

## Voices from Ravensbrück

### Interview no. 228 (English translation)

Polish Documentary Institute, Lund

Lund, 29 January 1946

Helena Dziedzicka, Institute assistant taking the record

#### Record of witness testimony no. 228, part I

Witness: Dr. xxxxxxxxxxxx

Born: 30 November 1905

In: Kraków

Occupation: physician - radiologist

Faith: Roman Catholic

Nationality: Polish

Parents' names: Wincenty, Kamila

Identification presented: - -

Last place of residence in Poland: Kraków, ul. Szlak 55

Current place of residence: Stockholm

Having been informed of the importance of truthful testimony, the consequences of false testimony and her responsibility to tell the truth, she has made the following statement:

I was arrested in - on --. I was in the prison (ghetto, labour camp, etc.) -- . I was in the concentration camp at Ravensbrück from 13 September 1941 until 25 April 1945 as a political prisoner, having the number 7403, and wearing a red triangle with the letter "P" on it.

During that same time, I was also in Neu-Brandenburg (at the airplane parts factory) with a work gang from 15 May 1944 until 19 September 1944.

Asked whether I have any specific information from my time or work in the prison, ghetto or concentration camp about how the concentration camp was organised, the camp regimen, inmates' working conditions, treatment of prisoners, medical and pastoral care, hygienic conditions, and also specific events in all areas of camp life, I can state the following:

Data about the Polish women at the Ravensbrück concentration camp.

At the behest of the Institute, xxxxxxxxxxxx, with whom I am personally acquainted, and who is currently residing in Stockholm, a physician by profession specializing in radiology, has sent me her written testimony today by post, which includes nine handwritten pages and describes: Data about the Polish

women at the Ravensbrück concentration camp. The testimony is an attachment to the present protocol. (Evaluation of the witness's reliability.)

( - )

Helena Dziedzicka  
Institute assistant

### **Data about the Polish women at the Ravensbrück concentration camp**

The Ravensbrück concentration camp opened in May 1939, four months before the German-Polish war broke out. Before the war, the camp held German women communists, and a few Czech women communists, German women from the I.B.F., i.e. the Intern. Bibelforscher Ferein [sic, should be "Verein"], who in camp jargon were called "bibelforszerki", and asocial German women (this meant prostitutes and women who were evading work). The first Polish women were brought to the camp in November 1939. There were 4 of them, and they had numbers above 2000, which means that the camp in November 1939 had over 2000 women in it. (In December 1944, there were about 50,000 women in the camp.)

Already in September (3 September, to be precise), Polish women arrived, though not from Poland, but rather from Germany, Polish women from the [Polish] minority there, for example Róża Styp-Rykowska, who was arrested on 1 September 1939 in Berlin.] The first Polish women from Poland came from the political prisons in Łódź and Pabianice - including one of the most outstanding Polish women, Dr. Helena Salska, a gymnasium [i.e. secondary school] professor. From the time the camp opened until April 1945, i.e. over the nearly six years of the camp's existence, a total of 100,000 (one hundred thousand) women of more than twenty different nationalities passed through the camp. During that time, 30,435 (thirty thousand four hundred thirty five) Polish women passed through the camp. This number was given to me by a prisoner named Dr. Urszula Wińska, from Bochnia, and was obtained from the precise camp records, kept in the camp sewing shop, run by the [woman] guard Massar. Dr. Urszula Wińska was a political prisoner for almost 4 years, had a number over 7000, and worked in that same sewing shop for over two years; it is there that she managed to obtain those figures.

The camp labour office, the "Arbeitseinsatz", kept precise data on all the prisoners, noting those figures in special books, of which there were 28 books up to April 1945. Four prisoners, 1) Halina Marmurowicz, her friend 2) Wanda (whose last name I don't remember) 3) Helena Strzelecka and I, 4) Dr. xxxxxxxxxxxx, decided (despite the difficulties and dangers) to search through those books and find the data about Polish women. We were 50% successful in this work, i.e. we managed to look through 14 of the books. From those 14 books, the figures are as follows:

340 Polish women were killed in the gas chamber, which in the books is called the "Mitwerda" camp, out of a total of 4,735 women who were sent to that gas chamber. The women who were slated to be killed in the gas chamber were first sent to a neighbouring camp known as "Uckermark", which was created in February 1945 in the barracks of the former camp for young German women, the "Jugendlager". There, they waited their turn for death in the gas chamber (up to 300 a day) and died

from hunger and cold. There were over 2000 who died while they were waiting for the gas chamber, which means the "Uckermark" camp took the lives of almost 7000 women from February 1945 to April 1945 (approximately 7 weeks).

On 7 April 1945, the Swedish Red Cross began its activities and on that day - memorable for all of us prisoners at Ravensbrück-(it was a Saturday), during the course of the day the survivors from "Uckermark" returned, and that evening, the first Swedish Red Cross vehicles drove into the camp, bringing food packages and taking the first transport of women to freedom - they were Norwegian and Danish women). In the earlier years, before 1945, 100 Polish women were sent to other gas chambers. They were noted in the books as N.L. (N-Lager) [*Nicht genanntes Lager*] [German, "unnamed camp"]. 166 Polish women were shot, which was noted as Trp.Lz. and Lb. It should be noted here that many of those who were shot were simply recorded as having died (so that figure of 166 is not a complete number of those who were shot). So for example all the Polish women who were shot from those who had numbers over 7000 to 8000, which included the Lublin, Warsaw, Kraków and Tarnów transports of September 1941, were noted only as having died.

There were 599 Polish women who died (which also includes the women above who were recorded as having been shot). (Please keep in mind that these are figures from only half of the books.) 993 Polish women were freed. Usually Polish women who were freed were those who had come to the camp because of petty crimes [committed while] in Germany on forced labour, and, after being punished in the camp, they returned to do forced labour in Germany. (They were known in camp slang as "from the *Bauers*" [German, "farmers"].) There were 8 escapes recorded among the Polish women. 2608 Polish women were sent to work on "komandos", i.e. to work in factories; 5,361 Polish women were sent to komandos belonging to Ravensbrück (for example Grüneberg) and to komandos that did not belong to Ravensbrück, but rather constituted separate "komandos" or belonged to other camps, such as Sachsenhausen.

Summing up, there were the following categories:

Distant komandos	5,361	Polish women
Nearby komandos	2,608	--"--
Released	.933	--"--
Died	.599	--"--
Gassed in 1945	.340	--"--
Gassed before 1945	.100	--"--
Shot (incomplete figure)	.166	--"--
Escaped	...8	--"--

The rest of the Polish women remained in the Ravensbrück camp. If one takes into account the fact that [only] half of the books were checked, which means that more or less the fates of one half of the Polish women were checked, i.e. about 15,000 - we see that of half the Polish women, about 5,000 remained in the camp. We know that in April 1945, there were about 9,000 Polish women in the Ravensbrück camp, of which about 4,600 were taken to Sweden.

It should be noted that these books were not checked in order from 1-14, but rather 14 of the 28 books were checked (in whichever order we managed to obtain them). (For example, books 1, 4, 7, 26, etc.)

The material given here is reliable, and is also valuable and gives insight into the figures about the Ravensbrück camp as far as the numbers of women in general are concerned and the [overall] numbers regarding Polish women in particular.

( - ) Dr. xxxxxxxxxxxx

P.S. Of the four of us who were checking the books, I was the only one who took notes and I was the only one to bring those notes [out of the camp].

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Polish Documentary Institute, Lund

Stockholm, 10 April 1946

Krystyna Karier, Institute assistant taking the record

**Record of witness testimony no. 228, part II**

Witness: Dr. xxxxxxxxxxxx

Born: 30 November 1905

In: Kraków

Occupation: physician - radiologist

Faith: Roman Catholic

Nationality: Polish

Parents' names: Wincenty, Kamila

Identification presented: - -

Last place of residence in Poland: Kraków, ul. Szlak 55

Current place of residence: Stockholm, Drottningholmsvägen 12, c/o Dickson, Sweden

Having been informed of the importance of truthful testimony, the consequences of false testimony and her responsibility to tell the truth, she has made the following statement:

I was in the concentration camp at Ravensbrück from 13 September 1941 until 25 April 1945 as a political prisoner, having the number 7403, and wearing a red triangle with the letter "P" on it.

During that same time, I was also in Neu-Brandenburg (at the airplane parts factory) with a work gang from 15 May 1944 until 19 September 1944.

Asked whether I have any specific information from my time or work in the concentration camp about how the concentration camp was organised, the camp regimen, inmates' working conditions, treatment of prisoners, medical and pastoral care, hygienic conditions, and also specific events in all areas of camp life, I can state the following:

Dr xxxxxxxxxxxx

The testimony includes a description of experimental operations performed in the Ravensbrück concentration camp and includes twelve typewritten pages +

3 pages - tables listing the operations (an alphabetical list of those who were operated on) 1 page - questions posed by the Institute 2 pages (handwritten) of answers to those questions

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- a. attached is a report in German about the operations (5 typewritten pages)
  - b. part I-a attached: 2 typewritten pages and 2 lines on the third [Signed, Krystyna Karier] (data about the Polish women at Ravensbrück concentration camp)

### **Expert testimony of material witness regarding the experimental operations carried out in the Ravensbrück concentration camp**

I consider my report to supplement all those that have already been written on the subject; in particular, I have in mind the report of Zofja Sokulska. This is why I am not attaching [list attached, K. Karier] a list of names of those who were subjected to operations or repeating the external details of that tragic crime, but rather am only attempting to explain the issue of experimental operations from my point of view as a doctor who was in a position to observe those operations more closely.

#### **Place and time of the operations:**

The operations took place from the summer of 1942 to the summer of 1943. The operations were done in the camp hospital, called the "*rewir*", and the last were done in August 1943 - in the camp punishment cell, called "the bunker".

#### **The doctors and nursing staff taking part in the operations:**

The operations were done under the direction of (in the beginning, even under the personal supervision of): Professor Franz Gebhard, M.D., SS-Brigadenführer, director of the "Hohenlychen" sanatorium in Hohenlychen-Mecklenburg. Gebhard is the first culprit of this dark crime.

He was assisted in this by two of his assistants, who performed most of the operations and were also SS officers and German physicians:

**Dr. Fischer** and  
**a second, whose name I do not know.**

In addition, the camp's medical staff took part in the operations:

**Dr. Herta Oberhäuser**, who was wholly devoted to these criminal experiments.

**Dr. Rolf Rosenthal**, who found an outlet for his sadistic tendencies, particularly in the inhumane way he dressed the wounds, mostly when he was drunk.

**Dr. Schydlausky**, who was least interested from a personal point of view.

All the German nurses who were employed in the *rewir* at that time assisted during the operations. I do not remember all their names. I remember only one by name:

**SS Nurse ERIKA**, who was most trusted.

Two German prisoners who were employed in the *rewir* also assisted, enthusiastically carrying out the criminals' orders. Their names were:

**Gerda Quernheim** (born 1906), and her helper, the head prisoner in the *rewir*, **Fina Pautz** (about 55 years old)

### **Who was subjected to the operations?**

74 Polish women political prisoners from the Warsaw and Lublin transports were selected to be the victims of experiments. They were all young, healthy, well-built, with pretty legs - since the operations were carried out on the legs. The youngest women operated on were 16, the oldest about 48 years old. Most of those who were operated on were operated on more than once, sometimes even as many as 6 times.

### **"Scientific atmosphere".**

Before I describe the operations themselves, I must point out that these operations were not operations on a scientific level, they were not scientific operations, but rather were done by ignorant German pseudo-doctors, educated in German wartime medicine. The assisting personnel were unqualified, and the conditions in which the operations were carried out went against all principles of hygiene.

The principle of aseptic conditions was not heeded during operations, the compresses were not sterilised; sterilisation was the responsibility of Gerda Quernheim who, though she was a nurse by profession, stood out because of her sloppiness and negligence.

After the operations, the sick were left in horrible conditions marked by neglect and lack of assistance, as Zofia Sokulska has described.

Depending on the mood of the doctors in charge of the *rewir*, the wounds were dressed using dirty instruments, unsterilised compresses, and if Dr. Rosenthal dressed the wounds, he tortured the victims terribly, ripping open the wounds with instruments, vented his sadistic urges, half- or completely drunk, flirting simultaneously with Gerda Quernheim, who was assisting him.

The results of the operations were not monitored, nor was the patients' condition.

There was a laboratory in the *rewir*, where prisoners, who were medical students, worked as laboratory assistants, analysing the blood and urine of the women who had been operated on, and studied bacteria under the microscope, but none of the perpetrators monitored their work, or paid attention to the

results - it was done just "pro forma", and its only significance was that we prisoners, doctors and medical students, found out under the microscope what kinds of bacteria were being used to infect our fellow prisoners.

The bone operations that were done on the legs were monitored with X-rays. I took all the X-rays myself in the *rewir's* X-ray laboratory, where I worked. Those X-rays pictures were of good quality, but they were not precise enough to be able to monitor the subtle changes during bone regeneration, [that would be] necessary for scientific purposes. The X-rays were also not taken frequently enough, but the perpetrators valued those X-rays, which were taken to Hohenlychen as scientific materials.

In this description I have not yet exhausted all the conditions under which the "scientific" experimental operations were carried out, because in August 1943, five victims were operated on not in the operating theatre, but rather in the bunker cell. The women operated on were not bathed first, but rather SS men would throw them violently onto the bunks, their mouths gagged, and their legs, dirty from coal dust, were operated on. After the operations, they stayed at first in the bunker cell before being taken to the camp hospital.

It should also be noted that all those who were operated on came to the operations exhausted from the inhumane work and hunger, which particularly destroyed people [during the harsh conditions] before the first harvest in 1942. These were more or less the conditions in which operations were carried out and in which the subjects remained after the operations. This is a short description of the "scientific" atmosphere surrounding the experimental operations, which were carried out for "scientific" aims.

### **Anaesthesia during operations and the kinds of operations**

Anaesthetic was used during all operations. Usually, they were begun with evipan and ended with ether.

Now I will describe the operations themselves as I perceived them. The operations were divided into 2 basic groups:

#### **A. Septic operations**

Operations A were divided into a number of subgroups, depending on:

1. The quality of the bacteria
2. The amount of bacteria applied (doze size)
3. Form of infection - i.e.,
  - a. whether bacteria were introduced into wounds caused by an operation;
  - b. whether they were introduced by injection.

#### **B. Clean operations**

these were divided into 3 subgroups:

1. bone

2. muscle
3. nerve

### **Operations in Group A.**

#### **ad point 1) - bacteria quality**

In terms of bacteria quality, for the most part various strains of **staphylococcus** and **streptococcus**, i.e. infection-causing bacteria, of which most often **staphylococcus aureus** was used. In addition to these common infection-causing bacteria, the following most virulent strains of bacteria were also experimented with:

- a. Oedema malignum - Clostridium oedematis maligni
- b. Clostridium perfringens, Fränkel-Welchscher, Gasbrandbazillus
- c. Tetanus

#### **ad point 2) - dose size**

The perpetrators divided the victims slated for experiments into different groups, named with letters of the alphabet (according to a key known to them) depending on how high the dose of bacteria was meant for a given group. Prisoners were taken for operations in groups of about ten. The "operators" brought the bacteria from Hohenlychen, marked with quantity and quality. I saw the vials in which the bacteria were kept.

#### **ad point 3) - how people were infected**

- a. Infection by introducing bacteria into wounds. As far as I could tell, some of those who had been operated on had tubes (apparently made of paper) containing bacteria put into the incisions that had been created. Those who had been operated on said that the first time their wounds were dressed, which took place a couple of days after the infectious operation, they felt that something had been taken out of their wound, which eased their pain. Probably it was the foreign body containing the bacteria removed at that time. Pieces of what seemed to be macerated paper kept coming out of their wounds, along with pus, for a long time. This was how the lower extremities that had been operated on and infected began to react with infection and the formation of pus, their entire body was ill from the serious infection, and the clinical picture of this was all the more terrible because the infected wounds were sewn shut after being infected, which caused terrible pain, until the wound opened itself or was opened when the dressing was being changed.

#### **Body's reaction and consequences:**

All of the women operated on and infected were ill for a very long time, with fevers of up to 40°C, and with changes in their blood and urine indicating the presence of serious infections. The white blood cell (leucocyte) count reached 20,000 and 30,000, and the urine indicated serious damage to the body, principally to the liver, and the disintegration of protein (tyrosine

crystals in the urine). Infections of the legs that had been operated on were all very serious, and some of them so serious that they caused serious illnesses lasting for months and after-effects lasting for years, permanently crippling those women.

b. infected by injection

The women who were infected by bacteria by means of injection into the thigh muscles were among those who were least damaged by the experiments. (Of course here I mean "damaged" in the physical sense, because the psychological effects on all of those who underwent operations must be considered separately.) They were ill for a few days, their legs swelled to a greater or lesser extent, and for most of them, the matter ended here. Sometimes, for example in the case of Mrs. Bielska, the infection only manifested itself after [several] months had passed, causing serious local and generalised infections.

### **Group B operations - aseptic**

At the outset, I must point out that all of the operations were supposed to be aseptic, but they were not, as it turned out. The conditions in which the operations were carried out, but above all those in which the sick lived after the operations, had so little in common with asepsis that it is even truly surprising that so few of those who were operated on did not suffer secondary infections.

1. **Bone operations**

Three kinds of bone operations were carried out:

- a. breaking of bones
- b. bone grafts
- c. bone splinters (Knochen späne)

The operations during which bones were broken lasted up to 3 hours, during which the shin bones of both legs were broken with hammers on the operating table, after both bones had been exposed by an operation first. Then the bones were set with the aid of clamps, as in the case of Janina Marczevska, or without clamps, as in that of Leonarda Bień - the wounds were sewn shut and the extremities were put into plaster casts, and after a few days the plaster cast was taken off and the broken extremities were left to heal without the protection of a plaster cast. In my opinion, these experiments were conducted to test Professor Boeler's method and that of his school, methods that were [already] generally known and practiced.

[The technique of] bone grafts is even better known and practiced, which were carried out as group b of the bone operations - including the complete removal of the fibula, as in the case of Krystyna Dąbska, or partial removal, as with the tibia.

The group c bone operations, known as "Knochenspäne", meant that during the first preparatory operation, a square 2 cm by 5 cm, the "Knochenspan" (bone splinter), was cut into the bone of the tibia, usually in both shins [the part of the leg between the knee and foot], and usually in two places. Then during the second operation, the part of the bone with that prepared splinter was removed.

Those operations were mainly intended as a study of the regeneration of bone tissue, but they were perhaps also supposed to answer some other questions, because once the excised piece of bone was taken to Hohenlychen, as was the case at Barbara Pietrzyk's operation.

The bone operations were carried out on 13 prisoners.

**2. Muscle operations**

During these operations, pieces of muscle were excised from the lower extremities, both from the thigh and shin. The victims were operated on several times, removing larger and larger pieces of muscle the second and third times, causing larger and larger holes and greater weakness of the extremities. Whether or not the excised pieces of muscle were taken to Hohenlychen for further study or not I was not in a position to know, but no one checked on the women's condition after the operation was over.

**3. Nerve operations**

These were done least frequently. During these operations, pieces of nerves in the lower extremities were excised. Barbara Pytlewska shows the after-effects of such an operation.

**Table: Distribution of operation types**  
**Group A operations**

Kraska, Weronika	tetanus bacteria	died as one of the first to be operated on
Kurowska, Kazimiera	gaseous gangrene bacteria	she died over several days in inhumane suffering caused by the progressing gangrene all over her right lower extremity. Her life ended by euthanasia, administered by Gerda Quernheim in the form of an injection of morphine or evipan
Lefanowicz, Aniela	Oedema malignum bacteria	died
Kiecol, Zofia	--"--	died
Prus, Alfreda	--"--	died
Kuśmierczuk, Maria	--"--	xxxxxxxxxxxxxx
Dzido, Jadwiga	pyogenic bacteria	the most injured victim of those infected

	(staphylococcus aureus)	with pyogenic bacteria
Bileska, Jadwiga	injection	infection returned after a month

### Group B operations

Pietrzyk, Barbara	"Knochenspan"	youngest of those operated on - most upset by the bone operations
Czajkowska, Stanisława	muscle operation	not even 20 years old yet, she suffered especially much from the multiple muscle operations
Bąbińska, Bogumiła	attempt to graft bone into muscle	the results of the operation, except for one X-ray, were not monitored, as the results of these operations were in general not monitored
Pytlewska, Barbara	parts of nerves excised	
Marczewska, Janina	bones broken and set by means of clamps	
Bień, Leonarda	bones broken, wounds sewn shut and extremities kept in a plaster cast for several days, then left without plaster to heal	
Dąbska, Krystyna	excision of fibula	
Śledziejowska, Stanisława	muscle operation	the second youngest (after Barbara Pietrzyk) of the women who were subjected to operations, she was most exhausted by the muscle operations

### The aim of the operations

The experimental operations were to be operations for scientific aims, but I did not find out what scientific problems the perpetrators wanted to solve by means of these operations, i.e. I do not know

what their assumptions were, and am only expressing what I assume to be the case on the basis of what I saw.

### **The aim of group A operations**

I pose the question: what was the purpose of the operations in this group?

Supposedly, it was to test new pharmaceutical preparations.

This sounds completely incredible, but I could not observe any other interest on their part. Naturally, they were also interested in seeing how wounds thus infected would react, wounds with the bacteria sewn inside; how they would react depending on the quality of the bacteria and the size of the dose - hence the division into groups - but **basically** what they were interested in was how they would react upon being administered various kinds of pharmaceutical preparations, new German ones. It was principally Cibazol and Albucid that were tested and administered. As evidence of this, I can state the glaring fact that Weronika Kraska, who was infected with tetanus, was treated by this method.

But perhaps I am mistaken, perhaps there was another point to the operation, which remains beyond the scope of my observations-after all, I observed this all as if through a keyhole, and in the beginning, even literally through a keyhole, since we, the *rewir* employees, were locked out during the operations in the first period, and access to the ward, particularly for us Poles, was forbidden. But I once again would like to stress that the perpetrators from Hohenlychen did not show the slightest interest in the women after they had been operated on, and the local doctors cared for them only with great negligence; no one monitored those criminal experiments on principle, not even in clinical terms, to say nothing of in scientific ones. One simply gets the impression that conducting experimental medical experiments on humans was simply part of the concentration camp plan. There was defenceless human material at their disposal which they could use as they liked without fear of punishment, so they conducted medical experiments, because this, too, was in the program for Nazi Germany's concentration camps; and these experiments were conducted on the same level Germany medicine and morality had been on since 1933.

### **The aim of group B operations**

What was the purpose of this group of operations?

The answer sounds quite improbable: to study the regeneration of tissues.

The answer seems unbelievable because, after all, everyday experience provides medicine with so much material for this kind of research and these kinds of answers that healthy people do not to be specially operated on and tormented [especially for this purpose].

Nonetheless, medicine in Nazi Germany decided to investigate the problem in its own way, according to the principles of Professor Gebhardt and his school in Hohenlychen.

Because these bone operations were monitored by means of X-ray photographs, which I did myself, and because that was the only kind of monitoring that took place-I therefore know that (as far as bone operations are concerned at least) this question was certainly taken into consideration and only once were pieces of the excised bone taken to Hohenlychen for further study. It was a piece of the tibia,

which had already been operated on once by "creating bone chips" (Knochenspan). That piece of bone that was taken came from the right tibia of Barbara Pietrzyk, a sixteen-year-old girl, who was tormented with several bone operations. She has the largest pieces of bone missing in both of her lower legs. I also took an X-ray of that piece of bone.

I write this on the basis of my improbable answer to the question of why they were doing this: to study the regeneration of tissues.

The second piece of evidence I have for this is from a conversation which I managed to have with Dr. Herta Oberhäuser in an underhanded way. I reported to her the result of the X-rays that I had taken of the women who had been operated on, and, holding X-rays of both of Krystyna Dąbska's lower extremities that had been operated on, I asked her: "so, since you have removed this piece of the fibula without leaving any periosteum, how is there expected to be any regeneration, since of course a bone is regenerated above all from the periosteum?" To which Dr. Oberhäuser replied: "That's just what we want to find out, to what extent bone is regenerated from the periosteum, and to what extent the actual bone tissue is also contributing ..."

In order to prove that my answer as to the purpose of B operations is correct, I will add a third piece of evidence and describe a new case, which will shed light on the ruthlessness of these criminal experiments.

I received an order from Dr. Oberhäuser to take X-rays of the lower extremities of two prisoners, not Poles, who were to be operated on. I asked, feigning innocence: "Oh, not only Polish women are going to be operated from now on?" To which Dr. Oberhäuser replied, "Ach, those are just two exceptions, because they exhibit certain conditions that are needed for our experiments."

Those two prisoners, non-Poles, who were also operated on for experimental purposes were: a Ukrainian, Maria Hretschana, and a German Jehovah's Witness, Maria Konwitschka.

I took X-rays of those prisoners and saw that both showed changes in the bones of the lower extremities that indicate a chronic inflammation of the bone (osteomyelitis). The camp doctors knew about this from the preliminary examinations that each prisoner had undergone. I showed the X-rays and said that those were not normal healthy bones, to which Dr. Oberhäuser replied: "Precisely. We are interested in observing how bones that had undergone pathological changes previously would react to the 'Knochenspäne' (bone splinters)."

Those are, I think, proof enough that I was correct in believing that the perpetrators were interested in those matters, as far as point 1 of B operations are concerned, and medicine knows that answers to those questions are provided by everyday experiences and that medicine should be horrified by the crime of those operations.

By analogy with the bone operations, I can say that the muscle and nerve operations had that same goal: to study the regeneration of tissues.

Was the intended goal achieved?

No.

The results were not even monitored, and taken as a whole, they were not scientific studies, but rather, as far as their scientific nature is concerned, pure charlatanism, and as far as their humanity is concerned - a crime.

After all, if they had been interested in the regeneration of bones, they would have had to be monitoring the patients for months, and even years, and here monitoring lasted weeks. All of those operations were worthless in scientific terms, because they did not fulfil the criteria for scientific experiments. The criminals have nothing in their defence. In order to emphasise the tragedy of this crime even more, I cite Dr. Oberhäuser's inadvertent "admission": "but there was at least one good thing about those operations: I got a bit of practice operating, and I have a chance of getting a position at Hohenlychen now ..."

Thus 76 political prisoners, young and healthy, were repeatedly crippled by operations in order for SS Dr. Herta Oberhäuser "to get a bit of practice operating" and land a position at Hohenlychen.

### **The heroism of the women who underwent operations**

Maybe they were not supposed to be scientific operations, perhaps their perpetrators had other goals in mind, perhaps they wanted to discover how many people would die in those conditions. They will not find an answer to that question by taking into account physical factors-here, it was the psychological reaction of our girls, their heroism, super-human tenacity and exceptional willpower to survive that were decisive. It would seem that all should have died after having been operated on in such conditions, while only five died, having been infected with the most virulent strains of bacteria.

Alfreda Prus died, a student at the University of Wilno, 21 years old, a victim of the criminal German operations. She fought for her life for several days. Her entire right leg, which had been infected with the bacteria *Oedema malignum*, was bleeding. Alfreda Prus suffered terribly, and was conscious until the end, smiling her very strange smile, and saying farewell to us with the word Poland on her lips. Alfreda Prus was so beautiful and pure that she was the expression of highest perfection. I promised Alfreda Prus as she died, looking at her hands, so white and beautiful, that as long as I live, I will tell the world about their [the operation victims'] suffering and about this German crime.

Maria Kuśmierczuk, Alfreda Prus's very close friend, who was similar to her in personality, also a student at the University of Wilno, survived being infected with *Oedema malignum*. Maria Kuśmierczuk was ill for over one year, and of all the women operated on, has been most crippled from the operations. She embodies the most terrible suffering of the victims, and is herself living testimony to this German crime.

The soldiers who have received the order *Virtuti Militari* can proudly stand at attention before Maria Kuśmierczuk-so much courage, bravery and unbreakable spirit did she exhibit through her suffering.

Jadwiga Dzido is the woman who suffered most-after Maria Kuśmierczuk - victim of the infection - causing bacteria (*staphylococcus aureus*). She was almost as heroic as Maria Kuśmierczuk: in her feverish

hallucinations, she exhibited the pathos of suffering and patriotic impulses as much as the perpetrators, devoid of human feelings, wore uncertain expressions.

### **The psychological impact of the operations**

The psychological and mental conditions in which the women who were operated on remained from the time of their operation for the duration of the camp's existence has been described by Zofia Sokulska. I would like only to explain them from a medical point of view; in particular, I would like to stress that in addition to the serious physical changes the women underwent, they also experienced serious psychological changes. These were not only related to the violence with which the criminal experiments were carried out on them, which crippled them, but also, and most importantly, to the fact that the women lived for nearly 3 years with the conviction that they were condemned to die and that they would be liquidated, so they would not become evidence of crimes that had not been previously noted. This state of psychological tension, which lasted so long, and which was intensified by the decrees of the camp authorities, was of great importance, especially since these were for the most part young girls, at the age when intelligence and character are being formed.

Of course, all of us in the concentration camps were prepared for death at any moment, and every evening we were surprised we were still alive. The women who were operated on, however, waited for death twice over, as prisoners, and as [the victims of those] operations. For this reason, medicine's task will be to examine the psychological damage sustained by the women who were operated on as well.

### **The fate of the women who were operated on**

I will not describe the fate of the women who were operated on after they left the hospital until the end of April 1945, but rather will refer to Zofja Sokulska's description instead.

Once again, I stress, basing myself on what Zofja Sokulska has testified, that 6 of the women who were operated on were shot, as their role as experimental material had ended. These were:

Janina Pajęczkowska

Rozalia Gutek

Maria Gnaś

Maria Zielonka

Apolonia Rakowska

Aniela Sobolewska

The physical conditions of the women who were operated on, on the other hand, after they left the hospital and returned to the block, were much better than the conditions of other prisoners. The women who had been operated on did not work (true, they were not able to work), had better sleeping and living conditions, had it easier at roll calls (they couldn't be there, however), and were helped secretly by the Polish women who worked in the kitchen and the clothing room, and probably it was thanks to all this that they managed to survive in their condition until liberation, despite the operations and mental anguish.

### **Special types of operations**

On that note, I would like to end my description of the experimental operations, and move on now to a description of the special operations for which the world does not yet have a name, and thus may be

called: "The special operations of Professor Gebhardt", to distinguish them from his "experimental" operations described above.

Professor Gebhardt's special operations were conducted the following way: abnormal prisoners (i.e. mentally ill or retarded) were selected, regardless of nationality or category. The prisoners' entire lower limbs were amputated by enucleation of the hip joint, as were the upper limbs, which were removed along with the shoulder blade, and then the victim, having been operated on in this way, was killed on the operating table, by [lethal] injection, inasmuch as she was still alive.

The entire amputated limbs were packed into operating drapes and taken to Hohenlychen for purposes known to Professor Gebhardt.

There were about ten such operations. I saw women who had undergone such operations sneaking to the "little death room" (the famous "*Stübchen*" [German, "little room"] at Ravensbrück). In addition to me, Maria Kaczmarczyk and Helena Kralewska from Wejherowo, both of whom were working in the rewir at that time, also saw them.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude my testimony about the experimental operations that were done at the Ravensbrück concentration camp, I pose two questions:

What compensation does the world have for those who were subjected to these operations?

What punishment does the world have for those who did these operations?

Submitting my testimony as material witness to the best of my knowledge and memory, I do this with the deep feeling that I have fulfilled my duty, telling the truth, which I did not hesitate risking my life to learn, and which I believe that it is my duty, owing to my profession and position, to all of the women-both living and dead-who underwent operations, to give this testimony

In submitting my testimony to the Polish Documentary Institute in Lund, I do this in the best faith that I am carrying out a task that will also be the task of the Institute.

I can also indicate the following expert witnesses who also know the experimental operations to some extent:

Dr Jadwiga Hewelke, M.D., of Poznań

Mila Skrbkova

Inka Katnerowa, both medical students from Prague

( - )

Dr xxxxxxxxxxxx

Radiologist from Kraków

Former political prisoner no. 7403 at

Ravensbrück, whose current address is Stockholm,  
Serafimerlasarettet, Röntgen.

Stockholm, 15 March 1946

*Received by Krystyna Karier*

**Questions:**

1. How did Dr. Schydlausky participate in the operations? (Did he himself do operations, dressings?)
2. What evidence could you provide of the kinds of noble assistance that Gerda Quernheim provided?
3. Do you remember the names of the 13 prisoners who underwent bone operations?
4. Could you expand the table to include all those who were operated on?
5. What percent of those who were operated on were crippled as a result?
6. Who carried out Professor Gebhardt's "special" operations?
7. Bąbińska
8. What do you know about the sterilisation of 70 Gypsy women - operations that were carried out at Ravensbrück in 1944?
9. Address of Mrs. Kaczmarczyk and Mrs. Krajewska.
10. Chełmicka Halina-Helena.

**Answers to questions:**

1. I am not able to say whether Dr. Schydlausky did operations on his own, because none of us were in the operating room during the operations. He did, however, clearly avoid contact with operations and with the whole problem of experimental operations, he avoided dressing the wounds, and his behaviour betrayed his negative attitude toward the operations. It seems to me that he participated in the operations only insofar as he had to as head doctor.
2. Gerda Quernheim saved the life of Izabela Rek, who was choking from ether anaesthesia that lasted too long, by injecting her with lobelina. I personally have Gerda Quernheim to thank for having helped me save my mother, who was ill with pneumonia, by giving her camphor and transpulmina with the approval of Dr. Rosenthal. She helped many Poles who were working in the kitchen, but this was dictated solely by material benefits that she had from the help of the Polish women working in the kitchen. I got the impression that often when she killed the victims, she believed she was liberating them, but-and this is the biggest danger in such acts - she lost internal control over whom to kill and whom not to kill (looking at it from her point of

view). As far as killing children was concerned, she did not have any of the problems other people had, but rather just carried out the order to kill them.

3. See the report in German.
4. " " " " "
5. Outside the camp, where we have the appropriate experts, I refrain from naming a percentage of those who were crippled from the total of those who underwent these operations. I realise that some of those who were operated on do not suffer from any negative physical consequences at all, and among those who do, one can easily determine what percentage has been crippled. It is also clear to mean??? that nearly all suffered psychological trauma as a result of the operations and the period following the operation. (One must also take into account that many of them suffered from post-traumatic shock as well.)
6. I saw Dr. Fischer in the Hohenlychen car holding a leg wrapped in a sheet.
7. I remember that after an operation on a leg, carried out on Bąbińska, she also had a small bandage on her lower abdomen-I believe it was on the right side, which would indicate that there was also some procedure carried out there-a small one, because the bandage was small.
8. It seems to me that the sterilisation operations on the Gypsy women were done in late winter 1945. I only know about these operations second hand. Since I know the X-ray machine in the *rewir*, I can say that the sterilisation operations could not have been done using X-rays, because the machine was not suited to that purpose, and that those operations only took place in the room where the X-ray machine stood, which is why the ladies told people that it had been done with X-rays. They were probably done in the X-ray room because that is where the high tension equipment had been moved, and the operations must have been done with some kind of equipment that required high tension. From what one of the women who had been sterilised told me, I drew the conclusion that the procedure had been carried out with 2 electrodes; a large passive electrode was laid on the abdomen, and a second electrode was put inside the vagina. The woman who had been sterilised said that she had experienced a short, violent pain. I was no longer working in the *rewir* at that time, and I could not see any of this going on myself.
10. I consider Halina Chelmicka to be a capable, intelligent and clever woman. She would be able to tell you a great deal about the experimental operations, mostly from the Hohenlychen perspective, where she was and worked - but I consider her to be amoral with a tendency to pathological lying, and her testimony would have to be checked by [first] having her examined by psychologists and psychiatrists. She was distinguished by her egoism and I cannot imagine that she would be able to do anything out of sheer goodness.

Having read this, signed by  
( - ) Trelleborg, 4 July 1946  
Dr. xxxxxxxxxxxx

Received by:

( - )

K. Karier

**Opinion of the Institute assistant:**

The witness, Dr. xxxxxx, has prepared her testimony as material witness independently.

The final section, titled "conclusion", attests to the fact that she was fully aware of her responsibility to provide truthful evidence about the crimes that have been committed - which she also does with great care, giving facts that she has confirmed with certainty, as well as her suppositions and observations-"to the extent that my knowledge and memory allow".

Having known Dr. xxxxxxxxxxxx personally from my time in the camp, I can say that her stance as a Pole, doctor and person were always ideal. Her balanced nature, calmness and highly developed sense of responsibility for her own acts guarantee that her testimony is completely trustworthy.

On the day she left for Poland, the witness answered a few additional questions that I asked in order to supplement her report.

( - )

Krystyna Karier

Lund, 6 July 1946