



JERZY SZAJKOWSKI

Warsaw, 7 January 1948. 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, without taking an oath. Having been advised of the criminal liability for making false declarations, the witness testified as follows:

Name and surname	Jerzy Szajkowski
Parents' names	Władysław and Józefa
Date of birth	4 October 1925, Warsaw
Religion	Roman Catholic
Education	student at the Warsaw Polytechnic (introductory course)
Place of residence	Warsaw, Zawrót Street 3, flat 2
Citizenship and nationality	Polish
Criminal record	none

During the Warsaw Uprising I resided together with my parents at Trębacka Street 2. On 9 August 1944 at around 11.00 a detachment of SS men came from the direction of Focha Street and ordered all of the residents to leave the house within three minutes, under pain of death. The people went down to the courtyard and the SS men checked the house in order to determine whether everyone had left, taking with them engineer Tadeusz Majewski as an interpreter. After a while I heard a shot and the group of SS men reappeared, but without engineer Majewski. The SS men set fire to the house. Our group was taken to the cellars of the house at Focha Street 2. Only the men were led down into the cellar; the group of women and children was left outside. I heard the cries of the women and children, and then we were ordered to leave the cellar. My mother, Józefa Szajkowska, later told me that the SS



men approached the cellar exits and started arming their grenades, whereupon the women commenced crying and lamenting; it was then that we were ordered to step outside. From there, the entire group was led to the courtyard of the house at Focha Street 5/7, where we were joined with the residents of the house at Trębacka Street 4, and to a smaller group from Focha Street. Along the way and during stops, the soldiers would take our watches, valuables, and other finer items. After a brief stop we were taken directly from the premises of Focha Street 5/7 to the opera, where we were led through cellars, a corridor, and then upstairs to the right side of the house. While passing through the cellars of the opera, I saw a few bodies of men with gunshot wounds. The group of women was led elsewhere – to the basement of the opera building, as I later learned. The group of men, numbering more than one hundred and including my father and myself, was taken to the stairs leading to the ground floor of the Theatre. Here, the soldiers ordered foreigners and those who were working for the Germans to step out. The following complied: a *Volksdeutscher*, a man with Ukrainian papers, and a few men who worked for the Germans, among them Ropelewski, unemployed, and Tadeusz Kasprzycki (aged around 40, a resident of our house, a plumber by profession as far as I can recollect). In all, some ten people stepped forward, while not all of them actually worked for the Germans. I later learned from Kasprzycki that this group was shot dead in the Saski Garden. Kasprzycki and three other men managed to escape from this execution. Next the Germans took all of our documents and threw them into the house. We were ordered to proceed in single file along the stairs, then along a corridor on the right to the first floor, where there were doors to the balconies. Almost immediately, men were being led into the balconies in threes. I heard shots and understood that an execution was taking place. The time was probably around 14.00. Some 60 men entered before me, among them my father and the following residents of our house: Dikerman, Smokalski (the proprietor of the "Art Palace"), Chodkowski, Siwojańczuk; and from Trębacka Street 4: Dydyński, Chołodowski. I didn't know the rest of the victims. The opera house had burnt down, and the balconies had collapsed, while the corridor at the entrance to the balcony was an inclined plane. SS men looked out from all the entrances leading to the house. I saw three SS men from the detachment that had taken us from our house, standing with their guns at the ready. Immediately after they entered the inclined balcony, I saw my father and two other men falling from there into the house, having first received shots to the back of the head. I stood on a level section of floor, while the SS man ordered me to go to the inclined portion, which would make it easier for him to shoot. When I found myself on the inclined fragment, I jumped instinctively, and the bullet went over



my head. I fell onto the bodies of those who had been shot before me, leapt to my feet and, my hands covered with blood, started to flee towards the stage. A barrage of shots was fired after me. I ran across the stage and fell into the basement. I used the stairs to get to a corridor, from where I proceeded through the exit at Trębacka Street. I found myself on the premises of the house at Trębacka Street 10, from where I ran, under fire, to the house at Trębacka Street 2. None of the bullets hit me. The house was ablaze, and so I walked to KoZIA Street 3, from where the residents had not yet been evicted. I stayed there. On 10 August at around 5.00 a smaller detachment of SS men appeared from the direction of the Ministry of Agriculture, ordering the residents to leave the house. When the SS men entered the courtyard, I escaped through an opening in the wall and managed to get to the house at Trębacka Street 4. After three–four hours a group comprising 11 men and one woman came to this house from KoZIA Street. Among others, the group included Zygmunt Jaworski and Dominik Balias (residing in Warsaw at Chmielna Street 104, flat 15). They told me that the SS men had taken the group of women from KoZIA Street to the opera, and shot the men – more than one hundred – on the spot, leading them in tens to the entrance hall of KoZIA Street 3. Only the group of people who had arrived from Trębacka Street 4 survived the mass execution. I remained with this group in the house at Trębacka Street 4 until 20 October 1944. We took refuge on the second floor of the burnt-down house. Access was difficult, for the stairwell led only to the first floor, and we used a ladder to proceed further. In the first half of September (I don't remember the exact date) two women who were hiding in the cellars and didn't know our group's whereabouts were captured by the Germans. I heard a shot, and then a woman's cries: "Let me take a look at her, allow me to cover her, don't break my arms", combined with screams of pain and the Germans' questions as to where the others were hiding. The screams and voices receded in the direction of Focha Street.

On 20 October 1944, my mother found me, and together we managed to leave Warsaw. I learned from my mother that the SS detachment that performed the executions and evicted residents from the vicinity of the opera had been stationed for a dozen or so days in August in the opera building. The group of women was kept in the basement for two days, after which they were led out through a corridor on the third or fourth floor. While walking along the corridor, my mother noticed a large number of bodies in the house. Next, having passed through St Wojciech Church on Wolska Street, the group of women was transported to the transit camp in Pruszków.



When I returned to Warsaw in February 1945, I went to the opera premises. In the house, on the ground floor, I saw human remains, bones, skulls, ashes. I didn't venture into the courtyard. In one of the shops in the wing of the Theatre on the side of Wierzbowa Street I saw traces of a pyre, human remains, a multitude of various trinkets and personal items such as keys, penknives, etc. In the basement of the opera, large numbers of personal documents and photographs were strewn around the house near the pyre and in the corridor near the house; these belonged to the residents of Trębacka, Focha, Krakowskie Przedmieście, Wierzbowa, Senatorska, Fredry, Alberta, and other streets.

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