



## WACŁAW PIÓRKOWSKI

Warsaw, 17 March 1947. [Judge] Halina Wereńko, member of the District Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes, interviewed the person specified below as an unsworn witness. Having been advised of the criminal liability for making false declarations and of the contents of Art. 107 and Art. 115 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the witness testified as follows:

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<b>Name and surname</b>	Wacław Piórkowski
<b>Names of parents</b>	Władysław and Romualda
<b>Date of birth</b>	25 September 1912
<b>Education</b>	Warsaw University, Faculty of Law
<b>Religious affiliation</b>	Roman Catholic
<b>Place of residence</b>	Warsaw, Aleje Jerozolimskie 95
<b>Nationality and national affiliation</b>	Polish
<b>Occupation</b>	clerk

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On 1 August 1944 I was in the "Dobrolin" factory, where I had worked, as I still do, since 1935 as real estate administrator. Some 80 workers and the executives, as well as a few German soldiers of the Wehrmacht, were with me in the factory. A year before the uprising, a Wehrmacht unit took over one of the factory halls as a depot for spare car parts.

The staff of the "Dobrolin" factory was partly involved in the operations of the Polish Underground. At the commencement of the uprising, they were to pick up weapons from the warehouse in the 22nd State Police Precinct at Wolska Street 147.



Before the uprising, the Germans had reinforced the orbicular railway, where they had even built bunkers. In this way, they cut off the communication between Wola and the city. They had also set up a phone wire tap.

The first incident of the insurgent action that I saw, on August 1 at 3.15 p.m., was opposite Wolska Street 165 (past Redutowa Street), at the so-called Piekiełko: two shots had allegedly been fired from a house at a German car driving past Wolska Street towards Włochy. The SS-men stopped the car, ran into the house, shot six men they found there, let the women walk away, then set fire to the house.

Already on 1 August there were German checkpoints at the city limits, past the corner of Wolska Street and Włochowska Street, but they still let the women working at "Dobrolin" through in the direction of Włochy. German tanks drove from Wola towards Bema Street. The Germans set up machine guns on street intersections. Gunshots were heard.

People, however, still crept around the streets. Our employee, Kreutz, managed to move a part of a cow slaughtered in our factory to a hospital organised by Father Krygier, near Saint Lawrence church.

Later on I realised that the tanks and armoured cars driving through were part of the "Hermann Göring" division, which came to Warsaw from the direction of Piastów.

The murdering of people and burning of houses, the so-called *Säuberung* (purging), was conducted by units of the gendarmerie, the so-called *Feldjäger*, partially arrived from Łódź and Poznań (they wore yellow shoes), amongst them were the Vlasovtsy units ("Ukrainians" and Kalmuks). The sector command was initially in what was later the *Raumunstab* at Wolska Street, past the clay pits.

The *Säuberung* started to operate within my view, from Bema Street, and went towards Wola, judging by how people were fleeing.

The way it happened was that every three or four hours new gendarmerie units rushed into the area, led people out of the houses, searched for weapons, while frisking people and looting. That way, whoever had hidden or had managed to beg for their life when one wave of the gendarmes came through, was swept up by the next wave.



It seems to me there were no large insurgent actions in our neighbourhood, as the weapons had not been handed out and communication to the city was cut. Along the Wolska Street axis, the insurgents did not have trenches, supply depots, or medical stations.

On 3 August, around noon, a worker named Włodarski arrived in the factory with his family and brought news that on Grabowskiego Street, where he lived, the Germans were bringing people out towards the factory at Dworska Street, murdering, looting, and setting fire to the houses. I also saw from a distance that the houses at [Jana] Kazimierza Street were on fire.

I know from hearsay that after 3 August – I cannot establish the precise date – the Germans murdered the residents of the houses at Wolska Street 100 (a large, four-storey block of flats), Wolska 112 (a single-story block and a carpentry workshop), and the “Moc” factory at Wolska 121.

On 5 August they murdered the residents of Kamiński’s house at Wolska 151, Hankiewicz’s house at Wolska 129, and the houses on Elekcyjna Street. On 6 August, the Germans blew up the house on the corner of Wolska Street and Gizów Street, which housed a school and where some of the people from Kamiński’s house were hiding.

Also on 5 August, at the Orthodox cemetery, near the embankment, the Germans shot sixteen policemen and two civilians taken from the 22<sup>nd</sup> Precinct. Their bodies were exhumed by the Polish Red Cross, at which point the names of the murdered were established. One of them was my father, Władysław Piórkowski.

The precinct was an organised Home Army cell. Father Krygier, who was hiding wounded insurgents in the choir of Saint Lawrence church, phoned the precinct and asked them to pick up the wounded on account of a possible search announced by the Germans. The Germans probably intercepted the conversation, surrounded and captured the group when it was leaving the precinct, then shot its members on the embankment.

Between 3 August and 5 August, the gendarmerie troops also raided the factory every now and again. But in this case we were helped by the Wehrmacht groups from “Zel” (the repair works), who explained to the gendarmes that there were only peaceful people here. One time a soldier, an SS-man, arrived at the factory. He entered the grounds, blew up a hole in the wall with a grenade, searched the attic and left.



When they entered the grounds, the gendarmes would say “You were shooting” (which was utterly absurd), but apparently it had been decided at the start of the cleansing to claim that the execution was performed as retribution for actions against the Germans.

On August 6, a colonel of the Wehrmacht, Muller (who had, due to the outbreak of the Uprising, moved his headquarters from Modlin), arrived in the “Dobrolin” factory. At a moment when a gendarmerie unit was marching all the Poles present out of the factory, Muller intervened effectively, so that we were allowed to stay in the factory. Then he left, leaving a motorcyclist with an order to quickly inform him if we were threatened with execution.

On 7 August, a new wave arrived, numbering ten fully-armed gendarmes. They marched our group out, 42 people strong. We were searched near the factory wall, but no weapons were found on us. There was no looting during the search. The gendarmes announced we would “go pray”. They led us down Wolska Street towards Saint Lawrence church. There was a gendarme with a revolver standing by the gate, and more gendarmes lying down with machine guns on the embankments in front of the church, one every ten paces.

When we entered the church cemetery, we were put up against the church wall and ordered to squat with our hands above our heads. The women, of whom there were about ten, were taken to Saint Lawrence church.

Upon entering, I saw spots of trodden-on blood on the cemetery surfaces. There were teeth on the ground, knocked out from a few people. In the meantime, the gendarmerie groups brought in more and more groups of men via Wolska Street, from the direction of Bema Street, so that after a while there was a jam at the gate. The escorting gendarmes would return towards Bema Street.

I saw groups of 15–20 men led, in columns, down the pathway, going towards the wall behind the vicarage. From the spot on the corner of the church where I stood I could see a soldier in a German uniform (I could not tell what kind of unit he was a part of) hidden behind the trees. Unseen by the men led down the pathway, he shot them from the back.

From the moment we entered the cemetery grounds, I also heard bursts of machine-gun fire and then single shots, which I assume were meant to finish off the wounded. I did not see the murdered men fall, as the view was screened by trees.



Around 11 a.m., a group of 15 men were brought in front of the church. They were covered with flour (and had bags of flour on their backs). The SS-man in charge of the execution group interrogated them to find out where they were from. I heard them say they were bakers from Redutowa Street. The SS-man said they were looters and ordered us to be led away behind the corner of the church. After a while, when we were brought back to that place, we saw traces of blood covered with flour.

When I was standing with my group, and later as well, I heard that Father Krygier, the parson of the Saint Lawrence parish, was murdered on 5 or 6 August, as had been Franaszkowa with her child.

From 3 August onwards, I could see fire and smoke near the Saint Lawrence parish vicarage when I was in the "Dobrolin" factory. I thought then that the vicarage was on fire. On 7 August, I saw that the vicarage was not burnt; so I assume that there had to be a pyre for burning bodies near the vicarage.

I believe that our group was put by the wall and not immediately taken to the execution site because we were all wearing fireman uniforms. We looked like an organised unit, I suppose we were to be interrogated first.

Around noon, having been alerted by the motorcyclist, Colonel Muller arrived to free us. At first, the gendarme by the gate did not want to let him in. Then I saw the colonel pull out a revolver, demanding to speak with the commander of the execution unit. An SS-man came out, wearing a green uniform, with three stars on a black velvet field on his collar; tall, very lean, with dark brown hair, crooked legs and a wild look in his eyes. Colonel Muller announced that he would now head to the *Säuberung* command (which had moved to the corner of Chłodna Street and Żelazna Street, to a building occupied by the gendarmerie before the uprising) and demanded that we not be shot until he returned. The SS-man gave an order and we were led to the opposite wall of the church, in the direction of Wolska Street, from where we could not see the execution site, with the women who had been taken to the church earlier reattached to our group. Around 3 p.m. Colonel Muller came back, bringing individual passes for our entire group, bearing the "*Feldjäger*" stamp at the top and provided with a number, a date, and a German eagle [gapa], saying that, being an employee of the GG chemical department, the given person was authorised to leave Warsaw and head on their way.



I do not remember who signed the passes and I have not kept mine.

The colonel told us that he had had some problems obtaining passes for the Poles, as they were only handed out to Germans, *volksdeutsch* and foreign nationals. We returned to "Dobrolin" together with Colonel Muller and, having loaded up two wagons of food, we rode out, with a Wehrmacht escort, by the road towards Włochy. Right past the city we encountered Kalmuk units walking towards Warsaw, and a little later the tanks of the "Hermann Göring" division.

The moment [we] left the factory, young SS-men from the "Hermann Göring" division drove cars onto its grounds, taking away food and large amounts of shoe polish. Judging by their stance, which was not aggressive, I think they arrived at an area that had already been "purged".