



## JAN SUŁKOWSKI

Warsaw, 20 December 1945. Judge Antoni Krytowski, delegated to the Warsaw Division of the Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland, interviewed the person named below as a witness. Having advised the witness of the criminal liability for giving false testimony and of the significance of the oath, the judge swore the witness under art. 109 of Code of Criminal Procedure.

The witness testified as follows:

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<b>Name and surname</b>	Jan Sułkowski
<b>Age</b>	b. 6 June 1921
<b>Names of parents</b>	Janina and Władysław
<b>Place of residence</b>	Warsaw, Krechowiecka Street 6, flat 29
<b>Occupation</b>	master builder 2nd class
<b>Religious affiliation</b>	Roman Catholic
<b>Criminal record</b>	none
<b>Relationship to the parties</b>	the witness's three brothers were murdered by the Germans

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On 19 May 1942, I was imprisoned by the Germans in the forced labor camp in Treblinka. I was incarcerated for twice escaping from the site of forced labor in Germany and for evading work in general.

When I arrived at Treblinka, a camp was already in existence there, some 2000-3000-strong, its prisoners mostly German Jews and some Poles. I was assigned to build barracks, around one kilometer away from the old camp. These barracks were located in the forest and were



used by so-called camp 2. Only Jews were placed in that camp, but when I started work there, there were no Jews in that camp.

My co-workers at the building site were Ludwik Krzyżanowski (whom I did not know initially) and Jan Lejbowicz (I only know that he used to live on [...] – now he is said to be dead, as I learned from Krzyżanowski). Krzyżanowski's most recent address was Warsaw, Żoliborz, Słowackiego Street, the Feniks building (cooperative), but in June or July 1945 he told me he was emigrating to the West. Krzyżanowski and Lejbowicz had previously worked with me in the same German [?] and we were placed in Treblinka together.

Apart from the three of us, a couple or a couple dozen other Poles were building the barracks, but I do not know their names and I have not seen any of them since. I was in Treblinka until 26 June or July 1942. It seems to me, however, that I was released from Treblinka in July 1942.

They began to bring in Jews to camp 2 only two or three days after my arrival at Treblinka. The first transport consisted of some 800 people. On the same day, another transport arrived, which consisted of fewer or roughly the same number of people. For the purposes of unloading the Jews, a special railway platform was built. The building materials to be used for the barracks had already been prepared and we were making quick progress since our work involved assembling boards – the barrack components – which were already finished and fitted together; consequently, erecting a barrack took two or three days at most.

It is difficult for me to [give?] a precise number of the Jews brought to Treblinka during my time there. I believe, however, that this number is of the order of 20,000. I knew of all incoming transports and I watched every one of them. I do not believe that my estimation of 20,000 is way off. This number, however, only applies to camp 2 and I have no knowledge of what went on in camp 1. But I heard that a significant number of Jews and Poles were unloaded there and that a lot of people died of typhus. The daily number of prisoners in camp 2 did not exceed three to four thousand. These people were used almost exclusively for work, such as digging graves in which the corpses of the murdered were buried, clearing the forest, building a railway siding or, initially, building a gas chamber. Given that there were never more than three or four thousand Jews in the camp and that during my time in Treblinka some 20,000 of them were – I believe – brought in, I think that some 16 or 17 thousand were murdered over that period.



I was involved in constructing barracks for about a week, and then I was assigned to building a gas chamber. I was involved in constructing it from the very foundations. Initially, I had no idea of the intended purpose of the building we were erecting. The SS-men supervising our work told us that it was going to be a bathhouse, and only later, when the building was in the final phase of construction, did I realize that it was a gas chamber. This was indicated by the presence of a special door made of thick sheet metal, sealed with rubber, locked with a screw and fixed to an iron frame, as well as the fact that in one of the compartments of the chamber there was some kind engine with iron pipes running through the roof to the remaining parts of the building. We worked on the gas chamber for about five weeks, and when it was finished, the Germans immediately started to murder Jews inside on a mass scale.

Also, SS-men would often burst into the barracks, drunk or sober, and shoot at the Jews who were there.

Additionally, I saw one incident when two Jews were hanged by the legs on a tree; they hung like that for three days. Obviously, they died.

Once, I witnessed how the Germans killed eleven rabbis; they had ordered them to observe Sukkot and while they were praying or performing their ritual dances, the Germans shot at them, bringing all of them down. During this "show," there was a photographer present, who took pictures.

Executions by shooting were also carried out in the camp, but these were less frequent. I only witnessed a shooting once, when thirty Jews were murdered at one fell swoop.

I do not know what the reason of the execution was.

It was carried out as follows: the Jews were ordered to stand right next to a pit they had previously dug, and as they stood in a row, Ukrainians shot them with automatic handguns; each Jew hit by a bullet was to be thrown down into the pit by the one standing behind [beside?] him as the next in line. The SS-men standing by the pit later checked if any Jews were still alive and fired single shots from their guns into the pit.

The SS-men supervising Jews at work would also frequently kill them by beating them with thick wooden sticks. Every day, I saw up to half a dozen corpses of Jews murdered in that fashion.



Such sticks – alternately, batons – were used for beating Jews by so-called Kapos, i.e. a police of sorts, whose members were Jews; they were an SS auxiliary organ used in supervising camp prisoners at work. If a Kapo did not beat people hard enough, he himself was beaten by the Germans. Kapos would most frequently finish off the victims of the SS-men.

Right by the railway siding, where the Jews laying down the tracks were working, the Germans built the so-called death cradle. The legs of the cradle were made of small planks and the cradle itself was three or four meters high. The Germans would pick out people from among those laying the tracks and order them to climb the cradle; as the people climbed, the Germans would shoot at them if they could not make it to the top. If some agile Jew did make it to the top, then the Germans would order him to take off his shoes and, standing upright, hold them above his head, which was difficult because the cradle was wobbly. Then the Germans would shoot, pretending to aim at the shoes the Jew was holding, but in reality aiming at the Jew.

The Germans, and consequently the Kapos supervising the Jews, demanded that the Jews work swiftly and efficiently, even though the food rations issued to them were extremely meagre. Essentially, they were issued meals three times a day, but in practice, there were only two [meals], since there was typically no supper. For breakfast, they got 100 grams of green, moldy bread, cooked in coffee, and for lunch, they got the same amount of the same bread, but this time cooked in water. The bread, I believe, was made of corn, and that is why, I think, it got moldy so fast. We had been getting the same kind of bread for a long time, and it was very bitter. For supper, providing there was one, the Jews got half a liter of bitter coffee and nothing else.

In such conditions, they were unable to work for lack of strength, but the Germans or Kapos took no notice and often killed the “lazy” ones with batons or sent them into the queue for beating, which took place on a designated bench. Such a person had to lie on his stomach across the bench, with his head and feet stuck under two other benches. The Germans or Ukrainians then beat them with wooden sticks, thick as an arm, or with horsewhips made of rawhide, to which the Germans would sometimes attach stones; they also used horsewhips made of intertwined electric cables. The Jews typically received 25 blows each (they were beaten naked), but if the person screamed and tried to break free from the perpetrators holding him, then the number of blows would be increased to 50. During the beating,



the Jews were inflicted terrible wounds in their buttocks, and often they even had their bones mauled, especially the spine. Usually, after such a beating, these people, half-alive, were dumped into a pit, where a Kapo, already waiting there, finished them off.

Apart from this beating or dancing, very often – that is four or five times a week – the Jews had to undergo a morning round of beating before commencing work. They were typically beaten with horsewhips, and for that purpose each had to lie on a bench in front of the barracks, where he received a couple or a dozen lashes. This was repeated in the evening, after work had finished. These were “camp regulations” of sorts.

No illnesses were recognized in the camp. The sick were killed with no quarter given.

Mass executions started in the camp when the gas chamber became operative. Each of the chamber’s three compartments could accommodate 100 people. Sometimes there were three or four transports of Jews in one day, each consisting of 2000 people, and all of those Jews would be poisoned in the chamber in the course of that single day. Between the chamber and a special pit, some 70 meters long, 40 meters wide and 5 or 6 meters deep (this is my rough estimation), dumpcarts were running all the time, removing the corpses of those gassed. These corpses were not burnt, just dumped into the pit.

The transports of Jews arriving at Treblinka mostly consisted of German Jews. As far as I remember, there were only three transports from the Warsaw ghetto, no more than 2000 people altogether. Apart from coming in by train, Jews were also shepherded to the camp from the surrounding countryside. The Germans lied to those on the transports from the Warsaw ghetto that they were going to work in a preserve factory. They were happy that that they had finally left the ghetto and would work undisturbed, being able to nourish themselves on some of the tinned food. On the first day, the Germans typically gave them a better life (meaning food), but already the next day they would be sent to the chamber.

Ever since the gas chamber became operative none of the Jews brought in in new transports were sent to work in the camp – all of them were sent to the chamber.

I did not know the names of the camp commandants or the names of other Treblinka Germans. They did not use their surnames when addressing one another, only their first names or nicknames. I only remember one name: “Al.” This was the SS-man who ran things at the gas chamber. He was not so bad; I only saw him a couple of times, when Jews were



being counted. When I was released from Treblinka, the commandant forbade us to tell anybody about what we had seen in the camp, and threatened that if we did, we and our families would die. Krzyżanowski and Lejbowicz were released with me.

The walls of the gas chamber were padded with terracotta tiles, as was the floor, which fell away towards one side. To pad out the chamber, a specialist from Berlin was called in; he told me that he had already built such a chamber elsewhere, but he never told me it was a gas chamber, nor would he tell me where he had built such chambers.

The commandant spoke Polish as if it was his mother tongue, as did some of the SS-men, but they used the Silesian dialect. The Ukrainians were posted as guards around the camp and by the sentry box opposite the camp; they were also posted to supervise work or punish, beat or execute Jews. They were also on the search teams looking for escaped prisoners.

At that the report was concluded and read out.