HANNA WASILCZENKO-LUBICZ

Warsaw, 16 June 1948. Judge Halina Wereńko, a member of the District Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes, interviewed the person named below as a witness, without taking an oath. Having been advised of the criminal liability for making false declarations, the witness testified as follows:

Name and surname	Hanna Wasilczenko-Lubicz, née Chojnowska
Date of birth	15 May 1918 in Kijów
Parents' names	Kazimierz and Natalia, née Grafczyńska
Religion	Roman Catholic
Citizenship and nationality	Polish
Education	School of Decorative Arts for Painters and Graphic Artists
Place of residence	Warsaw, Prokuratorska Street 5, flat 1

When the Warsaw Uprising broke out, my husband and I were in our flat at Prokuratorska Street 5 in Warsaw. My husband, Jerzy Wasilczenko-Lubicz, worked for the Government Representation. In the initial stages of the uprising, he communicated by telephone with his superiors.

In our area, the uprising commenced on 1 August 1944 at 17.00. There were no German units in Prokuratorska Street. Anti-aircraft units occupied Pole Mokotowskie, while at Sędziowska Street there was a German field kitchen, and signal detachments at Sucha Street; further on, the Germans occupied the Filter Station and Kraftfahrpark at Aleje Niepodległości. Until 3 August I saw how groups of insurrectionists would make sorties along Prokuratorska Street to Wawelska Street (Pole Mokotowskie). I saw no German soldiers on our street. On 5 August at around 13.00 a detachment of "Ukrainians" came up our street from the direction of Pole Mokotowskie. I was seven months pregnant and I withdrew to an already prepared hiding place

on the second floor of our house. At the time, my husband would come and go from the hiding place. I later learned that the "Ukrainians" had burst into the house at number 8 Prokuratorska Street, where they murdered Maria Zadrowska, the wife of a barrister, and her daughter, Zofia Lorentowicz, in the presence of a 13-year old servant. Next the "Ukrainians" entered out flat, no. 5, and from the ground floor flat took my father, engineer Kazimierz Chojnowski, my sisters Irena and Małgorzata Chojnowska, and a female nurse from the Home Army who was staying in the flat, and whose surname I don't know. My mother, Natalia Chojnowska, opened the doors to the "Ukrainians", and after that managed to hide in the cellar (she later died in the camp in Ravensbrück). The "Ukrainians" led the group of people that they had detained to Jesionowa Street 3 and from that house took the actor Mariusz Maszyński with his wife and their servant girl, as well as the residents of the house at Jesionowa Street 1 – including engineer Tomorowicz and his wife – who had hidden there. They were directed to Wawelska Street, where they were attached to a group of people from Wawelska Street. In total, there were approximately one hundred people. The eviction from the house at Jesionowa Street 3 and the subsequent march along Wawelska Street were witnessed by my husband from the attic of our house. I myself, being in the hiding place in the attic, heard only Maszyński's voice. All of those in the group vanished without a trace.

As far as I know, their bodies were not found in the course of the exhumations conducted in 1945.

On 12 August 1944 at around noon, a German detachment came to our house (I didn't recognise their unit), and the soldiers led the residents from each flat out in turn. A few days earlier, in Kolonia Staszica, German airplanes dropped leaflets summoning the civilian population to leave the city carrying white handkerchiefs. I do not possess such a leaflet. I went outside with my husband and mother, in a group of some 20 people. The Germans led us to the Zieleniak. Along the way, and particularly in Wawelska Street, the "Ukrainians" – who were marauding in groups – robbed us and performed brutal body searches on the women. They detained one, and she found our group at the Zieleniak only half an hour later.

We were kept at the Zieleniak for only a few hours; it was peaceful, and a "Ukrainian" even gave each of us a loaf of bread. A transport was formed and we were led to the Western Railway Station, from where we were transported to the transit camp in Pruszków, where I remained for a few hours. During the segregation of the transport I clung onto my husband and mother.

Being seven months pregnant, I was afraid to let anyone know for fear that the Germans would murder me as being unfit for work.

All three of us were put on a transport headed for Germany. We were loaded onto covered goods wagons, approximately 50 people to each. The transport was large, numbering a few thousand people, but I don't remember the exact number.

The transport departed on 12 August in the afternoon. On the next day we arrived at a station near the Oranienburg concentration camp. We were unloaded and led through a double file of soldiers with dogs (I didn't recognise their unit) to the male concentration camp in Oranienburg. A group of more than 500 women and children were separated from our group and told that they would be going to the showers. I never saw this group again, but it was said that the women and children were taken to a labour camp, where they were employed through the *Arbeitsamt*. A group of more than one thousand men was also separated; we were told that they had to take care of some formalities and that they would return soon, whereupon we would continue the journey with our families. The group did not return.

I later learned that all of this group were detained in Oranienburg concentration camp as prisoners. My husband was kept there for a few weeks, after which time he was engaged in the factories, but also as a prisoner. In the evening a group of some 1,200 women including myself were taken to the concentration camp in Ravensbrück. A group of children whose mothers had remained with our group (and didn't report when summoned in Oranienburg) somehow attached itself to us, as did some pregnant women. The train was terribly crowded, with more than 60 women being placed in each closed wagon.

On 14 August 1944 in the morning we arrived at Ravensbrück concentration camp. The escort was changed in Oranienburg. The escort that came with us was made up of German railway men. In Oranienburg they were replaced with SS men, and we were treated as prisoners right from the start – brutally and with no consideration shown. We were registered in the parade square and given numbers starting with 50,000. I received number 51,688 and my mother the number 51,400 something – I don't exactly remember the final digits. After a few weeks, my mother was taken away to a factory. Following her return from there, she received number 71,000 something.

I was allocated to barrack no. 21, where 40 out of some one thousand women were pregnant. Pregnant women were treated in the same way as other female prisoners. Only

those in the most advanced stages of pregnancy, from the seventh month onwards, were exempt from work. We had some 14 children in our block. The makeup of our group changed: healthier prisoners were deported to factories, while new women would arrive, and in all we continued to number more or less one thousand.

All of the female prisoners in our camp were subjected to medical examinations during which it was decided whether they were fit for work. It was registered then that I was pregnant. During the first examination the doctor (I don't know his surname) informed me that pregnant women were entitled to receive double portions of soup. In practice this could not be realised, for once the soup had been distributed there was not always enough left for a second helping, and even if there was, the second helping would be given to protégées of the room supervisors. In any case, the crowd near the cauldron was insufferable, pushing and shoving, and when I once found the courage to ask for more, the room supervisor poured a bucket of cold water over me.

New transports continued to arrive from Warsaw. I remember transports from Żoliborz and the Old Town. Hunger in the camp became ever more acute, and the portions of soup were smaller and smaller, so that even in blocks where the wardens and room supervisors were honest, pregnant women received steadily smaller second helpings, growing thinner and losing weight. The daily assemblies, which would last for hours, and the fact that the block wardens frequently ordered us to stand for an hour or so before the barracks, in the dust and strong sunlight, resulted in pregnant women suffering from swelling of the legs, headaches, and swooning. Sleeping in the stuffy, overcrowded, terribly louse- and flea-infested halls, two each on pallets with a width of 60 – 70 centimetres, with a casual – and oftentimes sick – neighbour, destroyed one's strength. The total lack of soap, paper, bathing facilities and warm water was unbearable beyond words.

Around the middle of September 1944 (I don't remember the date), three weeks before childbirth, I was summoned together with a few dozen other pregnant Poles and Russians to the sick room, where upon the instructions of the camp authorities a German female nurse (I don't know her surname) proposed that we have abortions. Silence fell. Seeing that none of us wanted to give our voluntary consent, she tried to encourage us: "Go ahead, do not feel embarrassed, maybe one of you has an illegitimate child or has a large number of children already". One of us replied that an abortion in the eighth month of pregnancy could lead to

the woman's death. To which the German nurse responded that German doctors and nurses know better, and that the procedure was risk-free even in the final month of pregnancy. We remained silent and were sent back to the barracks.

On 6 October, after three hours of standing at the assembly, I felt so sick that at noon I was sent to sick room no. 1. I arrived during the dinner break and in the midst of an air-raid alarm. I was left alone in the corridor, where I writhed in pain on the floor. After an hour had passed, the midwife came along and took me to the operating theatre. The midwife was one Józefina Polinger, known as "Fine", a prisoner from Austria who had a good reputation. She then gave me her address: Greiss 33 bei Wolfsberg In Lawantal Kärnten Österreich. The operating theatre was quite well equipped, but the hygienic conditions were bad. The prisoner-nurses used the surgical instruments to cut their nails. At 14:00 my son was born. He weighed more than 4 kg. The baby was healthy and pretty, so that even the head doctor deigned to come over and have a look at it.

For the first three days – just as with the other women who had given birth – I lay in sick room no. 1, where the conditions were bearable: separate beds, pillows, linens. The children were brought for feeding 3 – 5 times per day, depending on the nurse's mood. The food was scanty and inappropriate for breast-feeding mothers. For example, on the first day after giving birth, I was given a peppery goulash. I ate only a few potatoes.

After three days, the lying-in women were thrown out into sick room 11, which was on the other side of the camp. You had to walk there on your own, irrespective of the pain and extreme weakness. The conditions in sick room 11 were terrible: the barracks were unheated, dirty, louse-infested and full of other insects. It housed women suffering from all sorts of undiagnosed diseases, including infectious ones, pulmonary and venereal. Only after a sickness was diagnosed were the contagiously ill taken to the appropriate sick room. After three days, once they had passed through puerperium, the lying-in women were sent here. Patients lay two to a bed, irrespective of their ailments. Babies had a separate room that was 2,5 metres by 4 metres. They lay in two beds, placed across and covered with one blanket. Later on, when the number of children increased to fifty, two bunk beds were added. The children were looked after by a German woman, a prisoner by the name of Edith (I don't remember her surname), who had no idea about how to care for babies. The room was fitted with an iron stove for heating, but the fire was lit only when the German caretaker wanted

to prepare some food for herself from the products she had stolen from patients. She would heat it up until it was red-hot and open the window wide, even though the children's beds were located at that very window. We were allowed to come and feed our babies five times a day. The feeding hours were fixed by the German caretaker, who would change them at random. A female laryngologist would see her patients in the very same room in which the children were lying. When night fell, the children would be locked up and left without any supervision in the unheated, cold room (8 – 10°C) until the morning. Risking my life, I used to steal the key to check on the babies.

When on 11 or 12 October I entered the room at night and switched on the light, I saw for the first time that a great number of various kinds of insects (bedbugs, cockroaches, lice) were crawling over the beds and entering the children's ears and noses. The children were lying naked, in the main, for they had dug themselves out from under the blankets. Some of them were sucking the noses of their neighbours, while the majority were crying from hunger and cold, lying on wet, contaminated nappies. I saw that the children had serious wounds on their bodies. From then on, I visited the children in secret every night, until my son died on 22 October 1944, and I would always find them in the conditions described above.

The mortality of babies was very high. As I later learned, towards the end of November, when the average number of children was fifty, eight were dying every day. The *Oberschwester* refused to give drugs, nor did she allow us to dry the nappies, so that they were dried in secret in the block for the contagiously ill. In these conditions a child would live from a dozen or so days to a month.

My son died after 16 days from pneumonia. When he was ill, on 22 October 1944, he was given three camphor injections: one was administered in my presence by a female Czech prisoner (I don't know her surname). She told me that she was giving a camphor shot. After the injections I observed that my son's condition worsened.

A general assembly, which frequently lasted the whole day, was held on average once every two weeks. The babies would be locked up for the duration, with no food or supervision.

Ten days after childbirth, mothers would be sent from sick room no. 11, without their children, to the block, where no considerations would be shown. Since I did not have a watch, I was in constant fear that I would miss the feeding hours. The early rising hours, lack of

medical care, hunger, exposure to the cold, and the brutal treatment all served to destroy our health. What the mothers had to go through was terrible. We all saw how our babies changed from day to day. A healthy face became old, the body would be covered with pustules and wounds. Seeing the other children, a mother knew that her own baby would look the same in a few days – but she was completely powerless, dependent on the whims of an irritated prisoner-carer. Mothers whose children lived for approximately two weeks and were healthy, were sent to work outside the camp and allowed to take their babies. I saw only three such instances of women being released.

Towards the end of [my] stay at the camp the freedom of a few Varsovians was secured by their families from the General Government, which had appealed to the camp authorities. From February 1945 Varsovians were taken to work in the factories. Groups were placed at the disposal of the *Arbeitsamt*. After a ten-day stint in sick room no. 11, I was sent to block 20, after which the block warden, Mieczysława Jarosz, employed me in the block administrative office.

My mother had initially been sent to an armaments factory in Altenburg, but after three weeks she was transferred to block 28 at the camp in Ravensbrück. My mother did not work. The conditions in block 28 were terrible. It was dirty, overcrowded, and infested with insects. The prisoners slept three to a pallet, on naked boards. Food was distributed unfairly. On 16 January 1945 my mother died, at the age of 57. She was extremely exhausted, fell ill with diarrhoea and, having a weak heart, succumbed to the illness.

In the middle of February 1945 I was sent to the labour camp in Basdorf, 24 km from the centre of Berlin, where V2 missiles and aeroplanes were manufactured. At the time, 150 Varsovian women, prisoners at Ravensbrück, were freed. My documents were returned to me and I remained at the disposal of the *Arbeitsamt*. After my experiences at the concentration camp, the labour camp appeared as an enormous change for the better. Seeing that all of us female workers arriving from the concentration camp looked like shadows, the male labourers helped us and shared their food, even though conditions in the labour camp were difficult too. I worked in the forest, felling trees, and was also used to dig anti-tank trenches, clean labourers' barracks, etc.

On 21 April 1945 we were freed by the Russian army. On 30 April I returned to Warsaw. My husband arrived from Germany three weeks later – he was very exhausted and sick.

My camp experiences had ruined my health, exhausting me both nervously and physically. In 1946 I got pregnant, but the pregnancy was very difficult for me. Despite round-the-clock medical care, after five months I miscarried, and my condition was grave.

As proof of the fact that I was pregnant during the period described above, I would like to submit a certificate issued by Dr Jerzy Monsiorski, dated 15 April 1944.

At this point the report was brought to a close and read out.