



JAN DZIOPEK

On 1 July 1946 in Gorlice, the Municipal Court in Gorlice, Department I, in the person of Dr. Turosz, with the participation of reporter J. Kazek, interviewed the person specified below as an unsworn witness. Having been advised of the criminal liability for making false declarations and of the wording of Art. 107 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the witness testified as follows:

Name and surname	Jan Dziopek
Age	57
Parents' names	Józef and Antonina
Place of residence	Gorlice
Occupation	state high school and secondary school teacher
Religious affiliation	Roman Catholic
Relationship to the parties	none

Having been informed of my rights and obligations, I testify as follows:

The Gestapo arrested me on 21 August 1940. After detention in prisons in Gorlice, Jasło and Tarnów, I was sent to the concentration camp in Auschwitz on 8 October 1940. I was told that Höß was already the camp commandant at that point. The abuse and actual torture began the moment we were handed over from the *Schupo* [auxiliary police] to the SS men. We were stripped naked, shaved, and our hair was cut. After a cold bath in freezing temperatures we were given worn-out underwear with no buttons and striped prison uniforms. Throughout this operation we were being beaten. We were then herded to a small room, 50 of us, and denied food. The dusty, stuffy room was packed to the extreme, and we were not allowed to open the window.



We had to get up at 4.00 a.m., fall in for roll call at 6.00 a.m., and then do penal exercises – the so-called "sport". A prisoner was not allowed to be idle in the camp, so the newcomers like us were trained for the camp life with "sport". We would start the exercises by running around the big roll call square, then we would get down on the ground and crawl, a dozen minutes later we would do the so-called "frogs" – the block leader would order us to stand up, raise our hands, close our eyes and spin around. This exercise regime, which changed from time to time, was conducted from 6.00 to 11.00 a.m. by our block leader – a professional criminalist. He used a club to beat those who were sluggish or unable to keep up, kicked them and abused them in a brutal manner. Several SS men gathered around us, mercilessly torturing the weak. When a few of our colleagues fainted, the SS men brought buckets with cold water, poured it over them, and ordered them to keep exercising. The point of these introductory exercises was to break the prisoner physically and psychologically. Physical suffering crushed his spirit, broke his will and made him meek, quiet, and submissive to the worst kinds of abuse and hardest labor.

The food rations we received were too small, so we suffered from indescribable hunger. From the arrival at the camp until Christmas we worked outdoors in the rain and frost with shovels, wheelbarrows and pickaxes, from dawn to dusk, wearing only what I described earlier: prison uniforms – no coats, sweaters or hats. Chilled to the marrow, starving and exhausted with work which had to be carried out quickly, we would go back to the block, where further abuse awaited. We had to quickly drink dinner from a bowl, without a spoon, often in a squatting position. Everything in the camp was designed to cause the prisoner to die from exhaustion in the span of several weeks.

I will not describe a prisoner's experiences in detail, because they are generally known. I will, however, bring up some of the things that were typical of the Auschwitz camp, and were organized by commandant Höß. Among those things that terrified us were the daily executions. At first, the prisoners were shot in huge pits where stone chippings and sand were mined for construction purposes. SS men would stand around the edge and fire a salvo on command. Afterwards we would only hear individual shots from a revolver fired by *Rapportführer* Palitzsch to finish off those who were still alive. During national holidays (3 May, 11 November, even 27 June – on Gen. Sikorski's name day) several dozen Poles were killed. The camp commandant conducted the executions on his own initiative, because the records of the victims in the camp administrative office included the annotation *Überstellt*,



which meant that the prisoner had been transferred to another camp. Such an annotation was given in the ledger and in the files to all prisoners killed at that time. These murders were hidden from Berlin, since reports did not state that the prisoners were dead. These executions, conducted by a large team of SS men in the pits, were talked over at length in the camp, and even discussed on the radio abroad. The commandant decided to act in secret. He ordered that from September or October the prisoners be executed only in the courtyard of block 11, and not with firearms but with a bolt gun, normally used in slaughterhouses for killing cattle. Since the gun would often jam and break, Flobert guns came into use.

Working as a clerk in the camp *Schreibstube* [administrative office] from July 1942 to the last days of the evacuation of Auschwitz, that is until 18 January 1945, I had the opportunity to learn about various frauds and crimes committed by the camp authorities at first hand. Executions of all kinds could be divided into two categories: those approved by Berlin and those that were unofficial, conducted on the camp authorities' initiative. The administrative office knew best which category any given execution fell into, because we were the ones who prepared the list of people executed on the orders from Berlin, while those who were executed unofficially, without authorization, from the autumn of 1941 were put on a list of prisoners who died from natural causes in the hospital. Notifications of death were falsified to state various diseases as the direct cause of death. Frauds of this kind were committed throughout the existence of the camp in Auschwitz. I personally prepared monthly reports in which I included only the executions approved by Berlin, and others, as I mentioned, were given annotations *Überstellt* at first, and then from the autumn of 1941 they were described as deaths from natural causes. I do not exaggerate when I say that the proportion of these executions was one to a thousand, meaning that when one prisoner was executed with the approval of the administration, a thousand died in secret. Germans killed not only people of nationalities they considered hostile, but also fellow countrymen. In such a way, without a judicial decision, on orders from the camp authorities died Reinhold, block leader from 22a, Walter (whose surname I do not remember), warehouseman from the DAW [Deutsche Ausrüstungswerke], and the *kapo* from the carpenter's workshop – I do not remember his surname either. My *kapo* from *Schreibstube*, *Rapportschreiber* [reporting clerk] Herman Diestel took the ledger, the so-called *Hauptbuch* from me and marked these people as deceased in secret, so that I would not see.

In the autumn of 1941, reserve officers from Kraków, who had been transported to the camp as hostages, were shot. Since I knew some of their colleagues, such as Lieutenant Drzewicki



from Gorlice and engineer Wielgus, I took an interest and found the official annotation in their files which stated: *Überstellt* [transferred] – obviously to heaven.

On 6 January 1943, the camp authorities committed a terrible crime when they assembled prisoners from four *kommandos*, namely *Effektenkammer* [personal effects storage], *Bekleidungskammer* [clothing storeroom], *Erkennungsdienst* [police records department] and *Entwesungskammer* [delousing chamber] – over 400 people in total. They were divided into three groups: the first one consisted of about 150 entirely innocent men who were all shot. Some of the Germans and *Volksdeutschers* were released from the other two groups, and the rest was shot in the following days.

An immensely tragic day came on 19 July 1943. On that day, 12 Poles were hanged as punishment after three prisoners from their *Feldmesser kommando* [surveying squad] escaped, taking advantage of the fact that the prisoners' escorts got drunk. The camp commandant sent a false report to Berlin, stating that the prisoners poisoned the SS men with vodka and escaped while the SS men were unconscious. 30 prisoners were executed – 18 were shot in block 18, and 12 were officially hanged, as I mentioned. The victims were mostly engineers. Execution was conducted by *Lagerführer* Aumeier in front of all prisoners during the evening roll call.

Commandant Höß murdered people not only with rifles but also by means of a so-called needle. The "needle" was used for executions by the *Sanitätsdienstgrad* [auxiliary sanitary personnel] where a certain Klehr worked at all times. Sick, physically exhausted, and disabled people were sent to block 20 to be killed by Klehr. The "needle" was about 10 centimeter long and its ampoule contained 20 centimeters of liquid – usually carbolic acid (phenol) or various gasoline compounds. The needle was used to murder two transports of boys under 16 years of age that arrived at Auschwitz from the neighboring camp in Birkenau – the first numbering 96, and the second numbering 84 people. I received the lists of those deceased daily, in groups of 25, so as to avoid raising a suspicion regarding this many prisoners in such a young age dying on one day. Klehr was usually in the hospital where he picked his victims. On two occasions he made inspections of all prisoners from the entire camp, organized in the following way: prisoners from each block walked into the baths naked, and everyone had to march individually in front of this murderer. If Klehr disliked someone, their number was written down. The following day those prisoners were summoned to the hospital and

never came back. Klehr murdered them with the "needle". My colleagues who worked in the hospital calculate that with the knowledge of the camp commandant, Klehr personally killed tens of thousands of prisoners.

As early as March 1942, transports of Jews started coming from various countries in Europe. Slovakian Jews arrived first, then Norwegian, Dutch, French, Greek Jews and so on. The fate of these people was terrible. Men and sometimes women were segregated – while strong and healthy people were sent to camps and assigned to work, weak elders and children were marched to the gas chambers and killed. Besides that, under the pretext of being assigned to easier work, the so-called "Muslims" selected from each *kommando* were sent to Birkenau and gassed. Lists with these prisoners would come to the *Schreibstube* with annotations "SB". The abbreviation stood for *Sonderbehandlung* [special treatment], which was later referred to as "Die gesondert Unterbrachte Häftlinge" [prisoners detained in a separate location] in the reports. We marked these people in the ledgers and files as deceased, while in the statistics sent to Berlin they were marked as the so-called *Die gesondert Unterbrachte Häftlinge*. I do not know what this means. The majority of gassings occurred in the period of time between the second half of 1943 and February 1944. Officially, 12,000–15,000 registered prisoners died monthly at that time. I cannot tell how many people died out of those who had no number and were not listed in the ledger. At the end of each month I prepared death statistics for Berlin. The statistics showed the following: there were over 12,000 departures [*Abgang*] in February 1944, which included: 10,500 *Sonderbehandlung* prisoners, 500 deceased Jews [sent by] RSHA [*Reichssicherheitshauptamt* – Reich Main Security Administration], 993 deceased of various nationalities, 7 executed – in total 12,000 people.

I round those numbers to the nearest hundred, because I do not remember the last digits. I only present what reports were sent to Berlin. Out of the 12,000 deceased, 10,500 were marked with "SB" and alive according to the statistics. That the commandant at Auschwitz executed prisoners on his own initiative was evident from one instance when there was to be a visitation, the so-called *Besuch* [visitation]. I was told to hand over all lists of people who died until that day from the *Schreibstube*. The lists were the documents that recorded their deaths. I later learned that they were burnt. Several months later, we were ordered to find the files of all the dead and those files were burnt as well.

The camp commandant administered horrible punishments for escape: 12 or even 15 colleagues from the escapee's *kommando* or block were selected and detained in the bunker, where they



were shot or died of starvation. Following someone's escape, we often stood during roll calls for hours in the cold and rain. Several hundred prisoners died during these roll calls. I went through one such roll call in November 1940. The camp commandant knew that one SS man had a very mean dog. The dog would attack prisoners and bite them to death. Those who tried to protect themselves only made it worse, for the enraged dog bit them even more fiercely. Being aware of that, I only howled with pain when it attacked me once. I stayed still and the beast went away, having ripped my thighs. The camp commandant knew Storch, an SS man whom we called the "Strangler". He would select the weak, grab them by the throat and choke them until the victims were dead. Once the prisoner fell to the ground, Storch would wait for a moment and in case the prisoner was alive, he would finish him off by jumping and landing on him with both feet.

The camp commandant knew what punishments were administered for the slightest of offences. On his orders, 36 people were locked in a tiny cell, the so-called bunker, for one night. In the morning, 32 of them were dead. On his orders, five prisoners were punished with six weeks in the *Stehzelle* [standing cell]. The punishment involved being locked in a bunker with an area of 1 square meter at night with two other people, and having to go to work during the day. I purposefully kept track of their fate – three of them died after two weeks, and two survived. Commandant ordered that for eating a potato or a swede during work, having a knife, or lighting a cigarette during work, prisoners were assigned to the *Strafkompanie* [penal company]. This was tantamount to a death sentence.

I described the Auschwitz camp in great detail in my journal. Its copy is stored in the Municipal Court in Kraków, in the District Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes. I wrote down the facts described in this journal during my stay at Auschwitz which lasted just under five years. I survived thanks to my carpentry skills, since they allowed me to work under a roof. My calligraphic style of writing got me into the camp administrative office, where I closely observed the actions of the camp authorities for two and a half years. When I was sent to the camp in Mauthausen, I had to destroy the notes that I had made at Auschwitz, but I still remember many facts which I am prepared to explain at any time. I wish to inform as many people in our society as possible about the Germans: who they were to us, and what methods they used.

The report was concluded and signed.