



## MARCELA SKRZYPIŃSKA

On 5 July 1946 in Gdańsk-Wrzeszcz, barrister Aleksander Bronowski, a member of the District Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland, heard as a witness the person specified below. Having been advised of the criminal liability for making false declarations, the witness testified as follows:

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My name is Marcela Skrzypińska, but I am also called Tusia. I am a daughter of Piotr and Jadwiga *née* Nencka, born on 14 April 1920 in Warsaw, domiciled in Gdańsk-Wrzeszcz at Roosevelta Street 10, a clerk in the Ministry of Supplies and Commerce, Marine Representative Office for UNRRA, unmarried, Roman Catholic.

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On 25 August 1942, I was incarcerated by the Gestapo in Pawiak prison in Warsaw under the charge of collaboration with an underground military organisation. I stayed at Pawiak until the end of April 1943.

Generally, each healthy prisoner who was not in the pay of the Germans was harassed, treated with disdain, and his or her life was always in danger. As for the sick prisoners from the hospital, they were treated less severely, yet even they feared execution, as such things were also happening. I know that the sick from the Pawiak infirmary were being taken for interrogation in Pawiak or to the Gestapo, even if the prisoner was seriously ill and bedridden. They would come back to the hospital beaten, sometimes even disfigured. Allowances were also made for the functional prisoners, who had their walk prolonged for half an hour. The Gestapo harassment was of various sorts, the most infamous being the so-called *udziwianie* [oddities], exercise, *karcer* [seclusion room]. *Udziwianie* was one of many inspections of cells in Pawiak conducted from 1942 to 1943 by *Oberscharführer* Bürkl, who was "looking for" dust. Although the cells were being kept in perfect order, Bürkl, known as an abnormal man and a drug addict, would always find a speck of dust, make a scene, throw



everything from the cells into the corridor, order all female cells to be opened, and order the cells to be cleaned up in five minutes.

“Exercise” meant that a ward of prisoners, more than 100 women, was being taken to the yard and told to do squats and *żabki* [frog jumps], regardless of the state of health or age of the prisoners.

I don’t remember what this punishment of “exercise” was for, but I think it was for escape or maybe for smuggled messages.

For the slightest offence, a prisoner would be sent to the *karcer*, where they were deprived of walks and had their food ration significantly reduced according to the rules.

Whipping was also used for punishing women, for example five whips on the buttocks for smoking a cigarette in the cell.

The Gestapo used various methods for interrogating the arrested Polish people. As far as I know, during some interrogations the Gestapo men treated prisoners to sweets, or even grapes and alcohol, in order to induce them to betray others or to plead guilty. Usually, however, they would subject the prisoners to beating and other refined tortures, such as: putting an electrical device on their head, removing nails, smashing fingertips with pliers, setting dogs on prisoners, threatening prisoners with harm to their families, putting them in the dark cell or the so-called German isolation, where only the German guards were admitted, and where usually no mattresses were to be found and the food ration was reduced, and so forth.

Transports to the concentration camps were organised in the following way: on the day before the transport one or two cell were emptied and the prisoners transferred to other cells. When the name of the prisoner was called out, he or she, rushed by the German guards, had to go quickly to a transport cell, from which he or she was taken for a bath. In a cell which could hold on average 24 people, 60 people would be gathered, and sometimes even more. They were usually leaving in the morning. The prisoners were being poked, pushed, riffle-butted and kicked by the Gestapo men, and put into cars where they were packed like sardines, and taken, under heavy escort, to the spur railway of the freight station in Warsaw. There they would put on average 60 people in one freight carriage and seal the carriages, and the prisoners would not get anything to drink before or during the journey.



People who were to be executed were usually called out in the afternoon, put in a solitary cell and taken for execution in the morning.

I know of one characteristic example of Gestapo tortures: a woman who was heavily beaten and had her teeth knocked out had a sort of electrical helmet put on her head, which squeezed her head and caused her to faint.

At this the report was closed. The report was read out.