

WANDA MOENKE

Warsaw, 1 April 1946. Judge Halina Wereńko, delegated to the Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes, interviewed the person specified below as a witness. Having advised the witness of the criminal liability for making false declarations and of the gravity of the oath, the judge swore the witness in accordance with Art. 109 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. The witness testified as follows:

Name and surname	Wanda Natalia Moenke, spinster
Names of parents	Juliusz and Emilia née Switajewska
Date of birth	26 January 1908 in Łomża
Occupation	nurse in Mother and Child House [Dom Matki i Dziecka] on Bielany, Przybyszewskiego Street 13
Education	Warsaw Nursing School and six classes of secondary school
Religion	Augsburg Evangelical Church
National and state affiliation	Polish
Place of residence	[...]

When the Warsaw Uprising broke out, I was in Karol and Maria Children's Hospital at Leszno Street 136, where I was employed as a nurse.

Insurgents and civilians started to come to our hospital from the very first day of the uprising. They were admitted to the surgical ward. Children with milder conditions were taken home by their families. The hospital authorities gathered the children in internal pavilion S.

Around 5 August 1944 there might have been twenty-five children in pavilion S (there were ten permanent patients, then we brought in ten patients from surgery who had serious

conditions, for example limbs in traction, and from the internal ward six to eight patients). It was my duty to take care of the children. The infant ward, located beside pavilion S, had five to seven babies under the care of Nurse Szumska. On 2 or 3 August 1944, Szumska left to look for her family, and from then on, the babies were under my care.

Since the number of wounded patients exceeded fifty, and new ones were streaming in all the time, on 4 August 1944 the staff gave up their beds, and we were then putting the wounded on mattresses on the floor in the corridors. In light of the influx of the wounded, I spent half the day with them, and the other half I was with the children.

On 4 August 1944, the insurgents warned us that German troops were approaching. Panic broke out among the patients. We then burnt armbands and any other traces which could reveal that insurgents were in the hospital.

On 5 August 1944 around 6 p.m. I saw that Saint Lazarus Hospital (opposite our hospital) was in flames. My colleagues told me that they heard people screaming in the burning building. I did not hear any screaming then.

In mid-August 1944 (I don't remember the exact date), I went to Saint Lazarus Hospital together with my colleagues. In a large room on the first or second floor I saw corpses lying in beds, partially burnt, in a state of decomposition. It was impossible to tell the sex of the corpses. I did not go any further. My colleagues told me that in other rooms, and also in basements, there were many more partially burnt bodies.

On 6 August 1944, the German troops entered our hospital, throwing out the medical personnel and a part of the patients from the surgery ward and pavilion B. Only the seriously ill patients remained. On the way, the German soldiers executed Doctor Kmicikiewicz, and they probably intended to shoot everyone else, but upon the order of a German who came in a car, the group was herded to the Wolski Hospital at Płocka Street 26. Upon arrival at the Wolski Hospital, ten nurses and the patients were ordered to go back to our hospital. The patients were halted on the way, near the statue on the corner of Górczewska and Młynarska Streets (where Doctor Kmicikiewicz had been shot previously). These patients, around ten of them, disappeared without any trace, they were probably executed.

At that time I was in pavilion S together with Doctor Bogdanowicz, the acting director (since Doctor Kajkowski was not in the hospital during the uprising). The following nurses were

with us: Stobierska, Niziołkówna, Hanecka, Andruszkiewicz and Matuszewska. In the evening those ten nurses that had been sent back from the Wolski Hospital returned, along with others: Wanda Dąbrowska, Gierałtowska, [...], [...], Mrs Fudeł and Doctor Gac.

I first learnt what had happened in the other pavilions later from the arriving colleagues, before that I had been in the dark, I had even been surprised that it was noon and nobody was serving lunch.

From then on, not having a kitchen or food supplies in the pavilion, we went hungry. It was difficult to exit the pavilion because of the shooting. Together with nurses [...] and [...] I went to the supplies pavilion to get some food.

A few "Kałmuks" promised that they would help us carry the basket with the food. In the end they kidnapped the two nurses, and I had to go back alone, taking only semolina for the children with me. I heard that the nurses came back having been raped.

In the evening, despite the shooting, the nurses brought a wounded man named Andrzej Tymowski (his leg had been amputated), who had been found in the surgical pavilion, to pavilion S. He told us that after the group consisting of the staff and the mobile patients had been taken out, the soldiers had again burst into the surgical pavilion, bringing a group of civilian men with them, who had taken away the wounded. Tymowski himself hid behind the door and thus remained. He did not know whether the wounded had been executed in the hospital.

To date, none of these patients has been found, they have vanished without a trace.

During the night between 5 and 6 August 1944, we saw that the supplies and surgical pavilions were on fire. From then on, we kept our children, who were very quiet and very obedient, in the corridor. Fearing for the entire building, because in the basements under it we had spirit supplies, we gathered the children and a few of our patients in the garden. [Illegible] a few babies died without food.

After the fire had subsided a little, we came back to our pavilion S. That night we would go out and return several times, trying to get through in the direction of the Wolski Hospital.

This was impossible, however, since we were on the front line. With a group of around ten children and with sanitary personnel I hid on a hillock beside a wall of the neighbouring

building. Nurse Dąbrowska with the rest of the children and patients stayed in the garden in a pit, which had been dug up to serve as a grave but had not been used. From the hillock, a number of us managed to get over the wall to the neighbouring yard. Some "Kałmuk" started shooting at us, wounding Nurse Bronicka in her arm and a child in a toe.

The "Kałmuks" ordered us to get out of the hospital grounds. At that time a little boy, Antoni Synowiec, who was suffering from acute arthritis, was separated from our group and remained in the rubble. He was taken away from there only seven days later, he is presently being treated in the clinic on Litewska Street in Warsaw.

A wounded Nurse, Stobierska, whom I was supporting, lost consciousness; I had to leave her, because a "Kałmuk" with a grenade in his hand was standing beside us and rushing us to keep going.

We went through the hospital, not knowing what was happening to Nurse Dąbrowska and the children left in the garden. A German soldier ordered us to go to the Wolski Hospital.

That was on 7 August 1944 around 6 o'clock. Three hours later Nurse Dąbrowska with Mrs Plopis, the sister of one of the patients, also arrived in the Wolski Hospital.

Dąbrowska was detained by the soldiers when she was in Karol and Maria Hospital looking for water for the thirsty children. She was suspected of taking part in the uprising, finally she was escorted to the Wolski Hospital. Thus, the patients and the children in Karol and Maria Hospital's garden were left unattended.

Right after we had arrived in the Wolski Hospital, a few of our nurses, who had been brought to the Wolski Hospital before us – among others Rządkowska and Topolska – set out to Karol and Maria Hospital to retrieve the patients and children. They came back carrying Tymowski and Mrs Grzelak, who were wounded; Mrs Grzelak's sister came with them on her own. They did not manage to bring the children then.

Further efforts to go to our hospital to get the children were unsuccessful. German soldiers had a post in our area, and they would not let anyone out.

Seven days later (on 13 August 1944) a German soldier came to the Wolski hospital, carrying a baby from Karol and Maria Hospital. Handing over the little thing, he said that our children

were still alive, but unattended. This soldier led me, Doctor Gac and our nurses to the hospital from the side of Leszno Street. Walking down Młynarska Street, I saw many partially burnt corpses near the statue.

Other German soldiers were in front of the hospital and would not let us in. Finally, after an hour of negotiations and considerations, we were permitted to enter the hospital grounds through a neighbouring plot, from the side of Żytnia Street. We got into the garden, where Dąbrowska had left the children.

Getting in through a hole in the wall, I saw the body of Nurse Stobierska.

In the garden I found corpses with gunshot wounds. I recognized: Ulanowicz, aged about 4, the corpse of the little girl Omylińska, corpses of three of our patients, namely, Mrs Plopis' brother, an elderly man and an elderly woman.

I found only one baby that was still alive, covered in dust. Being unable to find the rest of the children – there should have been around fifteen of them – I asked the German soldiers about them. They told me that they saw four of our children taking each other's hands and walking ahead. From how they described [one of them], it could have been Kazimierz Kaczonowski, whose father is still looking for him in vain. I called them – nobody answered.

The soldiers did not let us look for the children any longer. I had to go back to the Wolski Hospital. I found the head nurse there.

Going out to get food, I many times saw corpses in the streets of Warsaw.

Basia Kulczyńska, aged 9, who had survived an execution in the area of Saint Stanislaus Church, stayed in the Wolski Hospital.

The mood of the survivors was gloomy. The insurgents were forced to keep retreating. Our nurse Sikorska committed suicide.

At that the report was concluded and read out.