



## TADEUSZ WĄSOWICZ

**Presiding Judge:** I hereby summon the witness Tadeusz Wąsowicz.

**The witness Tadeusz Wąsowicz approaches:** 41 years old, a civil servant by profession, unmarried, relationship to the accused – none.

**Presiding Judge:** I hereby instruct the witness, pursuant to the provisions of Article 107 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, that you are required to speak the truth. The provision of false testimony is punishable by a term of imprisonment of up to five years. Do the parties wish the witness to be sworn in?

**Prosecutors:** We release the witness from the obligation to take an oath.

**Defense counsel:** As do we.

**Presiding Judge:** What specific information can the witness provide regarding the cases of the accused? Please present the goings-on at the camp in Auschwitz and briefly inform us of your charges against the accused.

**Witness:** I was incarcerated at Auschwitz from 11 August 1941 to 28 October 1944. And at this very time in Poland, more than one million people are being sought by their families and by the Polish Red Cross. We, the former camp prisoners, know very well why these persons are impossible to find. As regards the camp at Auschwitz, it was the largest of all the camps in terms of both area and the number of inmates. I shall try to document this. Whereas the concentration camps in central and western Germany had average populations of up to 20,000 inmates, Auschwitz – and this already in 1941 and in the beginning of 1942 – numbered on average 9,000 prisoners, while in 1942 it continued to grow due to the daily arrival of fresh transports, so that its population at the time ranged from 9,000 to 26,000. On 7 October 1941, the number of 9,000 prisoners held there was augmented by approximately 12,000 new arrivals – Soviet prisoners of war, who gradually disappeared, so that six months later the *Lagerstärke* [number of prisoners] included only 158 living Soviets; by that time, the rest had been killed. They perished on such a mass scale that there was a period in November 1941 when the *Lagerstärke* reported the death of some 300 – 400

Soviet prisoners due to malnutrition. In the summer of 1942 the camp was expanded, while in 1944 its population rose to a massive 147,000. No other concentration camp in Germany had such a large population. According to extant records, in 1944 the second largest concentration camp, Buchenwald, had 81,000 inmates of both sexes.

I am mentioning these figures not because I want to boast of the martyrdom of the Polish nation before any other nation, but in order to establish the fact that the Germans' objective was to turn Auschwitz into an industrial center operated by prisoners who were exploited to the limits of their physical endurance. If we were to take a look at the plan of Auschwitz, we would see that it had an area of 40 square kilometers. It was surrounded by water on all sides: the Vistula on the west and the south, the River Soła on the east, and the King's Canal and numerous ponds on the south. Thus, it formed a kind of island, an isolated area that was to serve the security of Germany by ensuring complete protection against external influences and rendering escape impossible. The number of prisoners that I have given – 140,000 – has not simply been taken from memory; as a matter of fact, this was the number entered in the records kept by the *Schreibstube* [administrative office], which was adjusted daily. Another issue concerning the population, and one that we must make abundantly clear, is that more than 400,000 registered inmates passed through Auschwitz. Registration was performed by the admissions office and had as its objective creating the records necessary both for the camp command and the outside world, in order to be able to respond to any queries made by families.

Finally, as regards the numbers I would like to cite one more set of data, which confirms that the camp at Auschwitz, and in particular during its final period, when it was divided into three parts, had 26,000 inmates in the main camp (which I would call the "heart" of all the camps located in the vicinity of Auschwitz). Birkenau-Auschwitz II had 23,000 prisoners, while Auschwitz III, which was located in Monowice and Dwory, had 23,000 prisoners (including the subcommands, that is places of work situated outside Auschwitz). There is just one more figure that I would like to add. In the summer of 1944, when the Russians broke through the Eastern Front and reached the rivers Vistula and San, thereby forcing the Germans to wind up this "enterprise", one group of camps – loosely connected with Auschwitz – continued to function; they handled the transports of Hungarian Jews sent in under *Aktion-Höß*. These prisoners only received new uniforms in Auschwitz and, while some were left behind there, the rest were sent to a host of different concentration camps

in Germany, already suitably dressed and registered as inmates. I shall omit all the lesser details. I only intend to speak about some of the rules that we were forced to obey.

When we look at those sitting in the dock today, we realize that they are only a small fragment of the garrison which guarded the Auschwitz "enterprise". For it included SS battalions, well-armed, which knew how to handle prisoners. I would like to emphasize two time periods into which the history of Auschwitz may be divided – the first lasted from the beginnings of the camp until the German armies reached the River Volga, while the second marked a complete change in the situation existing in the camp, which entailed a change in the conditions experienced by prisoners. And one more thing, if I may. The periodization of Auschwitz may also be presented differently: the first period pertaining to prisoners with numbers 1 through 85,000, and the second – to prisoners with numbers 85,000 through 202,499, which number was the last to be issued at the camp's admissions office.

These two time-frames differ. While reading the newspapers, I came across the word "sanatorium", and it has been repeated in this very courtroom. I would like to stress that indeed, Auschwitz in 1944 resembled a sanatorium for those of the prisoners who had lived through its initial period, from the beginning of the camp until the Germans reached Stalingrad. And it was a "sanatorium", but not because the camp command attempted to remodel it as such, but because Polish society was finally able to provide the prisoners with some assistance. From October 1942, parcels started reaching Auschwitz, initially weighing 20 decagrams, and thereafter 2 kg, 5 kg, etc. It is obvious that these gifts were insubstantial when viewed separately, however as a whole they formed an enormous river that in 1944 supplied the prisoners with sustenance – provided, of course, that the customs border in Trzebinia let the parcels through promptly and their contents did not mildew. Finally, one more aspect that needs to be taken into consideration: prisoners at Auschwitz received the contents of their parcels only if they were no longer needed by the camp command or garrison, in other words provided that this element was sufficiently satiated and could throw the remainder to the inmates as scraps. The first period, which is usually – particularly today, during the present trial – omitted and in the whole brushed off, this because we are all occupied with something else, namely the second period, not with the martyrdom of the Polish or Russian nations, or other Slavic nations, but first and foremost with the second time-frame, when Auschwitz became a *Vernichtungslager* [extermination camp] or – as the Germans frequently called it – the *Knochenmühle* [bone crusher]. Basically, the initial period

was impossible to survive due to three factors: the first two were the completely inhuman living and working conditions faced by prisoners, and the third the woeful food that they were given. The foodstuffs that inmates received could have been sufficient – as we learned through experience – even for a strong person, but only if he had not been forced to use up his strength on other activities, and if he consumed this strength thus, he had no choice but to die within a few months. The gate of the main camp was adorned with the words "Work will make you free". And indeed, one became free and gained release, but – as the prisoners quipped – only through the chimney. It is stating the obvious that all that has been said here can be proved, and that it can be easily demonstrated that the meals which we received were insufficient. But I do not have to look for specific examples, for in November 1943 I myself, while returning from the camp in Rajsko where I worked, could barely stand on my feet and collapsed constantly, owing the fact that I somehow survived to a fluke of fate. The second period proceeded in stages, in that the parcels arrived first, and later, one beautiful afternoon or evening – for it was October – when roll call ended, *Hauptsturmführer* Aumeier, the *Lagerführer* [camp leader] of camp no. I, ordered all of the prisoners to be gathered in one of the camp streets and there told us something new, which gave us much joy. Namely, that from that day on there would be no more shootings: *Wir brauchen nicht euren Tod. Wir brauchen eure Arbeit.* [We do not want your death. We want your work]. These are his very words, which he spoke while standing on the steps of block 6, in the company of *Obersturmführer* Schwarz. Over the next few days, the prisoners waited anxiously to see what would come of this announcement, whether the nightmare of block 11 would disappear, and whether the summoning of prisoners by their numbers would come to an end – and in effect whether we would no longer have to worry about suddenly losing a friend, a brother, a father or a son. Our joy was short-lived. A different order arrived three days later, when a large transport, comprising more than 300 persons, was summoned at one of the evening roll calls and the next day led to block 3. It is obvious that the prisoners, who simply performed work, did not know what was going on, however prisoners are clever, they know how to cope, and even in the worst of times they look for ways to get some concrete information. It was the same with us. Our friends were employed in various of the camp offices – the very same offices that recorded all these people as deceased. We had friends who spent their entire time in the camp, and they told us that another mass shooting had taken place at block 11. Obviously, these developments did not allow us to have any faith in the declarations made by the camp administration, and we became even more convinced that we had come here to perish.



Then the second moment came along, when they changed the *Lagerkomendant* [camp commandant]. A new man, Liebehenschel, was appointed, and amazing things were said about him – that he would completely alter the camp, that camp life would be transformed. He gathered all the higher-ranking prisoners, the so-called worthies, in front of block 24 and announced thus: "The bombshell will drop tomorrow". Nobody knew what this "bombshell" was to consist in.

It would seem that the conditions were to improve, that was the best that we could come up with. And indeed, the next morning the block leaders and all the "higher ranking" prisoners were given a briefing. In the course of this meeting Liebehenschel said that it was forbidden to beat prisoners, that there would be no more shootings, that men who had hitherto been treated badly must now be given their due food ration, that he was aware of the fact that prisoners were needed to perform labor, also – since there must be discipline in the camp – that infringements on the part of prisoners will continue to be punished.

This was, in a way, astounding! The wall at block 11 was to be abolished. The bunker and crematorium I of the parent camp were to be abolished. The prisoners started to breathe a little bit easier. Maybe international law would be respected, and maybe they would finally be able to pursue their rights? It is obvious that executions were not carried out in camp I, but in Birkenau. And it was equally evident that we all received our due portions of food, but the *kapos* lived off Polish parcels. Again, as regards the behavior of these *kapos*, we could now envisage a situation where a prisoner – having complained – would have been beaten up, but then been able to complain once more, this time to the commandant. Then again, before he could have even tried to do so, he would have been stopped by his colleagues, for any complaint against a *kapo* would have had dire consequences for all the prisoners.

And how did life in camp I look in the beginning of 1943 and 1944? Prisoners who were allocated to *kommandos* were unable to see the bigger picture, and therefore I would like to describe solely what went on in my *kommando*. In order to provide a better understanding of what Auschwitz was, I will now present the observations that I made personally, while viewing that fragment of reality which was available to me. Initially, I worked in the *Gärtnerei* [vegetable garden]. Some time later I was told that I was required to teach one of the SS men secondary school mathematics. I was therefore transferred to the *Aufnahme* [admissions office]. I worked there until 28 October 1944, and I was in a position to observe

a whole lot of facts closely connected with my job. I was actually employed at the *Politische Abteilung* [political office], because the *Aufnahme* was its integral part. Especially from March 1942 onwards, I would be tasked with registering transports and the personal details of prisoners. This information was then relayed to the political branch of the *Schreibstube* for prisoners. This is by itself simple to understand and does not require further explanation. Those arriving at the camp were tattooed in order to prevent escapes, which became steadily more frequent from 1943 on. In connection with this work and due to a coincidence, it became necessary to reorder the political department's register, which was administered by Kirschner. It was to be reorganized in such a way as to make it possible for the SS men to quickly pull out the requisite personal file of a given prisoner. But the register of the political department differed from the general camp register. Namely, when a prisoner had been written down in the *Schreibstube* of block 24 as "delivered", he would receive a different designation in the political department's register.

The upper margin of his sheet would be marked with a red letter "E", which stood for "execution"; I was told this by a friend, Miłyk, who was better acquainted with the workings of the department.

The register of the political department had certain annotations: *Standgericht* [summary, or drumhead court martial] and *Nicht überstellen* [not sentenced]. These referred to people connected with the resistance movement in the General Government. These prisoners – marked with the letter "E" – simply perished.

I would like to recall an incident from June 1942, when the political department gathered all the *Nicht überstellen*, of whom there more than 200. All of them were sent to the penal company (*Strafkompanie*) at Birkenau, which was located on the grounds of the subsequent women's camp. They lived in a single barrack and worked at the *Königsgrube* [coal mine]. This is what I would like to talk about.

I witnessed something completely different, namely how the development of events led to changes in the register. It all started following the escape of some Pole, in the aftermath of which all the prisoners with red squares on their backs perished. They were herded into the block of the penal company, where they were all shot. But I observed this from a different vantage point – that of the register. After a few days, the personal dossiers of all these

prisoners were marked with the letter "E". In order to mislead the inmates who worked with the register, the camp administration planned to submit the data concerning these deaths not all at once, but in batches, in the so-called *Abgang* [those who "disappeared"] list. In accordance with this procedure, the entire transport was divided into three groups in the *Schreibstube* register, and over a period of three days transferred *nach Himmelkommando* [to the heaven squad]. Thus, the instances which I have recounted prove that what was written down in the files did not tally with the truth. Everything was concordant with the facts only insofar as these concerned death by natural causes, or one's date of birth or place of residence. But if you wanted to determine the actual number of prisoners in the camp, the register would be useless.

The next issue that I would like to touch upon relates to the admittance of transports to Auschwitz. It was typical for transports arriving at the camp to contain very different numbers of prisoners. Only one transport, comprising one thousand Slovakian women, was taken into the camp in full. But there were transports that had only a single prisoner, or even none at all. It is obvious what happened with them. Whereas the admissions office had all the transports registered in its files (inaccessible to the inmates), and these told the whole truth.

On the other hand, the *Blockführers* [block leaders] had to report all the newly arriving *stärke* [numbers] in order to make sure that the figures tallied with the general camp population. The facts that I am presenting prove that all of the transports arriving at the ramp in Birkenau, with the sole exception of the group of Slovakian women, were incomplete and never at full strength. On average, as we ourselves determined, on average some 5 to 10 percent of the nominal number of prisoners would be missing. This is the second fact that one could establish while working at the *Blockführer's* office, and it can be confirmed by all my colleagues who were employed there.

There is one more thing that I would like to mention – the *Überstellungs* [transfers]. These were brought about by the regular transferals of individual prisoners between camps. I saw the relevant lists on a number of occasions. For example, *Überstellung von Monowice nach B2f*, which referred to a section of the camp at Birkenau where the *Krankenstube* [infirmary] was located. There was a *Krankenstube* in Monowitz too, but this transferral constituted a selection of sorts. Transfers were permitted for those prisoners who were no longer fit for work. The *Krankenstuben* were located immediately next to the crematoria. On paper,





the number of transports from – for example – Monowitz and other camps to Birkenau was very large, and they reached a peak (ostensibly) in the winter of 1943. Sometimes there were transports of prisoners sent in by trucks from Monowitz to Birkenau, where they were handed over to the *Schreibstubelagerführer* [office of the camp commandant]. These are the three elements, or moments, which I myself witnessed, and I assume full responsibility for my testimony. At this point I would like to end my testimony.

**Presiding Judge:** Does the witness recognize any of the accused present here?

**Witness:** I recognize Liebehenschel, Aumeier, Grabner, Josten, Müller, and Bogusch.

**Presiding Judge:** Can the witness provide us with any information regarding these accused?

**Witness:** This is a difficult question, for we prisoners were extremely limited in our movements, and if I were to say that I actually saw this or that, I could be guilty of misrepresentation. The inmates only discussed specific instances of these persons' behavior. But this is not suitable to be repeated here.

On the other hand, I would like to stress that the commandant was too high up the ladder for the average prisoner to really know anything about him. Only those who encountered him directly could say anything pertinent on the topic. As regards information concerning Aumeier, I must say that he was known to all of us, not just myself, for he was a very forthright man – especially when it came to beating people, and we frequently saw him striking prisoners at roll call. Initially, when Palitzsch still worked at the camp, he helped him, and thereafter others helped him. Concerning Grabner, whom I knew best, I can say that he tried to act in such a way as to appear officially correct in his behavior. But I would like to state categorically that whenever he walked through the camp, or even moved from room to room, we would all be terrified, for it usually signaled that something nasty was about to happen.

As regards the accused Josten, he was never active at the more important "events", and I did not see him beating people at roll call.

**Presiding Judge:** How did the prisoners speak of these accused?

**Witness:** Variously.

**Presiding Judge:** Did they have a favorable opinion of any of the accused?





**Witness:** No, they did not. And even if any of the SS men had behaved in a proper manner with respect to the prisoners, for example Liebehenschel, who purportedly turned the camp into a sanatorium, one could still only say that he was a positive character in comparison with the others – not as such. He continued the camp policy, with the difference being that a bit more care was taken of those who labored for the Third Reich.

**Presiding Judge:** The witness has said that fundamentally nothing changed, only that the executions were carried out in Birkenau, and not in Auschwitz I.

**Witness:** What I meant was that if a transport arrived for execution, it would not be killed at Auschwitz.

**Presiding Judge:** Were the beatings stopped when Liebehenschel was in charge? And when Liebehenschel was the camp commandant were the shooting executions abandoned?

**Witness:** They were abandoned in the parent camp.

**Presiding Judge:** But they were continued in Birkenau?

**Witness:** That is correct, nothing changed. Except the form.

**Presiding Judge:** Can the witness say anything specific about Grabner and his activities?

**Witness:** Grabner was the head of the political department until November 1943. Not all the employees of the department had access to his person, Grabner would not talk with everyone, and for this reason I find it difficult to say anything particular about him.

**Presiding Judge:** Are there any questions?

**Judge Kutzner:** When Liebehenschel arrived, the camp was divided into three [sub]camps. Was there any connection between these camps and Liebehenschel? Did he have a superior position with respect to those three camps?

**Witness:** I find this question difficult to answer, for I have no knowledge of the matter.

**Prosecutor Szewczyk:** Should we understand what the witness has just said, namely that following Liebehenschel's arrival at the camp no more executions took place in the main camp, Auschwitz I, but that they were transferred to Birkenau, as meaning that the

executions themselves took place in Birkenau, while the transfers and selections continued to be performed at Auschwitz?

**Witness:** Yes.

**Prosecutor Szewczyk:** This means that the administration of Auschwitz I continued to have decision-making authority? What was the registration procedure for the Jewish transports, and what does the witness know about the so-called transport lists (German *Transportlisten*)?

**Witness:** I was not employed at the office where the transport lists were drawn up.

**Prosecutor Szewczyk:** In any case the transports were not entered in the register?

**Witness:** No.

**Prosecutor Szewczyk:** And who could provide some information about the transport lists?

**Witness:** Any one of my colleagues who worked in the *Blockführerstube* [block leader's office] in the *Aufnahme* of department II.

**Prosecutor Pęchalski:** I have two questions. I would ask the witness to state whether the political department was made up of a few units, or only the *Aufnahme*?

**Witness:** It comprised a few units.

**Prosecutor:** Was the *Aufnahme* located in the same building as the rest of the office, or was it separate?

**Witness:** It was separate.

**Prosecutor:** And therefore the witness, while working at the *Aufnahme*, could not observe how prisoners were examined and interrogated, nor how correspondence circulated in the head office of the political department?

**Witness:** That is correct, I was unable to make such observations.

**Prosecutor:** The witness dealt only with the register?

**Witness:** Yes.



**Prosecutor:** Does the witness know how the shootings and hangings of prisoners at Auschwitz were presented in their death certificates?

**Witness:** Such information would be privy to someone who worked at the camp registrar's office, such as my friend Raja Kagna, who has written a book about the activities of the political department.

**Prosecutor:** The witness does not possess such information?

**Witness:** No.

**Prosecutor:** The witness has stated that after a few months the group of 12,000 Soviet prisoners had dwindled to 158. How should we understand this: did the rest die of natural causes, or were there instances of them being killed?

**Witness:** The transport of Russian POWs arrived at the camp on 7 October and was sent to the so-called *Bauhof* [timber yard]. A group of them, some 600 or 700, was then selected and sent to block 11, where they were finished off.

**Prosecutor:** Does the witness know anything about the mass shooting executions of Soviet POWs near the *Kiesgrube* [gravel pit]?

**Witness:** No, not as regards POWs.

**Prosecutor:** That is all, thank you.

**Presiding Judge:** Does the defense have any questions?

**Defense attorney Kossek:** The witness has stated that the history of Auschwitz may be divided into two periods: the first from prisoner no. 1 to prisoner no. 85,000, and the second from prisoner no. 85,000 to prisoner no. 202,499. Can these two periods be termed differently, for example Höß' era and Liebehenschel's era?

**Witness:** No, their terms of office did not coincide with this breakdown.

**Defense attorney:** The witness has stated that inmates from Auschwitz I were executed at Birkenau. Does the witness know for a fact that they were executed – shot dead? Or perhaps they were gassed?



**Witness:** I cannot state whether they were shot dead or gassed.

**Defense attorney:** Does the witness know that during Liebehenschel's tenure the *kapos* with green armbands were removed, and their place taken by "politicals"?

**Witness:** Yes, I am aware of the fact that following Liebehenschel's arrival many *kapos* were sent to the penal camp at Flossenbürg. Their place was taken by a new group from Auschwitz, the *Aufsichters* [overseers], who were indeed recruited from amongst the "politicals". But I do not know whether this was Liebehenschel's doing, nor am I aware whether they were exclusively "politicals".

**Defense attorney:** Does the witness know that while in Auschwitz, Prime Minister Cyrankiewicz was sentenced to a spell in the bunker?

**Witness:** Yes.

**Defense attorney:** Does the witness know anything about him being freed from the bunker by Liebehenschel?

**Witness:** I do know that Prime Minister Cyrankiewicz was freed from the bunker, however I am unaware if this had anything to do with Liebehenschel.

**Defense attorney:** Does the witness know that one of the prisoners killed an SS man and the other SS men complained that the whole situation was due to the leniency introduced by Liebehenschel?

**Witness:** I have heard about the fact itself, but I did not associate it with Liebehenschel.

**Defense attorney:** Does the witness know that the SS men hated Liebehenschel, and even called him *Hampelmann* [a clown]?

**Witness:** No.

**Presiding Judge:** Does the accused have any questions?

**The accused Aumeier:** The witness said that there were 12,000 Russian POWs. I would like to ask when was it that the witness determined that their number had fallen to 158?

**Witness:** In May and June 1942.



**Presiding Judge:** Accused Josten.

**The accused:** Your Honor! I ask permission to pose questions to the witness. The witness has previously testified that he never saw me beating anyone. In the bill of indictment I am presented as a ruthless SS man who absolutely enjoyed tormenting and maltreating prisoners, in particular Poles. I am also accused of having trampled and kicked inmates when the *kommandos* returned from work. I would now like to ask the witness whether he even once heard that I had beaten or trampled a prisoner?

**Witness:** As regards the accused Josten, I saw him during roll calls, when he did no such things. I have no knowledge of other of his activities.

**The accused:** The witness has previously stated that Josten never beat people.

**Witness:** What I meant was that I as a witness know nothing of his activities in this regard. I only saw him at roll call, during which he did not beat people.

**Presiding Judge:** Are there any further questions?

**Defense attorney Minasowicz:** The witness has stated that he knows the accused Bogusch.

**Witness:** He only came to the *Schreibstube* – he was the *Lagerführer's* secretary.

**Defense attorney:** Does the witness know that he kept the prisoners' register?

**Witness:** The prisoners' register was kept in Aumeier's office, albeit it was Bogusch who administered it.

**Defense attorney:** Did Bogusch have direct contacts with the prisoners?

**Witness:** With those with whom he worked.

**Defense attorney:** This was office work?

**Witness:** First and foremost.

**Defense attorney:** Does the witness know how Bogusch treated prisoners?

**Witness:** I did not occupy myself with determining this.



**Defense attorney:** Did the witness ever hear that he was a *Blockführer*?

**Witness:** I do not remember.

**Defense attorney:** Please sketch a portrait of Aumeier – what kind of a man was he?

**Presiding Judge:** The witness has already explained this.

**Defense attorney:** Maybe some fresh details?

**Witness:** There is nothing that I can add.

**Presiding Judge:** The witness may step down.