



KAZIMIERZ SOWA

On 4 October 1947 in Kraków, a member of the Main Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland, Municipal Court Judge Dr Stanisław Żmuda, acting upon written request of the First Prosecutor of the Supreme National Tribunal, this dated 25 April 1947 (Ref. No. NTN 719/47), in accordance with the provisions of and procedure provided for under the Decree of 10 November 1945 (Journal of Laws No. 51, item 293), in relation to Articles 254, 107 and 115 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, interviewed the person mentioned hereunder, a former prisoner of the Auschwitz concentration camp, as a witness who testified as follows:

Name and surname	Kazimierz Sowa
Date and place of birth	28 December 1923, Kraków
Parents' names	Jan and Wiktoria, née Stoch
Religious affiliation	Roman Catholic
Marital status	single
Occupation	student at the Jagiellonian University
Citizenship and nationality	Polish
Place of residence	Kraków, [...]
Testifies freely	

I stayed in the Auschwitz concentration camp as a Polish political prisoner no. 22412 from August 1941 to 5 January 1945.

Right after my arrival at the camp, I was assigned to the *Bauhofkommando* [transporting building materials], where I worked until the end of my stay, with a short break when I was assigned to the *Schlachthauskommando* [slaughterhouse] and when I stayed in the hospital.

I know from my stay in the camp, both by sight and by name, *SS-Hauptsturmführer* Hans Aumeier, the *Schutzhaftlagerführer* in Auschwitz, and I have recognized him in the photograph I have been shown (the witness was shown Aumeier's photograph). Since he was short, the prisoners called him "Łokietek" [the Elbow-high].

He would walk around the camp all day long, and I often saw him beat and kick prisoners as he passed by, or threaten them with a gun, which he always carried with him. Under his tenure, informing was widespread. As a consequence of reports by the informers or SS men, Aumeier organized daily punishments by flogging at the evening roll calls. He would always assist in the flogging, watching with pleasure the prisoners writhing in pain. I saw him a number of times checking with his hand if the pants of the prisoner, who was bent over a vault, were stretched enough. If an SS man, especially one of the block leaders, did not beat the prisoner hard enough, Aumeier would call him off and order a different block leader to do the job. Aumeier took part in all public executions by hanging. I know that because all the prisoners, including myself, were commanded to watch such executions. When a new transport of prisoners arrived at the camp, or when speaking of public executions by hanging, Aumeier used to say: *Bei mir ein anständiger Häftling ist der, der ist tot* [for me, a good prisoner is a dead prisoner]. *SS-Hauptscharführer* Alfred Stiller, the head of the *Bauhofkommando*, would also repeat that saying to me.

A Jewish prisoner, whose name I do not know, told me that Aumeier, with an entire entourage of SS men, was present when a transport of Jews arrived at the ramp in Birkenau after Jewish rebellions in Dąbrowa Górnicza and Sosnowiec. When the train with barred windows was pulling in at the ramp, the nearby square was full of SS men who were pointing machine guns at the train. Aumeier was holding a gun in each hand and was shooting at the Jews looking through the windows. The transport arrived half-dead, and it immediately went to a gas chamber.

On Aumeier's order, prisoners going to or coming back from work in columns had to look at the corpses of prisoners who had been shot while escaping, spread on boards in front of block 24. The bodies had gunshot wounds to the head, and their abdomens were split open, with the intestines pulled out. Over the corpses there were inscriptions in several languages, informing the prisoners that they would share their fate if they tried to escape. The kommandos passing by block 24 had to look at the victims lying near that block, as ordered

by the SS men who would shout "*Augen rechts!*" [Look right!] when the columns were marching off to work. Aumeier also commanded that the columns of prisoners be forced to march faster, while going to or returning from work, to such a degree that they almost ran.

In the photograph I have been shown, I have also recognized SS-*Sturmann* Paul Götze, whom I know from my stay in the camp, both by sight and by name. As a *Blockführer*, he would often visit the Bauhof to urge the prisoners to work, especially unloading cars when the evening roll call time was approaching. He would then shout at the prisoners from the *Bauhof kommando* and would beat them with anything within reach. When Götze was approaching, the prisoners trembled with fear.

I know SS-*Obersturmführer* Heinrich Josten very well. He wore glasses and was present every day both in the main and the side camps. He served as an inspector of the guard booths and work *kommandos* of prisoners. Every day when the prisoners were marching off to work, he would stand near block 24 and watch carefully if they went in the assigned order or kept their heads and hands up as commanded. Every violation he noticed was punished with a strike or a kick, for example in the ankle when the prisoner did not march with the left leg. Josten would also write down the prisoner's number and report him for punishment. Walking a few steps away from the prisoner who was receiving the beating, Josten would at the same time show the rest how to march. In Josten's presence, SS men treated prisoners aggressively, beating and kicking them in order to impress him. The prisoners were scared of Josten, because he would walk around the camp all day long, looking for victims who could be punished personally by him or reported.

I remember when Josten saw that prisoners from block 4, where I lived at that time, threw their hats on a pile, instead of giving them back. He immediately reported it to Aumeier, who in turn commanded block 4 to participate in a special exercise, which lasted about an hour, consisting in strenuous running and a hard beating.

Josten also took part in searches of prisoners entering the camp, and sometimes also in the blocks. On his order, SS men had to prepare special punishment reports on prisoners. This is how Josten caused harm to a number of victims, in most cases indirectly by issuing orders.

At that the hearing and the report were concluded. The report was read out and signed.