

WACŁAWA SZLACHETA

Warsaw, 28 May 1948. Member of the District Court of the Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes, Judge Halina Wereńko, interviewed the following person as an unsworn witness. Having been advised of the criminal liability for making false declarations and of the wording of Art. 107 and 115 of the Civil Procedure Code, the witness testified as follows:

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| Name and surname | Wacława Szlacheta née Rutkowska |
| Date of birth | 23 September 1900 in Warsaw |
| Names of parents | Jakub and Teresa née Łazowska |
| Religious affiliation | Roman Catholic |
| Nationality and state affiliation | Polish |
| Education | elementary school |
| Place of residence | [...] |

From 1935 I lived in Warsaw, at Wolska Street 129. I was there when the Warsaw Uprising broke out. The vicinity of our house was peaceful during the first days of the uprising. I heard distant shooting, [but] there were no insurgents in the neighbourhood.

During the night between 4 and 5 August 1944, a German troop burst into our house. I am unable to distinguish the division myself, but men from our house said that they were gendarmes. They scattered among the flats, where they carried out searches. Three of them burst into our flat, opening closets and going through our stuff. They did not take anything.

In the morning I learned from the neighbours that during the searches in their flats the gendarmes had been taking jewellery and watches; for example they had taken a watch from the wrist of my neighbour, Natalia Aksamit. She died during the mass execution of the residents of our house a few hours after our conversation.

On 5 August 1944 at 10 a.m. a German troop burst into our house. These soldiers were wearing similar uniforms to the uniforms of the soldiers who had carried out the search in our house at night. It was being said around the house that these were gendarmes. There were a few dozen of them, they were armed with hand machine guns and grenades. Our house was big, it had over one hundred and fifty flats. Before the uprising, the house's supervisor, Józef Hankiewicz, had told me that it had around six hundred tenants.

I don't know exactly how many people were in our house on 5 August 1944. Roughly estimating, around five hundred people came out of the house. There were men, women, and children.

A few sick people remained in the house: the pharmacist Danowski, a woman whose name I don't know, and a group of people that had been hiding in the garden at the back of the house. I later heard that the group from the garden were executed in Ordona Street.

I don't know what happened to those who had been seriously ill. I only know that there have been no signs of life from either the pharmacist or that woman to date.

I left the flat with my husband Michał (born in 1895), sons Józef (born in 1921), Marian (born in 1923) and two daughters – Lucyna (born in 1926) and Alina (born in 1928). We went out to the yard, from where, together with other residents of the house, we were ordered by the gendarmes to go to Wolska Street, to cross it, and to stop by Sowińskiego Park. The men were separated from the women, and boys around 14 were separated from their mothers. We were lined up by the fence of Sowińskiego Park, starting from the park gate in the direction of Elekcyjna Street, up to the spot where the stone cross stands. Women with small children stood from the gate up to the seventh fence-post, counting from the gate in the direction of Elekcyjna Street; further on boys, and then men.

Standing against the fence I saw that on the corner of Wolska and Ordona Street, right by the corner of our house, there was a machine gun on a stand. It [stood] on the pavement on Wolska Street, right beside our house. Around ten meters from Ordona Street, in the direction of Prądyńskiego Street, under a tree (which still grows there now), stood a second machine gun. I also saw a third machine gun, but I don't remember where. I only know that it stood further away on Wolska Street, by our house, closer to Prądyńskiego Street. German soldiers fired a volley at us from these machine guns.

I didn't recognise the division of the soldiers shooting at us, I am unable to specify what uniforms they were wearing. I heard calls in German from that direction. I collapsed to the ground by the second fence-post of the park, counting from the gate. I was not hurt. Corpses were falling on my legs. My youngest daughter Alina, lying next to me, was still alive then.

Lying there, I saw and heard that the German soldiers were walking among the people on the ground, kicking them to check who was still alive. Those who were, got killed off with single pistol shots. I was lying on my belly, but my head was resting against a food basket, so I could observe a little of what was happening around me. Thus I saw a German soldier (I didn't recognize the division) kick a woman lying next to me, who was still alive, and then shoot her. Then I saw a soldier approach a pram in which my neighbour Jakubczyk's twins, who were a few months old, were lying, and shoot them.

The entire day I heard the moans of the dying. I later found out that on that day, right after us, near the statue the Germans had executed the residents of the magistrate house at Elekcyjna Street 1/3 (corner of Wolska Street).

I didn't hear the sounds of that execution, I didn't see the groups brought to be executed there.

Near me, in the vicinity of the Sowińskiego Park gate, no one else was executed.

After lunchtime – I'm unable to specify the exact time – a German killed my daughter Alina. I kept lying until the evening. Around 8 p.m., maybe a little earlier, anyway the sun was setting, a German soldier said that whoever was still alive could get up and would not be executed.

I later figured out, and others told me, that it had been a gendarme that ordered us to get up. He told us that a part of us had died because there was a revolution in Warsaw. From the group of residents of our house five women, including myself, and five children got up. These were: Leokadia Therek, Alina Jakubczyk (I don't know their addresses), Danuta Karchel (presently residing in Warsaw), and a fourth whose name I don't know. The children: Bogda Chwedorzewska (presently residing in Łódź), Eugeniusz Stanik (missing), Graszewski, presently employed at the gas works in Wola, the son of our house's janitor Maliszewski, Pętlak (I don't know their addresses). I took care of Bogda Chwedorzewska, who had been shot three times.

I didn't see any men at that time. I later found out that two men survived by escaping through the fence.

I know the name of one of them. He is Henryk Wojciechowski, presently employed at the gas works in Wola.

We were taken to the Orthodox church and then to St Lawrence Church in Wola. In the church there were many civilians from Płocka, Elekcyjna, and other streets. While I was already there, residents of houses in Prądyńskiego Street arrived. The church was overcrowded. On the following day, 6 August 1944, on Sunday morning Bishop Niemira celebrated Holy Mass, giving communion. While that was happening, German soldiers burst in (I didn't recognise the division), put out the candles, and called to the priests to "get to work". The bishop stopped giving communion, left the church and had to carry water.

On that day, in the evening, we were all herded on foot to the transit camp in Pruszków. When leaving the execution site, I did not find the corpses of my husband and sons. But since that time there has been no news of them. I saw the bodies of both of my daughters myself, beside them I saw the bodies of my neighbours: Stanik, Tomaszewska, Szczerbator, Leszczyńska.

I request reimbursement for my travel expenses from Warsaw to Sochaczew and back.

At that the report was concluded and read out.