

JAN GRABOWSKI

Warsaw, 30 January 1946. Judge Halina Wereńko delegated to the Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes interviewed the person specified below as a witness. Having advised the witness of the criminal liability for making false declarations and of the significance of the oath, the judge swore the witness in accordance with Article 109 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. The witness testified as follows:

Name and surname	Jan Grabowski
Date of birth	25 January 1911
Names of parents	Franciszek and Franciszka née Piórkowska
Place of residence	[...]
Education	five grades of primary school
Religion	Roman Catholic
Occupation	peddler

During the Warsaw Uprising I lived in Warsaw at Wolska Street 123. The house was big, around fifty flats. From the beginning of the uprising there was no fighting in the vicinity of our house. You could hear shots and German tanks driving in the street, shooting at houses and people if anyone appeared.

On 5 August 1944 between 10 and 11 a.m., around one hundred German gendarmes burst into the yard of our house and arranged themselves in a line stretching from the yard in Wolska Street up to the forge which was located in the back, at number 124, almost directly opposite our house. All of them were armed with light machine guns with bayonets and with grenades. From the yard, they shouted to get out of the house. Men, women and children came out and all of them were herded to the ground near the forge.

I went out with my wife Franciszka Grabowska (aged 33), daughter Irena (aged 4) and son Zdzisław Jerzy (aged 5 months).

On the square in front of the forge, all of us were ordered to lie down on the ground. The group from our house numbered five hundred persons. When my family and I arrived at the forge, there were already some people on the square.

I don't know whether these were the residents of our house or of other buildings.

When I was already lying on the ground, I noticed that a machine gun had been set on a stand on the ground where a burnt-down house used to be, about five to ten meters from the people lying. At one point the Germans started shooting this machine gun, light machine guns, and throwing grenades into the lying crowd. After some time the shooting ceased, I noticed that the Germans were bringing another group. I heard a woman from that group ask "Which house are you from?", but I did not hear the answer, and I don't know which house the people brought at that time were from.

I didn't notice how many persons were in that group.

People lay down and another shooting began, which continued – with breaks for killing off those still moving – for at least six hours. A gendarme walked over me three times with his shoes, I was not hurt, but my wife and children had been murdered. My little five-month-old boy was crying, I heard a gendarme ordering someone to shoot him, then I heard a shot, and the child went silent.

I saw that the following persons were murdered: Wacław Stachura – the caretaker in the house where I lived; tenants – the midwife Michałowska, Keller (a woman), Pawłowska, Kulesza – the owner of a soap shop. I didn't see anyone else I knew. I was lying still, playing dead.

After some time the shooting subsided, single gendarmes were walking among the people lying and killing off those still alive. As I already said, a gendarme walked over me three times. Then I heard Polish being spoken, I thought that the gendarmes had gone, but I realised that these were Poles, workers being herded by the Germans, who were collecting the suitcases and bundles of the murdered people.

After some time the same group of workers came back to collect the corpses; they were followed by gendarmes who were still killing off people that moved or otherwise showed that they were still alive. Then I heard the Polish workers calling everyone who was still alive to get up, saying that they would not be killed anymore, since some German had come and had brought such an order. I did not believe them and I kept lying, until the body carriers came to pick me up. I then got up, picked up a corpse together with the workers, and continued doing this until the work was done.

We were putting the corpses on two piles until nightfall. One pile was about 20 meters long, the other was 15 meters long, they were about 10 meters wide, and 1.5 meters high (as high as it was possible to throw a body). After the German who had allegedly brought the order to stop murdering Poles had left, and while I was carrying the corpses, the gendarmes were still following the workers carrying bodies, still killing those still alive.

At nightfall, the group of workers forced to carry corpses that I had joined was herded by the gendarmes to Elekcyjna Street near Sowińskiego Park, where there were even more corpses than in front of the forge; I believe that there were at least two thousand of them. Among the corpses I recognized the administrator of Hankiewicz's house at Wolska Street 129.

Later, in 1945, somebody told me that residents of Hankiewicz's house, as well as people from Elekcyjna Street, from the house known as "Cegielnia" on the corner of Wolska and Elekcyjna Streets, were executed by the fence of Sowińskiego Park. Near that house, while I was carrying the corpses, I saw that some of them had already been burnt. We were bringing the bodies to Sowińskiego Park and putting them onto two piles. We worked late into the night, but we did not manage to complete the task. From there we were escorted in fives to Saint Lawrence Church, where we spent the entire night.

On the next date a gendarme called that he needed twenty persons to volunteer to finish bringing corpses to Sowińskiego Park. I went with the others, since I wanted to see my family one last time. It took us three hours to carry the corpses. The piles in Sowińskiego Park were 1.5 meter high and were more in the form of circles, with diameters of 25 meters or more.

I did not see the corpses being burnt.

After I returned to Warsaw in 1945, I saw the remains of pyres and bones there. Presently, they are buried in one place in the park.

After we were done carrying corpses in Sowińskiego Park, our group was brought to Saint Lawrence Church. On 6 August 1944 we were escorted on foot to the transit camp in Pruszków, and then further to Wrocław.

On 5 August 1944, in Saint Lawrence Church, I met three tenants from our house: Elżbieta Wituska (presently residing in Chłodna Street 41, flat 32), Helena Seling, employed at the railway office in Armatnia Street, and I don't know the name or the address of the third woman. All of them were there during the execution in front of the forge, where – as Wituska recounted – they had gotten up upon hearing that anyone still alive should get up, because Poles would not be killed anymore.

The report was read out.

Additionally, I testify that I was sent from Wrocław with a group of one hundred and sixty Poles to work at the trenches in the so-called Rudolfsdorf, where I remained until 20 January 1945. In the camp it happened that one of the workers left to work somewhere in the country. The Germans punished him with a beating. They chose two other Polish workers, whom they ordered to beat up the culprit, and since those two were allegedly not beating him hard enough, the Germans chose two new workers to beat the workers who were not beating the man hard enough.

I was not there to witness this myself, but my colleagues told me about it. For food we would receive vegetable soup and three chunks of bread per five workers once a day.

Read out.