



BOGUMIŁA BĄBIŃSKA-DOBROWOLSKA

Warsaw, 8 October 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	Bogumiła Bąbińska, married surname Dobrowolska
Age	30 years
Parents' names	Stefan and Irena
Place of residence	Warsaw, Madalińskiego Street 69, flat 2
Occupation	Deputy Head of a Department at the Central Statistical Office
Religion	Roman Catholic
Criminal record	none
Relationship to the parties	aggrieved party

I was arrested on 25 April 1941 in Lublin. At 3.00 p.m. my flat was visited by five Gestapo men, or so I think judging by their uniforms. They conducted a thorough search of my flat, but failed to find any potentially incriminating materials. They inquired after Mr. Władysław Jezierski, who also resided in the flat, but was temporarily absent. Next, they detained all those present in the flat, namely myself, Jan Ziemba and Marian Krawczyk. My acquaintance, Kazimierz Stępień – who was in the flat when the Gestapo men arrived – managed to escape. (They caught him later and he died in the camp in Oświęcim).

The Gestapo men demanded that I, Krawczyk and Ziemba inform them of Mr. Jezierski's whereabouts. When we refused, they started beating us. I was hit in the temple with fists and a rubber hose upon which iron rings had been fixed. The men were not beaten in



my presence. Neither I nor the men were bloodied. The Gestapo men did not obtain the information they wanted and therefore set up an ambush in the flat, remaining there with us until 7.00 p.m. Their plan was fruitless. Thereupon we were all taken in a motor car to the prison in the Castle. During the search the Gestapo men developed a liking for my suitcase, so they threw out my personal belongings and took the suitcase with them when they were leaving the flat. For reasons unknown, the Gestapo men released Krawczyk. They took only me and Ziemba to the Castle. I was interrogated in the prison – at the office – three weeks after being taken to the Castle.

I do not know the surname of the person who interrogated me. The questioning passed without physical violence. I was examined with the participation of an interpreter. I do not know the surnames of those who interrogated me.

I was asked repeatedly about Władysław Jezierski and other persons, whose surnames I did not know at all. After a few weeks I was interrogated at the Castle once again – by the same people, who asked me the same questions. This time, too, the questioning passed without physical violence. I was interrogated the third time on 19 September 1941. This time I was taken to the Gestapo. I was told that a duplicator had been found on the premises of the company in which I worked (a furniture manufacturing enterprise located on the premises of Wolski's factory in Lublin) and asked who took part in mimeographing illegal prints, who distributed the prints and where, and – finally – whether Władysław Jezierski participated in this activity, and if so, then in what capacity. I did not give any answers, admitting nothing. During this interrogation I received fist blows to the head and was beaten all over my body with a stick. My lip was cut during the investigation.

I was then sent back to the prison in the Castle and attached to a transport that was sent to Ravensbrück on 21 September 1941. I arrived in Ravensbrück on 23 September. At the station we were met by female SS guards. In my opinion, initially the SS-women came from the intelligentsia, among others. They were of various ages, for example there was one whom we called "grandma" Rabe, aged over 60, who however drilled us most brutally, not hesitating to use blows and kicks. Later on, the SS-women came primarily from the working class, and I must say that a great many of them appeared to be prostitutes. Their characters varied. For example, during a certain period the camp commandant was one Langefeld, who behaved like a cultured person, that is she did not shout or hurl abuse at us. She strove to maintain

order in the camp, but she did so without beating or kicking us. When she was the *Oberin* there was relative freedom in the camp and by this I mean to say that discipline was not very strict and the searches and inspections less frequent. The worst of the *Oberins* was Mandel (I do not know her name), aged around 35, who had the air of an educated person (she was later transferred to Oświęcim) – she was a monster. When she was out in the *Lager* street, it was enough to have an item of clothing infringing the dress code, for example when we were required to walk barefoot, if any one of us was wearing shoes sewn from rags, or a headscarf tied contrary to the rules, or a needle in her collar (those who worked in the tailoring shop would frequently stick needles in their collars or aprons for the duration of the lunch break) – well, it would be enough for Mandel to notice any such infringement in order to kick and beat up a prisoner. She simply loved to beat and ill-treat others.

There was another one, an *Aufseherin*, whose surname I do not remember right now; we called her “the crow”. Apart from beating, kicking and hitting around the face and head [illegible] with a stick for the most trivial infringements, she would also apply other methods. For example, whenever she felt that someone was working badly or with insufficient eagerness, she would not allow such a person to leave the tailoring shop to go to the toilet – this resulted in the women having various mishaps, to which she would react by beating them, and also, once the work had been finished, by making us stay outside in the biting cold. There were days when we finished work at 7.00 p.m., and yet returned to the block only after 11.00 p.m. We would spend the intervening period standing outside.

Every once in a while the camp’s administrative personnel would attend screenings of propaganda films and receive propaganda brochures [prejudicing them] against Poles. For example, one brochure was devoted to the events that occurred on the border in Bydgoszcz immediately before the start of the war. These were written in German. I was able to have a look at the brochure concerning the events in Bydgoszcz and saw that it contained photographs of murdered Germans. I did not read it. I noticed that following these screenings and the distribution of such brochures the anti-Polish stance would toughen and the administrative personnel would invariably treat us worse: we were called bandits and accused of murdering German soldiers, gouging their eyes out, etc.

In July 1942 women from the Lublin transport aged under 35 were summoned by name to the camp’s administrative office. Some 80 women were summoned. After this group

was looked at by some physicians (absolutely casually, for we did not undergo a medical inspection), we were sent back to the block.

A few days later we were called once more (this time the entire Lublin transports from September and May) to the administrative office, where our names were checked and our legs were looked at – from a distance. Yet again, we were all sent back to the block.

Some time later a younger group was called to the *rewir* [sick room, from the German *Revier*; translator's note], where we were arranged in fives and two or three such "fives" were sent to a doctor for inspection. However, the doctor did not examine them – he just cast a glance. Once more, we were all sent back to the block, although I do not remember exactly whether or not a few of us were ordered to remain in the hospital.

The first operations were carried out on 1 August, while I was operated on on 17 November 1942. Before the procedure I was completely healthy. We would be summoned for the operation as if it were an execution (we were told to "report for an interview"), a sentencing or an interrogation.

I would like to add that we would receive the following punishments: the lightest – standing during lunchtime or after work, for an hour or longer; next, we could be deprived of food – for example for a week and during this period we would receive no more than 30 decagrams of bread per day. More severely, we would be sent to the penal block, where the prisoners were tasked with especially difficult jobs, or locked in the bunker, in a dark cell, with soup being given once every four days.

On 15 November 1942 I was summoned to the *rewir* (hospital), where I had my temperature taken and was inspected visually (having first undressed); finally, I was sent to a room in which women who had already been operated on were lying. I received an injection of morphine (I was told that it was morphine by the nurses), whereafter I was wheeled out into the corridor before the operating theater and anesthetized. I woke up with my right leg in a plaster cast and saw that I had a piece of plaster near my appendix area; this was covered by gauze held in place by sticking plaster. The dressing was not tight, so I drew it aside and saw that my stomach had been cut open and sewn up in this area. The cut was some 12 cm long. I felt a terrible pain in my right lower leg. The cut on my stomach was numb. For more or less a week I had a temperature of around 38° – 39°, but later on it started to fall. As time



passed, the pain in my leg died down somewhat. Every evening I would receive morphine to drink. Throughout this time no dressings were applied to my stomach, while they started dressing my leg only after the cast was removed, that is more or less 12 – 14 days after the operation. I saw the dressings. I determined at the time that I had had four incisions on my thigh: three parallel and the fourth lower down, each approximately 8 cm long.

Treatment consisted of washing the area of the wound with petrol and covering it with a fresh dressing. I would like to add that the dressings were changed only if we so demanded, and it was not uncommon for me to wear the same dressing for five – six days. In the latter case we would use the help of female prisoners working in the hospital and make our own dressings, utilizing materials stolen for us by these prisoners-cum-nurses. Before the doctor's inspection, which consisted of him only entering the hall, we would unwind and hide the bandages. This was so because dressings were at a premium. Had they noticed that we had fresh bandages, there would have been a tremendous row. It was often the case that the visiting doctors were drunk.

After the first operation, only the wound on my lower leg festered (it was approximately 20 cm long). The operations were carried out by Gebhardt (I know this from other physicians – Germans) and Fischer; Oberheuser cooperated in the procedures and applied dressings. Schiedlausky also put on dressings, but he did not take part in the operations. I did not receive any injections. I was not subjected to any special procedures, nor did I have a special diet.

On 18 December 1942 I underwent a second operation: two incisions on my right thigh (which had by then healed up) were cut open under general anesthetic (I received an intravenous injection and an ether mask). In all probability, my blood vessels were not tied off after the second procedure, for I experienced major bleeding from one of the cuts. My leg was not put in plaster, but only bandaged. Immediately after the operation I ran a temperature of up to 40°. I demanded that the bleeding wound be examined by a physician. Schiedlausky then took out the stitches from the wound and inserted a gauze swab. This dressing was not changed for five days. The wound started festering.

The other [wound] – cut open once more – suppurated as well, but only on the surface. The wound from which I experienced bleeding suppurated for around two months.

On 18 January 1943 I had a third operation (by this time both the wound on my stomach and that on my lower leg had healed up), during which the other two incisions on my thigh



were cut open (that is the ones that had not been cut open a second time during the second operation). Before the third procedure my entire (right) leg was x-rayed. After the third operation the dressing was applied so carelessly that when I woke up, I found it lying on my knee. Both these wounds started to fester. Yet again, I ran a temperature of up to 40° for a few days. I felt a pain in my thigh. I noticed after a few days that around these wounds there were holes from which pus seeped.

The suppuration lasted for more or less a month. During this period my dressings were changed, but my eyes were not covered and I was able to see what was happening. On 14 February I was discharged from the hospital and returned to the block on crutches. Gradually, I started walking. I was exempt from work. I did not work until 15 August 1943. I could walk around freely. Initially, after I returned to the block my (right) leg was strongly swollen from the knee down, including the foot. Gradually, the pain eased and finally subsided altogether.

On 15 August I was once again summoned to the *rewir*, together with nine other women. Some time before I had heard rumors that the operations were to be resumed and that a special area was being prepared in the *rewir*. We were officially told that we were to be inspected in order to determine whether we were in good enough shape to be sent to a factory. Since we were prohibited from working outside the camp, we guessed that this was a lie. We did not report to the *rewir* when ordered, even though the summons was repeated a number of times. *Oberaufseherin* Binz then instructed all of the prisoners to return to their blocks, and came over to our block and ordered us to arrange ourselves outside the building. Next she read out our surnames (that is mine, Helena Piasecka, Władysława Karolewska, Joanna Szydłowska, Halina Piotrowska, Stefania Sieklucka, Urszula Karwacka, Zofia Sokulska, Pelagia Michalik, and Zofia Kormańska). We stepped forward and, in accordance with her order, stood separately. We declared, however, that we would not go for the operation and requested that – if we had already received death sentences – we be executed. Binz responded that we were idiots, that there was no question of any operations being performed (for which she vouched), and that we would only be taken away to a factory. We replied that we did not believe her. Binz then ordered us to go to the administrative office, where she would show us a document that would convince us that we were to be deported to a factory upon the demand of the Labor Office. We therefore walked over to the office, however having first agreed that if the Germans attempted to take us for an operation we would run away and offer



resistance. Before the office, our ten-strong group was guarded by *Aufseherins* and the *Lager* police. It was a Sunday. We noticed that Binz was making a telephone call. We heard voices behind the gate and the barking of dogs. It appeared as if they were gathering SS-men to take us by force and so we fled, mixing with the crowd standing in front of our block. A moment later Binz appeared with the police (*rewir* prisoners who were *Volksdeutschers* or of German origin) and ordered us to step forward. Initially, we did not want to comply and thus the policewomen started looking for us one by one (they knew us by sight). When they pulled out one, the rest of our group all came forward. Binz then declared that we would be locked up in the bunker as punishment. We reiterated that we would not go for the operation. In the bunker we were placed in two dark cells, five to each. The following afternoon the door of our cell was opened: in the doorway we saw Dr Treite, a second doctor in uniform, German nurses (SS-women) and the SS-men who were guarding the bunkers. Treite asked us why we were in prison and looked at our operated legs.

One of the female guards asked him: – Will you take them? Treite responded that he would. Once again we declared that we would not go for an operation. The door to our cell was closed, leaving us locked inside. We expected them to take us by force. However, this did not happen. It turned out later that they took the five women from the other cell. Only one of us was picked, late in the evening, to care for the other five. As a matter of fact, she was removed from the cell by force, for she did not know why they were taking her. We remained in the bunker for two weeks, but none of us were taken for an operation.

After two weeks we were sent back to the block.

I would like to add that because of our actions, our whole block was punished by being deprived of food and locked down for three days.

I later learned that the five women from our group of ten had been operated on, each one thrice.

I would also like to add that on a number of occasions we protested to the commandant and doctors against being operated on, even before the whole affair with the bunker, but we never once received a response. We submitted a written protest in February or March 1943. This, too, received no answer. After some time, when women summoned to the hospital would fail to report, Oberheuser declared that no operations would be performed, and indeed none were until 15 August.



Currently I have no particular ailments afflicting the operated leg. It is just weaker than the left, but obviously I have scars and also the right tibia has thickened.

I worked out from conversations held by the doctors that I had undergone so-called military operations, although I do not know what they consisted of. Polish women doctors (prisoners) working in the camp hospital told me that I had been injected with bacteria, for example gas gangrene bacteria; the microorganisms grew in our bodies and – probably – the pus recovered from our wounds was used to obtain a serum.

One of my friends – Kraska – died after an operation with symptoms of tetanus. I know that some of my friends had bone and muscle fragments resected during operations. A female prisoner-doctor who examined me stated that some of my nerves had been cut out.

By complete chance, I had the opportunity to look through an issue of the "Das Reich" newspaper from 30 July or 30 August 1943. The paper had an article on the extraordinary achievements of German scientists in the field of surgery. The article (I read it) mentioned the discovery of a serum against gas gangrene, the transplantation of bones, muscles and skin and also some kind of cerebral operations. There was no indication of where the experiments had been conducted. These experiments – operations – were carried out not only on Polish women, but also on Ukrainians and Russians (Maria Hreczana from Odessa and Anna Kukowa from Kharkiv). Four mentally ill women were also operated on: a Czech, Yugoslavian, Russian and German. After the operations had been performed, all of them (with the exception of Maria Hreczana) were killed with injections. I know this from the accounts of women prisoners who worked in the camp hospital. They also told me that one of them (I do not know her surname) had her leg cut off during the operation, while another had her shoulder blade removed. They were also operated two to three times, whereas during the final procedure they were killed with injections and immediately placed in caskets. These operations were also performed by Gebhardt, around January 1943.

The report was read out.

Report

Warsaw, 12 October 1945. Examining Judge Mikołaj Halfter, implementing the motion submitted by the Prosecutor of the District Court in Warsaw – through the agency of Professor Wiktor Grzywo-Dąbrowski, director of the Institute of Forensic Medicine of Warsaw University, a resident in Warsaw at Grochowska Street 246, appointed in the capacity of court expert – performed a medicolegal examination of Bogumiła Dobrowolska-Bąbińska, 30 years of age, daughter of Stefan and Irena, resident at Madalińskiego Street 69, flat 2, Deputy Head of a Department at the Central Statistical Office, having no criminal record, and being the aggrieved party.

Medical history: the subject stated that on 17 November 1942, while imprisoned at the camp in Ravensbrück, she was injected with morphine and thereafter taken to the operating theater, where she received an intravenous injection in her left arm and fell asleep. She stated that she had woken up on a bed in the hospital and that on the lower right side of her abdomen she had a small surgical dressing, while her right leg was in a plaster cast from the groin to the foot inclusive. At the time she did not know what was being done to her. The plaster cast was removed after two weeks, and this allowed her to see that her thigh had been incised four times and her right shank once. An incision had also been made on her abdomen. During the week her temperature rose to 40°, whereafter – over the next week – it returned to normal. Her temperature was highest on the second – third day after the operation. After a month – on 18 December 1942 – she was taken once again to the operating theater, where she received an intravenous injection and fell asleep. She woke up on a bed in the hospital and noticed that she had a dressing on her right thigh. She lifted the dressing and saw that she had fresh incisions along the two previous scars. On the second day her temperature rose to 40° and she experienced bleeding from one of the wounds; a swab was applied, which became purulent after a few days. The suppuration lasted for approximately two months. The fever lasted for up to ten days. On 18 January another operation was performed, during which the two remaining scars on her thigh were cut open; this was also accompanied by suppuration, lasting some five to six weeks. She had a fever for more or less one week.

Before the procedures in Ravensbrück she had not experienced any serious ailments, and in particular had not been affected with any diseases of the right leg, nor had she had any abdominal complaints.

Present condition: the subject is of tall height, well-built and sufficiently nourished; on the skin of her abdomen, above the right groin, there is an oblique, whitish scar that is 10 cm long and a few millimeters wide, whereas the subject did not feel any pain when this place was pressed. On the front of the right thigh, at a point located more or less centrally, she has a grayish white scar, which runs from top to bottom, with a length of 8 cm and a width of approximately 7 – 8 mm. At a distance of some 4 cm away from the above mentioned scar there runs another scar, blueish gray in color and parallel to the former, with a length of 9 cm and a width of approximately 6 cm. On the outside of the same thigh, in its central lower part, there are two scars arranged one above the other, vertically, with a length of 6 cm and width of up to 10 mm each. Both these scars are retracted and light brown in color.

All of the scars described here above are movable and painless; transverse stitch marks [illegible] pass through them. No unevenness can be felt in the bone.

On the front of the right shank, more or less in its central part, there is a vertical scar with a length of 16 cm and a width of 10 – 12 mm, [illegible], coalesced with the base. On the central-upper part of the tibial bone, inwards with respect to the scar, there is a slight mound with a hard consistency. B [illegible] the subject stated that she feels [illegible] pain in this place.

The circumference of the thighs and shanks, measured at symmetrical points, is identical.

The right extremity shows no dysfunctions and its strength is normal. The subject walks ably, without a limp. She performs knee bends correctly and rapidly.

No objective changes have been found in the nervous system.

At this point the inspection report was brought to a close.

When asked the relevant question, the court expert replied: in order to issue an opinion, it is necessary to analyze the radiograms.

The report was read out.

OPINION

1. Taking into consideration the results of the examination of Mrs. Dobrowolska-Bąbińska and the contents of her medical history, I have come to the conclusion that four incisions were made on the subject's right thigh, one of the right shank, and one on the right side of the abdomen.

After a month, two of the thigh scars were cut open, while one month later the two remaining thigh scars were cut open.

Following the surgical procedures, which were performed without any medical indications, the subject developed a high fever due to the infection of tissues in the vicinity of the wounds, and during this time her life was briefly endangered.

As a direct consequence of the surgical procedures performed on her right leg, the subject experienced a disorder of health connected with the dysfunction of the said leg, this lasting in excess of 20 days. Currently, no dysfunction of the subject's right shank has been disclosed.

2. Due to the lack of data, it is impossible to determine the objective of the surgical procedures undergone by the subject. One may, however, conjecture that the incision of tissues was followed by the introduction of some bodies or microorganisms, thus leading to an infection which was to serve an indeterminate purpose.

3. There is no possibility of determining the objective of the incisions made on the right side of the abdominal wall. It would be necessary to perform a gynecological-surgical examination of the subject in order to determine whether she had undergone an ovariectomy or an appendectomy.

W. Grzywo-Dąbrowski