



ZDZISŁAW RATAJCZYK

Warsaw, 6 June 1947. Judge Halina Wereńko, a member of the District Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Warsaw, interviewed the person named below as a witness. Having advised the witness of the criminal liability for making false declarations and of the wording of Article 106 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, and of the significance of the oath, the judge took an oath therefrom under Article 109 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

The witness testified as follows:

Name and surname	Zdzisław Józef Ratajczyk
Date of birth	21 March 1927 in Warsaw
Parents' names	Józef and Karolina, <i>née</i> Grzelec
Education	vocational school
Place of residence	Warsaw, Bartycka Street 7
Profession	carpenter
Religion	Roman Catholic

During the Warsaw Uprising in 1944 I lived together with my parents in Siekierki, at Bartycka Street 7.

On 23 August German soldiers (I don't remember their unit) went from house to house and ordered all of the men to gather at the school at Gościniec Street 53. They said that they would be taken for work. Those remaining in Siekierki would be shot. I arrived at the school at around 13.00 together with my father and cousin, Marian Grzelec. I saw that SA men (in yellow uniforms) were already escorting a group of men from the school. Our group, numbering some 1,000 men, was marched off to the Gestapo offices at aleja Szucha 25.

There we were handed over to soldiers in grey uniforms with death's heads on their caps and uniform collars. Our documents were checked. My father, being a farmer, had an identity card, while I was employed at Sosnowski's wood processing factory (a private company). We were allocated to the first group, and I got the impression that the segregation was completely random. We were divided into two groups of more or less equal size. Ours was led first to the rear of the Gestapo building, and then to the cells – the so-called tramcars – in the cellar; the second group remained in the courtyard. The next day in the morning, soldiers with death's heads on their caps selected a dozen or so people from each cell for labour. First they took my father and Grzelec, and then myself in a group of one hundred people. I was accompanied by Stanisław Górski (he currently works in Warsaw, and was previously residing in Siekierki at Bartycka Street 15/17; I don't know his present address) and Odachowski (previously residing at Bartycka Street 19, currently employed at the Baby Jesus Hospital in Warsaw); I don't know the surnames of the other men. We were led to the open-air kindergarten, where from the side of Bagatela Street we loaded shells (large ones) onto an armoured vehicle. It was then that I saw that clouds of yellow smoke were rising from the wing of the Chief Inspectorate of the Armed Forces, which had been destroyed in 1939, and I could smell the characteristic whiff of burning human bodies. The ruined wing of the Inspectorate building adjacent to the open-air kindergarten had walls up to the first floor, while the windows on both sides of the building were boarded up, with the exception of a single window located nearer to Aleje Ujazdowskie (the second or third to last). On the side of the courtyard, almost in the middle, three boards nailed together with transverse rungs had been set against the window of the upper ground floor. We were led for dinner to the house at aleja Szucha 25, and thereafter taken back to the open-air kindergarten. After dinner the other workers left to collect shells, and I was left alone. A soldier came up to me and, speaking in Polish, ordered me to leave, for he would be bringing "bandits" to be shot. I took a few steps to the side and saw how SS men were bringing in three groups of 20 civilian men each through the gate at Szucha Avenue. In one of these groups I recognised Józef Janowski (residing at Gościniec Street in Siekierki) and Jan Wrzosek (residing at Gościniec Street in Siekierki), both aged around 60. The others were the very same people who had arrived in the group from the school in Siekierki. The groups were led up, in turn, along the boards with rungs and through the window to the ground floor of the destroyed Inspectorate building, through the central entrance from the side of the interior courtyard. Once a group had been brought in, I heard bursts of automatic fire followed by individual

shots. After some time I went up to the building from the side of the open-air kindergarten and, through a crack in the boarded up windows, saw naked bodies lying more or less in the centre of the building.

In the late evening, at around 18.00, when I was being taken back to the Gestapo offices, I saw clouds of smoke coming from the building in which I had previously seen the bodies.

I continued to see clouds of smoke at this location until the end of September 1944, accompanied by the characteristic whiff of burning human bodies. The next day, 25 August, I saw that three groups numbering 20 men each had been brought in from Siekierki to be executed. The SS men would bring the victims to the makeshift footbridge at the ground floor window, where they were handed over to SD men in helmets with dark green veils covering their entire faces; they led the men inside, and then I heard shots – when the gunfire subsided, I saw the SD men in veils leave.

I worked in the open-air kindergarten for more than two weeks, however I was not always present on the premises, for sometimes I would also be used to load ammunition at the Western Railway Station. For this reason I could not see all of the groups brought in to be shot. After the execution of the group of men from Siekierki, I once saw the Germans bring in a group of five men and one woman. They had been severely beaten; we thought that they were insurrectionists. I also observed that more groups of civilian men were brought in to be executed in the first few days, and less frequently thereafter.

I don't remember how many times such groups were brought in.

Men's clothes, underwear, and shoes were thrown out from the side of the open-air kindergarten. The soldiers, and also civilian men, would load the clothing onto two wagons, which then left down aleja Szucha. Later on, in the first week of September, when I was transferred to the camp at Litewska Street 14, I saw folded clothes in the side annex and in the front building. My father and I recognised the clothes of Antoni Rodzki, Józef Radzki (a spring coat), Żułwiak (a light-coloured suit), and the sheepskin coat of Józef Janowski. These were residents of Siekierki, and they had been executed by firing squad in the Inspectorate (I wore Janowski's sheepskin coat, but after the war Janowski's family took it from me and tried to get me into trouble).



One of the cells in the Gestapo building was occupied by some 20 men who were kept isolated from us; as I learned, they were used to carry the bodies of those murdered in the Inspectorate to a pile, from which they were taken to be burned. I did not speak with them myself, and I don't know their surnames.

I remained in the camp at Litewska Street 14 until 2 or 3 December, and then I ran away.

In October, after the Śródmieście district had surrendered (I don't remember the exact date), I was in a group of ten labourers that were sent to Solec Street in order to bury bodies. In the vicinity of number 33 – 35 we found some 40 civilian corpses, mainly male, but also a few female; all had gunshot wounds and were facing in one direction. In the middle of November 1944 the *Schutzpolizei* would take me and a group of prisoners from the camp at Litewska Street 14 and, guarded by a special technical squad, we would drill mine holes at the corner of Filtrowa and Sędziowska streets, in Niemcewicz Street, and once at a factory in Ulrychów.

At this point the report was brought to a close and read out.