



STEFANIA CHMIELEWSKA

Warsaw, 22 January 1948. Judge Halina Wereńko, member of the District Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland, interviewed the person specified below as an unsworn witness. Having been advised of the criminal liability for giving false testimony, the witness testified as follows:

Name and surname	Stefania Chmielewska
Marital status	single
Names of parents	Walenty and Maria <i>née</i> Żaglewska
Date of birth	22 March 1898, Płock
Religious affiliation	Roman Catholic
Education	secondary
Place of residence	Warsaw, Solec Street 36, St. Francis de Sales care facility
Citizenship and nationality	Polish
Occupation	merchant

The outbreak of the Uprising caught me in my shop with artistic church embroidery at Krakowskie Przedmieście Street 61 in Warsaw. The entrance to our house faced Krakowskie Przedmieście Street, but some of the windows also gave onto Kozia Street. The insurgents controlled Kozia Street from the outset, and German units were firing at them from the direction of Krakowskie Przedmieście Street, from its junctions with Trębacka and Miodowa streets. There were tanks rolling down Krakowskie Przedmieście Street. These tanks, as well as the machine gun installed on the roof of the building housing the Council of Ministers (Krakowskie Przedmieście Street [46/48]) fired on Kozia Street, and anyone who appeared on Krakowskie Przedmieście Street. After the insurgents burnt a tank on 1 August, throwing

a bottle with gasoline, German soldiers burst into the courtyard of Krakowskie Przedmieście Street 63 and threw a grenade into the corridor by the caretaker's flat, causing a fire.

On 3 August, a German unit wired a gate at the entrance to the Saski Hotel (junction of Krakowskie Przedmieście and Trębacka streets), setting fire to the block on the odd side of Krakowskie Przedmieście Street, from its junction with Trębacka Street all the way up to Miodowa Street. On the night from 3 to 4 August, together with the residents of the houses that had been set on fire, I went out of a first-floor window and down a ladder onto Kozia Street, and then got to the house at 11 Miodowa Street. After a couple of days, the insurgents ordered people out of the house I was staying in because they were to set up a barricade there. Then I went to the Old Town.

On 6 or 7 August (I cannot remember exactly) I arrived with my nephew, Reverend Wacław Ośko (presently residing in the village of Pilczyca, Słupia post office, near Końskie), and four other family members, at St. Stanislaus care facility, located at Przyrynek Street 4. Prior to the war, the facility had been located on Dzielna Street, but when setting up the ghetto, the German authorities first moved it to Górczewska Street, and then to Przyrynek Street. It was a care facility for elderly women and handicapped girls (typically hunchbacked), ran by the Daughters of Charity. Aurelia Pomierny was Mother Superior. Apart from her, there were eight other nuns there: Zofia Kowalczyk (an elderly woman who had been a nun for 55 years), Anna Moc, in charge of the workshop, Maria Wilman, Helena Jezierska, Zofia, Józefa, Maria. When I arrived at the care facility, there were maybe 80 or 90 elderly women there, and 50 or 60 handicapped girls. The nuns ran a needlework and embroidery workshop, managed by six able-bodied girls. Since I had an artistic embroidery shop, I had been placing orders at the workshop so as to support it, and this is how my closer acquaintance with the people there had developed. Apart from the nuns, boarders, servants and my group, there were also other civilians in the facility. That included, among others, Irena Kąkolewska, wife to a lawyer, (presently residing in Żoliborz, at Śmiała Street 43), the son of mgr. [Master] Gobiec, Reverend Stanisław Lewarski, presently provost in Złotokłosa near Piaseczno, who had arrived in the Old Town having crawled through a barricade; earlier, he had been in St. Anthony's Church on Senatorska Street and seen the execution of Reverend Trzeciak and the wounding of Reverend Żelazowski, provost at St. Theresa's Church on Tamka Street. As I was helping distribute the food rations, Mother Superior told me that there were 203 people on the premises. The facility was located by the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary. There was a secular care facility for elderly women in the same building, in a different annex.

I do not know how many of them there were. I heard that the director of the institution had earlier fled to Śródmieście [City Centre] and there was nobody left to attend to the elderly women. A few of them came to us, others, together with a group of some 1,500 civilians from the neighbouring houses, mostly from Rybaki Street and from the Vistula riverside, took refuge in the church vault. Our house was located close to the State Securities Printing House building, which was heavily fought for, so we were constantly under fire.

On 29 August, around noon, once the Securities Printing House had been seized, a German troop burst into the facility. I know little about military units, but people were saying they were an SS unit. The soldiers were very violent, they ordered us out at once (*raus*). I was one of the first to leave, along with my family and the civilians, to a garden adjacent to the church [and] through the secular refuge, which had been bombed out, onto Przyrynek Street. When I was in the garden, I could see a group of elderly women from the secular refuge. When we were being rushed towards the Citadel, groups of civilians, removed from the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the nuns and boarders from our care facility, caught up with us. A civilian (I do not remember this person's name) told me that the elderly women from the secular facility had been machine-gunned in the church. In the course of this execution, many civilians were wounded by bullets – later, I saw them in the school on Stawki Street. Sister Aurelia Pomierny, Mother Superior of St. Stanislaus care facility, and Sister Kowalczyk caught up with me. Sister Aurelia said she had left the facility with the last group of elderly women and the handicapped, and that 18 women who had been ill and unable to walk had remained in the vault chapel. Sister Zofia Kowalczyk (a retiree) had asked the soldiers to be allowed to stay with the elderly women. One soldier agreed, but another forced her out, saying: "We will take care of them." She had barely stepped out into the courtyard when the soldiers threw grenades into the chapel through the windows giving onto the courtyard. In March 1945, together with Wacław Domieniecki (a Katowice Opera House singer) I arrived at the site of St. Stanislaus care facility. I saw that the house was burnt-out and where the vault of the chapel had been, there were remains of half-burnt human bones, skulls, shins and ashes.

At the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, people were being forced out by an SS unit. In Przyrynek Street, our group was taken over by soldiers in German uniforms who spoke Russian or Ukrainian. As we marched, the "Ukrainians" despoiled us. I saw how a "Ukrainian" officer grabbed a girl, who was maybe 14, and took her from her mother's arms. She



caught up with the group some time afterwards; both she and her mother were crying, and the girl said that the soldier had raped her. I do not know the names of these women. The "Ukrainians" were very violent, they pushed people, and one of them knocked the hat off Reverend Ośko's head. We were taken to a school on Stawki Street, where the "Ukrainians" handed us over to German soldiers. I could not recognise the unit. For the night, we were crammed into a classroom and locked up. Many of the wounded from the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary were left unattended.

On 30 August, four or five lorries (I cannot remember exactly) drew up at the school. The German soldiers announced that whoever was wounded, weak or unable to walk would be transported to the Western Train Station [Dworzec Zachodni]. Those reporting to the lorries were seated comfortably and had a lot of space. Sister Moc, who had a heart condition and who I was assisting along the way, wanted to get on a lorry. When we approached the vehicle, one of the soldiers whispered to me in Polish: "Do not put Sister in the car, Ma'am." Then I figured that they were taking these people to be executed, so I kept Sister Moc by my side. The lorries drove off in the direction of the Powązki Cemetery. As far as I know, nobody from that group has been found.

The supreme convent of the Daughters of Charity is the St. Casimir care facility on Tamka Street in Warsaw. The elderly women and the handicapped girls from St. Stanislaus care facility would surely have reported there.

They grouped the rest of us in pairs and took us to Okopowa Street. We stopped by the Pfeiffer factory. As I was walking down Okopowa Street, I could hear volleys of what sounded like machine gunfire, coming from the direction of the Jewish Cemetery. I also thought I could hear cries. The hunchbacked girls from the care facility and my niece Amelia Ptakowa (presently residing at Reverend Ośko's) also heard them. The Reverend only heard the shots. We were led into the courtyard and grouped by families. An SS officer (Reverend Ośko and others present said that that was his unit) made the selection. Two groups were taken to a garden, which was divided with a chain-link fence: the group that I was part of was closer to Okopowa Street, and on the other side of the fence were the elderly women and the handicapped girls from the care facility, nuns, elderly civilians, more than 300 people altogether. I asked the officer not to separate my group from the facility nuns. He asked: "Do you want to work?" When we replied in the affirmative, he told us to join the young.



We were kept in the garden until 5 p.m. without food or water. The carrots in the garden had already been lifted, but the hungry children would still find some. The German soldiers who were watching us took these carrots away from them. It was sultry, children and women fainted. The soldiers kept all of us away from the water pump. I could see the commandant of the German group at the Pfeiffer factory come and then retire to the house at the far end of the courtyard; I think that is where the command was. Around 5 p.m., German soldiers gathered eight nuns from the garden and took them to the commandant. As they were walking away, the elderly women and the handicapped girls called to them not to go, because they would be executed without the nuns. To this, Sister Aurelia replied that she would not leave them, and that if they were to be executed, then it would be all of them.

As soon as the nuns left, our group was taken away, and I have not seen anyone from St. Stanislaus care facility since. I suspect that the Germans wanted to let the sisters go, but they did not agree to leave their charges behind.

I had previously agreed with the nuns and the girls on a place where we would meet after we left Warsaw. I gave a couple of thousand zlotys to each of the girls, on condition that they would settle up if we survived and met outside Warsaw. Sister Aurelia gave me the address of her mother in Częstochowa and I gave them the address of my friends living outside Warsaw. In spite of this, nobody from that group has since been heard from. They also have no news about them at the St. Casimir care facility at the supreme convent of the Daughters of Charity.

Our group was taken from the Pfeiffer factory by the soldiers, some of whom wore bands above the cuffs of their uniforms (I could not make out the writing on the bands). When I got to Okopowa Street, I could again hear the volleys of gunfire from machine guns coming from the direction of the Jewish Cemetery. We were grouped in fours and taken to St. Adalbert's Church, and then marched to the Western Train Station [Dworzec Zachodni]. Shortly before the departure of the train, a couple of Gestapo men arrived at the station and picked five men and two women, including me and Reverend Ośko. They said we would address the civilians through loudspeakers, telling them to leave the Old Town and saying that the Germans were not executing anybody. They took us to a car and said we were going to the City Command. We arrived at the vicarage by St. Adalbert's Church on Wolska Street. Once there, I realised that there was a Gestapo station there. We were taken to the commandant, whose name I could not find out. He was around 40, tall, well-built, with



blond hair and fishy blue eyes. He carried a horsewhip. Because the loudspeakers were out of order, we were told to make statements for the record. They asked us where we came from, where we were staying, what we thought of the Uprising. Apart from the commandant, there were two Gestapo men in the room – one was asking questions and the other was typing. During the interrogation, the commandant would often step out into the corridor or go into other rooms. Whenever he left, I heard cries and screams. In the corridor was a group of young men, half naked, and a girl wearing some rags, all of them kneeling, their faces to the wall. The men's arms were tied with barbed wire behind their backs. Their bodies bore signs of beating, they were bruised and bloodstained. When we were taken out of the room after the interrogation, we were stood against the kneeling men. The commandant watched our faces. I saw the commandant step out into the corridor and hit men with the horsewhip. Standing in the corridor, I saw Gestapo officers leading a man, severely beaten, out of the commandant's room. He was taken to a storage room in the courtyard of the vicarage. The windows of the storage room were open, and I could see the faces of young men and women behind bars. In our presence, the commandant asked a young girl, covering her body with rags, why she had joined the uprising. She said that she went to fight the Germans, who were murdering us. Then he said: "Do you know what happens to you now? If you were to be released, would you fight the Germans again?" The girl said that she would. The commandant was communicating via an interpreter, [but] I thought he could understand Polish.

I do not know what became of this group. In the evening, we were taken out to the courtyard and fed. In the meantime, a couple of thousand civilians arrived at St. Adalbert's Church from the Old Town. We started to give them water, but then the Gestapo men chased us out of the courtyard and made us join the group.

At that the report was concluded and read out.