



ALINA ZIÓŁKOWSKA

On 13 December 1971 in Łowo, Antoni Lamperski, prosecutor for the District Court in Mława, with the participation of court reporter Janina Lapeusz, heard the person named below as a witness. The witness, cautioned about the criminal liability for giving false testimony, then stated with her own signature that she has been cautioned about this responsibility (Article 172 of the Criminal Code). The witness, [also] cautioned about her responsibility regarding the content of Art. 165 of the Criminal Code, then testified as follows:

Name and surname	Alina Ziółkowska
Maiden name	Szymczak
Parents' names	Stanisław and Weronika <i>née</i> Andrzejewska
Date and place of birth	11 May 1918, in Uniszki Zawadzkie
Place of residence	Łowo, [...]
Occupation	housewife
Education	high school

I have been a resident of Łowo since 1929 and I lived in its vicinity throughout the occupation. For this reason, I knew that there was a camp in Łowo, where officers of the Polish Army were detained during the initial period. Then there were also Russians and Ukrainians, and only later was there a camp organized for children aged, as far as I know, up to three years.

The camp, with brick buildings, was located at the junction of Leśna and Jagiellońska Street. Three more barracks were built on [its] grounds, besides these three brick buildings. The three brick buildings are located there today. In one of them, along Jagiellońska Street, there is the 'Samopomoc Chłopska' District Cooperative, while in [the other two], located along Leśna Street, there are a vocational school and private lodgings.



The camp was surrounded by a fence made of wire mesh, with barbed wire on top. Regardless of that, it was guarded day and night by Germans dressed in gray uniforms. Each of these guards was armed with a rifle. I don't know if they were military or officials of other organizations; in any case, the guards were recruited from among older men. As far as I could tell, these were men aged around 50 or even more.

I would like to point out one thing: the area of Hłowo was mostly inhabited by Germans and for this reason, due to my citizenship, I didn't have very wide contact with all the residents, let alone the authorities. I knew that there was a camp, that in it there were, as I pointed out, prisoners, soldiers, initially Poles, then Russians. I simply made these observations myself and at first I didn't even know that on these grounds there was a camp, or even a sub-camp for children.

It was only at the end of the summer, probably 1944, when I made contact with a Lithuanian woman evacuated from Vilnius, who could speak perfect Polish, and from her I learned that there were infants and children in the camp up to the age of three. I don't remember the first name or surname of the Lithuanian; I didn't ask, because she was much older than me and so I didn't know her name or address her by name. I should point out that this Lithuanian had graduated from the music school in Warsaw before 1939, and that is why she was fluent in Polish. She emphasized, however, that she was a Lithuanian. She also knew the German language perfectly, but she was keener on making friends with the Poles, simply because she hated the Germans, a fact which she didn't hide from me. Nevertheless, I approached this woman with a certain amount of caution. This was dictated by fears that she had perhaps been sent by the Germans and was maybe playing the unfortunate, yet, during the occupation, quite common role of an agent provocateur. That's why I listened to what she said, but I didn't ask for any other details on my own initiative.

As I pointed out, she always spoke very negatively about the Germans and about their system of governance or way of dealing with the occupied population. One time she came to me terribly upset, and the reason for this agitation was that her 21-year-old niece had been taken away and transported near the front. What's more, this Lithuanian whom I am talking about, received an illicit letter from her niece, in which [she] mentioned that she was a 'play thing' for the German officers. Later, [the Lithuanian] said that her niece had informed her in this smuggled letter that if she became a mother, her future child would be taken away from her and brought up by Germans. In this way she expressed her double despair—firstly, that



she was a 'play thing' for the German officers, and [secondly] that if she became a mother, she would not be able to raise her own child. Sticking to my tactics, I tried not to speak ill of the Germans and after listening to her accounts, I replied that it was impossible that the Germans could act in this way. Furthermore, I couldn't understand that such a situation could take place and that these things could not only be tolerated but even organized. However, the Lithuanian, in order to convince me, cited the example of Łowo and said: 'What don't you believe? After all, there is a children's camp in Łowo for children taken away from their mothers.' This was the first definite message for me about the existence of a children's camp in Łowo, in the place I mentioned at the beginning.

I would like to point out that I lived on Jagiellońska Street, and yet I hadn't noticed any small children in the camp. Besides, the camp consisted of six buildings, including three barracks, and if there were children living in barracks—that is, behind the brick buildings from the side of Jagiellońska and Leśna Street—they couldn't be seen, even for one moment, from outside. Yes, there were cases when we even gave them food through the fence, but it was taken away by elderly people, mostly women, and if there were any children, they were with their mothers and had come from Ukraine. I only heard, but in the most general terms, about the existence of the lazaret [infirmary] in the camp, but I didn't know its purpose. I knew that a doctor named Marian Knappe worked in the area of Łowo during the occupation, whom I also knew. He was a Pole, and despite the fact that he worked on the orders of the German authorities, he maintained contact with the Poles as much as he could and assisted them in every case.

Coming back to the Lithuanian, I would like to emphasize what else bound us. Well, I had my own piano and the Lithuanian, due to her musical education, was looking for a home with a piano, and found one with me. So she came to my place to play the instrument. This, of course, didn't please the Germans, in particular a *Treuhänder* called Wilkop. He caused the piano to be taken away from me and handed over to the SS, who had taken over the local Roman Catholic presbytery. Of course, the removal of the piano took place without any formalities—that is, without a written decision or other order. They just came and took it. I didn't get the instrument back. After the liberation, I was forced to acquire a new, different piano, because I know how to play the piano myself.

My husband at that time was in the oflag as an officer of the Polish army, while I worked as a manual worker in the so-called *Stoppkolonne*. This involved group work performed on the



installation, repair and maintenance of tracks. I can say from experience that this is one of the most difficult jobs imaginable on the railways. It was done by hand and most often boiled down to pulling up the tracks with a pickaxe. Throughout the whole occupation, except for a few months, I did the hardest job.

In this way, in a very general sense, I was presented with information about the existence of the children's camp, and although this was first-hand information, I didn't make it widely known during the occupation for fear of the Germans. Due to the fact that I was the wife of the head of the school in Łowosze, the wife of an officer in the oflag, I was being observed, and so my caution was dictated by concerns for my own safety and that of my daughter, who at the time of the outbreak of the war was one and a half years old.

Immediately after the liberation, I checked with my own eyes, personally, the conditions in which the infants and children up to the age of three had been detained. I should note, however, that when I did manage to get to the camp, the children and infants had already been coaxed by Dr. Knappe to some semblance of normality and, above all, nourished.

In the first ten days of February I reached the area of a children's camp, which was under the care of the organized Polish authorities and nuns from Płock, independently of Dr. Knappe. Although I cannot give the exact date—that is, the day—I am not mistaken despite the passage of time as to the rough date, which I reckon to be the first ten days of February 1945, because this was after the liberation of Łowosze, which took place on 18 January 1945.

This date is important to me not just for purely historical reasons, but also because on the eve of the liberation, the Germans shot my brother Zdzisław Szymczak, who was only 19 years old, during a mass execution in Kalkówka, Mława. Along with my brother, 364 people were killed in Kalkówka. My brother was taken by the Germans literally two days before the liberation and, as I pointed out, on the eve of liberation, maybe even a few hours before the liberation, he was shot together with 364 people. This place, called Kalkówka, was located in the gravel mine just behind Mława and is now a place dedicated to the commemoration of Nazi crimes. As a side-note to this case, I would like to point out that people who were accidentally encountered and detained there were also shot at the moment when the detainees were brought to the place of execution. There were even children and pregnant women among them and that they happened to be there by chance is proven, among other things, by the fact that they even had shopping bags with them.

I mention this, because regardless of my own pronouncement, which does not require comment, it influenced the course of events in our family and was related to the fact that my sister and I went to the children's camp. Well [after my mother lost her son], my sister Leona Byks decided, in agreement with me, to take one child from this camp to bring up. She assumed that [since our mother] was in despair after losing her son, [my sister] would personally bring up a child, who would later grow up and replace in some respect our mother's son Zdzisław, murdered by the Germans. Perhaps this circumstance in a different situation would not have had so much significance, but in the case of my family it meant even more since my brother Zdzisław was the only son of my mother, Weronika Szymczak.

In accordance with the decision and the agreement with my sister, we went to children's camp to choose and take with us one of the infants or one of the older children. We decided to take a boy to raise. The following event helped in our decision as to which boy to take for bringing up: the moment we were evaluating the children lying next to each other, two or three to a cot, one of the children, at that moment being held by one of the nuns, spoke to me with the one single word that he was able to say—'mama', stretching his little hands towards me. This surprised us, and the boy spoke the word 'mama' for the second time. It was this event that decided that my sister would raise this boy and not another.

From a nun whose name I don't know but who may be familiar to Zielska, who is being heard today, I learned that the Germans had named the boy Horst, and according to what the nun told us, Horst's surname was Marmaitte. Before giving him this surname, she checked it in her records or the remains of the camp documentation. I wasn't particularly interested in whether these were official documents or just records kept by the nun. I was more interested in details about the child's origin. I couldn't find much, but from what I learned from my sister, Horst's mother was a tall, handsome woman. Horst was born in Łowo, in the camp itself. He was taken away from his mother against her will by a German, and no amount of despair or pleading on the part of Horst's mother helped. On the basis of his surname, we wanted to determine the nationality of Horst's mother, but we didn't succeed. We supposed that she could have been a Lithuanian or a different nationality, maybe of French origin. Anyway, the name could have been slightly distorted. However, this is what we were told. The nun was interested in this boy herself; she, as she told us, was the one who determined his particulars, his date of birth and possible origin, because she intended to give him up to her closest relatives—that is, her family—for upbringing. However, she agreed to give [the child] to us because of his behavior mentioned above.



At first, we didn't take any official steps, or even baptize the child, because we expected that someone, especially his mother, would come for him, but this hasn't happened so far. We named the boy taken from the camp Andrzej Zdzisław, but we formally adopted him in 1949, when we were convinced that no one would come looking for him. Personally, I am convinced that if the mother of the adopted boy were alive, she would have certainly returned to Łowo at least to establish his whereabouts or where her child had been sent. Apparently she is dead. In these conditions, Andrzej Zdzisław Szymczak became my brother. The adoption proceedings took place in the District Court in Działdowo. The files should also be there.

In Łowo, like my sister, many people took children from the camp to raise. I know that Panek, Szczepańska, Tułodziecka, Maliszewska and others raised and adopted children from the camp.

This report was completed in accordance with the content of my statements and signed after being read.