

## JADWIGA MAGNUSZEWSKA

On 11 December 1946, in Pleszewo, the Municipal Court of Pleszewo, in the person of Judge Stefaniak, with the participation of a reporter, Court Registrar Dąbkiewicz, interviewed the person specified below as an unsworn 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, the witness testified as follows:

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Name and surname	Jadwiga Magnuszewska <i>née</i> Budzyńska
Age	28
Parents' names	Roman Budzyński, Maria <i>née</i> Gryczmańska
Place of residence	Pleszew, Rynek Street 13, Greater Poland Voivodeship
Occupation	married
Religious affiliation	Roman-Catholic
Criminal record	none

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I was staying in the Auschwitz concentration camp from 21 January 1943 until the evacuation of the camp, that is, until 19 January 1945. From the beginning of March 1943, I started working in the *Schreibstube* as one of the *Schreibers*, filling out the registration cards of new incoming prisoners, the so-called *Zugangs*. We were making the registration cards based on registration sheets, the so-called *Bogens* prepared by *Aufnahmessteilung* – also known as *Politische Abteilung* or just *Politische*. The main objective was to fill in the printed forms, *Bogens*, for all the incoming *Häftlings* – female prisoners. A *Bogen* included very detailed information about each *Häftling*: ordinal number (tattooed on the left forearm – replacing the surname in the camp), the reason for being sent to the camp, etc.

[Fragment missing] of the whole transport was transported to Auschwitz ([fragment missing] FKL [*Frauenkonzentrationslager*] Birkenau) by the boss of the *Aufnahme*, to the real *Politische Abteilung* – staffed by the most ruthless Gestapo men (Grabner, Boger, and others whose names I do not recall). There, based on the *Bogens*, they made lists of the incoming prisoners, the so-called *Zuganglisten* (their copies were kept by the *Schreibstubs*).

Subsequent chiefs of the *Aufnahme*, dating from the beginning of my stay, were: first – Klaus, then Hustek [Houstek], later one going by the name of Erbert, the last – Bilan (recognized in the photographs presented).

Bilan was working with all the chiefs until eventually he took over the post himself. The bosses of the *Aufnahme* were directly connected with all the transports, both those destined for the labor camp and those for the crematoria. They always had to be present when the transports came, during the off-loading and selection. The most comprehensive account of each *Aufnahme* chief could be given by the female prisoners employed there, some of whose surnames I'm listing below:

- Halina Lipińska, Wapno (school), Wągrowiec district
- Zofia Bratro, Katowice, Szafranka Street 9/1
- Stanisława Rachwał, Kraków, Sobieskiego Street 5, II floor
- Stanisława Rzepka, Bielsko, Piastowska Street 5/3
- Maria Świdorska, Nowy Sącz, Konarskiego Street 7/1
- Jadwiga Sarnowska (*née* Rakowska), Opoczno, Kilińskiego Square

The *Schreibstube* was serving as a lower administration unit in the camp, keeping the following records: 1. names and numbers, 2. *Numerbuch*, 3. *Hauptbuch*, 4. *Nationalitats* 5. mail, 6. roll-call reports (I am using the German names commonly used within the camp).

1. Card files – German *Kartei*. These records were kept in the *Schreibstube* and [in] *Forne* – that is, in an SS block placed in front of the camp entrance, where the headquarters of the relevant sections were situated.

The *Kartei* – *Karte*, a sheet from the records, included the *Häftling's* data: the number, badges – *politische*, *asoziale*, *verbrecher*, *bibelforscher* (each category was marked with a different triangle [*winkel*] color worn on the clothes together with the number, that is red, black, green, or lilac). Jews were wearing a star instead of the *winkel*, with some space left for notes. The

notes concerned changes related to prisoners. For example, relocation to another camp would be noted as the destination they were moved to, with the date of the transport's departure; the death of a *Häftling* [would be noted] based on the list sent either from *rewir* [infirmery], with the date of death and possibly the sickness (mainly *Herzmuskelschwäche*, since illnesses such as typhoid fever – the most common condition – were not recorded. Typhoid cases qualified one for the gas chamber, the only way of preventing the epidemic), or from Auschwitz's *Politische Abteilung*, marked "SB" [*Sonderbehandlung*] and "GU" [*Gesonderte Unterbringung*] – in that case including the date and abbreviation "Sb" and "Gu".

Initially, the death records were kept, later they were liquidated. The name file served both the camp's SS authorities and the *Schreibstube*. It was used to find a number, if the surname was known in the distribution of parcels, mail or something else. The same use was made of the number file (sorted by ordinal numbers) [in case of a] known number and an unknown surname. The records placed in *Forne* were for the exclusive use of the SS (searching for a specific *Häftling* in order to quietly dispose of them, etc.).

2. *Numerbuch* – just like the card file, it served to find a specific *Häftling*. The *Numerbuch* is a book including solely ordinal numbers and a space for putting down the block number in which the prisoner was kept. Due to frequent "*Verlegungs*" – block to block transfers, death lists of the *rewir*, Sb lists, relocations to different camps – the *Numerbuch* was in constant flux. Every day, it was supposed to give an exact location of every *Häftling*. Death was marked with a brief cross. Initially, a normal death and Sb were differentiated by the red and black colors of the cross. Later this was forbidden, and so was a whole range of things that could later become solid evidence of German crimes. A death could only be marked with a date (no matter if the prisoner was strangled, shot, or died naturally) or sometimes with a cross like in the *Numerbuch*. The fastest way to find a *Häftling*, knowing their number, was to use the *Numerbuch*. SS men took advantage of this for deportations to gas chambers as well. They would send a list of numbers, sorted by block, prepare the prisoners, sometimes delouse them (to imitate a relocation to another camp) – only to gas the whole transport. A couple of days after the transport preparations, a list of the same numbers came in, but this time in order to record the date of death in the *Numerbuch*, the card file and the *Hauptbuch*.

3. *Hauptbuch* – a register of prisoners sorted by number, including surname, name, date of birth, address, occupation and possibly date of death. Every new transport was recorded

according to the *Zugangslist* sent from *Politische Abteilung* from Auschwitz. All the prisoner registers concerned only those who actually entered the labor camp. The mass transports that went directly from the trains into crematoria were not subject to any numbering nor were they referred to by any general number. Apart from the general numbering system, which reached the number of about 90 thousand in January 1945, another type of ordinal numbering existed: "E" – *Erziehungshaftlinge* and "A" for Jewish transports, both starting much later than the original numbering.

4. „*Nationalitets*" [*Nationalität*] – a nationality list. Statistic data according to nationality, with Aryans and Jews listed separately. Poles were the predominant nationality in Auschwitz. Towards the end they began mass deportations of Poles to Germany.

5. Mail. The *Schreibstube*'s task was to sort the letters (by numbers), make sure that they all have stamps and deliver them to the *Forne*, where they were inspected thoroughly in terms of their content. A camp letter was actually a template, the things allowed to be written were very limited. By writing "please send me a parcel", one risked that this message, the only one to their family, wouldn't get through. By mentioning an illness or somebody else staying in the camp – the consequences could be more serious. The arriving mail was also subject to SS supervision. You could only receive one letter a month, sometimes two by mistake. Photographs were confiscated. The so-called *postpera* occurred very often, that is, when letters from a prisoner wouldn't get through to the recipient, nor would the prisoner receive any.

6. The roll-call reports, so-called *Raportblats*, were drawn up by a *Raportschreiberin*, chosen by the SS, who was also a *kapo* (a direct authority in the *Schreibstube*). The roll-call sheet was filled according to a template and included the total number of prisoners and the numbers in the specific blocks. The *Raportführerin* (SS) compared the numbers from the report to those passed on to her during a roll call by the *aufseher*s who had previously counted the prisoners awaiting the roll call in fives.

The *Schreibstube*'s authorities were *Lagerführerin* Mandel [Mandl], *Rapportführerin* Dreksler [Drechsel], SS man Taube, and *Lagerkomendant* Hesler [Hössler]. All of the above could be easily proved to have committed criminal offences by any *Häftling*, because they were very often harassing and torturing the prisoners during the roll calls (punching them in the face, kicking and stepping on a lying victim). Mandl, during individual encounters, had her

favorite way of hitting a prisoner's head against the wall, of course until the required result was obtained, that is, till they bled. Hössler was most keen on kicking in the stomach – the results were immediate. Taube would show off his boxing skills – a prisoner had to fall after receiving the first punch, otherwise he would finish her off.

Regarding block 25. Initially we weren't allowed to speak about block 25 – the "death block" as we called it. The prisoners destined for the gas chamber were moved to that block, most often to be delivered to gassing in the evening or at night. Sometimes the prisoners would spend a couple of days until a certain number was gathered. The fate of those staying in the block was horrible – not having been fed, they would collapse or die of starvation and fall prey to huge, hideous rats (the rats attacked even the ones who were still alive).

Death took a heavy toll in block 25 during the second general roll call which took place in February 1943, and which I remember vividly. Early in the morning the whole camp was driven outside the barbed wire, surrounded with SS guards with dogs, and we were standing like this for the whole day. Just before evening we were ordered to run into the camp through the gate one by one. On both sides of the *Lagerstrasse*, so on both sides of the prisoners who were running, stood two female guards, Drechsel and Hasse, totally amused and excited. Should someone slip, trip or just have a face they didn't like – there was no rule anyway, it was accidental – with a snap of their fingers that one would have been assigned to the selected group, whose destiny was known to all of us. Only the healthy and strong would go to block 25, and that's why the two girls from my transport from Tomaszów Mazowiecki, who were absolutely healthy, went there.

Regarding the signs "GU" and "SB": as mentioned above, they were used until a certain time, no later than until mid-1943. Later they were dropped, and only the date of death was used. At that time the *Schreibstube* was ordered to transcribe the entire general register where the "GU" and "SB" signs appeared. All written evidence was being destroyed. Since that time the *Sortierung* weren't officially carried out among the Aryans but only among the Jews (*Sortierung* – picking candidates for the crematoria during a roll call) – just officially, because in fact the growing number of prisoners was still being constantly reduced. Pregnant women [and] children had no place within the camp – they were sent to crematoria. It wasn't until later in 1944 that births took place and children were allowed into the camp (vast numbers consisted of Russians and Poles – a transport after the Warsaw uprising).

I have seen commandant Hess [Höß] only once, during a camp inspection.

Regarding the mass gassing, I should mention that when it comes to mass transports from within the camp, they were mostly carried out at night or during a previously announced *Lagersperre* (when nobody was allowed out of the barracks). In such a way, during one night, the whole gypsy section was deported for gassing, as well as the *Theresienstandt* section (Slovak Jews) of more than twelve thousand people. In the latter case they were allowed to write letters to their families (normally Jews weren't allowed to write at all), with a content dictated and a request to send parcels, dated two months forward. The section was liquidated on the same day.

Mass transports (which didn't make it into the camp and weren't registered), for example the most numerous transports of Hungarian Jews in May 1944, were going directly to the gas after being unloaded. We could see them in the broad daylight from behind the barbed wires (just behind the camp there was a railway siding). Due to constant influx of people they gave up the mimicry and the *Lagersperres*, making people march in fives for the whole day towards the crematory ovens placed behind our camp and visible to us. We could clearly see the SS men opening the hatches (the gas chamber by that crematory was placed underground) and throwing in the cans of gas (whose appearance was well known to every prisoner).

Five trains a day arrived – we estimated three thousand people for every train, the daily influx would equal around 15 thousand, the same at night, so it came to 30 thousand every twenty-four hours. A regular at the transport arrivals was the head doctor, commonly called "Megelle" [Mengele] (his real surname had a similar sound), who was seeking new victims for the experimental block. Once, he picked twins; another time a family of midgets; then a certain number of young women of the same age and married; and so on.

The crematory chief, Moll, was officially obliged to take part in the gassing operations. So were the bosses of the *Aufnahme* (mentioned before). When it comes to female SS guards, I would also place Brandel [Brandl] and Bormann among the infamous Mandl, Drechsel and Hasse mentioned above.

I cannot say anything about Rudolf Höß's activities, as I was not witness to his criminal actions, since Rudolf Höß was a superior authority towards the end and was responsible for

the whole Auschwitz. Hubert Schwarz was the camp's commandant before Rudolf Höß. Rudolf Höß showed himself rarely in the camp's premises and it's possible that I didn't see him when he did.

In the photograph shown to me, dated 7 November 1946 and signed "9) Bilan Włodzimierz", I can clearly recognize an SS man, Bilan, who was the chief of *Aufnahme* and took part in receiving the transports. I didn't see him during the receiving of the transports, because it was hard to recognize the faces of the SS men due to distance. As I already noted above, the details about Bilan could be given by the witnesses listed at the beginning of my testimony.

The report was read out.