

BOLESŁAW LERCZAK

On 23 September 1947 in Katowice, the District Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland, in the person of the Deputy Prosecutor of the Court of Appeal Karol Jarzębiński, a member of the Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes, with the participation of reporter Władysław Giemza, pursuant to Article 20 of the provisions introducing the Code of Criminal Procedure, interviewed the person specified below as an unsworn witness. Having been advised of the criminal liability for making false declarations, the witness testified as follows:

Name and surname	Bolesław Lerczak
Age	35
Parents' names	Walenty and Marianna, née Swoboda
Place of residence	Mysłowice, [...]
Occupation	barber
Criminal record	none
Relationship to the parties	none

On the night from 12 to 13 February 1943, I was arrested by the German authorities (the Gestapo) in Mysłowice, where I lived during the occupation. My arrest was prompted by the confession given by one of the members of the clandestine organization that I also belonged to. Immediately after my arrest, I was escorted to the police station from where I was transported with 26 other prisoners to the concentration camp in Auschwitz. Apart from our group, other groups of prisoners arrived from Silesia and Zagłębie on 13 and 14 February. I estimate the number of the detainees at 700.

When I got to the camp, until around 28 March I stayed in block 2, lying on my stomach during the day and on my back at night, under a very powerful electric light. During that

time I was interrogated in the Political Department of the camp. Max Grabner was the head of this department. The method of the so-called "swing" was used during the first interrogation – I got hit 65 times with a whip and an oaken stick. Grabner did not beat me. I was beaten only by a Ukrainian SS man and another SS man from Silesia. I do not know their names. During the second interrogation, I was on a stool and got 25 lashes with a whip. I was beaten by an SS man named Swoboda. During the third interrogation, I was on the so-called "swing" and, as I learned from my colleagues, I was hit 300 times with a whip and an oaken stick. During that interrogation, the pain caused me to faint repeatedly and I was revived with water poured down my nose. I do not know whether Grabner attended these interrogations, but during the third interrogation, literally the whole political department was there. Afterwards, I was carried to block 2a, because I was unable to move on my own.

I met Grabner in person and learned his name during a bath, when another prisoner – beaten as badly as I – was getting hit in the face by Grabner. Grabner terrorized everyone in the camp. In some instances, prisoners summoned for interrogation with Grabner did not come back and, as we found out, were either shot or sent to the gas chamber. It is telling that a prisoner summoned to Grabner's department typically said farewell to his colleagues, because he assumed he was going to die. A prisoner who came back to the block was also greeted with joy by his colleagues. I learned from fellow prisoners that Grabner sentenced detainees to death and was thought to be the master of life and death.

I also saw Hans Aumeier, *Lagerführer* [camp leader], beating and kicking prisoners. Aumeier, a short man, derived the most satisfaction from striking a prisoner and causing him to fall down.

As for Liebehenschel, I have to say that when he was in command, relations in the camp became more relaxed. Public flogging was abolished, block leaders and *kapos* were forbidden to beat the prisoners. Liebehenschel showed interest in the camp; he would often halt a prisoner and ask about his crimes, he inspected the files. Some detainees were even released by his decision. I remember the following case: in the spring of 1944, a group of prisoners, the so-called "Muslims", mostly Jews, were selected for gassing. Liebehenschel ordered to release them back to the block with a promise that gassing would not occur as long as he was the camp commandant.

I do not know the other people from the list that was presented to me and I have no information about them.

That is all. The report was read out.