

DIRECT EXAMINATION BY Mr. McHANEY:

Q. Witness, your name is Maria Broel-Plater?

A. Yes.

Q. Your last name is spelled B-r-a-e-l--P-l-a-t-e-r?

A. Yes.

Q. You were born on 13 December 1913 in Warsaw?

A. Yes.

Q. You are a citizen of Poland?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you come here voluntarily to testify in this proceeding?

A. Yes.

Q. What is your present home address?

A. Warsaw, Grehenska Street, Number 171, Flat 9.

Q. Witness, are you married?

A. No.

Q. Are your parents living?

A. Only my mother.

Q. Witness, will you tell the Tribunal what education you have received?

A. I finished high school and junior college in Bjela Poglawska and then the college of commerce and industrial college in Warsaw.

Q. When were you graduated from this school of commerce and industry in Warsaw?

A. In June, 1936.

Q. What did you do after you finished school?

A. I went to the hospital in Pjeij near Bug, near Rivey Bug. After six months of practice, I worked as a bacteriologist in the hospital.

Q. And how long did you stay there? In other words, I want you to tell us what you did up until 1939.

A. Till the 11th of September, 1939, I worked in the same hospital as bacteriologist.

Q. I see. What happened on the 11th of September, 1939?

A. On the 11th of September 1939, the hospital where I worked was evacuated. I got orders to go with the rest of the personnel of the hospital. After two weeks of travelling, we arrived in Hungary. There I stayed eleven months and was interned in a camp. Afterwards I was brought by Germans back to Poland. I immediately entered the underground; and I worked there until I was arrested.

Q. When did you come back to Poland from Hungary?

A. On the 1st of August, 1940.

Q. You say that you then entered the Polish underground?

A. Yes.

Q. What work did you do in the underground?

A. I was the chief of messengers.

Q. And what happened as a result of your working in the underground? Were you ultimately arrested?

A. I was arrested by Germans on 12 June 1941.

Q. Did you undergo any trial?

A. Yes.

Q. By what sort of court were you tried, and what was the result of the trial?

A. I was not tried by a court, but I was only investigated by the Gestapo, and during interrogation I was very heavily beaten.

Q. And what was the result of this investigation? What did they do with you after you were arrested?

A. I stayed in prison, and then I was sent to the concentration camp Ravensbrueck.

Q. You mean you stayed in prison in Poland, is that where you were kept?

A. Yes, in Poland, in Bjela Poglawska, and in Lublin.

Q. And then when did you go to the Ravensbrueck concentration camp?

A. On 23 September 1941.

Q. And how were the living conditions in Ravensbrueck at that time?

A. Living conditions in the concentration camp Ravensbrueck were not bad at that time, but a few months later they grew worse and worse. Each of us had our own number, and my number was 7911. Because the Germans were then at the top of their power, they were very naughty and we

could not talk with them. We were not treated like human beings, but like numbers. Each officer, or each SS-woman, could beat us as much as she wished. If you were summoned to the hospital or to the block you were not allowed to put any questions. Living conditions were hard because we had to work twelve hours a day.

Q. What sort of work did you do in the camp, witness?

A. I carried stones in wheelbarrows; then I worked in shop work, where straw shoes were produced. I braided straw which was put into water which was mixed with lye. The lye ate off the skin of my fingers. I worked there until I was operated on.

Q. Now, before we come to that-- are you hard of hearing, witness?

A. I am hard of hearing because of beatings received on my head by the Gestapo.

Q. You stated that you were operated on. Will you tell the Tribunal in your own words just when that happened and all the circumstances surrounding it?

A. The operations started to be performed in the concentration camp Ravensbrueck on the 1st of August, 1941. Before I was operated on, five of my comrades had been operated on before me, and they died. Their names were Ketzol, Keroska, Prust, Pepanowitsch, and Kraska.

I was taken to the hospital on the 18th of November, 1942. A police woman came and brought a list with names of prisoners, and my name was on this list. We all asked where we were going, but we got no answer. We were brought to the hospital, so-called Revier. There we waited about one hour in the corridor. Then we were taken to Dr. Oberhauser, who told us to disrobe, who examined us and then sent us to be X-rayed. My breasts had been X-rayed. Then I was sent back to an ordinary hospital room, and I was put to bed.

Q. Witness, was there anything wrong with you that required an operation?

A. No, I was entirely healthy, except for my ears.

Q. Were you asked if you would agree to undergo an experimental operation?

A. I was not asked, and none of us knew why we were brought to the hospital

Q. Well, will you continue to describe what happened?

A. We stayed in bed two days and our temperatures were taken. After two days a German nurse arrived and shaved my legs. Then I started suspecting that I would go for an operation. I could not defend myself, as none of my comrades could, because the conditions were such that I could not defend myself; I was so ill-treated and I had had so much of all of this camp life. We were always told, "You will never come back to Poland," and they said that we would not leave the camp alive.

Therefore I hoped that maybe I would die during this operation and that it would be the end of my suffering.

On the 23rd of November, 1942, I got no food. About noon I was given an injection, and I felt stunned after this injection. In the afternoon I was put on a small hospital cart and brought before the operating room. Before the operating room Schidrowsky and Oberhauser were waiting for me. Oberhauser asked me whether I had artificial teeth. Then Schidrowsky gave me an injection. After

this injection I lost consciousness. I recovered consciousness and noticed that I was back in the hospital room. Oberhauser stood before me and slapped my face. I shivered with cold. I was curious to see how my leg was. The left leg was not operated on. The right leg was completely numb, I did not notice any wound or bandage, but a few centimetres beneath the knee I noticed a small hole, as if it was after a sting given by a pin or needle. Around this hole there was something like powder. I brushed off the powder, but I didn't see anything.

At night I developed a very high temperature. I had this temperature for two days. My leg was very swollen from the toes up to the hip. In the neighbourhood of the ankle my leg was quite dark and very swollen. In the evening Oberhauser came with some other doctor, I did not know this doctor, and I don't remember his face. He examined my leg and said, in German, "fertig", that is all.

I was then taken to the operating room for the second time. I don't remember how I got there. When I woke up after the operation I was again in my bed. My leg was bandaged from the toe up to the knee. The bandage was triangular in shape. My leg pained me; I felt severe pain, and blood flowed from my leg. At night we were all alone, without any care. I heard only the screaming of my fellow prisoners, and I heard also that they asked for water. There was nobody to give us any water or bed pans.

In the morning Oberhauser came and gave us injections; a German nurse helped her in doing this work. I remember that there were great quantity of injections intravenous injections; a great quantity.

Then I had a high temperature and I could not remember anything. A few days later I was taken to the dressing room. When the dressing was changed I was put to sleep. After this changing of dressing, pus drained from my wound and all the bandages were wet. A few days later I was taken again to the dressing room. In the dressing room was Oberhauser I heard her voice because the blanket was put over my eyes. I felt that somebody took off the bandage. I was told to lift my leg and keep it like that. Because I felt a severe pain, I removed the blanket from my head and the first thing I saw was my leg. The leg made a horrible impression on me. It was on the flesh. Near me stood Oberhauser and a man in an operating gown. The man wore glasses and was blonde. At that time, I didn't know who he was. As my leg caused me great pain I started shouting that "it pains me" and the doctor came near me and told the German nurses to give me narcosis. I kept his face in my mind. When I came back to my hospital room I asked my fellow prisoners who had performed the operation on me and I described the face of the man. I was told by other prisoners that it must have been Gebhardt.

Q. Witness, do you see the man Gebhardt in the defendants' dock now?

A. The seventh in the first ring.

Q. Seventh from which end?

A. In the first ring.

MR. McHANEY: From which end is she coming seven?

THE INTERPRETER: From the right. The witness says that she was mistaken. The ninth man sitting in the first ring. It is very difficult for the witness to recognize him because he is changed and she is not quite sure.

MR. MC HANEY: Witness, just take your time and tell which of the men in the dock you think is the man you said was Gebhardt, if you see any such man. If you don't, why just tell us.

DR. SERVATIUS: Mr. President, may I make a request? The witness is not speaking in Polish but she is speaking Russian. I would be very grateful if she would speak so loud that we could all hear. What the interpreter is saying to her and what she replies to him.

THE INTERPRETER: The witness says that she recognizes Dr. Gebhardt in the seventh man sitting in the first ring.

MR. McHANEY: I have asked you twice. You can count the seventh man from either this end of the dock or that end of the dock. Now, which man is it?

THE INTERPRETER: The man-- where the place is empty -- the last man sitting in the first ring.

MR. McHANEY: Will you have the witness count from this end of the dock. She says "in the first row". Will she count down the number of men she says until she arrives at the one she says is Gebhardt.

THE PRESIDENT: The Tribunal asks the witness to stop down and pass along the dock and indicate the man.

(The witness stepped down from the stand, passed along the dock, and pointed to the defendant Genzken who stood up.)

MR. McHANEY: I suppose that the defence counsel will wish that the record show that she recognized the defendant Genzken as the defendant Gebhardt.

THE PRESIDENT: The record will so show.

MR. McHANEY: Now, witness, will you continue to tell your story.

A. I was told by my comrades that this was Dr. Gebhardt and since that time I haven't seen him. The third change of my dressing lasted a very long time and I was put to sleep also. Oberhauser used to visit us each day and give us injections. She always gave us injections herself. The German nurse called us by letters and numbers and not by names. I had the letters PTAI. Near me was the prisoner Djijowna with the letters PTZ. Her leg was not operated on.

Q. Witness, when did you leave the hospital?

A. On 15 January 1943.

Q. Were you well at that time? Were you cured?

A. I was not cured at that time but places for other people were needed in the hospital and therefore I was sent to the block.

Q. What work did you do in the block?

A. I lay in bed because I could not walk. In spite of that I had to be on the roll call place each day. At the end of May Oberhauser told all operated girls to come to the hospital. She looked at our feet and told us that we were fit for going to work.

Blood flowed from my leg and it was very difficult for me to walk, but I had to carry out the order. We had to work. I was put in Block 15. In this block the chief of the block was a Czech woman who tried to help us. It occurred to her that it would be good to use us as workers in knitting stockings on the block as it was done by elderly women. But even this work was very hard for me. I could not sit a long time because my leg got numb. At the end of June the scars on my leg opened again. Blood and pus drained from my wound during one week. It was not only my case, but the legs of many comrades also bled. I saw, in the wounds of my fellow prisoners, pieces of wood, glass, and even a thread with a broken needle.

The doctors who used to work with Oberhauser refused to help us. They told us that they did not want to improve things, by Oberhauser. I did not hear it myself but this was repeated to me by my comrades who asked for help from the hospital doctors.

Q. Now, witness, when did your wound heal completely?

A. In the end of June.

Q. June when, what year?

A. 1943.

Q. And you were/operated on in November 1942. Is that right?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you object to this operation?

A. I could not protest against the operation because like conditions in the camp didn't allow it. We were not allowed to say anything and were beaten for having said something. I went through this beating and treatment. When the life conditions in the camp changed, then we protested because the operations were performed constantly on persons who had been operated before, who had been operated on before. Some of them were operated on five and six times. In the Spring of 1943 we decided to protest against it. We preferred to die than to suffer again, but our protests gave no result because the operations were carried on. At that time the camp commander was Oberaufseherin Langefeldt and then we made a protest in writing against those operations. We got no answer. They tried to operate on some other of my comrades. Some of them escaped and ran away from the hospital. Those who were weaker and could not escape had to be operated on again. For several months there were no operations. At that time, Langefeldt was dismissed and Bienz took her place. On the 15th of August 1943, some girls were summoned to the hospital. They didn't want to go. They knew that they were going to be operated on. Bienz appeared on the same day and told all the prisoners to get out of the block. In this block lived all girls who had been operated on before. There were sixty girls after the operation and about a thousand women who had not been operated on. All women in other blocks were not allowed to leave their blocks. Bienz came and told ten girls to get out of the block. She put them before the block and asked them why they did not follow her order and did not appear in the hospital.

The tenants said that they know why they were summoned and they do not want to be operated on again and that they preferred death to the operation. Bienz told them that there was no question of an operation and gave them their word of honour that they would go for work outside the camp. She

told them to follow her because as she said; she wanted to show them a paper proving that they would be sent for work to the factory outside the camp.

I forgot to mention that people, women belonging to the Lublin Transport, were not allowed to work outside the camp. That is why my fellow prisoners did not believe Bienz; but they followed Bienz and stood before her office. Bienz left them standing before her office and went alone to the canteen. In the canteen were Polish prisoners who understood German very well, seeing those ten prisoners standing before the office, and told them that Bienz asked for SS-men to help to get them by force to the hospital. Then the comrades ran away and mixed with us. After a while, Bienz appeared with the camp police and told those ten girls to get out of the rink. Nobody followed their order. Then the police women, who know very well the operated women, drove them out of the rink; accompanied by the camp police, and they were taken by Bienz to the bunker. I know that operations had been performed on them in the bunker because the girls who had undergone these operations told me that.

Q. Was it clean in this bunker, witness? was it clean in the bunker, were the conditions hygienic?

A. The bunker was a kind of prison. The cells were very small, dirty and dark.

Q. And they operated on these ten Polish girls in this bunker?

A. Five of them were operated on in the bunker.

Q. When did this happen?

A. On the 15th of August 1942. They told us they did not get food for three days as a punishment that women from this block did not betray their comrades. The shutters were closed and we had to stay in the block in darkness without food. After three days when the doors were opened, the majority of the prisoner were lying on the floor--fainted. I know that the operations had been performed in the bunker and in very bad conditions and that during the operation the legs of the operated women were dirty and covered with mud.

Q. How do you know that, witness?

A. I know it from my comrades who came back and told me that.

Q. Now, can you tell the Tribunal approximately how many Polish girls were operated on in Ravensbrueck, experimental operations?

A. About seventy.

Q. And do you know whether any of them died as a result of these experimental operations?

A. Five persons, whose names I gave at the beginning of my deposition.

Q. And those five were only ones that you know died as a result of these operations, is that right?

A. Yes, but I know also that five other girls who had undergone operations had been shot down. One of them, Okonewska, was supposed to be set free. In 1945 I met her on her way back to Poland. I talked to her and she told me that she worked with a German peasant on his farm.

Q. Were any of these girls who were operated on released from the concentration camp because they underwent the operation?

A. No.

Q. Do you still suffer any effects from this operation?

A. Yes.

Q. What are they?

A. I have very often temperature and my leg causes me sometimes very severe pain so that I cannot walk.

Q. Do you have to wear special shoes?

A. Yes, I must wear shoes on very low heels and very light.

Q. What is that answer again, please?

A. I must wear very light shoes with very low heels.

Q. Do you have any limp when you walk bare-footed?

A. I limp, but not much.

Q. Have you received any operational treatment since you left Ravensbrueck?

A. No.

Q. I would like now to submit to you 3 pictures. Those are, if the Tribunal please, Document Number NO-1079, a, b, and c. They are not in your Honours' document books. They have just been received. They were taken only a few days ago and they are not in the document book.

JUDGE SEBRING: Will they be, Mr. McHaney?

MR. MCHANEY: Well, Your Honour, I don't know whether we will be able to have photographic duplications of all of these or not. We can very easily make photostatic copies but they really do not show up very well. I have got one set here which I would like to pass up to the Tribunal now.

BY MR. MCHANEY:

Q. Witness, will you look at these photographs and tell the tribunal if they are pictures made of you here in Nurnberg?

A Yes.

Q. Are all three of them pictures of you?

A. Yes.

Q. Thank you. I submit Document Number no 1079a, b, and c as Prosecution Exhibit 209. New witness, will you please remove the stocking and shoe from the leg on which you were operated?

(Witness proceeds to comply with request.)

JUDGE SEBRING. How can you submit these photographs so that a permanent record may be made unless you actually have the originals and a copy filed with the Secretary General?

MR. MCHANEY: Well, Sir, we have original copies made from the negatives which are now in this exhibit folder and which has been given Exhibit number 209. We will pass that to the Secretary General and it is then a part of the permanent record. I have passed those up for Your Honours' inspection and the Tribunal may keep these.

JUDGE SEBRING: Do you have two sets of each of those pictures for the Secretary General? We require the Secretary General to keep all of his record in original and duplicate, as you know.

MR. MCHANEY: I see. We will be glad to provide him with a set, yes.

BY MR. MCHANEY:

Q. Witness, have you removed the stocking and shoe from your leg?

A. Yes.

Q. Will you please stand up and walk around to the front of the witness box so that the Tribunal may see? (Witness complies.) Now will you turn around, please? Turn around again, more slowly please, a little more, turn around just a bit more; now then, stand still there. (Witness complies.) All right, you may sit down now, please. When did you leave Ravensbrueck, witness?

A. On 23 April 1945.

Q. What are you doing now?

A. I work now in the Red Cross in Warsaw.

Q. Now, do you see anyone in the defendants' dock you recognize to be the person Oberhauser?

A. Yes.

Q. Is she a woman, witness? I did not get the answer please.

A. I recognize her.

MR. MCHANEY: We will ask that the record show that the witness has recognized the woman in the dock as being Oberhauser.

JUDGE SEBRING: The record may so show.

MR. MCHANEY: I think I have no further questions at this time, Your Honour