



MARIA SROKOWSKA-TOMKOWICZ

Warsaw, 21 November 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	Maria Srokowska-Tomkowicz
Age	46 years
Parents' names	Konstanty and Zofia
Place of residence	Warsaw, Chełmska Street 20, flat 19
Occupation	doctor of medicine
Religion	Roman Catholic
Criminal record	none

I was arrested on 14 November 1944 in the village of Mała Wola, in the commune of Czerniewice, near Tomaszów Mazowiecki, where I was temporarily present. I say "temporarily present", because while traveling from Milanówek to Tomaszów I stopped by in Mała Wola, having learned that there were injured partisans in the village who had been wounded in a skirmish with German troops. Since the doctor of this unit had been killed in the fighting, I started giving first aid to the wounded. Just as I was finishing dressing the men's injuries, two vehicles of Gestapo men drove up (they were in Gestapo uniforms), and a few of them entered the house in which I and one of the wounded men were present.

When they entered, I was packing the remaining dressings. One of the Gestapo men turned to me and said in Polish: – You go from one group of bandits to the next! And slapped me across the face. I was immediately taken to a truck, while my first-aid kit – in which I had

my documents – was seized. They also took the wounded man, whose surname – as I recall – was Lewandowski (I do not remember his name). The Gestapo men asked me on the spot whether I had also tended to any other bandits. Contrary to the truth, I declared that I had attended only to this one man (the remaining wounded were in another village, Gaj). And I do not think they found them, for the vehicles that arrived in Mała Wola and in which I and Lewandowski were driven off to Tomaszów did not contain any other Poles apart from us.

After we arrived in Tomaszów, I was detained in the Gestapo building on Zapiecek Street. Two days later I was taken for an interrogation, which consisted in me being asked whether I was a member of an underground organization, to which I replied no. I was also asked about the surnames of the commanders of the partisan unit. Truthfully, I did not know them. Since my responses were in the negative, I was beaten during this and the six subsequent interrogations. During each interrogation I was beaten on the thighs with a rubber truncheon, while at one moment they also aimed a blow at my head, whereupon I shielded my face with my left arm and as a result the blow fell on the inside of my left forearm, splitting the skin and tearing the muscles. Since I had no possibility of applying a dressing, an infection set in and the wound suppurred until February 1945.

(At this point the witness showed the judge a scar with a length of approximately 20 cm, passing from the center of the forearm towards the elbow, with a width of around 5 cm).

I was kept in the Gestapo building in Tomaszów Mazowiecki for two weeks; after the final interrogation they gave me a report to sign, in two copies, or possibly two different reports. They were not read out to me and I do not know their contents. I did not protest, I agreed to sign the documents in order to leave the interrogation room as quickly as possible and avoid further beatings. During all these interrogations I was beaten by the Gestapo interpreter, who spoke good Polish; I do not know his surname. I was examined by the local Gestapo chief, whose surname was said to be Kurt. His surname was given to me by some other prisoners. For two weeks I was kept in a regular dark basement, sustained with only bread and water. There were two cells for arrestees in the corridor (reportedly, there were also additional cells for detainees in other corridors). The one in which I found myself contained both men and women. There were around ten people in total. The arrestees changed, for they would bring new ones in and take the others to the prison.



After 14 days, I was transported to the prison in Tomaszów. I was kept in cell no. 20, where there were 22 other women and me. I stayed in the prison for two weeks. While there, I was no longer summoned for interrogation.

I would like to add that during my period of detention in the prison I got to know, among other people, a Jewess who was in the same cell as me. She asked me that in the event I should be freed to inform the public of her name and surname – Janina Rybicka from Koszykowa Street 19, Warsaw. She was approximately 30 years old, with reddish blond hair. She was very intelligent and did not really look like a Jewess. As I learned from other female inmates, Janina Rybicka and three other people ... (Dr Zabłocki from Warsaw, deputy prosecutor Manteuffel – maybe his surname sounded somewhat differently – from Łódź, and a 14 year-old girl – I was unable to determine her surname; it was said that she kept giving different surnames and places of origin) were hanged by the Germans in the prison basement, apparently because they were of Jewish descent.

I was told that they were executed by prison warden Klein (I do not know his name), who was well-known in Tomaszów.

Furthermore, I heard that Klein also hanged a certain inmate, an 82 year-old woman (her surname is known to Dr Janina Sumara from Tomaszów; she and the elderly lady were co-accused in the same case), who happened to walk into the basement when Klein was hanging the other four.

I was transported from the prison together with 200 other women to the camp in Ravensbrück. A transport of 500 men was sent out at the same time. I do not know where they were headed.

I arrived in Ravensbrück on 18 December 1944. We were picked up at Fürstenberg station and driven to the camp in Ravensbrück on foot. We were not beaten along the way, for we were led by a fairly decent German gendarme. He demanded that we sing some partisan songs during the march and we obliged.

In the camp we were immediately taken to the baths, where we handed over our clothes and, indeed, all of our belongings. Afterwards all of us had to undergo a gynecological examination, which was conducted with considerable brutality by an SS *Schwester*, who not only did not



wash her hands, but also proceeded in such a way that some of the inmates who were virgins lost their virginity there and then. I know this because I myself saw that this nurse had bloodied hands after the examinations, I heard the cries and pleas of the inmates, and also personally saw that two of the prisoners – Lonia Waligórska (she currently lives somewhere in Pomerania) and Andzia (I do not remember her surname) – had their hymens damaged in such a way. I heard that there were more such instances.

After the bath I was given a torn summer shirt and equally shabby sundress and also a light cloth coat, while my own shoes were returned. Apart from this I received no other clothing or underwear. The rest were kitted out more or less the same. This was on 18 December, after a warm bath. The temperature was around minus 15°. After the bath, our transport was taken to block no. 21. Five days later I was given number 94,589.

Before we received our numbers, we were not taken out to work. During this period other inmates, who worked in the tailoring shop and sorted the items taken from prisoners, brought us various articles of clothing which they would steal for us during work. I was dressed in this way by Maria Bujalska, the wife of the head physician of the National Insurance Hospital in Warsaw (shot dead in Oświęcim), currently employed as a teacher at the Słowacki secondary school in Warsaw at Wawelska Street.

Indeed, she dressed many other inmates from our transport in this manner. Thanks to her we were able to make it through the roll-calls – without the clothes, none of us would have survived, for we had to stand at roll-call in the freezing cold from 4.00 a.m. to 8.00 a.m.

Among others, Bujalska gave me a warm winter coat with a caracul collar, a sweater, a warm skirt, stockings, etc.

I would like to stress that we all had our numbers on our dresses and sleeves and also carried a colored triangle with a letter specifying our nationality. The triangles were in the following colors: red for politicals, green for criminals, lilac for Germans arrestees, black for asocials, that is all Gypsies and prostitutes, and also those Germans who were detained in the camp because they had friends who were of Polish, Jewish or other origin.

The camp housed inmates of all nationalities – not only were all the nations of Europe represented, but we also had Turks and even one Egyptian.



Poles were the largest group (approximately 30 percent), followed by Russians (prisoners of war from the Red Army and other Russian women) – also around 30 percent, Gypsies and Jewesses – 10 percent each, Czechs, Yugoslavians and Slovaks – 5 percent each; the rest were Germans (communists, [illegible], those who had non-German friends, and criminals), Belgians, Dutch, Swedes, Norwegians, Danes, and others.

I remained in the camp until 15 March 1945. Then, new arrivals would receive numbers above 150,000.

While in the camp, I worked as a doctor (I am an internist – a gynecologist by profession) at the on-site hospital. The hospital building – the so-called *rewir* (from the German *Revier*) or sick room – contained an office, clinic, an operating theater, and the following blocks: 11 (internal disease patients), 10 (tuberculosis and mentally ill patients), 9 (surgery), 8 for erysipelas and hunger diarrhea patients (cholera block), 7 for internal disease patients who did not work outside the camp, and 6 – the “death block”.

At this the report was interrupted at the request of the interviewee.

The report was read out.

Warsaw, 27 November 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: Maria Srokowska-Tomkowicz, known in the case.

From Christmas 1944 to March 1945 I worked as a doctor in hospital block no. 6. Apart from me, the following were employed there in the same capacity: Dr Janina Węgierska (currently resident in Łódź, I think she lives at Zgierska Street 5; I will try to determine her address and inform the court), Antonina Nikiforowa, a Russian (a professor at Leningrad University), Ludmiła Afanasjewa (a Russian) and, for a short time, a Hungarian Jewess by the name of Iza (I do not remember her surname; she was with us only a week, for Dr Treite did not allow her, a Jewess, to remain in an Aryan environment and treat Aryan patients; she was sent to a regular block).

Our block was known as the block of death, for it housed only those sick with *Durchfall*; however, the conditions in our block were such that the patients had no chance of making a recovery.

The block could accommodate some 350 – 400 inmates. Of this number, around 50 would die every day. There was no treatment at all in our block. By way of example, for the 150 – 180 patients who were in my care I received two ampules of camphor for injections and 10 aspirin pills – no more – for the entire week. I was not given any drugs to treat *Durchfall* (a type of diarrhea). In order to somehow resolve this problem, we would burn wood into coal, smash it into powder, and administer this powder to the sick. However, the constitutions of some patients were so strong (for example that of Wanda Pozner from France) that they successfully combated the disease. We would transfer such patients to block 8 or 7 as convalescents (there was not enough room in our block, and in any case the conditions in other blocks were



better). Once a week we had to discharge those patients who could stand on their legs from block 6 (usually in such instances we transferred them to other hospital blocks). Furthermore, once every week – authorized by Treite – *Schwester Ani* (SS), the head of the pharmacy, or a German physician, inmate Siens (we managed to bribe her and she played along), performed inspections of patients, during which all those who were able, more or less, to stand on their legs, were discharged from 6 to the blocks from which they had come, from where until March 1945 – very often, while from March – as a rule – they would be taken to the gas chambers.

In March 1945, due to the disorganization in the camp, those discharged to their blocks quite frequently managed to save themselves (provided they were able to move around in some way) by changing blocks and numbers, concealing themselves in other blocks.

I would like to add that sick women were walked or brought to our block every day in the morning, and placed in the vestibule – the so-called *Tagesraum*, which was an admissions room of sorts. There they were undressed and their names, surnames, numbers and blocks registered. We wrote down the numbers with a copying pencil on their hands. In the *Tagesraum* there was a small stove, cabinets with clothes, and [illegible] with food for the entire block. The fact that many people died in the *Tagesraum*, before they even got to the hospital proper, was nothing out of the ordinary. We would carry out the bodies to the *Waschraum* throughout the day and from there they were collected by the *Totenkolonie* (this was made up of German inmates sporting black patches; on a number of occasions I saw how they – in the *Waschraum* or in the *Toterkeller*, to which I sometimes had to go – tore out gold teeth from the bodies and played with them).

The patients arriving at our block would undress, whereafter we cut their hair and directed them to the hall, where there were double-decker plank beds with pallets and blankets. From February 1945 the patients received neither underwear nor bedlinen, and were forced to lie naked. We were not allowed to leave the patients their clothes. Only sometimes did we manage to do so in secret. In any case, the clothing and underwear of newly arrived patients was always louse-infested. When we discharged the patients, they would receive a different set of clothes and underwear – invariably of worse quality than that in which they had come. The hall was not heated in any way. The sick would lie five to two plank beds set side by side. It was often the case that we had insufficient room for even this arrangement, and so some of them would be forced to lie on mattresses laid out

on the floor. This would be the usual arrangement for those who were in their death throes and also for German inmates.

In the morning, each patient would receive half a liter of unsweetened coffee (as did the personnel), at noon one half liter of gruel made from flour or groats, while we and the healthier inmates were given cooked cabbage or rutabaga; apart from this, everyone received 0.25 kg of bread, and in the evening one more half liter of unsweetened coffee.

Apart from block 10, which housed the tuberculosis patients (with open tuberculosis, bedridden) and the mentally ill (there were some 200 consumptives and 200 mentally ill patients in this block). I would like to stress that in our diagnoses we made no mention of sicknesses such as tuberculosis (provided the patient was able to walk), myocardial weakness, nor indeed of any type of heart disease, for if we had done so, the patients concerned would have been sent to the gas chambers. The mentally ill sent to block 10 usually remained alive until a mental illness was diagnosed by Treite (I was told this by the medical personnel of the block). Until February 1945, once a mental disorder was determined, the person concerned would receive an intravenous injection of phenol (administered by the SS nurses), which resulted in death after a few minutes. Tuberculosis patients (in block 10a) were dealt with in the same way. Thus, patients arriving at block 10a usually stayed for only a few days.

From February 1945 patients were no longer put to death using phenol injections; instead, once a week they were put on a truck and driven to the gas chamber. I am not familiar with the procedure of execution in gas chambers. I know one inmate who survived the *Jugendlager* – her surname is Szabelak (she came from Warsaw), and she has recently returned from Sweden (I will determine her address and notify you, citizen Judge). I also knew another woman who was selected to be gassed, but managed to escape. I will determine and submit her address. Her name and surname: Józefa Chmielnicka.

Conditions in the other hospital blocks (apart from 10 and 6) were better: the patients had underwear and a slightly larger quantity of drugs. The removal of inmates for gassing was a rarer occurrence and was usually performed in a more discreet manner, i.e. prisoners would be transferred to the *Jugendlager*.

As a matter of fact, there was an instance in the beginning of March 1945 when Treite ordered us to transfer all the patients who did not have *Durchfall* to block 7, ostensibly in

order to make room for the great number of *Durchfall* sufferers who were kept in the living blocks. Antonina Nikiforowa transferred her patients to block 7 (as did Janina Węgierska), while I – sensing deceit – sent only two of mine. Nikiforowa and Węgierska thought that I was endangering my patients. As it turned out, however, it was I who had guessed correctly, as two days later the SS-men took all of the sick women from block 7 to the gas chamber.

In February 1945 Treite made a proposition to the Jewish and Gypsy inmates: namely, if they reported voluntarily to the sick room for roentgenological irradiation that could cause infertility, they would be freed from the camp. A large number of women came forward and the procedures were conducted throughout February. I learned from two fellow inmates, the Czechs Aniczka Kleist and Majda (she was a doctor, but I do not know her surname), who worked at the x-ray machine, that Professor Widemann arrived and personally, with the assistance of SS nurses, irradiated these women. The irradiations were performed in the following way: ten women aged between 14 and 40 would be arranged in a line, naked, and exposed to the radiation (all at the same time) for half an hour over a period of 7 days. The promise was not kept; they were not freed. I know only that in the beginning of March large groups of these women (Jewesses and Gypsies) were taken away from the camp as part of work transports. I do not know where they were taken.

No experimental operations were performed during my period of detention in Ravensbrück. As far as I know, none of our doctors was present at such procedures. Maybe Dr Grabska from Poznań (I think her name is Zofia, but I do not know her address) could say something more on the subject. Grabska – a Polish prisoner – worked in the sick room's surgical and gynecological department. I was unable to determine what these operations could have consisted in. I only know what was told to me by the women who had been operated on. On the basis of their accounts I came to the conclusion that they were infected with some kinds of malignant bacteria. I also heard that some of the prisoners had fragments of their femoral and tibial bones excised. I know nothing about why human limbs were taken from Ravensbrück to some unspecified location, although I did hear about such instances.

The report was read out.