



WOJCIECHA BURACZYŃSKA

Warsaw, 29 September 1945. Investigating Judge Mikołaj Halfter interviewed the person named below as a witness. Having been advised of the criminal liability for making false declarations, of the obligation to speak the truth, and of the significance of the oath, the witness was sworn and testified as follows:

Name and surname	Wojciecha Buraczyńska
Age	25 years
Parents' names	Wiktor and Zofia, <i>née</i> Rudzińska
Place of residence	Włochy, Ortweina Street 8, from 1 October 1945: Kutno I
Occupation	currently unemployed, she graduated from secondary school before the war
Religion	Roman Catholic
Criminal record	none

I was taken to the concentration camp in Ravensbrück as part of a transport from Lublin prison on 23 September 1941. In July 1942, the camp authorities selected a few dozen women inmates from the Lublin transport for the purpose of carrying out experimental operations. They chose women aged under 30. After a few days the number was increased to well over a hundred, and included women from different age groups.

The first operations were carried out on 1 August 1942, on six women: Wanda Wojtasik, Zielonka – I do not know her name, Aniela Okoniewska, Maria Gnaś, Wanda Kulczyk, and I do not remember the last one. This was an infectious operation, consisting of making an incision on the leg and, in all probability, injecting some sort of pathogenic bacteria. The procedures were performed by Professor Gebhardt from Hohenlychen, who was assisted

by Doctor Fischer (I do not know the name of either doctor) and Doctor – if I recall – Stomberger [Stumpfegger], but I am not certain whether I have remembered this surname correctly. I learned the surnames of these physicians from the camp hospital personnel. The camp doctor, an SS man – I think it was *Oberhauptsturmführer* Szydłowski [Schiedlausky] – and the chief physician or overseer, the so-called *Aufseherin*, one Oberheuser, who later received a medal for her achievements in the field of military medicine, also assisted during the operation. I learned all this from friends who worked in the hospital. German nurses (*Schwester*) were also present during the operations. I know from the hospital personnel and my operated friends, who overheard the German doctors talking amongst themselves, that the operations were divided into the following: 1) a) bone procedures, b) infectious bone procedures; 2) a) muscular procedures, b) muscular infectious procedures, and 3) infectious procedures. Fourteen days after the group of women named above was operated on, a second series of procedures was conducted. I do not remember exactly how many were operated on then, but I think the number was around ten. The operatees and other friends informed me that these were infectious operations. Thereafter a few people or just individual women would be operated on, with bone, infectious and muscular procedures being performed alternately.

In October 1942, five women died following infectious operations: Weronika Kraska, Freda Prus, Aniela Lefanowicz, Zofia Kiecol, Kazimiera Kurowska. Before the deaths of the above mentioned inmates, prisoners would be taken for operations without any medical examination being performed. From this moment on, medical examinations became obligatory and Doctor Oberheuser would exempt people who had heart diseases, lung ailments or ran a temperature in excess of 38° from the operations. However, this rule was not fully observed. All operations were carried out under anesthetic. The victims selected for the operation would be given a shot of morphine while still in their cells.

We knew that this was morphine, for it had a stupefying effect; I know this agent. After the injection, German sisters – subsequently this role was taken over by two German prisoners who worked in the hospital, Gerda and Fina (I do not know their surnames) – would come round with a gurney. The women would lie down or be placed on the gurney and taken to the operating theater. The first operation took the inmates by surprise and so there was no protest. Before the second procedure one of our friends, Urszula Karwacka (currently resident in Bydgoszcz, Śląska Street 2, flat 4), while lying on the gurney in the operating

theater and having already received the morphine shot, but not yet the anesthetic, asked the doctors present “why and on what grounds are we being operated on”, and also stated that “we protest against this”. Her protest was dismissed with a joke – that we were all young and pretty – and that the camp doctor would provide explanations. Despite a number of interventions, Doctor Schiedlauský never gave us the promised explanation.

Because of the terror reigning in the camp, no further protests were possible; we were simply too stupefied by the grueling, 12-hour work shifts, the hunger and the harassment suffered at the hands of the camp authorities.

I do not know what agent was used as the anesthetic.

Operations would be repeated on the same people as many as six times – such, for example, was the experience of Barbara Pietrzyk (currently resident in Łódź, at Narutowicza Street 71, flat 9). When she was arrested in 1940, Barbara Pietrzyk was barely 15 years old, while during the operation she was just 17. Minors constituted a large percentage of operatees (up to a dozen or so).

I was operated on on 23 November 1942. It was in the afternoon and we were summoned – ten of us – to the camp hospital, or *rewir* [sick room, hospital – from the German *Revier*; translator’s note]: myself, Wacław Andrzejak (currently resident in Chełm Lubelski, Obłowska Street 49a), Jadwiga Bielska (currently resident in Lublin, 3 Maja Street 8), Krystyna Czyż (currently resident in Lublin, Weteranów Street 34), Maria Broel-Plater (currently resident in Warsaw, Grochowska Street, I do not know the house number), Jadwiga Dzido (currently in the Child Jesus Hospital following an operation), Jadwiga Gizges (I do not know her present address), Eugenia Mann (currently resident in Wołyń, district of Biała Podlaska), Eugenia Mikulska (currently in a sanatorium in Busko-Zdrój), and Anna Sienkiewicz (currently resident in Krasnystaw, Rynek Street, I do not know the number). Our group was admitted to the *rewir* by the physician, Oberheuser, who ordered our temperatures to be taken; this was followed by a chest x-ray. Oberheuser sent us to a hospital room where a German nurse shaved our legs. Each one of us received an injection of morphine; I do not remember whether the syringe contained 5 or 10 cm. For me, the injection was not painful. I learned that it was morphine from the German nurses and also determined this fact myself. Stupefied by the morphine, we were taken in turns to the operating theater. While in the corridor before the theater,

I (and my friends) were anaesthetized by a German nurse. This was an intravenous injection administered to the flexure of the left arm.

I do not know the size of the ampule, nor the type of drug that I was given. I counted to 18 and lost consciousness. When I woke up, I was lying on a bed in a room. I wanted to see what my leg looked like. During my friends' previous operations I saw that they had their legs in plaster or that they were bandaged and the bandages were bloody, which indicated that their legs had been incised, irrespective of the type of operation. However, all the women in our group were astonished that on the backs of their calves, in the middle of the right leg, there was only a small piece of plaster. I tore off the plaster and saw that there was a mark, as if a needle prick, on the leg. My companions made the same finding.

In the evening after the operation I had my temperature taken; I was running a fever above 40°. During the night I lost consciousness. I heard that my friends were raving deliriously, too.

I must add that the women who had been operated on previously were in the same room in which I and my friends were lying; because of our mutual closeness, they acted as our nurses, even though they were in a bad state of health after their operations. On the second day I found that my leg was swelling downwards and upwards from the point of the injection. I felt strong pain in my entire leg. My temperature did not fall below 40°.

On the third day the swelling continued to develop and advanced to my hip, and I could see that infection streaks were reaching right up to the hip. Over a period of three days the doctor, Oberheuser, looked at our veins and selected four women – Krystyna Czyż, Wacław Andrzejak, Jadwiga Bielska and Anna Sienkiewicz – who received a series of intravenous and intramuscular injections (from 1 to 20 cm) of an agent of unknown quality. According to my friends, the intramuscular shots were extremely painful. Nothing secreted from the needle mark.

Three days after the operation, there were six of us left: myself, Jadwiga Dzido, Jadwiga Gizges, Maria Broel-Plater, Eugenia Mikulska and Eugenia Mann. Yet again we received injections of morphine, following which they placed us on gurneys and wheeled us off to the operating theater. Doctor Fischer, assistant to Professor Gebhardt, another assistant to Professor Gebhardt – I think it was Doctor Stumpfegger, camp doctors Schiedlausky and Rosenthal, as well as Doctor Oberheuser, were all gathered in the theater, accompanied by

two German nurses. I lifted my head in order to take a look at the physicians, whereupon Rosenthal, with brutal strength, pushed my head back down onto the gurney. Next, a gauze pad was placed over my face and one of the German *Schwesters* held my head while the other poured ether. I was unable to lose consciousness for a long time, I was suffering terribly, but finally I passed out. When I woke up on the gurney in the operating theater, I heard my own tearful voice saying *warum*, over and over again. They wheeled me to a room and there, lying on a bed, I saw that my leg was bandaged from the ankle to the knee, and traces of bleeding were visible. I would like to stress that I had a look at the temperature card, which had been left carelessly by the *Schwester*, and under the date of 23 November 1942 I saw the word "operation", written in German, while under the date of 26 November 1942 I read the word *Schnitt* – incision. For the next few days I ran a high fever, of around 40°. I was unable to take a look at my leg, but it hurt terribly right up to the hip. I was cared for by a friend who had previously been operated on, Stefania Łotocka, who while washing and giving me various things would jump around on one leg. Three days after the procedure I was taken to the dressing hall, where Doctor Fischer and Doctor Oberheuser were already waiting. There they covered my eyes with a sheet, whereafter someone grabbed my leg and cut through the paper bandages; a moment later they started applying a dressing. I drew the sheet slightly aside and saw dressing materials in the sterilizer, as well as an enormous wound on my leg. I saw Fischer using a syringe to remove pus; this was terribly painful. After the dressing was put on, the fever fell. My leg continued to hurt. I received the same dressing every few days. Initially, the procedure was performed by Dr Fischer, but later Dr Oberheuser and then Dr Rosenthal – who acted with considerable brutality – took over. I saw the wound on my leg when the dressings were being changed. I did not receive any special treatment or nourishment in connection with the operation or dressings. Operatees would be given better food than in the camp, but no specific nutrients or drugs were provided. We only received liquid morphine for the night in order to alleviate the pain.

I would like to stress that following the death of five operated friends in October 1942, Professor Gebhardt ordered that operatees were to receive better nourishment. I was kept in the hospital for eight weeks. After six weeks, when I started feeling better and my temperature fell somewhat, I myself – jumping around on one leg – started caring for the new operatees. After eight weeks I was sent back to my block and came back to the hospital only to have my dressings changed, so that the wound would heal. The dressings were



initially applied by Doctor Oberheuser, while later by inmates working as nurses. By March 1943, the wound had healed up completely.

Afterwards I continued to experience pain in my leg, while at present it hurts only when I walk intensely. I would like to stress that the incision on my leg could have been more than 20 cm long. After the procedure, during the period when pus was being removed, the wound suppurated profusely. It looked as if though it had been infected.

The report was read out.