



WANDA ODOLSKA

Warsaw, 20 May 1946

To the attention of
the citizen Prosecutor investigating the crime committed by the Germans on men at aleja
Szucha in the first days of August 1944.

Testimony
of Wanda Odolska, resident at Grochowska Street 277, flat 23, employed at "Polskie Radio,"
Koszykowa Street 8

In the first days of August 1944 the Germans evicted the residents from houses which they
subsequently burned down. After the men were separated, the women were driven on foot
into aleja Szucha, to the Gestapo building.

In order to supplement data already gathered by the Commission for the Investigation of
German Crimes, I would like to add – having been in the Gestapo building from 10.00 a.m.
on 5 August until 12.00 a.m. on 6 August – that the total number of women detained at
the Gestapo building during this period was around one thousand. Women were brought in
throughout the day, even at night. "My" group was initially ordered to stand on the corner of
Litewska and Marszałkowska streets, where it was covered by two machine guns set up on
the corners. We were made to stand there for half an hour or so. The women were expecting
a mass execution. This did not happen only because – as I think – some irritated German ran
up from the Gestapo building, said something to the machine gun crews, and waved a whip
in our direction.

The men who had been led out with us were kept standing in Marszałkowska Street, in front
of houses nos. 35, 33 and 31. On the opposite side, on the pavement, some men were lying
face down on the ground; apparently they had been evicted earlier, from other houses with
lower numbers. They were being beaten over the head with rifle butts, suitcases and planks.
This was the first and last time that I ever saw the men from that group, the fate of which is
unknown to date.



While walking towards aleja Szucha, my group was robbed of watches, wedding rings and jewels, subjected to torrents of abuse, and constantly prodded and jostled. Clearly, the intent was to kill us there, for the *Vlasovtsy* soldier who tore my dog's leash from my hand said: "What do you need a dog for, you bitch, you don't need anything now." Another *Vlasovtsy* soldier, when asked about the fate of the men, replied: "You are no big deal, but we will take care of those bandits really well!" The notion that they initially intended to kill us is further supported by the fact that women holding foreign documents and *Volksdeutscher* women were called forward a few times. Finally, however, the *Volksdeutscher* women were not separated from us, and this would indicate a sudden change of intent.

Before entering the Gestapo building, we were forced to sit on the ground for three or four hours. During this time the *Vlasovtsy* soldiers disappeared somewhere (they were probably "taking care" of the men). Four tanks drove up to the building, and the Germans started pulling women [from the crowd] by the hand. They were arranged in two lines of six to eight in front of and behind each tank. Additionally, some 10 women were placed on each of the tanks. A detail that has not been mentioned by the Commission in its reports published in the press and read out over the radio concerns the fact that male Gestapo men mixed with the women who had been placed on the tanks; they were dressed as women, with stockings, furs and coats, each wearing a helmet covered with a scarf. The Polish women were used as human shields, while the dressed up Gestapo men – armed with revolvers – both prevented their escape and could have initiated an assault if a barricade was breached.

After the tanks returned from the "escapade," we were told: "Today's foray was unsuccessful, we will try again tomorrow" – and taken to the courtyard of the Gestapo building, where we spent the night. A pile of coke a few stories high was lying in front of the building. The long courtyard had a wooden fence on one side, and this was riddled with bullet holes, while on the other there was a shooting range. Right in the middle, on the ground, there was a burnt out, rusted machine gun on a tripod, with a great many empty cartridge cases near it. The soil in the courtyard was soft and black, and the elevation protruding. The courtyard looked as if it had recently been dug over. A single pumpkin bush grew on its border, indicating that the area must have functioned as a vegetable garden. The ivy on the building was burnt and blackened up to the first floor. From the ground, at a depth of just a few centimeters, I dug up a few tin buttons, clasps for garters and braces, and a fragment of a jawbone with two teeth.



The next day (6 August) at noon we were arranged in fours and made to listen to the following speech: "Our guard posts will not shoot at you from behind, up to Zbawiciela Square. Go to your bandits and tell them that we treated you well." When we asked where we were supposed to go, they told us "Get lost! If our Germany can burn alive, so can you." And when we inquired after the men: "They will return, they will only go with us to perform some work." Despite the promises, we were shot at from behind and from the side while walking along a section of Marszałkowska Street.

In the windows and doorway of the burnt down Anca Pharmacy (Marszałkowska Street 21) I saw male heads, corpses, arranged in layers right up to the ceiling, with their heads placed perpendicular to the street.

My searches, advertisements and contacts with the women from this district have yielded no results. The men have simply vanished into the blue. According to my provisional calculations, the number of men evicted from this district between 1 and 5 August inclusive must have totaled some 20,000.

Personally, I am very much interested in the fate of the group in which my husband (Jan Odolski, 39 years old) and father (Tadeusz Skrzypiciel, 71 years old) perished, both of whom were taken from Marszałkowska Street 33. I would request that you take into consideration these details which, as I find following a perusal of the published reports, are unknown, and for the veracity of which I pledge my honor, being additionally aware – as a journalist – of the significance of the spoken word.

Around 10 August a group of priests and six civilian men – all in a state of panic – arrived at the insurgent hospital at the corner of Mokotowska and Jaworzyńska streets, where I had gone after being released from the Gestapo building. They had been let free from the Gestapo building. The priests had been released for propaganda reasons. The surnames of the priests, who had been taken from the Parish of the Savior on the same day as my loved ones, that is on 5 August, are as follows: Pogorzelski, Fulde, Cegłowski, Włodarczyk, Długotłęcki. I was more interested in finding out why the handful of civilian men had been let go, and what had happened to the others. One was an infirm old man, known as the "colonel." The second stated that he had been barracked since July and had been forced to paint walls at the Gestapo building; he had been released because he had obviously not taken part in the

Uprising. The third – with a surprisingly “Gestapo-ish” face – said that he was a draughtsman, and had been employed in the same way. The fourth – a gardener. The fifth – a dubious character – recounted that the men were kept in cells in the basements of the Gestapo building, 160 to each, so that they could not even sit down, and had been led out one by one. Each man had to hold his documents in one hand, and his money and valuables in the other. When asked about the fate that awaited them, my source just gestured with his hand in despair. The sixth was a young dental surgeon, Dr Kałużny, who presently lives in Poznań. He is a close friend of Aleksandra Koziarska, an announcer at “Polskie Radio.” In my opinion the doctor behaved oddly and did not want to say anything. When I met him last year in front of the “Polskie Radio” building and asked that he explain the facts which he so obviously knew, he became confused and said that he knew nothing. When I inquired why he had been freed, as one of the very few exceptions, he stated that he had run away, which is extremely improbable. Reacting to my lengthy requests and appeals to social understanding, citizen Koziarska (who does not want to provide the address of Dr Kałużny) explained that Dr Kałużny had distinguished himself in the eyes of the Germans with some service which had been rendered by his mother.

I know, too, that an engineer, Plebański, also survived; he had been taken on the same day from Marszałkowska Street 31, and was until recently residing on Teresy Street, currently on Frascati Street. The residents of Marszałkowska are of the opinion that Plebański always had very good relations with the Germans, for he engaged in trade with them. It was said that engineer Plebański was released from the Gestapo because he was recognized at aleja Szucha by a German chauffeur who had driven Germans for hunts to the engineer’s estate in Grójec.

The priests, from amongst whom Pogorzelski and Długolecki are currently at the Church of the Savior, said that “the women should not delude themselves – everyone has perished.” But they either did not know the details, or did not want to disclose them. Furthermore, I know that Marek Korganow managed to survive, seeing as he was a Georgian and a minor (14 years old). This “better treated” foreigner, who had been immediately detached from the group, was saved from Oświęcim by his father a few months later. The boy’s mother, Władysława Korganow, runs a boarding house in Sopot or Gdańsk. I sent them a considerable number of letters, but his parents replied laconically and provided no information.

I consider it my duty to submit these facts, for I think that the persons whom I have mentioned are unquestionably in a position to provide many details that would help explain this crime – the greatest and most mysterious of all those committed by the Germans during the Uprising.

It is my personal impression that – apart from the priests – only those men who had served the Germans in one way or another were released. I am, however, conscious of the gravity of this declaration, based on incomplete facts and a large number of circumstantial accounts. I am also aware that as an interested party my judgement may be somewhat impaired, and also clouded to a certain extent by the jealousy arising from the fact that these men are alive, while my husband is not. Realizing full well that the opinions whispered by widowed women concerning those freed may wrong these men, I hereby kindly request that they be interrogated, considering that they are the sole living witnesses.

One other fact that would be worth taking into account concerns the disclosure of the bodies of a few men from the same group (Marszałkowska Street 33) in aleja Piłsudskiego in the past few months. The corpses were found by accident and recognized by the documents discovered on the bodies of Tadeusz and Kazimierz Zaniewski, Henryk Siwek, and Franciszek Zaremba. I heard that they were shot on the spot, as they had tried to escape in the street. I have been unable to determine who witnessed this attempted escape. Janina Zaniewska, a wife and mother, works at the railway administration office in Poznań.

I would also like to turn attention to the fact that when I was looking through the ashes in the building of the former General Inspectorate of the Armed Forces, I saw a great many small objects: blackened scissors, belt buckles, spectacle cases, and tin tobacco boxes. If these ashes were sifted through, we could gather some important evidence. For example, my husband had a bracelet riveted on his right arm; this was a tough iron chain, and so obviously devoid of value that in all certainty no one would have attempted to remove it from his person. I wear an identical bracelet on my arm. Mine has 26 links, while my husband's – if I remember correctly – 32. If this bracelet were found, it would constitute proof not only of his death, but also of that of the entire group.

Citizen Krystyna Znatowicz (currently residing at Marszałkowska Street 4), who was with me in the Gestapo building, obtained information – which she is trying to

supplement single-handedly – to the effect that our group of women was not burned to death only because the grates in the Inspectorate building were clogged up with ashes. And that on the day when we were there, there was a dispute concerning this matter between the technical personnel operating the furnaces and the Gestapo. Reportedly, the furnace personnel had not been burning people since 4 August. Citizen Znatowicz managed to find an institution that has in its possession materials which prove that this was indeed the case.

On the basis of conversations with women who together with me spent the day (5–6 August) in the Gestapo courtyard, I have come to the conclusion that apart from the men from Marszałkowska Street, along the section from Zbawiciela Square to Unii Square, men from Aleja Przyjaciół, Koszykowa Street, Oleandrów Street and their side streets were taken to the Gestapo building at the same time. Since the burning of men at the Gestapo building commenced on 1 August, I assume that by 5 August some 20 thousand victims had been incinerated.

There are two tons of ashes – completely unsecured – at the building of the former General Inspectorate of the Armed Forces. I know full well that these ashes are being looted with impunity – people take bucket loads and rinse them out with water in search of gold teeth. At the same time, small articles – lying scattered here and there – are getting lost. Thus, apart from the profanation of the remains of the deceased, evidence is being destroyed with impunity. The entire Warsaw press wrote about this issue a number of times, while I myself have spoken about it over the radio. I sincerely request that you order the ashes to be sifted. It is my opinion that this work would be readily undertaken and performed with complete honesty by those who are most interested – the wives and children of the unfortunate victims.

While submitting to you, citizen Prosecutor, the facts outlined above, I must stress that although I am deeply interested in the outcome of proceedings, I am unable to create for myself a complete and clear image of the events, for I have no authority to examine or appeal to the aforementioned men (in particular Dr Kałużny and engineer Plebański) to testify. I am aware of the fact that the materials which I have provided may prove important if they are analyzed by those authorized not in the name of painful personal interest, but in the name of the law.



I kindly request that you summon for examination myself and my mother, who shared my fate (Anna Skrzypiciel, Grochowska Street 277, flat 23) and who knows, as a long-standing resident of the house at Marszałkowska Street 33, the surnames of many of the men who died in the Gestapo building, and of the women who survived, each one of whom undoubtedly knows of some small facts that would help to elucidate the case.

I would like to make a heartfelt request that this German crime, the largest in terms of the number of victims and the most mysterious, committed on civilian men during the Uprising, be fully investigated.

Yours sincerely,

Wanda Odolska