



## ZOFIA SIEMIŃSKA

Warsaw, 30 March 1949. A member of the Main Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland, Judge Janina Skoczyńska, interviewed 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	Zofia Siemińska, <i>née</i> Wielgus
Date and place of birth	11 November 1906, Domaniewice, Rawa Mazowiecka county
Parents' names	Jan and Julianna, <i>née</i> Stańczak
Father's occupation	laborer
Citizenship and nationality	Polish
Religion	Roman Catholic
Education	four classes of secondary school
Occupation	seamstress, shop owner
Place of residence	Warsaw, Racławicka Street 5, flat 5
Criminal record	none

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When the Warsaw Uprising broke out, I was in my flat at Olesińska Street 8. On 1 August 1944 the insurgents launched an attack on the German positions in Dworkowa Street; the attack was unsuccessful, and the insurgents withdrew deep into Olesińska Street and further back.

The Germans from Dworkowa Street were firing on the whole of Olesińska Street from the beginning of the Uprising. Already on 2 August German soldiers entered our street and tried to set fire to the house at number 5, however the blaze did not flare up and petered out.

On 4 August at around 1.00 p.m. or 2.00 p.m., another detachment of German soldiers arrived from the direction of Puławska Street and drove all of the residents of Olesińska Street from their homes. The procedure was that the Germans would throw the tenants of individual houses out of their flats and order them to proceed to the basements of the building at Olesińska Street 5. They did not allow anyone to take personal belongings and, once the residents had been driven out, the houses were set on fire. I saw that at the basement entrance the Germans behaved, how should I put it, quite politely, offering cigarettes to the men and handing out sweets to the children. When I went down to the basement under number 5 with the other residents of our house, I noticed that the Germans sprayed us with some liquid from a bottle. I also noticed that a certain *Volksdeutscher* who had ended up in our house by accident had not been ordered down to the basement, but – after his documents were checked – was instructed to go to Puławska Street. We, the Poles, did not have our documents checked.

When the basements of the house at Olesińska Street 5 were filled to overflowing – people were fainting due to the lack of air – grenades were suddenly thrown through the windows and from the stairwell. Many people fell, dead and wounded, in the crowd, and I saw that quite a number had started to burn. No grenades were thrown into the basement in which I was standing, or rather wedged motionless in between dozens of other people – the bombs fell only into basements with windows opening onto the street, into the corridor connecting individual basements, and near the stairwell. Someone managed to tear out the bars in the window of our basement, which opened onto the courtyard of the house at Olesińska Street 5. I grabbed my daughter and jumped out into the courtyard, as did a dozen or so other people who were in the basement. There was a mass of bodies in the courtyard – I would like to stress that the courtyard was being fired upon by the Germans from Dworkowa Street. A moment after we had left, there was a loud explosion and a part of the house, or – to put it more precisely – the ceiling of the basements, collapsed. When after the explosion I tried to get back to the basements, I found that they had been crushed by the ceiling, and groans were coming from beneath the rubble.

Next I tried to escape from the courtyard, which was being fired on without pause, over the wall enclosing it from the side of Grażyny Street. Many people managed to climb over the wall – when attempting to follow suit, however, I was heavily wounded in my left arm and left breast, and fell back into the courtyard.

I remained in the courtyard amongst the bodies, and other wounded and healthy people, until late evening, when it grew completely dark. The house at Olesińska Street 5 was ablaze; the fire had been started on the uppermost floor. Making use of the darkness, I and some others managed to climb over the wall into Grażyny Street, from where I walked towards Racławicka Street. On 5 August I was taken to the Hospital of the Sisters of St. Elizabeth. In the hospital I met a lot of people who, like me, had been wounded during the execution at Olesińska Street 5, and also persons who had been wounded in a similar execution which the Germans had carried out on civilians at Olesińska Street 7. However, I don't know the details of the other execution.

I am unable to state how many people died in the execution at number 5. I know that on the next day the insurgents tried to save the people buried under the rubble. For example, on 8 August my sister-in-law, Jadwiga Wielgus, and her father, Władysław Kur, were brought in from Olesińska Street 5. Shortly after, just two days later, they both died. Before her death, my sister-in-law told me that following the explosion at Olesińska Street 5 she had not only been buried under the rubble, but also flooded by the water escaping from burst pipes.

I was told in the hospital that some of the bodies were buried in the courtyard at Olesińska Street 5 already during the Uprising.

I know that in the spring of 1945 the Polish Red Cross carried out an exhumation in this area, that is, at the house at Olesińska Street 5.

Having spent two weeks in the hospital and being unable – physically and mentally – to remain in the combat zone any longer, I went with my child and father across the meadows to Służew. There, near the monastery, the Germans wanted to shoot us – three women, a child and a father – but released us, touched by the child's sobbing.

At this point the report was brought to a close and read out.