

STEFANIA WOŹNICKA

Warsaw, 1 April 1946. Judge Halina Wereńko 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	Stefania Jadwiga Woźnicka née Szlubowska
Names of parents	Antoni and Zuzanna née Piotrowska
Date of birth	5 October 1895 in Opoczno
Occupation	housewife
Education	seven grades of secondary school
Place of residence	[...]
Religious affiliation	Roman Catholic
Criminal record	none

Before the war, I worked as a clerk in the hospital department of the Warsaw Municipal Board. During the German occupation, I remained at that post, and from 1 October 1940 onward I was moved to the Municipal Board census bureau. Like now, I lived in Żoliborz. In the spring of 1944 I began to look after a child whose mother was in the Pawiak prison. The child was at Gruszevska's (living at Wolska Street 129). I took care of that otherwise abandoned child and gave it whatever I could every month. On 1 August at 1 p.m. I went to Wolska Street to pass on some goods and money. The child was sick and I had to bring a doctor.

At 3.30 p.m. I heard gunshots and a horrible scream, then some people rushed into the gate, they were running away. I walked out into the street and I saw more than a dozen bodies

lying on the roadway. Going from Wolska Street 129 to Grabowskiego Street, I counted some 20 corpses. German cars were going down the street. The street was empty, aside from myself and a young man who started walking with me. The Germans from the cars shot at us, so at Grabowskiego Street I walked into the gate of some factory. The gunfire was very thick, yet, wishing to get to Żoliborz to my daughter and son, I headed down Elekcyjna Street to Gostyńska Street, where I entered the house at number 17. I could not go any further, so I stayed there, trying to cook food for the insurgents and organizing cigarette production for them. Soon a German shell smashed our kitchen and I went to the basement with the others. There, under fire and in the middle of the fighting, I stayed with the others.

On 4 August the insurgents withdrew, letting the Germans into the area. They threw grenades into the yard, the ground floor and the second floor. They threw three grenades into the basement, but none of us were killed. Then they doused the house with petrol and set it on fire. In total, there were about a hundred people in that house. Some of the women with children left at this point and the Germans told them to walk forward. Part of that group of women managed to escape to Lewkowicz's gardens and they made it home an hour later. Meanwhile, after the Germans had left, the men put out the flames. Only one apartment and a part of another on the ground floor burnt down.

The insurgents came back at night, having recaptured the area. But in the morning of 5 August they showed up again, shouting for the people to run away, since they had to withdraw once more and the Germans were murdering civilians. We fled to Lewkowicz's garden, where a deep, concealed ditch had been dug. There were up to a hundred of us in that shelter, mostly women with children, no more than maybe fifteen men. We sat there under fire until 11 a.m. The Germans threw grenades at the ditch from the school at number 19 on that street.

At 11 a.m. the Germans came and told us to leave our shelter. They shot a policeman and his family who had been with us. They brought the rest of us to Gostyńska Street and led us to the bridge over Górczewska Street. On the way there, the German soldiers would rush up to people and rob them, taking their watches and rings, as well as holy medallion necklaces. Along the way the Germans made the inhabitants of the nearby houses join our group. This continued all the way up to the bridge. There was another group there as well. By the bridge we numbered, estimating by eye, some 2,500 people.

Past the bridge near Górczewska, next to a white brick fence and some sheds, an execution was taking place. The people were split into three groups. I was in the second group, then I moved back to the third. The first group was put up alongside the fence and the sheds, some in lines, some without order. Around those places machine guns had been set up, I don't remember how many.

While lining people up at the fence and the sheds, the Germans surrounded the captives and fired at them from machine guns. I looked at my neighbour's watch as it was being stolen by a German. It showed [...]. I started shouting to the German officer that these people were civilians and for him to stop the killing, to which he responded by pointing a rifle at me.

I started calling out to people so that they would not let themselves be killed passively, I wanted them to jump at the oppressors with me, to die in action. But all the Poles stood still. So I started praying loudly, reciting the Confiteor. Then a "Ukrainian" soldier approached me and said in broken Polish: "You pray to Mary, you love Mary, you'll soon be at Mary's". It was said with terrible mockery. Finally, when my group went, I walked up to the shed, I heard a volley in the middle, people around me were falling. In front of me, a man – or more accurately a young boy – named Ignaś (17 years old), from Gostyńska Street, took a bullet. At that moment, with exceptional presence of mind, I fell down, undercutting him so that he fell on me. I lost consciousness.

Some time later I came to and felt I was suffocating. A metre-high mound of dead bodies lay on me. I started to dig in the ground to catch my breath, a wood chip got under my fingernail. The pain woke me up, I realised I was next to the shed wall. I felt an excruciating pain in my legs, which had been stamped upon by the wooden soles of Wola citizens' shoes. I passed out from the pain.

Later on, when I looked at my legs, they were covered in wounds and blisters. I still have traces of those wounds.

(The witness shows her legs. She has pink scars on her calves; the largest of them on the inner side of the left leg and outer side of the right leg.)

These wounds took five months to heal.

I came to again, I dug at the ground near my nose until I felt a breeze. At the same time, I felt the unbelievable weight of bodies crushing me. Even though I was in the last group of those

I was brought with, a lot of bodies were already on top of me; also, from the moment I woke up until, I suppose, 5 p.m., I was hearing desperate cries, moans and howls, as well as volleys.

I realised the Germans were shooting more and more groups of people. The Germans ordered their victims to step onto the bodies already on the ground. It was an image of Hell. Between the volleys I heard footsteps; whenever someone moved, the Germans finished them off, as they did if someone moaned. Four people were still moving on top of me, I heard four shots, one after another. Hot blood gushed onto me after each one.

Later on, in the Pruszków camp, I saw that there were pieces of human brain on my coat. I lay still.

After sunset, I began trying to set myself free. After an hour of effort, I moved my head out from beneath the dead. I saw a wall of dead bodies around me near the shed, with more under the white fence. The entire field alongside Górczewska Street, all the way to the bridge, was covered with corpses.

(The witness made a site drawing of the execution site, which has been attached to the present report.)

I would like to point out that when I was lying beside the wall of the shed, I was digging a tunnel to get to the other side. The evening was already turning grey; there were sentries posted by the field along Górczewska Street. Some one hundred metres away from me I heard a child cry, a girl four or five years of age from Gostyńska Street 17 emerged from amongst the dead, her name was Kasia Bednarek. I saw a "Ukrainian" in German uniform approach her and ask: "Who is alive with the child?" The little one jumped out and shouted, kneeling: "Don't kill me and my sis! You're a thug, Mister, you killed Daddy and Mommy!" The "Ukrainian" asked, stroking her head: "Where is your Daddy, where is Mommy?" The girl pointed at dead bodies lying nearby. The "Ukrainian" said: "You poor orphan, come, I will give you milk, I will give you candy".

Kasia resisted for fifteen minutes or so, she did not want to go. Then she went. I also saw the "Ukrainian" carry a little baby, two or three months old. The soldier took the children. Later, when I was already in the shed, I heard the soldier loudly calming the children down in the next building by the sheds, which, as I realised, served as the barracks. The baby must have been stunned

when its mother fell down with it, since I didn't hear it cry until about 8 p.m. The Germans shouted: "[*Stille*]" and cursed at the soldier who had brought the child. The next day around noon I heard Kasia's terrifying scream and the baby's cries from the execution site, as well as shots.

Going back to my experiences, when I got out from beneath the corpses, I heard the voice of a woman who had been hit in the arm. I dressed her wound. A moment later I heard the voice of a wounded person from the other side. I made a total of seven dressings, carefully, so as not to attract the sentry's attention. At some point a man lying near the guard, seeing me take care of one of the survivors, shouted: "Madam, please, me too". The soldier moved and I hid behind the bodies. He shot the man who had asked me for help and looked for anyone the wounded might have been talking to, but he didn't see me.

While I was crawling among the bodies, I felt someone grab my handbag and try to steal it. I turned around and saw a young boy – maybe twenty-three years old – crawl up and try to rob me. I pulled the bag out of his hands and a moment later I saw that boy running from the execution site through a potato field, between the dead. I decided to move to the shed, [but] I found my tunnel filled in. It turned out that two women had already gone through it with a ten-year-old boy. They had survived as well, they were not even wounded. At first the women and the boy did not want to let me in, but later I got into the shed somehow. The woman hit in the arm, whom I had bandaged, wanted to go through as well, but she could not, since her wound hurt too much, so she went on to crawl through the potato field. What happened to her and what her name was, I don't know. In the shed, we hid under the straw. I don't know the names of the women. We couldn't speak out of fear.

On the next day (6 August), from 5 a.m. on, we heard shots again, so there was another execution on the field. When the sun started to shine stronger, two "Ukrainians" in short underpants lay down in front of the shed to sunbathe. Since the previous night was cold, I had gotten a cough, so the women wrapped fur around my head while the Ukrainians sunbathed. I was very uncomfortable and at one point could not hold back the cough any longer. One of the Ukrainians jumped up: "Someone is here", the other said: "It's the rats". This is why I couldn't talk at all to the women who were with me in the shed.

The executions on that day lasted until half past [...]. I know the time because one of the women in the shed had a watch hidden on her arm, almost in her armpit. Around 2 p.m.

the Germans let dogs out into the field where the dead were; it was between the volleys. Then we heard screams in the potato fields and ten single shots. So died those who did not manage to get away after having survived the execution. The Germans also let the dogs into the shed, but somehow they didn't bark, then they ran out into the field and we soon heard single screams and shots.

We saw everything through a hole in the shed wall. We also saw moments of the execution. In this way I saw a "Ukrainian" take a baby, lying on a pillow, by the leg and smash it against the corner of the white brick wall. It was near Górczewska Street. Also on the pavement of Górczewska Street I saw a German squash the head of a baby lying down there. Amongst the executors, besides "Ukrainians", I also saw Mongols. The murders of children I described above (with the heel and by the wall) were done by the Mongols.

At half past 3 p.m., when the executions stopped, I saw lorries arrive. The same soldiers who walked around Górczewska Street and shot people were throwing dead bodies onto them. Houses were on fire on the other side of the train tracks. I saw the cars ride towards the burning houses, through the fields and through the street, loaded with corpses; I also saw them stop by the burning houses and come back empty to the execution site. Opposite the shed I saw a burning house – the Germans were throwing corpses in there, too, through a window.

There were some thirty lorries for transporting bodies. They would drive away and quickly, after fifteen minutes or so, they would come back empty. It seems only the Germans were loading up the dead. After an hour, the bodies from the executions were cleared out. The women in the shed with me were afraid that the Germans would burn the shed, but that didn't happen.

After taking the bodies away, three senior army men and a German soldier came to the execution site. Two more women, having broken away a plank from the wall, hid in our shed. The soldiers lifted that plank and found the women, telling them to immediately come back out into the field through the hole. The women came out, saying they were volksdeutsch. At that moment, one of the Germans noticed our tunnel, that is, the hole through which my companions and I had gotten into the shed. The tunnel was only covered up from the inside, in the shed. The German shouted "Tunnell!" in Polish and quickly rushed along the wall to go from the outside into the shed. When the German shouted "Tunnell!", the two women, the child, and I jumped out into the yard and, crawling between the bushes so that nobody would

see us from the barracks, stopped by the path to the workshops (which were for car repair) and to Górczewska Street. It went along the field where the execution had taken place.

We barely made it to the gate and managed to get up when a German with a friend running to the shed noticed us. Soon, the two volksdeutsch women arrived with the soldiers. The first shouted at the running German: "Please point me to Żoliborz, this caught me at work". I showed him a document issued by the director of the Municipal Board Census Department, which said that I was authorised to inspect residence registration offices. I also told him that I [had been] verifying registered residences in the Wolska Street office and that I had been lying under the dead bodies at Wolska Street 129.

I said this firstly because I had heard that at Wolska Street 129 the residents had already been shot on 1 August in the house yard, secondly because the Residence Registration Office is near number 129. My two companions said nothing. The volksdeutsch women showed their documents and were released, then they went away. The Germans led us to the workshops (marked on the sketch I have made). There were over a thousand people there from the Leszno Street courthouse, from Górczewska Street, Wolska Street, Chłodna Street, and Ogrodowa Street. The two workshop halls were full. The halls there are huge. I washed the blood off my face and legs, I combed my hair. I heard a shout. It turned out the "Ukrainians" had started to lead people out of the hall and told them to line up in groups according to nationality: reichsdeutsch, volksdeutsch, Ukrainians, Poles, and others. A Wehrmacht officer arrived. I told him my story briefly, through an interpreter. Then he left, took the Ukrainians with him and told the Poles to go back into the hall. A moment later the officer came back and told twenty men to leave. He assured them there would be no killing. A few "Ukrainians" came in wearing Red Cross armbands. I asked them to help the wounded in the hall, but they bandaged no-one and didn't want to help anyone at all.

Soon after, some platform carts arrived. The wounded were placed on them – some six or seven people – and taken away. We followed the carts, which the men pulled in shifts. We were brought to Bema Fort.

We walked down Górczewska Street. Passing by a house halfway along the street, I saw a dead body, completely charred, fall out of a burning house, which was breaking up into flaming planks. These scorched many of people in our group. I saw corpses on the streets

everywhere. I walked barefoot, but did not take shoes from a dead body, although I saw people take suitcases lying by the dead.

At Bema Fort, the commander announced to us in Polish that he could not take us in, since he already had too many people. He also said that if he could, he would let everyone go home. Hearing that, people started to run off to the sides, towards Jelonki village. The soldiers started to fire warning shots into the air after them. However, seeing as we were not accepted into the fort, the escorting soldiers drove us to Saint Stanisław church. We were refused entry there as well. We headed to Wola Fort, where we also heard there was no room for us.

We were thus led on foot to the Pruszków camp. The same "Ukrainian" who had told me "You pray to Mary, you go to Mary" before the Górczewska Street execution walked beside me. I don't know if he had recognised me, but he kept an eye on me – perhaps because I was wearing bloodied clothes. At some point, past Włochy, he pointed me to the bushes: "Run," he said, "I won't shoot". I saw a vicious smile in his eyes and said I would "share the fate of my brothers". But a woman walking beside me with a child made for the bushes and the Ukrainian raised a rifle and shot at her. He wounded her. The march had stopped, the men rushed to her, they picked her up alongside her child. A doctor bandaged her and she was placed on the cart. The march resumed. I think that "Ukrainian" wanted to shoot me.

The marching column was now very large, as the Germans who led us added anyone they encountered along the way to the column – both in Warsaw and after we left it. Therefore, many people from towns and villages near Warsaw who came out to give us bread, milk or fruit were taken to the Pruszków camp.

We marched out of Warsaw all through the night. At 6 a.m. on 7 August we entered the Pruszków camp. There, at half past 1 p.m., trains were brought up and people were taken to the Reich. I went to the camp commander and asked him to let me go to my friends in Pruszków to take a bath, since I was covered in blood. He asked me for my documents. When he saw papers from the Municipal Board, he threatened me with a revolver. I walked out, but I was not taken into the transport, a German shoved me away. I went to a doctor, as my legs were in very bad shape.

I want to note that on the way from Warsaw to Pruszków the "Ukrainians" told me that we were being taken to a crematorium to be killed, like the Jews.

I went into a little house where the railwaymen worked. They gave me a basin of water and implored me to stay, saying they would smuggle me out of the camp pretending I was the wife of one of them. But the gendarmes noticed something and surrounded the house.

I walked out alone and a gendarme pushed me into a room. Only later did a doctor refer me to a hospital, and the nurses walked me out of the camp gate.

At that the report was concluded and read out.

A reference sketch of the site where Poles were executed on 5 August 1944 was made by witness Stefania Józefa Woźnicka as a supplement to the testimony given on 1 April 1946 and is attached to the present report.