



JULIAN PISKOREK

Kalisz, 28 February 1948

To the District Commission
for the Investigation of German Crimes

Report

In response to the letter of the honorable Commission of 19 February 1948, Ref. No. 1260/48, concerning the crimes committed by the Germans in the Old Town in Warsaw during the uprising in 1944, I would like to make known the following facts:

Unfortunately, I cannot fully treat the subject of the hospital "Pod Krzywą Latarnią" [Crooked Lantern], especially concerning its massacre, as I did not witness it. The details pertaining to the hospital itself, which I could submit, are probably not important and are already known to the honorable Commission. Although I visited that insurgent hospital quite often, I was not mainly affiliated with it.

I would like to explain that I was a priest from outside of the Warsaw diocese. I had been in Warsaw for less than a year before the uprising. I had worked as a friar in the Jesuit church on Świętojańska Street; I was not a member of the Home Army. Due to these circumstances, I was meeting the majority of people during the uprising for the first time. I did not even know all the Warsaw priests. Therefore, I am very sorry but I cannot submit the name of the priest who, some weeks before the surrender of the Old Town, assumed permanent care of the sick in the hospital "Pod Krzywą Latarnią", as a result of which I almost completely gave up going to work there. He was of middle height, stout, about 50 years old. Maybe father Kunert will know more.

The post which was entrusted to my care at the very beginning of the uprising was a little military hospital in the townhouse of the Mazovian Princes. After 10 August it was moved to Freta Street 10, to the basement by St. Hyacinth's church; it comprised some 30 sick people. Since I was first of all concerned with the spiritual ministry, I was visiting various

places, according to needs. On 15 August I was for the first time invited by father Tomasz Rostworowski to celebrate the mass in the hospital "Pod Krzywą Latarnią". From that time until the surrender, I celebrated mass and preached sermons there on every holiday and Sunday, and I was also administering the sacraments and visiting the sick quite often until I was replaced by the priest whom I have mentioned above.

Based on this I can say that the hospital "Pod Krzywą Latarnią" was generally meant for the insurgents, but out of necessity there were also many civilians in it. Among others, a dozen gravely sick people from the burnt St. John of God Hospital were crammed in there. In the hospital, there were both less and more seriously injured soldiers. A tall young doctor – a military surgeon with the rank of lieutenant – was the head of the hospital. "Mrs Doctor" assisted him in surgeries, which he was performing on the spot by the light of carbide lamps. Apart from her, there were six to eight staff members tasked with taking care of the injured people, and some people in charge of the kitchen and food provisions. I had not known any of these people personally. We were using first names and *noms de guerre*.

There were indeed some 150 sick people. I heard that number from one of the staff members in the last days. I know, however, that many of the less seriously injured soldiers tried to reach Śródmieście in the so-called "break-through," and when it failed, they attempted to leave the Old Town with their units through the sewers.

Out of fear of a massacre, a large part of the less seriously injured soldiers dressed as civilians and went to Pruszków when the Germans seized a given area. It was so with the injured people in other hospitals, so it must have been the case also in this one. This is why I believe the number of 150 victims in that hospital to be an overestimation.

Did the staff survive? I do not know. I know that the staff was ordered to leave the hospitals and was even permitted to take the less seriously injured people.

I remember that on the day of the surrender of the Old Town, on 2 September in the afternoon, when we came under the German escort to the Western Railway Station and we were waiting for transport to Pruszków, there came a truck filled with the less seriously injured and sick people. I recognized among them a sister of the Red Cross whom I knew by sight from the Old Town. I approached her and asked her about father Tomasz Rostworowski, who had stayed with the injured people. Then she told me briefly that there

had been a great massacre of the injured people in the hospitals in the Old Town, that they had been told to leave the hospitals, and that many members of the hospital staff might have been killed. We could not talk any more. Those injured people, however, were not from the hospital "Pod Krzywą Latarnią".

I heard about the executions also from other people. I did not witness them myself, as on 2 September in the morning I was taken by the SS troops near the entrance to the sewer on Miodowa Street, through which I had wanted to get out. I wanted to go back to the hospitals but it was too late. They had already been taken.

I believe that it is beyond a shadow of a doubt that the massacre of the injured in the hospitals took place on 2 September before noon. This was the day when the Old Town was almost entirely captured, especially as far as the premises of the hospitals in question are concerned.

I heard that the Germans ordered the seriously injured people to be brought to one spot and executed them there. There must have been several such places, so mainly the premises of the hospital on Długa Street 7, the hospital by St. Hyacinth's Church and maybe, but I am by no means certain, the hospital "Pod Krzywą Latarnią" (Podwale Street 25) and the little hospital "Czarny Łabędź" [Black Swan] (Podwale Street 46), in which there were some 40 rather seriously injured people. Apart from these hospitals, all known to me as I was visiting them, there was one more little hospital, "Inwalidów" [The Disabled] at Długa Street 8, in which there were some 20 injured people.

I find it difficult to establish how many injured people remained in all these hospitals, as many of the sick people, when they learned that the Germans were capturing the area and out of fear of a massacre, dressed as civilians and went in transports to Pruszków.

And so my military hospital in the basement at Freta Street 10 was, to a large extent, evacuated exactly in this manner; later in Pruszków I saw many faces, which I had known by sight, of soldiers hiding their wounds. However, the seriously injured undoubtedly stayed in all these places and were finished off by the Germans.

As for the people whom I know and who might have witnessed the execution of the injured people in the Old Town, I can give the names of only two friends who had stayed there at that time: father Tomasz Rostworowski (Łódź) and father Franciszek Kulesza (Łódź). As



for other people whom I know, I think that Mrs Maria Plater was at that time somewhere near these hospitals (her address is Boników village, Garki post office, Ostrów Wielkopolski county). According to her account she tried to save the injured brother of her friend from this massacre, and a German officer shot him dead almost in their hands.

As far as I know, father Pągowski survived the massacre at Długa Street 7 and witnessed its horror, as he had been lying in a basement there, being injured. His whereabouts could be established in the Warsaw Curia.

Mrs Felicja Majewska (her address is, as far as I know, Warsaw, Kozia Street 40) was in the vicinity of the hospital at Freta Street 10. I believe that she could provide many details concerning the execution. As for the hospital "Inwalidów" on Długa Street 8, Mrs H. Czekajewska (Warsaw, Żelazna Street 18) might be able to say something more about it.

Apart from that, I was a few times in the hospitals on Świętojerska Street – there was a little hospital of the Home Army, comprising some 40 injured people, in the basements of the ammonia factory, and there was a bigger hospital of the People's Army just next to it. However, I cannot say what their later fate was, as I did not go there after 25 August.

Yours faithfully,

Father Julian Piskorek