



BERNARD CZARDYBON

On 11 September 1946 in Gliwice, Regional Investigative Judge Jan Sehn, a member of the Main Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland, at the spoken request and in the presence of a member of that Commission, Deputy Prosecutor Edward Pęchalski, pursuant to and in accordance with Article 4 of the Decree of 10 November 1945 (Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland No. 51, item 293), in connection with Articles 254, 107, 115 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, interviewed the former prisoner of the concentration camp in Auschwitz specified below, who testified as follows:

Name and surname	Bernard Czardybon
Date and place of birth	18 June 1901, Chorzów
Citizenship and nationality	Polish
Religious affiliation	Roman Catholic
Occupation	private clerk
Place of residence	Chorzów, Stalmacha Street 7

I was arrested by the Gestapo on 18 December 1940 in Chorzów, and on the same day I was transported, together with over two hundred colleagues from Chorzów, to the concentration camp in Auschwitz. I stayed there as prisoner no. 7623 until May 1941, when I was transported to Katowice for an investigation led by the Gestapo against myself and my comrades for treason against the German state (*Hochverrat*). During the ensuing period I was kept in prisons in Bytom, Gliwice and Berlin, where finally in March 1942 a trial was held against myself and my comrades before the Reich People's Court (*Volksgerichtshof*). In the course of that trial I was found not guilty, or rather I was released due to lack of evidence of guilt. In spite of the verdict, I was transported back to the Auschwitz concentration camp, where I was imprisoned with the same number until 18 January 1945.

During the first period of my stay I worked in various details, and in the second – after returning from the trial – in the *Effektenkammer* [storehouse for prisoners' belongings] and the *Bekleidungskammer* [clothing storehouse], and from mid-1942 to November 1943 in the so-called Canada located in special buildings next to the *Bauhof*. The name "Canada" was given by Polish prisoners to the warehouses where the camp management gathered all the goods stolen from victims murdered in gas chambers or executed by shooting. Over time, the name was adopted by the camp administration as the official designation of those warehouses. The Canada area was separated from the rest of the camp by a special barbed wire fence. At its corners, there were watchtowers with SS men patrolling the area day and night. Within the fenced area there were five barracks, a special warehouse and a disinfection building (*Entwesungskammer*), converted for this purpose from an old brick peasant cottage. The average number of male and female prisoners working in one shift in Canada was about 900. During a certain period, that number even rose to 1500 [people]. We worked in two shifts, day and night. Our work was constantly under the close supervision of SS men, and entry to the area of Canada was strictly forbidden to prisoners and SS men who did not work there. Before returning from work to the camp, the prisoners were stripped naked and searched. The same practice was also applied to female prisoners. The SS inspectors even looked inside the natural orifices of the body.

Our task was to sort goods transported by trucks by special prisoner details from the railway ramp, where the belongings were taken away from prisoners arriving in train transports, and from the crematorium undressing rooms, in the gas chambers, where the prisoners who had arrived by train were murdered. These things were tossed onto open squares in Canada, where we sorted them and transported them to barracks and warehouses designated for individual items. These were: clothing of all kinds, food items, valuables, jewelry, foreign currencies, medicines, various tools and all kinds of household items, and tools for performing various professions. I remember that once a Norwegian Jew brought with him to the camp three huge boxes of luxurious, precious furs. Another Jew, a Polish watchmaker, brought with him his entire watchmaker's workshop and a stock of watches. Doctors would bring the full equipment of medical offices, in many cases x-ray machines; dentists – dental chairs, etc. This can be explained by the fact that in the clothes of many murdered people we found documents in which the local German occupation authorities had ordered a given Jew specified by name to undergo productive work training and recommended they take



clothes, valuables and tools needed in their profession with them. I remember that I found such certificates in the clothes of some Dutch Jews.

The clothes brought from the gas chambers were very often dirty and stained with feces and blood. I remember that four times there were dead newborns in the boxes; once we found a dead 12-year-old girl, while sorting clothes thrown on a pile in Canada. The corpses of the newborns were buried in Canada, and the girl's body was taken to the crematorium. I am not able to specify the amount of clothing and other items gathered in Canada because it was immense.

The intensity of the gassing can be measured by the fact that at some point in the course of three consecutive days, the belongings of 90,000 gassed Jews were brought to Canada. All valuables were taken in special boxes to the Political Department, whose officers were permanently in Canada. On some days, we transferred three large boxes of valuables to the Political Department.

All valuable food items were set aside for the SS. Other things, after being ordered and bundled, were sent in train cars to the Reich, most often to the addresses of various local NSV (*Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt* [National Socialist People's Welfare]) organizations, or the addresses of mayors of various towns. Those shipments were made at the written request of the institutions to which the items were sent. In those letters, they clearly asked to send them things previously belonging to Jews.

There were also individual requests from German people, most often soldiers, who asked for layettes and prams for children. The camp authorities granted such requests. In many cases, the recipients would send complaints to the camp, stating that the items they had received were useless, because they were stained with blood. We were all severely punished for failures of this type. The Canada detail was one of the toughest and most dangerous details. Prisoners who had contact with the treasures accumulated there would experience a gold rush, which most often led to their execution by shooting. In many cases, SS men used prisoners as lackeys to commit thefts. By following such an order, prisoners put themselves at risk, and if they were caught taking anything out of Canada, they died. Such SS men would never speak out for the caught prisoners. Besides, all the SS men who were employed in Canada were dismissed on disciplinary grounds; many of them were in prison for stealing the former property of Jews on their own. They all stole a fortune for themselves from Canada in the form of valuables and other precious items.



I assume that former prisoner Bernard Kuc, residing in Chorzów-Batory at Armii Czerwonej Street 123, who worked as a bookkeeper in Canada, could provide some information regarding the number of individual items that passed through the Canada warehouses.

The report was read out. At this point, the interview of the witness and the present report were concluded.