



## CZESŁAW JAKUBIEC

On 14 January 1948, Dr Father Czesław Jakubiec, born on 14 July 1902 in Warsaw, son of Wacław and Tekla, née Królikowska, assistant professor of Catholic Theology at the University of Warsaw, residing in Warsaw at Krakowskie Przedmieście Street 52/54, made the following statement before the District Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Warsaw:

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At the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising, I was in the seminary at Krakowskie Przedmieście Street 52/54. Until 7 August 1944, our area had been peaceful, we only heard the sound of fighting from afar. On several occasions, when I went to Dobra Street to bring spiritual comfort to some of its residents, I had to sneak across Furmańska Street, as some German (a civilian) was shooting at everyone who appeared in the street from the balcony of a house on Sowiec Street. In all probability, this German wasn't wearing military clothing.

The building of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers (at the time the so-called *Deutsches Haus*) was manned by the Germans. In the garden at the rear of that building, for many days in a row, some young German woman was sitting in a tree for many hours, watching the annex of the seminary opposite and shooting whenever she noticed someone in one of the rooms. The following conversation between that German woman and one of the soldiers was repeated to me: "Now get down from there, Olga!" "In a minute, I'll just shoot one more Pole!"

One day very early in the morning, a group of Germans (from the Wehrmacht?) stormed into the seminary and, taking four priests and three seminary students for disguised insurgents, threatened to shoot us and began searching for weapons. This incident ended happily, as no weapons were discovered. However, the Germans insisted that someone had been shooting at them from our building. Generally, throughout our entire stay in the seminary the Germans had an *idée fixe* about that: one day already in the second half of August, some German had burst into the seminary, thinking that we had been shooting. He threatened to kill us.

Early in the morning of 7 August, I found out that the Germans were seizing Powiśle from the direction of Kierbedzia Bridge, and that they were displacing the local populace, executing many men in the process. Shortly afterwards, large groups of people from Furmańska, Bednarska, Karowa, Sowia and Mariensztat streets began to arrive at the seminary, seeking shelter. From that day on, we experienced a massive influx of residents from Powiśle, and as a result over 10,000 people (from infants to the elderly) passed through the seminary. Many of these people had been evicted in a most brutal manner. I saw one old man who hadn't even been allowed to put his shoes on. The houses which were emptied in this manner were usually set on fire by the Germans.

Among the evacuated people I encountered a professor of the University of Warsaw, Cybichowski, who told me that he had miraculously escaped death, as the Germans had executed the majority of professors from the professors' dormitory at Nowy Zjazd Street 3/5.

Shortly after the arrival of the first groups of evacuees at the seminary, the Germans decided, as they put it, "to take these people to a safer location". Only one drunk German admitted that these people were being sent to a camp, while younger men were being "liquidated".

I learned much later that the transports made their way to the Pruszków transit camp usually on foot, rarely by car. Of course these people were reluctant to leave the seminary and face an uncertain fate, but the Germans checked every nook and cranny for people hiding. In the second half of August (I don't remember the exact date), during one such transport, the SS men gathered up the majority of these people and robbed them of valuables, divesting them – on pain of execution – of watches, wedding bands, rings and money.

The first transport to leave on foot consisted of boys from an orphanage in Struga near Warsaw. These boys had been brought to the seminary by Michaelite Fathers, who were their guardians. The Germans promised the Fathers that they would be allowed to take the children out of Warsaw. This transport was taken to the Saski Garden, and the Germans began to separate the older boys from the rest. I don't know the circumstances of this incident, but a salvo was then fired and two of the Fathers were wounded; perhaps some of the boys also sustained wounds then. Father Zawada, currently residing in Kraków (at the printing house of the Michaelite Fathers), who was present then, could provide more details regarding this event. There were over a hundred boys.



Every few days the Germans were taking away larger groups of people, who were then replaced by new groups of people who had been forced from their houses as the Germans seized new areas. Among others, the Princess Anna of Mazovia maternity hospital from Karowa Street was evacuated to the seminary. The babies were placed in various rooms of the seminary; I didn't hear of any incidents occurring during this evacuation.

Other than the "transports", people staying in the seminary suffered many tribulations. Around the same time, various groups of Germans used to storm into our premises (I don't remember the units, but they were not only from the Wehrmacht, but also from the SS) for numerous reasons. Usually early in the morning, they would come searching for "bandits" (i.e. insurgents) and weapons. During these searches the Germans didn't spare any corner of the church.

I remember that once, while I was finishing the Mass, the local organist approached me and, pale from fright, told me that there were Germans in the church searching for men. Indeed, I saw a dozen or so German soldiers with helmets on their heads and guns at the ready. They dispersed throughout the church, closely watching the people who were praying there. I don't remember whether anyone was taken then.

Another source of torment was the almost daily choosing of men "for labor". It usually took place before noon. Not only were the younger ones selected then, but also the elderly. As I heard, they were used for dismantling barricades (under fire) and fixing telephone lines. Many of them didn't return; maybe the Germans killed them themselves, or they perished while working under fire.

There was one other problem. The seminary abutted on the wine warehouses of the Rago company, which – if I am not mistaken – during the occupation was taken over by some German company. It turned out that not only was wine stored in these warehouses, but also vodka. The Germans got to these stocks and for many days following got drunk on a daily basis. Usually in the evening, or even in the afternoon, drunken soldiers would storm into the seminary premises and abduct girls and younger women. As far as I know, they took them to the neighboring houses or even to the Brühl Palace, where apart from ordinary soldiers there were also officers. I didn't hear about any rape being committed on the seminary premises. It is easy to understand that whenever drunk Germans appeared, a panic broke out, especially among the women. I myself almost got shot by a drunk soldier, only because

I smiled ironically on seeing another drunk soldier fall from a bench to the ground. Saying, "It was you who gave him vodka!" that German reached for his revolver. I managed to run away and hide only because he was drunk and staggering. Yet another drunk German walked from room to room where the elderly and the wounded were lying, checking their identity papers. Having approached some elderly lady who was lying on the bed, he took out his revolver in order to shoot her. Fortunately, Father Dembiński was there in the room, and he managed to persuade that German against doing it.

One day the German soldiers organized a wild game: seeing that the corridors were swarming with people (a few thousand people couldn't be crammed into fifty rooms, and several larger rooms had been turned into hospitals), they began to shoot at them from the courtyard. Several people got wounded in the process, including a mother of two small children who, after being transferred to St. Roch's hospital, died from her injuries.

On 14 August, the Germans set fire to the house abutting on the seminary, the so-called deanery. When they realized that the *Deutsches Haus* (Presidium of the Council of Ministers) might also catch fire, they ordered us to put it out. Although our efforts were hampered by the lack of water (the filter station no longer operated at the time), a few hours later we managed to quench the flames. Everyone took part in that effort, including the women.

Given the helpless condition of the people gathered in the seminary – subjected to attacks of German soldiers who used to burst into the seminary from all sides (including the garden at the rear, which the soldiers would enter through the windows), and who would plunder and terrorize the people – it was decided that a complaint should be made to the Germans stationed in the Presidium of the Council of Ministers. As far as I know, Colonel (?) Schmidt, who worked there, responded to the complaint unfavorably, even rudely. Another German officer, however, by the name of Stachel, sent two soldiers to the seminary, and from that time on there were sentries at the entrance to the seminary. I don't know who parleyed with Stachel, but probably it was Mrs. Krystyna Wilkowska, who was staying at the premises at the time, and, more importantly, Prof. Cybichowski (presently deceased).

The German sentries' behavior varied. Two (or maybe more) times they actually intervened when some German soldiers stormed in through the windows from the side of the garden. However, the sentries also took part in drinking sessions. One of them, a short, brown-haired man, gained a special notoriety for his behavior: he was extremely ruthless (especially when

drunk). Once he wanted to shoot me, allegedly for failing to keep the seminary in order; I fled the room at the last moment. The same sentry wanted to shoot one of the employees, Józef Woźniak. I don't remember the reason, but it was about some trifle.

The Germans were particularly suspicious of us, the clergy. They were constantly checking our identity papers and threatening us with deportation. Once, one of the Germans assailed us with the following words: "You, priests, have raised the youths to become bandits – it's unbelievable that young people would dare to shoot at German soldiers like some bandits!"

When the Old Town fell, we saw residents of that district being marched by the Germans. We would bring them water, as they were very emaciated. We even managed to pull many people into the seminary. The Germans who escorted these people were driving us off with their rifle butts. Nevertheless, we managed to learn that a lot of wounded, sick, elderly and disabled people were left in the Old Town, lying unattended in the streets, and that they were even being finished off by the Germans. It was decided, therefore, that the hapless victims should be taken care of. And so a delegation went to the above-mentioned Stachel (I don't know who went: more information in this regard could probably be provided by Mrs. Krystyna Wilkowska, currently residing in Warsaw at Białostocka Street 20, flat 33), and he gave them permission to go to the Old Town. If I remember correctly (I'm not certain) this permission came with the proviso that "bandits" couldn't be taken from that district, only civilians. For a longer period of time (some two weeks?) we went to the Old Town every single day with stretchers and the emblem of the Red Cross, along the streets of Podwale, Kilińskiego and Długa. At Długa Street, in front of the building of the Ministry of Justice, there was an assembly point where we would split up and go into the adjacent streets (Freta, Mostowa, Stara). Although, as I have already mentioned, we carried the emblem of the Red Cross, we were harassed by the Germans. For instance, when we carried the wounded past the Orthodox Church on Podwale Street, some German ran out from that church and tried to pull one of the girls from among us into the gateway, despite that fact that she wore an armband with a red cross; the girl, however, managed to escape his clutches. At Castle Square, where we stopped to rest by the already-fallen Sigismund's Column, we were approached by a group of Germans, who checked all the stretchers, gun in hand, in search of "bandits" in order to shoot them. Altogether, a lot of people were transported to the seminary (I cannot say how many), including a number of people of Jewish nationality (especially from Stara Street); the poor wretches were placed in a makeshift hospital. Many

of these people died in the seminary, and the rest were later generously accepted into the hospital at Płocka Street (the Wolski Hospital), and then evacuated to Podkowa Leśna with the whole hospital.

The above-mentioned building on Długa Street, where a hospital had been set up during the Uprising, presented a ghastly sight. I saw a lot of half-charred bodies lying on top of one another in the gate. These were the Poles who had been lying wounded in that hospital, and whom the Germans – as I was told – had burned alive. The reason why the majority of the bodies lay in the gateway was given as follows: when the Germans set fire to the hospital, the hapless victims tried to crawl out to the street, and therefore went in the direction of the gate, which, however, had been barricaded on purpose by the Germans. Similarly, half-charred corpses were also found in the basements, as well as – if I remember correctly – wounded people who were still alive. I didn't go down into the basements.

When we came to Długa Street the second time, I saw Father Pągowski and a few other people sitting in front of the hospital gate. They had survived (Father Pągowski was wounded in the leg) only because the stairs leading to the part of the building in which they were located collapsed too soon for the Germans to reach them and kill them, and when the stairs burned down the fire died out too. Already on the first day when help had arrived, Father Pągowski heard our people shouting that the Red Cross had arrived, and that those who survived could come out of the ruins of the hospital, but, fearing deceit on the part of the Germans, he didn't respond, and came out only on the following day, when he heard us calling out again.

When I was in the Old Town for the fourth time, I saw at Stara Street, at the rear of the house of the Charitable Society, some wounded people (mainly women), including Jews, lying on mattresses, wooden boards, or directly on the ground; they had vermin in their undressed wounds and were shivering with cold, lying day in, day out in the open air. We had to take the poor wretches away in turns, as we had an insufficient number of stretchers at our disposal. There were some women who took care of the wounded (I don't know their surnames). The eleven of us took the stretchers three times, and some people walked, but a lot were left behind.

I don't know how many. I also don't know how these wounded people found themselves there.

While transporting the wounded I was crossing the courtyard by St. Hyacinth's Church. I noticed a few men who had been killed, by the figure of the Mother of God; I don't remember whether they had been set on fire. I didn't enter any buildings of the above-mentioned church; at that time the flames had subsided. Eventually the Germans forbade us to carry out further transports from the Old Town. This was approximately in the middle of September (I don't remember the exact date).

Towards the end of our stay in the seminary, I buried three decently dressed young women who had been strangled by the Germans in the basement of the house abutting the seminary buildings. They had fallen victim to some rowdy Germans who had been quartered there for a period of several days.

On 26 September, the Gestapo came to the seminary (they had green uniforms with black epaulettes and skulls with crossbones on their hats). They were surprised that there were still civilians in the seminary, which, in their opinion, was situated directly on the front line. As a result, they ordered that the building be emptied within a few hours. When they returned, they found almost the same number of people in the seminary, as the people were reluctant to go and meet an uncertain fate. Then they told me to give a speech to the people and tell them to leave the seminary, as otherwise they would execute us all upon coming back. I did as ordered, but it was no use. On the following day, fearing bloodshed, I left with a small group of volunteers to set an example. We reached the Wolski Hospital. On the next day, as I was anxious about the seminary, I snuck back to Krakowskie Przedmieście Street. On the way I encountered my friends, who were driving carts in the direction of Wola. When I reached the seminary, it was already empty. I withdrew in haste, as remaining in the building could end in death.

After I had left Warsaw, I learned from the people who were taken from our seminary to the *Deutsches Haus* (the Presidium of the Council of Ministers) that shortly after they had emptied the seminary, the Germans plundered it. Among other things, they made their way to the basement, from which they stole church valuables (monstrances, chalices). In order to erase all traces of the crime, they started a fire. I learned this from Józef Woźniak, a seminary employee. However, another group of Germans, fearing that "their" *Deutsches Haus* would catch fire, put out the flames.

I left Warsaw with the wounded from the Wolski Hospital on 28 or 29 September 1944, and we went to Podkowa Leśna, to which the hospital was evacuated.



Any incoherence or fragmentariness in my account should be attributed to the fact that literally each day which I spent in the seminary during the Uprising abounded with dramatic events, and as a result today (three years later) they have all blended in my memory into one nightmarish picture. I find it difficult even to recall the names and faces. I didn't keep a journal, fearing that the Germans might seize it.

I didn't come into any personal contact with Schmidt, Stachel, or any other German commander during my stay in the seminary. I only heard that Schmidt was unfavorably disposed towards us.