



JAKUB STYCZYŃSKI

On 31 May 1947 in Zwolen, the District Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes with its seat in Radom, this in the person of lawyer Marian Marszałek, acting pursuant to Article 20 of the provisions introducing the Code of Criminal Procedure, interviewed the person mentioned hereunder as a witness. The witness testified as follows:

Name and surname	Jakub Styczyński
Age	53 years old
Parents' names	Walenty and Aniela
Place of residence	Zwolen
Profession	teacher
Religion	Roman Catholic
Criminal record	none

I have been a permanent resident of Zwolen since 1932, with only a single period of interruption, between 4 June 1942 and 10 May 1945, when I was incarcerated at a concentration camp in Germany.

During the occupation, I lived in Zwolen until 3 June 1942. In the course of their invasion in September 1939, the Germans bombarded Zwolen on three occasions, twice with aircraft and once using artillery. Their actions were hurtful only to the civilian population, for there were no Polish army units in the town, nor did any march through it in the daytime. While when actually entering Zwolen, they fired upon the defenseless civilians, killing a great number. A few Polish prisoners of war, who were walking unarmed in the direction of the city, were shot dead by another detachment. During this time, Zwolen was ablaze, however the Germans intentionally set fire to buildings that had somehow escaped the initial conflagration. With the help of local

Volksdeutsche, such as the Gede, Najdemajer and Duzdal families, and others, they carried out searches, ostensibly looking for weapons and Polish officers and soldiers who had escaped from captivity. All valuables were seized. The worst hit were the city's Jewish residents, whom the Germans treated with considerable hatred. Volksdeutsche living in Zwoleń and the vicinity set up a *Selbstschutz* [a paramilitary "self-defense" force] and started making life unpleasant for Poles and Jews alike. Products brought into the township were confiscated. They also imposed grain, cattle and pig levies. People were forced to hand over milk, while even the slightest infringements were punished with fines, the seizure of cows, or deportation to camps. The Germans also obligated the local populace to work on the upkeep of roads and the removal of wood from forests, which was most onerous. Soon, it became difficult to deliver food supplies, for the *Selbstschutz* patrolled the roads leading to the city and regularly requisitioned eggs and dairy produce, pork fat, etc. from passing farmers. The local Germans started settling scores with their neighbors, and in general denounced anyone whom they didn't like. In 1939, they used this method to get Wacław Papiewski, Franciszek Markiewicz, Gawdziński and others arrested. The Germans demolished the fittings and equipment of the school. All the benches were removed and burned, while teaching aids that had some value (such as radios, projectors, cameras, etc.) were seized – the rest, considered as worthless, was broken to pieces and thrown out into the courtyard. School books were taken away, and the teaching of history and geography was forbidden. The Germans kept on appearing at the school in order to check what was going on. They even stopped children in the road and inspected their notebooks or seized their books. The local committee of the Central Welfare Council was forbidden to register Poles who had been expelled in the winter of 1939/40 from the Poznań region and Pomerania. Jewish residents were persecuted and tormented in various ways. When gendarmes arrived in Zwoleń, the harassment and victimization only got worse. Starting from the spring of 1940, special convoys would be sent from Radom on market days and, with the help of the local Volksdeutsche, organize round-ups, the victims of which were deported to Germany. The then commandant of the gendarmerie, second lieutenant Heinris, and ... his son, an adolescent, were particularly involved in tormenting the Jewish population.

And since the Jews, making every effort to stay unobserved, would try to purchase food in local villages, the Germans organized ambushes along the roads and pathways, executing any Jews they found on the spot. The aforementioned son of the gendarmerie commandant, who was no more than 15 or so years old, once shot 3 people (unidentified to this day) on

the road from Strykowice Błotne. On 18 March 1942, the Germans organized a large-scale massacre of Poles in Karolin. Special SD and SS units were sent in from Kraków for this express purpose. They surrounded a township to the south of Zwoleń and herded some its inhabitants – a few dozen people – into Karolin. There, they were subjected to barbaric torture (for example, one Bąk, a teacher from Sydoł, had his arms broken), and subsequently shot and buried in the field of Gram, a German, which was later leveled. Insofar as I know, later, when the Germans were retreating, the bodies of the murdered victims were dug up and burned. In 1942, they detained teachers and Officers of the Reserve, accusing them all of organizing an underground resistance movement. The arrests were carried out in the entire region. Detainees were taken to the Gestapo in Radom and forced to spend a whole day lying face-first on the floor of a garage. During the night from 4 to 5 June 1942, we were spoken to by the head of the Gestapo, who encouraged us to admit that the “underground organization” did in fact exist and reveal it. Next, they checked our personal data, while in the morning one part of the group was sent to Oświęcim, and the other to prison; 1 or 2 people were released. We were welcomed in prison with a savage and terrible beating, administered all over the body with truncheons. An SS man by the surname of Koch, who worked at the Political Division of Radom prison, was by far the most brutish and cruel to prisoners. We were also victimized by a “Ukrainian”, a former NCO of the Polish artillery, however I don’t remember his surname. Fijas, the prison doctor, treated us prisoners with contempt and spite; I don’t think that he even once behaved towards one of the inmates as a Pole should to a Pole. You would have thought that he was a German.

After three and a half months, I was sent to Oświęcim. I was imprisoned there for half a year, later for 6 weeks in Gross-Rosen, and finally – from 23 April 1943 until 21 April 1945 – in Oranienburg-Sachsenhausen-Falkensee near Berlin.

The conditions and happenings in Oświęcim and the other concentration camps have been aptly described in books, such as *Smoke over Birkenau* by Seweryna Szmaglewska, *From the Abyss* by Zofia Kossak-Szczucka, *Letters from under the Mulberry Tree* by Gustaw Morcinek, and numerous other memoirs. For despite the fact that the experiences of these authors have been presented using a literary style, they are based on their lives in the camps and therefore true. The trials of German criminals have also shed some light on the reality of the Nazi camps, and so I personally don’t have much to add. The greatest problem is that you didn’t know your tormentors by their surnames, only by their names or some aliases, and

these have all faded away in memory. The leaders, the ones who were at the very top, have been convicted and sentenced, however the majority of crimes were committed by smaller fry, and these are proving elusive. In the camp system, the procedure of killing was organized in such a way that the murders were not necessarily committed by SS men – German (and even Polish) prisoners had a role to play, too. In Oświęcim, inmates were beaten and killed not only by the SS, but also by snitches, *Vorarbeiters* [foremen"], block wardens, room supervisors, etc., usually for no reason at all. In block 8, an SS man by the surname of Kowal (I don't know his name), a heavyweight boxer, would punch anyone whose appearance he didn't like during roll-calls and assemblies. When the victim fell to the ground, he would kick him in the kidneys; the sufferer would usually die in a few days.

Irrespective of the weather, we would be herded to the baths naked, and for this reason those who had not inured themselves to the conditions quickly fell ill and died of pneumonia. Later on, some of the block wardens allowed us to take coats. But the worst were the delousings. Everything would be taken from us, and sometimes we even had to wait a dozen or so hours naked for our clothes to be returned.

The sick would be admitted as follows: first, those reporting ill would be taken to block 24 for an examination. Irrespective of the season and weather, they would wait in a line in the open, dressed, and then be ordered to proceed naked through the cold corridor. Conditions at the so-called *Krankenbau* ["clinic" or "hospital"] were only slightly better than in the camp proper. The filth was terrible, there were no drugs, and the food rations were reduced by one half. One of the Polish doctors said that patients were at the mercy of God and their own stamina. Operations were performed in such a way that patients waited in a line, forced to observe the procedure carried out on the man in front of them. Incompletely anesthetized, operatees would scream and try to break free. The procedures were carried out by the head surgeon, Dr Dering (currently wanted for the experiments that he organized in block 10). A patient would remain in the hospital for 2 months at most. Every month, and subsequently every 2 weeks, the Germans selected those intended for the gas chambers. The victims were usually excessively gaunt, or were chosen because their treatment would have lasted too long. In any case, they were immediately separated from the rest and driven off in their underwear to the crematorium in Brzezinka. I do not remember the surname of the sergeant who sent hundreds of people to the crematorium right before my very eyes. Selections were also made by an SS doctor who, having graduated from the medical academy in Poznań, spoke Polish.

If anyone was beaten and fell or collapsed from exhaustion during work, he had to lie right there on the ground until work was over, whereupon his companions would carry him by his legs and arms to the roll-call square. Only then, if still alive, would he be taken to the hospital. In December 1942 alone, 27 people from one *Kommando* were killed in the space of one day during the unloading of potatoes at the *Bahnhof* [train station]. At the *Bahnhofkommando* [railway head office] there was an *Oberkapo* [head trusty], a man from Vienna, who had more than 2,000 people on his conscience. The system in Oświęcim and all the other German camps was based not only on maintaining an iron discipline, but also on keeping the prisoners in a state of permanent nervous tension, so that we would not have a moment's peace. This system led to exhaustion and, ultimately, death.

Jews and the sick were by no means the only victims of the gas chambers. Indeed, the administration must have imposed some sort of numerical quotas, for a commission regularly went from block to block and selected those who were healthy, but didn't look too good, for gassing in Brzezinka.

I was in Gross-Rosen for 6 weeks, all the time in the quarantine ward. Conditions were such that if we had been forced to remain there longer, not many of us would have survived. Since the Germans wanted to exploit the prisoners' labor, they allowed us to receive food parcels. In Oświęcim, parcels usually reached their addressees. But in Gross-Rosen, parcels would be opened by an SS man in the prisoners' presence, and the best products taken and distributed amongst those who had performed the most work. Whereas in Oranienburg, which was the "presentable" concentration camp, there was no gassing and medical care was better, however the weak and sick would frequently be sent off in an unknown direction. But the torment and torture were the same. When a prisoner by the name of Stanisław Krupa from Kraków managed to escape from Falkensee, a dozen or so of us were punished by being forced to stand at the gate, bareheaded and completely immobile, from 5.00 a.m. to 9.00 p.m. in the pouring rain. Forced standing at the gate was agonizing. The escapee himself was hanged 3 weeks later near his workplace, and all 3,200 of us were forced not only to watch the execution, but also to walk under his body in lines of five.

The company that ran the tank factory, "Demag" (*Deutsche Maschinenbau-Gesellschaft*), paid us bonuses of 50 pfennigs to 1 mark per week. Whoever was not listed for receipt of the bonus would have to perform penal work while the others rested. If he was then sent



any money from home, he would actually receive only the amount equal to his bonus. Sometimes all of the money would be confiscated, and the prisoner received nothing. Towards the end of 1944 and in the beginning of 1945, in order to deprive all prisoners of their monies through measures having some semblance of legality, the camp administration bought things that were completely useless for prisoners, such as shoe linings, combs and imitation beer (which nobody drank in the winter), and removed funds from our accounts.

I heard that during my period of incarceration there were mass arrests and shootings in Zwoleń and Leokadiów. The events in Zwoleń have been written down at the town hall in Zwoleń, complete with the surnames of the German killers, among them Kula, Matas, Krall, Heidt, Weiss, Bremer, Gede, Onstat, Lewartowicz, Mokrzysłowski, Jądra, Józef Janszek, Karst, Stefanowski, and Górnikiewicz.