



PAWEŁ BRANNY

Warsaw, 29 March 1946. Investigative judge Halina Wereńko, delegated to the Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes, interviewed the person named below as a witness. Having been advised of the criminal liability for making false declarations and of the significance of the oath, the witness testified as follows:

Name and surname	Paweł Branny
Names of parents	Jan and Ewa née Węgłosz
Date of birth	13 May 1888 in Żuków Dolny
Occupation	head of the Field Inspection [Naczelnik Inspekcji Terenowej]
Education	civil engineer
Place of residence	Warsaw, Gimnastyczna Street 3
Religious affiliation	Roman Catholic
Criminal record	none

When the war broke out I held the position of inspector in the technical department of the municipal board. After the German invasion I kept the position, with this modification that approximately from the beginning of January 1940 I was also head of the liaison office of the Municipal Construction Offices [Miejskie Urzędy Budowlane], created at the request of engineers Gross and Supinger, who at that time were President Dengel's officers. I kept the position of head of this office until the director of the technical department, eng. Olszewski, was arrested on 18 February 1943. At the same time, I held the position of deputy director of this department. After Director Olszyński was arrested, Mayor Kielski appointed me acting director of the technical department, and I held this office until the uprising broke out in 1944.

Upon the Germans' entry after the surrender of Warsaw in 1939, Dr. Otto was appointed Reich Commissar for the City of Warsaw for the military. He held that office until the General Government was created, and then the position of city president was assumed by Dengel, who held it until approximately the end of March 1940. Dengel brought his officers with him and they commenced work. They included Ludwig Leist as the head of the so-called department of industry. Later, when Leist became the president of the city and the city captain, I was in touch with him due to the office I held, and once during a conversation he told me that he came from Bavaria, that he was German, had worked in Würzburg as a financial commissar (Finanzkommissar) I believe, and that during the world war of 1914–1918 he had been in Tarnopol as a Bavarian army sergeant. He did not speak Polish. Engineer Supinger told me that Leist had belonged to the Nazi party from the very first years of its existence, and hence his considerably high rank, since when he came to Warsaw he had the rank of colonel in the party army, the SA (Sturm Abteilungen). In Warsaw, I don't remember what year it was, whether in 1942 or at the beginning of 1943, he became an SA Brigadeführer. At the beginning of April 1940, after Dengel had resigned, Leist became the plenipotentiary of the head of the (German) district, which position was later renamed that of city captain (Stadthauptmann). At the time when Leist was already the head of the industry department in President Dengel's office, due to the position I held, it was my responsibility to protect the building at Daniłowiczowska Street 1/3, where the technical and construction supervision departments were located, in the sense that the evacuation of these two departments was to be deferred by a few months, which I managed to achieve. That was in December 1939, the evacuation was completed in March or April 1940. The offices of President Dengel and then of the city captain were moved into the building.

In December 1939, the military authorities ordered that all Polish Army officers who had participated in the German-Polish war in September were to report on 13 December 1939 to be transported to POW camps. Some of the staff of the technical and construction supervision departments had to go to the camps, some were kept by Leist; I believe that there were several such persons; apart from that, thanks to my intervention, he suppressed the letter written by [about?] engineers Erazm Zwolanowski and Aleksander Jabłoński to the city headquarters.

In December 1940, eng. Mieczysław Zaremba, an employee of the technical department, was arrested. In January 1941 the Gestapo arrested eng. Witold Sikorski in his house. For

reasons unknown, both of them were sent to the camp in Auschwitz. I intervened on their behalf with Leist several times; at the beginning of May 1941, Leist told me that he would release Sikorski, but that he could not release Zaremba, as the latter was politically dangerous. I received this answer after a conversation Leist had had with the director of the criminal police (Kriminaldirektor). Engineer Sikorski came back from Auschwitz on 1 June 19[...], Zaremba only came back in 1945, after Germany's surrender.

In June 1943, eng. Witold Kozłowski was arrested at the Dama club (Bracka Street 18). On 13 June 1943, I intervened with Leist on his behalf, sadly to no avail, since Leist did not see eye to eye with me with respect to this matter and did not want to discuss it.

Generally, during the initial period, it seemed that Leist, who needed our departments, feigned a kindly disposition towards us. This, however, did not prevent him from extending the working hours of public service staff from nine to ten hours, from taking away, without payment, all of the vegetables or a considerable part of the vegetables from the so-called Mokotów garden for himself and for his officers' mess located in the Blank Palace [Pałac Blanka] (without payment, whereas public service staff had to content themselves with starvation rations); from putting, in 1942, around 700 staff of the technical department, clerks and workers, at the disposal of the Arbeitsamt (a considerable number were deported for forced labor to Germany); from at first shortening and then taking away altogether the employees' holiday leaves. These were not only Leist's initiatives, they were instructions from the General Government. During Dengel's and Leist's term of office, the Royal Castle in Warsaw was entirely plundered, something at which Baumeister Böhler from Würzburg was particularly diligent, taking away in particular the more valuable painting frames. Böhler was an officer in President Dengel's office; later, as I heard, he left for the front. During Leist's term of office, the ghetto and the German quarter were created. In the German quarter, Polish names were removed from the street signs and replaced with German ones; also at that time, with a metal collection operation underway, a lot of valuable fences from, among others, the Saxon Garden [Ogród Saski], the Krasiński Garden [Ogród Krasińskich], and from many private properties were taken away. Also around that time the Latin sign on the Copernicus monument was removed and replaced with a sign in German, and when this sign was removed by the Polish underground authorities, the monument of Kiliński was removed from Krasiński Square in retaliation. Initially Leist resided at Wyzwolenia Avenue 17, and after Dengel had left Warsaw, in the Blank Palace, where he used the previous furnishings.



A chauffeur from the Blank Palace showed to an acquaintance of mine rooms in the palace where furniture and other items looted from the ghetto and elsewhere were kept.

In 1942, the Pilatowski company was ordered by the city captain's office to create a cold store in the wing of the Blank Palace where the city captainship officers' mess was located. Since the company did not manage to finish the work on time, the owner was sent to Treblinka for five or six weeks. After his return from Treblinka, Pilatowski reportedly died.

I heard from German sources that the initiative to create the ghetto came from the district authority, Fischer. Leist's offices had a more executive function, to a rather limited extent.

I don't know whether Leist got rich during his term of office in Poland. I heard that in 1941 he had lost a son on the eastern front.

I don't know what Leist's role in the organization of round-ups and public executions was. I never heard him object to any of those things, however.

I don't know whether he took away anything when he was leaving Warsaw for Germany before the uprising, and if he did, what that might have been.

At the beginning of Dengel's time in the office of president, Becher, whose first name I don't remember but who came from Düsseldorf, was Dengel's associate. Later, after Leist took over Dengel's function, Becher became his deputy. While holding this office, he ordered, among other things, the arrest of one of the municipal gas works engineers, since while performing an inspection, the engineer had taken his wife to Grochów in the company car. The engineer could have been sent to Treblinka, and only thanks to the intervention of Director Wongel, and after almost two weeks in prison, was he released. Becher was generally considered an even greater hater of Poles [*polakożerca*; literally: Pole-eater] than Leist.

Bolenbach, an officer in the office of Dürrfeld, who was the head of the public utility works (gas works, power plant, water works, sewage works, tramway company), was also considered a great hater of Poles. Engineers Skibniewski and Jan Kubalski, the director of the city tramway company, could testify about Dürrfeld. I heard that Dürrfeld was in Poland when the uprising broke out in 1944.



Also, Fabisch was an associate of Leist. He later became the mayor of Siedlce. He proved to be a great hater of Poles in Warsaw and Siedlce. His attitude towards Poles was such that he rebuked me and threatened to have me arrested for providing information to a Jew in the street in the autumn of 1940. He persecuted Polish clerks and clients, treating them brutally. Other associates of Leist's who were notorious haters of Poles were Leist's subsequent deputy, Dr. Fritolin, and Bram, who was the head of the automobile office and later of the housing office. Fritolin was killed during the uprising and Bram was killed together with eng. Pabst on 13 December 1943; the first [latter?] two had been sentenced to death by the Polish Underground authorities.

Both Leist and his associates committed smaller and greater offences, taking bribes, plundering.

I should add that eng. Witold Kozłowski, whom I have mentioned above, was murdered by the Germans in the camp at Auschwitz.

The report was read out.