



JÓZEF LUDWIG

On 16 September 1947 in Jelenia Góra, the investigative judge of the District Court in Jelenia Góra, with its seat in Jelenia Góra, in the person of Judge T. Szewczyk, with the participation of reporter M. Reuby, article clerk, interviewed the person named below as a witness, without taking an oath. Having been advised of the criminal liability for making false declarations and the wording of Article 107 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the witness testified as follows:

Name and surname	Józef Paweł Ludwig
Age	37
Parents' names	Anastazja and Jan
Place of residence	Jelenia Góra, Wyczołkowskiego Street 59
Occupation	clerk
Religious affiliation	Roman Catholic
Criminal record	none
Relationship to the parties	none

I was brought to the Auschwitz concentration camp together with 67 other inmates on 6 December 1941. On 7 February 1942, by a lucky coincidence, I was chosen to work in the labor deployment office – *Arbeitseinsatz* – as a writer – *Schreiber*. I worked in a barrack, the so-called *Blockführerstube*, where offices of the whole SS leadership in the Auschwitz camp were situated. Every day there I met the then-*Lagerführer* [head of the camp] Hans Aumeier and other SS men, such as Bogusch, Hans Hoffman, Heinrich Josten, and Kurt Müller. The political department, headed by Max Grabner, had its seat in a different building.



The Auschwitz camp, which was called the *Vernichtungslager* [extermination camp], managed by specially trained Nazis (creatures deprived of any human feelings), fulfilled the task imposed by the Nazi regime. Millions of European Jews, who had never been registered anywhere, were burnt, among others, in gas chambers and crematoria. Every day when I worked in the office I prepared reports for Berlin with indications of daily incoming prisoners, the number from the previous day, and the deployment of people able to work and the sick. That data referred only to numbered prisoners. I saw in the reports that the average number of prisoners in the camp was always up to about 50 per cent of the numbered people. The number declined due to those who died of exhaustion and all kinds of diseases, as well as those who were shot and gassed. The mortality rate escalated most in the summer of 1942 with an outbreak of typhus in the camp. In order to eradicate the disease, people suspected of being sick and prisoners who had experienced the disease crisis were sent to the gas chambers. According to my observations, 10,000 prisoners were killed in the camp during that time – solely as a result of the epidemic. The extermination of Russian prisoners of war is a different story. When I was brought to the camp, there were over 12,000 of these POWs. This was at the beginning of 1942. In summer of the same year, there were only just over 150. They all died of starvation, overwork, cold, and because of inhumane treatment by the SS men. Today it is difficult to provide evidence of the crimes committed by individual SS men. If we saw an SS man abuse one prisoner or a group, we could not see his name – there were hundreds of SS officers and it is impossible to compile an exact registry of their crimes. They were a whole group composed of criminal elements, who zealously performed their task of murdering people, often with personal satisfaction, satisfying their well-developed sadistic streaks. We, the prisoners of Auschwitz, know the names of those who stood out from the rest because of their supernatural criminality. They were: Höß, Fritsch, Aumeier, Seidler, Grabner, Palitzsch, Lachmann, Woznica, Boger, Sell, and many, many more. By relating my experiences from the camp, I can provide details now concerning the following SS members of the Auschwitz personnel:

Hans Aumeier – *SS-Hauptsturmführer*, he was the *Lagerführer* from the beginning of February 1942. From the first moment of his tenure, he proved to be an exceptional criminal, a sadist. I saw him personally beat, kick and torture prisoners for the pettiest violations – if someone limped while marching, put on any additional piece of warm clothing or did not take off their hat in the presence of an SS officer, etc., Aumeier would burst into a fit of



anger and administer countless blows, which would usually end tragically for the prisoner involved. There were thousands of such cases. For example, when a mark was discovered in the possession of a prisoner, Aumeier himself beat and kicked him, and did not stop the abuse even when the prisoner fell unconscious on the ground. The prisoner was taken to the hospital.

I know that Aumeier personally participated in executions of prisoners in block 11. As far as we knew, this task was to be performed by the *Rapportführer*, who was then Palitzsch. However, from 1942 until the middle of 1943, Aumeier would often eagerly help the *Rapportführer* out, shooting prisoners sentenced to death.

In spring 1942, one of the prisoners working in the *Feuerwache* [the camp's fire station] found out that he was to be executed by firing squad on that very day. After the morning roll call, he ran through the *Blockführerstube* [guardhouse] and wanted to escape, but he was stopped by SS officers. I saw Aumeier personally beat this prisoner. Then, he gave an order to administer over 50 blows with a stick. Only then was the prisoner executed. Cases where prisoners were whipped before execution were not uncommon.

When three prisoners from the *kommando* of *Vermessers* [land surveyors] attempted to escape, over 20 people were executed by firing squad and 12 were hanged. Aumeier, who wanted to suppress brotherly feelings among the prisoners, personally selected 12 colleagues of the sentenced prisoners and forced them to assist SS officers in the execution. Their task was to put a noose around the neck of the sentenced inmates and to knock out the stool from under their feet. As a consequence of this horrible experience, several of the more sensitive prisoners who participated in the execution suffered psychological trauma for a long time. It is possible that they have never recovered.

As the *Lagerführer*, Aumeier was responsible for creating a whole system for the extermination of political prisoners placed in Auschwitz. In particular, his task was to authorize and order SS officers, as well as *kapos* and German block leaders, to beat prisoners at work and at any time of the day for the smallest misdemeanors. SS men and *kapos*, or sometimes block leaders, were allowed to kill an exhausted, sick prisoner who was too weak to work. The columns of prisoners returning from work carried hundreds of beaten, dying and killed colleagues. Every day, Aumeier would stand by the gate and observe the return of prisoners, clearly pleased with the sight of the carried corpses.



For the morning and evening roll calls, the block leader had to gather all the prisoners. The dying, sick and crippled could not be left in beds in the block, and regardless of the weather – even if it was cold or it rained – they were placed on the snow next to the prisoners standing in a row. If the roll call lasted several hours, which was not uncommon, frozen and finished-off people were later taken to the morgue.

As the *Lagerführer*, Aumeier would also decide on the punishment for prisoners based on the SS men's reports. The most frequent punishment he chose was to put the prisoner in a *Stehbunker* [standing cell] for several to a dozen or so nights, which would inevitably lead to the prisoner's death. Another punishment was the so-called "pillar". As a result of this torture, the prisoner would have his hands crippled for a long time, which made him unable to work physically. Consequently, the prisoner was killed for "avoiding work". Aumeier would also send prisoners to the SK punishment company [*Strafkompanie*]. Only a few can say that they were lucky enough to survive a stay in the *Strafkompanie*, and this happened only thanks to the help of their colleagues. The stay in the *Strafkompanie* was a nightmare: superhuman work, punishing exercises after the work, and everyday flogging in accordance with the number of blows ordered by Aumeier. One of the relatively mild punishments was a one-time flogging, which consisted in administering 15 to 100 blows with a stick or a whip.

[There was a] horrible reduction in the caloric value of meals. In the toughest period in the camp, when prisoners' families were not allowed to send packages to the camp, during the harsh winter of 1941/42, the camp kitchen served only soups made of rotten rutabaga. Once a week on Sunday we were given a few boiled potatoes, which were completely frozen or rotten. We were lucky if one in five of them was edible. Later, out of frugality, they started to cook those potatoes (unpeeled) in the soup. Consequently, thousands of prisoners got sick: bloody diarrhea, the so-called *Durchfall*, usually ended in death. In order to make the prisoners even sicker, the SS leadership developed a devilish plan. The camp canteen was supplied with different kinds of spicy salads, made with vinegar and mustard. A serving of such salad cost 50 pfennigs. The prisoners, starved almost to death, would buy those salads regardless of the risk of disease, which made them more susceptible to the above-mentioned illness in its most severe form.

In the summer of 1942, during the worst heat, Aumeier gave an order to take away hats from the prisoners working in fields. The prisoners' shaved heads, which were incredibly swollen



due to all-day exposure to strong sun, developed numerous ulcers. There were hundreds of cases of sunburn.

Aumeier ordered that after the escape of a prisoner, when the camp siren sounded, all prisoners working in the field should get down and lie on the ground until the alarm was turned off. The *kapos* were allowed to beat all prisoners who moved slightly while on the ground. It was in January 1943, in a period of severe frosts. Badly clothed prisoners had to lie on the snow, which often led to pneumonia, etc. I personally experienced such a condition.

Aumeier commanded that, apart from the punishment which he would later impose, all prisoners reported by the SS men be publicly given 25 to 50 blows with a stick during the roll call.

August Bogusch – I met this SS man in 1943/44 in the *Blockführerstube*. He always treated the prisoners working there in the worst possible manner. He was particularly dangerous, because he spoke Polish. Bogusch would constantly refer to the prisoners as *du polnisches Dreck, du Hund* [you Polish trash, you dog]. There was no way to bribe him and mollify his attitude towards the prisoners.

Max Grabner – from the time I arrived at the camp, namely in December 1941, he occupied the position of Head of the Political Department. He was an extraordinarily bloodthirsty beast who spread terror among not only all the prisoners, but also SS officers who committed any violation. Every time Grabner appeared in the camp, some prisoners were arrested, locked in bunkers, or executed by firing squad. He assisted in all executions. Dissatisfied with the natural loss in prisoners due to diseases, exhaustion, the gassing of the sick, etc., he created a great system of informers in the camp. The idea was to single out people who were then sentenced to death under any pretext. He was particularly interested in officers and Polish intelligentsia. The prisoners in the service of Grabner were a plague and a curse. Those who were summoned to the political department for interrogation were usually taken to the hospital after several hours. The political department used torture methods which exceeded everything we have ever heard and read of in relation to the Middle Ages (water tortures, nail puncturing, clenching fingers with special tools, etc.)

I will describe the following case as an example:

One day, my colleague Stefan Rudnicki was called to the political department. In the evening when I came back from work, I saw him lying on a stretcher in the hospital



corridor. His clothes [were] ripped apart, his body covered in wounds, dark from the beating. The prisoner died without regaining consciousness. Grabner's executioners were "examining his endurance".

Another example. I was present at the autopsy of a young man. It was performed by Dr Olbrycht, assisted by, among others, Dr. Stanisław Kłodziński from Kraków. Because the killed man had long hair, I asked Dr. Kłodziński who he was. He said that the corpse had been brought from the political department with an order to perform an autopsy. He died there as a result of "examination".

The executioners from the political department under Grabner's command murdered countless innocent people. The torture methods they used there are indescribable.

Grabner sentenced hundreds of prisoners to death for the smallest violations of rules. In January 1943, I witnessed Grabner and Aumeier, assisted by other SS men, come to the bunkers of block 11 and single out over 50 people, mainly young Gypsies, Jews, and Poles, who were immediately executed by firing squad on the square outside block 11. All others were detained in the bunkers under the suspicion of escaping, after being caught while attempting to escape or for the escape of their colleagues. I found out that the idea was to empty the bunkers to make room for a new transport of prisoners from the camp, who were locked up as the result of an operation using informers and executed by firing squad a few days later. I remember that among those people were attorney Szumański, Woźniakowski, Colonel Gilewicz, and many other officers and prominent people.

Hans Hoffman, *SS-Rottenführer* – I knew him as an officer who often acted as deputy for the *Lagerführer*. He treated prisoners with hostility and disdain. He was always brutal. As the *Lagerführer*, considering it his duty to "protect the camp" against air raids, he was responsible for the death of over a hundred prisoners and for the crippling of several dozens during an air raid in 1943. There were no shelters prepared for the prisoners in case of emergency, and during air raids it was prohibited to escape from unsafe buildings to the open space located inside the camp and, after all, restricted by guard booths. The prisoners were forced to go down to the basement in their blocks. When hit by even the lightest bomb, the buildings' weak ceilings would form a common grave. This happened in the summer of 1943. During an alarm, the *Bekleidungswerkstatt* [clothing workshop] *kommando*, with over 500 workers, had to descend into such a basement. Then, one of many bombs hit that block



and over a hundred people lost their lives, while many others were wounded. During that air raid, when some prisoners started escaping from the unsafe area into the field, SS officers shot at them. Only after this event were *kommandos* ordered to come back to the camp in the case of an alarm, as it was assumed that the Allies would not bomb the main camp. Then, all officers and SS men would take refuge in the prisoners' camp during an air raid.

Liebehenschel was Höß's deputy and the commandant of the camp for a short time. I have nothing particularly bad to say about him. I only know that during his tenure the treatment of prisoners improved noticeably. Escapees were no longer punished with death, SS men and *kapos* were prohibited from beating the prisoners, while camp informers were removed and sent to the Flossenbürg camp. I don't know if this was thanks to Liebehenschel or if it was a coincidence that it happened during his tenure.

Kurt Müller was the *Arbeitsdienstführer* [work service leader] for some time. He was ruthless to prisoners and would make them work hard.

What is more, I know that all the officers and SS men participated in selections of Jews brought to Auschwitz, in plundering them, and escorting them to the gas chambers.

This is what I testified. The report was read out.