



CZESŁAW GŁOWACKI

On 27 July 1945, the prosecutor for the Special Penal Court of Justice in Kraków, Dr. Martini, with the participation of a reporter, secretary Ms Żukrowska, took a deposition from the witness named below. After being informed of the criminal liability for giving false testimony and about the content of Art. 107 of the Code of Penal Procedure, the witness testified as follows:

Full name	Czesław Głowacki
Age	24 years
Names of parents	Bronisław and Leokadia
Place of residence	presently (temporarily) Warsaw, ul. Jaworzyńska 7
Occupation	junior high school graduate
Religion	Roman-Catholic
Criminal record	none
Relationship to the parties	none

On 16 August 1940, I was arrested in Warsaw by Gestapo men on the suspicion that I belonged to an underground organization. On 19 September 1940 I was imprisoned in the concentration camp Auschwitz I, the so-called *Stammlager*, where I stayed until 20 June 1943. On that day, I was transferred to the concentration camp Auschwitz II, Brzezinka (Birkenau). I stayed there until 29 November 1944, when the evacuation of the Auschwitz camp began because of the Soviet offensive. A group of 2,080 Poles, including myself, was evacuated to Oranienburg, and then in smaller groups to other camps. I was sent, in turn, to Sachsenhausen and Ravensbrück. On 28 April 1945 we were again evacuated. During the evacuation I escaped and made it to the zone occupied by the American Army. On 13 June 1945 I returned to Poland.

From 1 November 1941 till 20 June 1943, that is, up to the moment when I was transferred from the Auschwitz I camp to the Auschwitz II camp, I worked as an orderly in the so-called *Leichenträgerkommando*. I must point out here that only orderlies could work in that detail. In that role, I took part in all executions that took place in block no. 11 throughout the whole period of time indicated by me. Executions took place every day with only rare exceptions. The average daily number of convicts varied between 15 and 20, but quite often mass executions were also performed when new transports arrived in the camp. Then the whole transport was executed, and the number of convicts varied between 150 and about 300. Mainly, large executions of Lublin transports took place, but there were also others, such as transports from Mysłowice.

The executions were performed in the following manner: all people set for execution on a given day were gathered in the so-called *Waschraum*, where they were ordered to undress and where often, but not always, their hands were tied. Then, these totally naked convicts were led in twos or fours to the „death wall”. The number of convicts led to the wall depended on whether on a given day there was one or two executioners, each executioner shooting two people. With smaller executions, four *Leichenträger*s were always present, with bigger ones eight or even twelve of them. This was because the dead corpses had to be immediately taken away, so that the pace of the execution was not slowed down. This meant that during the whole execution we worked “on the double”. We watched the executions from a distance of about three or four meters. The victims were shot dead. The executioners were SS men only, and in the daily, less numerous executions, the executioners were always *Rapportführer* Palitzsch, *Rapportführer* Stiewitz and SS man *Oberscharführer* Plagge, while in the bigger ones still other SS men came as executioners. The weapon used to kill people was a rifle with a silencer that, when fired, made a sound similar to an air rifle. The victims were always, without exception, shot in the back of their heads – the shot was called by the Germans *Genickschuss*. When the gun was fired, the end of the gun barrel was approx. 20 cm from the back of the convict’s head. Only Palitzsch, a known sadist, touched the neck with the gun end. I repeat that the shot in the back of the head was a rule that was strictly followed by the German executioners.

During my stay in the camp, only twice did a whole firing squad arrive, consisting of eight executioners in full uniform and a squad commander. These were so-called official executions following convictions handed down in Berlin. A whole commission and

representatives of the court martial took part in them, and before the execution itself, death sentences were read out in Polish and German to the convicts. When the shots were fired, all prisoners from the whole camp, having already been gathered for a special roll call, had to stand to attention and take off their caps on the orders of *Rapportführers*. In the two cases that I am describing, that is, in „official executions“, the technique was different. The firing squad fired from all rifles, and every two riflemen shot one convict. Half of the riflemen had live ammunition, and half of them had blank ammunition. They fired at the command of the squad commander. The victims were shot in different parts of their body, generally the soldiers aimed at the heart. The convicts were facing the squad and their hands were tied. The squad fired from a distance of 12 m.

During the daily, „normal“ executions that I mentioned earlier, in many cases the hands of the convicts were tied. The hands were tied tightly with wire behind their backs. Usually, convicts who were strongly built and the nervous ones were tied. In all, the percentage of convicts tied was a little lower than that of those not tied. After the shot, victims almost always fell on their backs. In that place, the ground was dug specially to avoid having the victims break their skulls when falling. When men were executed, the first shot was usually deadly. Cases of having to finish them off were rare. But when women were executed, two or even three shots were fired, and the next shot was fired a couple of seconds after the first one and aimed at the lying body. I can't explain it, but I saw myself that women after a couple of seconds from the first shot opened their eyes and looked around. They finished them off with a shot aimed at the temple or at the heart. They were finished off by the same executioners, and later, when the dead corpses were put in the coffins, they checked that no signs of life were visible, and sometimes, though only very occasionally, they even finished them off in the coffin.

In the „normal“ executions that took place almost every day, convicts were mostly men, while women were very numerous, maybe even more numerous than men, among convicts during mass executions of transports from Mysłowice and Sosnowiec. In those executions, elderly people and children several years old or slightly older were also executed. The difference was that just after execution the children were put in coffins that were nailed up, probably so that nobody could see them.

During the executions, my fellow *Leichenträger*s and I took the dead corpses to a place where they were thrown on a pile. In that place, there was a special sewer to drain the



blood. Then, during small executions, we put the dead corpses into coffins, two corpses in each coffin, and the coffins were taken to the crematorium. During bigger executions the Germans didn't bother to fetch the coffins, and the dead corpses were loaded directly onto trucks that took them to the crematorium. I was not present during the tying of the prisoners, because it took place, as I mentioned, in *Waschraum*, while I and other *Leichenträger*s were waiting by the "death wall". Almost always, as I could see from working there for a long time, the convicts remained calm and dignified. It often happened that Poles shouted „Long live Poland!", also Russians shouted patriotic slogans. The convicts didn't answer to questions asked by the SS men, and kept a proud silence. The SS men, in particular the three of them already mentioned by me, were vulgar, provocative, they mocked and sneered at the victims. They kicked or prodded the dead corpses lying on the ground with rifle butts after the execution.

The testimony was read out.