



ROMAN TAUL

On 18 September 1947 in Ruda Śląska, the Municipal Court in Ruda Śląska, with Municipal Judge Z. Skąpski (MA) presiding and with the participation of a reporter, R. Geilke, heard the person named below as a witness, without taking an oath. Having been advised of the criminal liability for making false declarations, the witness testified as follows:

Name and surname	Roman Taul
Age	30 years old
Parents' names	Jan and Anna
Occupation	office worker in the Rybnik Coal Industry Union
Place of residence	Radzionków, Mariacka Street 4

I was incarcerated in the Auschwitz camp from 24 June 1940 to 30 September 1944, on which day I fled the camp. I can testify about the following members of the SS garrison:

1) *Hauptsturmführer* Hans Aumeier – I concur with the testimonies of witnesses Waldera, Wróbel and Fligel; I would only like to add that in July 1942 or 1943, three trucks brought from Kraków a transport of prisoners of both sexes. These prisoners were taken to the camp crematorium, in which both Aumeier and the head of the Political Department, Grabner, were present, and where I was present as well as a prisoner employed at checking numbers of dead prisoners against the list of the deceased from the sick room.

When the above-mentioned prisoners from Kraków, some 120 people, were brought to the crematorium, Grabner asked Aumeier what he was supposed to do with them. To which Aumeier replied, "Why, shoot them!" As a result of this answer, one Quackernack, an *Oberscharführer* employed in the Political Department, presently residing in Bielefeld



(Feldstraße 2, American Zone), having received an order from Grabner, shot all these prisoners with a Flobert. Aumeier and Grabner were present during the execution.

Apart from that, I overheard several times how Aumeier called Grabner and the camp physician to tell them that again there was a larger group of so-called "Muslims", that is, people unable to work due to illness or exhaustion, and that they should be executed by shooting or gassed. After such a proposition was made, Grabner, Aumeier and the camp physician in office would convene for a meeting and decide about gassing a certain number of people who were unfit for work.

One day – I don't remember the exact date – I personally saw that Aumeier, who was present during an execution of prisoners carried out by *Oberscharführer* Palitzsch, also shot prisoners with his own gun. I also eavesdropped on a conversation in Grabner's office between him and Aumeier which was about the escapes of prisoners from the camp. They came up with an idea that since at the time all leaves for German soldiers and SS members were cancelled, those members of the camp personnel who would shoot a prisoner on the run would be rewarded with a leave and additional rations of cigarettes and vodka. As a result, the SS men who supervised the prisoners who worked outside the camp would order them to go away under some false pretence and then shoot at them, and later file a report that they shot at an escaping prisoner.

In accordance with instructions from Berlin, a prisoner caught on the run was to be flogged or placed in the so-called bunker. On Aumeier and Grabner's initiative, prisoners caught on the run were first put in the bunker, next flogged, and finally publicly hanged.

In the summer of 1942, in the Birkenau camp there was a mutiny by the captives from the Soviet Army, as a result of which some 80 Soviet prisoners had escaped. Then, Aumeier flew into a rage and shot at every prisoner that he chanced upon. I didn't see it for myself, but everybody in the camp knew about it.

2) Max Grabner – *Untersturmführer* and *Kriminalsekretär* – headed the Political Department and was the representative of the Gestapo in the camp. He was the one who made decisions regarding both death sentences against the prisoners and executions carried out without a sentence.

On 11 November 1941 or maybe 1942, Grabner ordered the head of the administrative office, *Unterscharführer* Kirschner, to search the files for surnames of those Polish



prisoners who were the officers of the Polish Army. Then, he ordered that a list comprising 75 surnames be made, and on that day these prisoners were executed in block 11.

During the executions which Grabner carried out himself, when he needed a few more prisoners to reach a number divisible by 10, he would choose the lacking victims from among the prisoners who had been punished with imprisonment in the bunker for some petty offence. I know this from one of my fellow inmates, who experienced this as one of prisoners in the bunker, and from prisoner Obojski from Warsaw, who was employed at carrying the bodies of the executed.

When Heinrich Himmler visited the camp, on the orders from Grabner and Aumeier, all sick and exhausted prisoners, so-called "Muslims", were led out of the camp, and all the gravely ill had been gassed beforehand. In this way, Himmler saw only healthy looking prisoners.

I witnessed how after the death of one prisoner, a half-Jew from Gliwice, his wife, a German citizen, and her parents were allowed to see the body. When these persons arrived at the Auschwitz camp, the body of that prisoner was placed in a special room in the crematorium, clad in black garments and white shirt. The prisoner's mouth was filled with paper in order to make him look better. Nevertheless, the wife of the deceased man shouted to the present Grabner and Quackernack: "You bandits, what have you done to my husband! My God, this is not my husband!" On these words Grabner ordered that woman's parents to leave the camp immediately, and a few days later, when I made a list of people burned in the crematorium, I found the surname of that woman who had not been imprisoned at the camp. It could have happened only on Grabner's initiative.

On Grabner's initiative, executions of prisoners by a firing squad of SS men armed with rifles were replaced with executions with the use of pneumatic or small-caliber weapons, which was to keep the matter quiet and avoid discontent among SS soldiers. With the same aim, that is, in order to prevent the prisoners from informing SS soldiers about what was going on in the camp, an order was given that if a prisoner approached a soldier and was three steps away the soldier was to shoot at him.

On Grabner, Aumeier and the camp physician's initiative, a regulation was introduced that if a prisoner was sentenced to death and executed or gassed not as a result of having been sentenced by the court but on a decision made by the camp command, the family of such



a prisoner would be notified that he or she had died in the sick room of some disease or another. The same information was submitted to the Registrar's Office, entered in the camp files and sent in reports to Berlin.

In August 1941, the first gassing of prisoners took place in the camp. About 800 Soviet commissars and a certain number of prisoners who were completely unfit for work were subjected to it. This gassing was conducted under Grabner's supervision.

It was also Grabner's idea to carry out the so-called "decimation" of prisoners in a block in case of escape of a prisoner from that block. Later, the punishment was modified, also on Grabner's initiative, so that when a prisoner had escaped from the camp, his family was brought there instead.

Max Grabner headed the Political Department in the Auschwitz camp from the moment of its establishment until its liquidation in January 1945. Towards the end of 1943, in the so-called *Effektenkammer*, i.e. a storeroom with prisoners' clothes, one of the prisoners, Jerzy Janicki from Tarnów, placed a short-wave transmitter under the flooring. This resulted in a secret action among the prisoners of informing the West about conditions in the camp. The camp authorities began to suspect something, and then Janicki destroyed the transmitter. Nevertheless, on Aumeier and Grabner's orders, on 6 January 1943 all prisoners employed in the *Effektenkammer* [personal effects storeroom] and *Bekleidungskammer* [clothing storeroom] were assembled and had to stand at attention all day long in the cold without their caps. It was repeated on the next day, and then Grabner carried out a selection, asking the prisoners about their professions, education and nationality. As a result of that, 120 prisoners were sent by Grabner to be shot to death and the rest were sent for hard labor.

I admit that on 18 August 1942, when I was making a list of people who were to be executed, I found that my own surname was to be put on it and therefore I asked Grabner to pardon me, which he did.

3) Gustav Kuny – *Unterscharführer* – head of a storeroom in the *Effektenkammer*, under whom I worked as a writer. He treated the prisoners very brutally; I saw for myself how he hit them in the faces, ordered them to fall to the ground and then get up, and do the so-called frog jumps and squats.



4) Arthur Liebehenschel – *Obersturmbannführer* – the successor of Höß, inspector for Jewish matters in the southern Europe, was appointed the successor of Höß at the post of the camp commandant, and Höß took his place. When he assumed the duties of the commandant, all block leaders, *kapos* and SS men had to sign a regulation to the effect that from then on it was forbidden to beat and harass the prisoners, that prisoners were supposed to work and had the right to come to Liebehenschel with various complaints.

I myself heard how one of the block leaders recounted to his friends that he had gone to Liebehenschel to ask him how he was supposed to maintain discipline in the block since he was forbidden to beat the prisoners. Liebehenschel told him that it was just on paper and to do as he pleased.

After Liebehenschel became the camp commandant, the prisoners received milder treatment. However, it was said that it happened on the initiative of the higher authorities.

5) Kurt Hugo Müller – *Unterscharführer* – was a *Blockführer*, and later he was employed in the so-called *Arbeitseinsatz* [labor deployment office]. He was particularly brutal towards the prisoners, whom he beat and harassed without any reason. He also took part in escorting prisoners to the execution sites. Moreover, I once witnessed him say to his friend that he could fling every prisoner to the ground with just one punch in the face, and then he called some prisoner who chanced to pass by and began to hit him in the face until the prisoner fell to the ground.

6) Ludwig Plagge – *Oberscharführer* – was a *Blockführer* in the so-called first quarantine in 1940. All those newly arrived at the camp were entrusted in his care, and for the first six weeks he had “German exercises” with them, which meant that he ordered the prisoners to fall to the ground, crawl, spin, do frog jumps and squats, run, etc., for the entire day with a one-hour break at noon, and all this time he behaved with extreme sadism and brutality. Those prisoners who couldn’t stand it were called out and beaten, and then ordered to do the same but separately from the rest.

Later, Plagge served as *Blockführer* in block 11, where he personally meted out various punishments, for instance the pillar punishment, when a prisoner was suspended on a chain with his hands tied in the back. When a prisoner was thus suspended, Plagge would suspend himself from the prisoner’s hands in order to weight him down. This often resulted in shoulder joint dislocation and stretching of veins.



Moreover, I know that the following SS men were employed at the camp: Arthur Breitwieser, Christian Carstensen, Franz GÜsgen, Hans Hoffmann, Heinrich Josten, and Richard Schröder, but I cannot provide any details pertaining to them.

I would like to point out that since I was imprisoned in the Auschwitz camp for a longer period of time, I remember a number of members of the SS crew who were very particularly brutal in their treatment of prisoners and who have many crimes on their conscience, but I don't know their surnames. However, I could recognize them if I saw them or was presented with their photographs.

I would also like to explain that from August 1940 to September 1942 I was employed as a writer in the Political Department, where I had the opportunity to familiarize myself with various details of the camp management and where I could overhear conversations held by the camp authorities. I was chosen for this position because I spoke German, and besides, I was a prisoner as for whom release was not taken into account.

From 1 January 1943 I worked in the *Effektenkammer*, where I came into contact with a number of prominent prisoners who distinguished themselves in helping other inmates and smuggling messages out of the camp.