

WIESŁAWA CHEŁMIŃSKA

Warsaw, 7 May 1946. Judge Halina Wereńko, delegated to the Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Warsaw, interviewed the person specified below as a witness. Having advised the witness of the criminal liability for making false declarations and of the significance 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	Wiesława Bronisława Chełmińska
Marital status	spinster
Names of parents	Antoni and Modesta née Bartold
Date of birth	7 November 1930
Occupation	no occupation
Education	five classes of primary school
Place of residence	Warsaw [...]
Religion	Roman Catholic
Criminal record	none

My sister, Hanna Chełmińska, was wounded on the first day of the uprising and was being treated in Saint Lazarus Hospital, in the pavilion located at Leszno Street. On 5 August 1944 at noon, together with my mother, Modesta Chełmińska, I went to visit my sister. We found her in the basement. I would like to note that the hospital was under German fire and almost all the wounded and sick were in the basement. The patients with the most severe injuries stayed on the top floors, because there was no-one to carry them down.

I do not know how many persons were in the Saint Lazarus hospital at that time.

Apart from the sick, the wounded, and the hospital staff, there were many civilians in the hospital, since they came to visit their sick [relatives] or sought refuge from the war operations.

Being a stranger at the hospital, I do not know the names of the staff or the patients.

When I arrived at the hospital I knew that insurgents were also there. They came to have their wounds dressed, to rest and eat, and apart from that they attended to their wounded.

I did not see any military operation against the Germans being carried out from the hospital grounds. I was with my sister, who was lying in the hospital kitchen, in the basement of the house adjacent to Leszno Street. There were about forty wounded patients there. In the neighbouring basement, which was not connected to the kitchen in any way, there were many more wounded and sick. I did not know whether or when the insurgents left the hospital. Around 7 p.m. people told me that German soldiers were already in the hospital. Shortly after that a couple of SS-men burst into the kitchen, armed with grenades hanging in garlands around their necks. They ordered everyone who was able to walk to get out. We obeyed the order. The seriously wounded, including my sister, altogether no more than ten persons, remained.

I am unable to say how many people walked outside.

In the yard, the SS-men ordered us to stand against a wall of the building we had come out from. There was already a large group brought out of the neighbouring basement standing there; roughly speaking, it could have numbered even 500 people. The medical and sanitary staff had been taken away. Those who remained were civilians and the wounded. I heard shots fired in the basement and I saw that the SS-men were shooting through the windows at the wounded lying in the basement. After a while the shooting stopped and the SS-men started to call a couple of people from our group at a time to the basement, and right after they entered I heard shots. When there were about 30 people left in the group, my mother and I were called to the basement. The entrance to the basement was from the opposite side, from Karolkowa Street. When you entered the basement there was a corridor, and on either side of it were five wards separated by walls. Right behind the entrance door I saw blood on the floor, and in the basement ward opposite the entrance there was a pile of corpses one meter high. The electric lights were on. A group of SS-men were standing in the corridor, and by the entrance to each of the wards there was an SS-man with a weapon (rozpylacz) at the ready. I was ordered to enter a ward where there was already a pile of

corpses one meter high and puddles of blood. My mother and I were ordered to climb the pile of corpses. My mother did so first and I saw an SS-man shoot her in the back of her head, then I saw her collapse. I climbed after her and collapsed without even waiting for the soldier to shoot me. He shot anyway, hitting my right arm. After me, about twenty more people were forced to climb the pile, and then they were shot. Several corpses collapsed on me, only my head stuck out. There was a clock on the wall, it was striking the hour, and this is how I know that it was one o'clock at night when the SS-men left. I do not know when they started the fire. Around two o'clock I felt that my shoes, which had rubber soles, had started to smoulder. I crawled from under the corpses and walked to the next ward in the basement, where about fifteen corpses were lying inside, by the entrance. I hid under a table for fear that German soldiers would come. It was very hot, the smell of burning was suffocating, and the mattresses covering the windows were starting to catch fire. After a while I noticed that a woman was wriggling among the corpses. A German soldier standing in the yard near the basement window shot her dead. I was joined by Maria Rykiel, who had pneumonia (before the uprising she lived at Konarskiego Street 8, I do not know her present address). Apart from her I did not see any of the executed persons showing any sign of life. In the morning, Rykiel and I left the basement, because the Germans were no longer in the yard. Seeing that the fire had not engulfed the kitchen, I went in there and saw the body of my sister and bodies of other seriously wounded patients. The corpses had gunshot wounds. We stayed in that part of the basement until the evening. We spent the night between 6 and 7 August 1944 in the hospital gate opening onto Leszno Street. During the day there were no Germans in the hospital. At night only once a single German soldier entered the hospital. In the morning of 7 August 1944 we again went down to the kitchen, which caught fire around noon, so we then moved to a ground floor room in the hospital. But the linoleum floors in there were also starting to catch fire and it was time to go. We then went down into the already burnt-out basement, where the execution had taken place. I walked through all ten basement wards and found that human remains were smouldering in each and every one of them. It was impossible to establish the number of bodies. We did not come out until 8 August 1944 when, on hearing words uttered in Polish in the hospital yard, we joined.

At that the report was concluded and read.