



MARIA PĘKALSKA

Warsaw, 16 March 1949. A member of the District Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes, Judge Halina Wereńko, heard the person named below as an unsworn witness. Having been advised of the criminal liability for making false declarations, the witness testified as follows:

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| Name and surname | Maria Pękalska, <i>formerly</i> Ziegler, <i>née</i> Pietkun |
| Date and place of birth | 21 January 1902, Dynaburg |
| Names of parents | Antoni and Maria, <i>née</i> Dejko |
| State affiliation and nationality | Polish |
| Religious affiliation | Roman Catholic |
| Education | secondary |
| Occupation | housewife (husband's occupation – secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party cell) |
| Place of residence | Warsaw, Kwiatowa Street 19 |
| Criminal record | none |

When the Warsaw Uprising broke out, I was in my flat at Madalińskiego Street 51. The closest German posts were in the school at Narbutta Street 37 and in the *Stauferkaserne* at Rakowiecka Street 4. On 1 August, from the premises of our house, the insurgents launched an attack on the property at Narbutta Street 37 that spread up to Madalińskiego Street. The insurgent attack failed, and the wounded and killed people were brought to our house. Here, those killed were buried and the wounded were attended to, after which they were taken to sanitary posts (for instance, wounded civilians were taken to the convent at Kazimierzowska Street).



I don't remember the exact date, but on 4 or 5 August a unit of German soldiers arrived, and they took all the men from the following streets: Madalińskiego, Kazimierzowska, Łowicka and Fałęcka. The Germans told us that we might enquire about the fate of the men in the *Stauferkaserne*. Our house was under fire, but taking advantage of a relatively calm period about noon, I went there with other women on the same day. When I came to the courtyard of the *Stauferkaserne* from the direction of Rakowiecka Street, I saw bullet marks on the wall (to the right of the entrance), and fresh blood, not yet congealed, by the wall and on the grass on the right side of the courtyard. My husband told me that when he had been taken to the courtyard in the morning, the corpses of civilian men had been lying there. Inside the gate on the right side, I saw a dozen men from Fałęcka Street standing with their hands up, and there were three male corpses lying next to them – my husband told me that they had been executed for lowering their hands. My husband and a group of men from Kazimierzowska Street were brought to us from the building situated behind the second gate, on the left side. My husband told me that through the windows of that building he had observed the group of men from Fałęcka Street, and that they had been standing with their hands up since morning.

I don't remember the exact date, but my husband told me – he did not specify the date either – that a certain number of men were taken from the *Stauferkaserne* to aleja Szucha. If I remember correctly, five residents of our house were taken there, among them Wawrzyński and Hauser.

With the help of a bribe, I managed get both my husband and my son released from the *Stauferkaserne*, the former on 11 August, and the latter on 13 August.

Even before, on 10 August if I remember correctly, the Germans ordered women to go to the insurgents' barricade at the corner of Kazimierzowska and Różana streets, and announce that unless the insurgents surrendered, the men in the *Stauferkaserne* would be starved to death, and no one would be allowed to bring them food. The women came back from the insurgents with a refusal to comply. Nevertheless, they were still allowed to bring food in the afternoon.

On 15 August (I am not completely sure of the date), the German soldiers from the shelter on the corner of Kazimierzowska and Madalińskiego streets opened fire on a group

of women from our house who were carrying food to the *Stauferkaserne* in the hours prescribed by the Germans. Two women were killed on the spot, and two, fatally wounded, died shortly after. I also heard that the Germans had shot some tram driver from Falęcka Street, who was regularly reporting to the *Stauferkaserne* on the Germans' order.

The part of Kazimierzowska Street from Madalińskiego Street to Różana Street was a no man's land – at night the insurgents were coming to us, and in daytime the Germans were shooting at our houses.

On 21 August in the afternoon, a German unit came to Madalińskiego Street, took women from the houses at Kazimierzowska Street 53 and Madalińskiego Street 38 as a live shield and attacked the houses at Madalińskiego Street 39 and Kazimierzowska Street 51, from where a few hours earlier the insurgents had retreated to Różana Street. At Madalińskiego Street 39, some 30 civilians were gathered in the corridor, including Targowska (currently residing in Warsaw at I Armii WP Street 3, flat 25). I know from her account that the Germans showered the people with grenades, and then set the house on fire, not letting anyone out. Targowska survived thanks to the fact that she had said she was Russian and had been let out.

Then the German soldiers stormed into our house at Kazimierzowska Street 51. There was a tank in Kazimierzowska Street. The soldiers tore down the door with a grenade, charged into the courtyard and threw a grenade into the basement in which we had been gathered. Its explosion fatally wounded one of the residents, Hauser.

The Germans ordered us to leave the basement – first women with children left, then wounded women, and finally four men, including my husband and son. Women were released to the street, and the men were stopped by the wall in the hall. German soldiers with their guns at the ready stood opposite them. I tried to stay with my husband and son in the hall, but a German pushed me out into the street. At the moment when I was crossing the threshold I heard a salvo.

I managed to get through to the Polish sanitary post at Kazimierzowska Street 79 or 81, to Dr Tarkowski, and from there I saw that our house was ablaze.

In January 1945, when I returned to Warsaw, I carried out an exhumation of a grave in the courtyard of our house and I recognized the bodies of my husband, my son, a professor



of the Warsaw School of Economics – Kunze, and one more resident of our house, an elderly man.

On the same day, 21 August 1944, the Germans retreated from Madalińskiego Street and entrenched themselves on the corner of Kazimierzowska and Narbutta streets.

On 22 August the Germans took the civilians from Kazimierzowska Street to Madalińskiego, Narbutta, and adjacent streets. I watched from the sanitary post how the people proceeded along Kazimierzowska and Rakowiecka streets in the direction of aleja Niepodległości.

I stayed in the sanitary post of Dr Tarkowski for about three weeks. In the middle of September 1944 I managed to leave Warsaw.

At this the report was concluded and read out.