



## LEOKADIA CHOŁODOWSKA

**Warsaw, 8 March. The testimony of Leokadia Chołodowska, born on 23 April 1915, a shop owner, residing at Czynszowa Street 4a flat 4.**

Regarding the case concerning the shooting by SS units on 9 August 1944 in the building of the Grand Theatre of approximately 500 residents from Trębacka, Focha, Senatorska and other streets adjacent to Teatralny Square.

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Since 1936 I have been living in Warsaw at Trębacka Street 4, flat 32, together with my family. On 9 August 1944 at 10.00 a dozen or so SS men armed with machine guns ran shouting into the courtyard of our tenement and ordered all of the residents to immediately leave their flats and cellars and proceed to the courtyard. We were also instructed to bring down the sick. All of us came down. Our street had been in German hands since the beginning of the uprising, and the insurrectionists had not conducted any operations there; the residents had remained quietly in their houses and cellars. We all came down – men, women and children. An old paralysed woman by the surname of Ropelewska, aged 70, remained in one of the apartments. Once the residents had left, a few SS men entered her apartment and set her mattress alight. Seeing this, her son carried her down to the courtyard.

When we were all gathered outside, the SS men darted from apartment to apartment, setting them on fire. Next they led us to another courtyard, at Focha Street 2. Since Ropelewska could not walk, one of the armed SS men shot her dead with his pistol right before our eyes. Her body, along with those of other people who had been found and shot following our exit, was buried in the courtyard of the house at Trębacka Street 4.

At Focha Street 2, the men were separated from the women. We went from house to house, one after another (Focha Street 2, 4, 5, 7). We were led through the cellars and courtyards to the opera, the women and children to the cellars, and the men to the first floor. The group of men included my father, Bolesław Dydyński, the proprietor of a pork-butcher's shop (aged 69), and my husband, Stefan Chołodowski (aged 26), a student.

What happened to the men was told to me by Jerzy Szajkowski (residing at Trębacka Street 2), a student, aged 18 – 19, who fled and avoided being shot; he currently lives in the Mokotów district. I will provide his address in a few days. The men were ordered to take the stairs to the first floor, where their war-time identification cards were taken and they were divided into: 1) those working in German institutions, 2) foreign citizens, 3) the remainder. Next they were led through opera box doors and killed with a shot to the back of the head. Their bodies fell into the house. My father and husband were killed in this way. Szajkowski's father suffered a nervous shock and his son ran after him. In the commotion, while the thugs were shooting at his father, he managed to jump down into the house, hide, and exit the building through the cellars. He hid in the ruins of the house at Trębacka Street 4, where he stayed for two months. Jerzy Szajkowski witnessed the shooting of our men. Approximately 500 people were shot during that execution.

The women, numbering a few hundred, were divided into groups: 1) those over the age of 60, 2) women with children, 3) the remainder. I was in the last group and, together with 30 other persons, we were led to a church in the Wola district, from where we were transported to Pruszków.

Currently I have returned to Warsaw, and I met Szajkowski. I went with him to the ruins of the opera. The burnt corpses of the men who were shot on 9 August 1944 are still lying there. I saw bones, hair, teeth, remnants of clothes, shoes, and documents. I think that women were also shot there – for there are also remnants of women's clothes – and that quite a few executions took place at that location.

I have testified truthfully, and am ready to confirm the veracity of my statements by swearing an oath. I have read the report before signing it.

The following residents were shot at that time:

1. Smokalski Józef – the proprietor of the 'Art Palace', Trębacka Street 2,
2. Chotkowski – the proprietor of a shop, aged 60, Trębacka Street 2,
3. Szajkowski – a locksmith who worked in a factory in the Praga district, aged approx. 40,
4. Lubowicki Mieczysław – an office worker, aged 33,



5. Szmit Andrzej – a caretaker, Trębacka Street 4, aged 22,

6. Wierzbicki – the owner of a coal yard, Trębacka Street 2, aged approx. 40

And numerous others, whose surnames I do not remember.