



## HELENA KARŚNICKA

Warsaw, 8 February 1946. Judge S. Rybiński, delegated to the Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes, interviewed the person named below as a witness, without taking an oath. The witness was advised of the obligation to speak the truth and of the criminal liability for making false declarations, and testified as follows:

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**My name is Halina Karśnicka, I am 32 years old, I used to run a shop in Warsaw, religion – Roman Catholic, I live in Włochy at Chrobrego Street 6, flat 20, criminal record – none.**

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On 15 May 1940 at 5.00 a.m. Gestapo agents entered our apartment, in which I reside to this day. Two wore uniforms with death's heads, while the third was dressed in civilian clothes. They rang the front door bell persistently. When my mother opened the door, they entered the room, walked around the whole apartment, conducted a search, found nothing, looked at all those present, and turned to my middle brother, Zdzisław Karśnicki (20 years old). They took documents from his jacket, which was hanging by his bed, satisfied themselves as to his name and surname, and ordered him to get ready to leave. The Gestapo officer in civilian clothes spoke Polish. It was he who ordered my brother to go with them. They did not even let him say goodbye to us. Apart from Zdzisław, my older brother, Waław (31 years), and the youngest, Henryk (17 years), were also present at home. The Gestapo officers also wanted to take Henryk, but Waław tricked them into believing that he was only 14 years old.

The Gestapo men led Zdzisław away and brutally pushed him into a taxi that was waiting in front of the house. This was when I saw him for the last time.

After he was arrested, I tried to determine where he was being held. Only after two and a half weeks did I learn that he was in the prison at Dzielna Street, commonly known as Pawiak.



I took a parcel for my brother to the prison's administrative office. They accepted the parcel. In this way I learned that he was a prisoner at Pawiak. From then on I started going to Dzielna Street regularly, and waited by the prison wall. I could not see the prison windows, but my brother looked out of a window and noticed me standing on the street, and on a few occasions used a sling to throw pieces of paper through the window; these passed the prison wall and fell onto the street. I picked up these pieces of paper. From these I learned that my brother had been arrested, as he had been turned in by one of his colleagues, Zbigniew Sachanowski, arrested a few hours earlier. Sachanowski could not withstand the torture, broke down and turned in twelve boys (including my brother Zdzisław), all of whom were members of a secret political organisation formed in the area of Włochy. Zdzisław was the head of this organisation.

I don't know the surnames of the other members of the organisation who were arrested along with him. None of these boys, just as with my brother, ever returned, while a year later Sachanowski was transported to Oświęcim, where he died.

In the messages that he wrote from prison my brother stated that he had not and would not turn anybody in. In the final communication, which was thrown out in the same way as previously by his friends, after he had been taken away, my brother wrote that he was probably being deported to perform agricultural work and that we should not worry. This was on 20 June 1940. I received the piece of paper at 8.00. On this day I went to the Patronat and was told that many of the people taken away from the prison were being shot by the Germans in the Młociński Forest.

I later learned that on that day, 20 June 1940, a mass execution was conducted in Palmiry. I think that my brother was shot dead together with Speaker Rataj and Member of Parliament Niedziałkowski, for he had notified us previously that both Rataj and Niedziałkowski were with him at Pawiak. I also know that Rataj and Niedziałkowski had been executed by firing squad in Palmiry, although I don't know the date of this execution. All I can say is that I did not receive any more messages from my brother.

Twice I asked about him at the Gestapo office at aleja Szucha. Once I was told that he had been deported to Germany, while on the second occasion that he had died at the current location.

Zdzisław was a student at the Niklewski secondary school, and had graduated in 1939, before the War. He had not yet taken up any work.



I would like to add that in 1941 I myself was arrested in Chmielnik, as the Germans suspected that I was a Jewess and had left the ghetto. However, I began to defend myself and said that I was not a Jewess; they let me go after five hours.

Apart from my brother Zdzisław, during the War I also lost my younger brother, Henryk, who was accidentally hit by a bullet during shooting at Pawiak on 25 May 1944 and died of the wound on 27 October of the same year.

The report was read out.