



## JAN MICHALSKI

On 15 January 1947 in Szczecin, Investigative Judge of the District Court of Szczecin, with its seat in Szczecin, Judge J. Kolawska of the District Court, with the participation of a reporter, senior registrar T. Mitecki, heard the person named below as a witness. Having been advised of the criminal liability for making false declarations and of the wording of Article 107 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, as well as the meaning of the oath, the witness took the oath before the judge and testified as follows:

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Name and surname	Jan Michalski
Date of birth	1 April 1909
Parents' names	Alojzy and Wiktoria, <i>née</i> Blarowska
Place of residence	Szczecin, Krasińskiego Street 89/12
Occupation	file clerk at DOK [Corps District Command], Szczecin
Religious affiliation	Roman Catholic
Criminal record	none
Relationship to the parties	none

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I was staying in the penal camp in Auschwitz from 17 April 1942 to November 1944, at which point, as the result of the evacuation, I was transported together with one batch of prisoners to the camp in Oranienburg, then Sachsenhausen and Bartzch [?].

My transport consisted of 475 people brought from Pawiak. On the day of our arrival, we were bathed: we were told to get undressed outside (it was frosty) and then we were led under a cold shower. We were kept outside, naked, for two hours, while the admission formalities were being completed. As a result of such bathing, about 50 people came down



with pneumonia. Some number of them died, while another part was selected from the infirmary by the commission (which we called the “Death Commission”) as an unnecessary burden on the camp. They were gassed and then burned in the crematorium. I know that from my friends who were staying in the infirmary.

On the day after the bath, the prisoners were photographed, which also included a form of harassment. Namely, if a prisoner didn’t rise immediately from their chair after being photographed, they would be flung from the chair with the help of a special electrical device and they would get hurt. It didn’t happen to me personally, because, having seen my friends covered in blood and having been warned by them, I got up quickly enough. I did not personally witness an incident in which a prisoner was flung from the chair by an electric current. I would like to add that the “Death Commission” consisted of a chief doctor (*Standortarzt*) and his helper, an SS orderly (*Unterscharführer*), whose names I don’t remember.

The conditions of the stay at the camp were one form of harassment for the prisoners. We were kept in overcrowded blocks. Two camp beds pushed together were occupied by two to ten people. The blocks were not heated in winter. We were given one or two blankets to use as a cover, depending on the influx of prisoners. When there were more prisoners, they would sleep on the concrete floor, on a thin layer of straw, regardless of the season. I myself didn’t have to sleep like that. It only happened at the beginning of my stay and it didn’t happen later. Our clothes were made of thin, striped denim, which we wore to work in the winter, as well as in the summer, so we would be freezing and many would fall ill.

Our food consisted of a daily allowance of bread (35 decagrams), with a small addition of three decagrams of margarine or the same amount of sausage, cheese or marmalade. We would get a liter of soup based on rutabaga, beetroots or other vegetables. It sometimes happened that the soup was made from nettles. We were allowed to receive parcels from Christmas of 1942. Before that, getting parcels had not been allowed. After it was allowed, I received food parcels regularly. Initially, five-kilogram parcels were permitted daily, then two parcels – five kilograms each – per week. In 1944, we could receive two parcels – ten kilograms each – per week. I cannot tell you the exact periods in which those regulations concerning the volume of parcels were in place.

After my admission to the camp, I first worked on the building site of the laundry in the new camp, as well as on other building sites. From 1945, I worked at disinfection. The



conditions on the building sites were very harsh. The smallest failure to obey the orders of the *kapo*, who supervised the work of a particular group (*kommando*), was enough to get beaten and kicked by the prisoners who were his helpers. I didn't see anybody beaten to death in this way.

Aside from the penal company, which I will speak of later, there were daily occurrences of people fainting due to such harassment. They were unable to make it back to the camp by themselves. I also saw corpses being carried behind the other working groups almost every day, as they were returning from work. I cannot list the names of the *kapos* or the SS men who abused prisoners. All I know is that everyone did it.

In January 1943, I was sent to the penal company for trading a packet of tobacco for some bread. The company was located in a different block, separated from the rest of the camp. We would sleep in unheated, damp bunkers. We would get beaten and kicked in the blocks and at work. I cannot name particular incidents or particular people, because everyone did this – from the *Blockführer* [block leader] SS man and the *kapos* to the German prisoners. I remember two German prisoners guilty of abusing people. These were Krawy, nicknamed "Aleks," and Koch. During my stay, which lasted about two months, when the penal company would go to work, we would be engaged in digging a canal. Every day, an SS man, who was a *Blockführer* and a *Kommandoführer* [*kommando* leader] at the same time, whose name I don't remember, would choose a *kapo* to supervise the working group, and the number of prisoners to be "finished off" in a given day. That was the task of *kapos*, foremen (*Vorarbeiter*) and other German prisoners. While a prisoner was bent over at work, he would be hit with a stick in the back of his head. Several dozen people per day were finished off in this way. I remember that 69 were killed once. Their bodies were brought back to the camp and then burned in the crematorium.

During my stay in the penal company, every Sunday – sometimes every second Sunday – a so-called *Blocksperr*e was organized. The block was closed and nobody was allowed to leave. *Kapos* would then call out the prisoners' numbers and those [who had been called] would go out into the yard. When the block was opened and we went out, we saw the bodies of those prisoners stacked up on top of each other. I don't know who killed them or how.

The morning and evening roll calls were a particular torment in the camp. If some prisoner was missing during the *Rapportführer's* [report leader] report, the roll calls were prolonged by a couple of hours and we had to stand, with no hats on our heads, in the freezing cold or in the heat. The



longest roll call during my stay lasted six hours. As a result of beatings at the camp and at Pawiak, all my teeth were knocked out. I can't say exactly by whom and when they were knocked out. At the roll call, dozens of prisoners were called out every day and were later executed in block 11.

I was in the infirmary a few times. Once or twice a week, the sick, those who were apparently untreatable, were qualified to be "finished off." The ones selected were taken to the crematorium. Prior to being burned, they were gassed. I would often hear the screams of those seriously sick, who – unable to walk on their own – were dragged by their legs to the car and thrown in like inanimate objects. I saw that. There were a few times when I stood before such a commission too. The last "purge" of that kind that I remember happened in November 1942. 270 people were selected from among all the sick. I also remember a "purge" in March 1943, when 50 more people from the block of those who had already recovered – in which I was staying (block 19) – were marked for death. Among them, attorney Makowski from Kraków.

People were also selected for death outside the infirmary. I remember, once, after people had returned from work, all groups were inspected in front of the kitchen. The inspection was performed by the senior *Rapportführer*, whose name I don't remember, and *Arbeitsdienstführer* [work manager] Fritz. During the inspection, people with swollen knees were selected. They were gassed and burned. I remember that 300 people were selected from the potato peeling *kommando* alone. I remember that well, because my friend Kowalczyk, who was gassed, was in that *kommando*. That was in the fall of 1942.

In the fall of 1942, three prisoners escaped from one working group. They dressed up in German uniforms and escaped in a car. As punishment, 12 people from that *kommando* (the work group) were shot, and 12 were publicly hanged at the roll call. Among the hanged was engineer Małkowski, my friend from Warsaw. I found out about the shooting from the orderlies who took the bodies away in cars. Ofmayer [Aumeier] was the camp commandant at that time, Schwarz was the *Lagerführer* [camp leader] and Grabner was the chief of the Political Department, with Bogner [Boger] as his deputy. Executions were performed by Palitz [Palitzsch], and Kadyk or Kaduk was the *Rapportführer*. I remember that Aumeier was removed from his post for liquidating an entire working group. I remember that in June 1942, 150 people brought from Kraków were executed. [This took place] after their short stay at the camp, apparently because some German officer and a non-commissioned officer had been killed. The death sentence was carried out by Palitzsch. I know that, because some of

the people executed on that day had worked in my *kommando*.

At the end of October 1942, 300 prisoners out of those staying in the camp were selected and executed for some train wreck near Lublin. Some Gestapo commission came and called out the people from the Lubelskie voivodeship during the roll call. They never came back. I saw their bodies being taken away. Returning from work, we saw the door of the trailer open and the bodies spilling out onto the road.

I remember that, prior to being sent to the penal company, I sat in a bunker for eight days for the tobacco thing. The camp authorities mentioned above (Aumeier, Grabner, Schwarz, Palitzsch and Kaduk) [then] selected 70 people from those sitting in the bunker, who were also executed. Once, being in the infirmary, whose windows faced the execution ground, I observed the way in which people were executed. They were shot in the neck from the distance of about one meter, in a completely quiet way. All of the above-mentioned commandants of the camp were present at such executions and Palitzsch was the executioner. While I was observing one such execution, one of the prisoners shouted: "Poland is not yet lost!," the other shouted: "Jesus Christ!" and Aumeier replied [illegible].

(To the judge's question about how Aumeier could still be present at the camp in January 1943 – when the prisoner was sentenced to the bunker and then sent to the penal company for the tobacco transactions – if he had been removed from his post for the execution of an entire *kommando* because of three escaped prisoners in November 1942, the witness replies that he may have mixed up the dates. Either way, he remembers that in January 1943, Aumeier was still present at the camp for sure.)

The penal bunker was a basement with a small window, cement floor and no beds or chairs. I wrote a diary about my stay at the camp, which I can make available to the Court. I cannot testify anything about the particular activity of Rudolf Höß.

The report was read out.

Official note:

The witness gives the impression of being not too intelligent, he testifies in a chaotic and emotional manner. Apart from that, he has a general memory of the camp rather than the knowledge of particular facts. He does not seem to require close observation.