

FRANCISZEK NIERYCHŁO

On 4 December 1946 in Gliwice, Z. Świtalski, the investigating judge of the District Court in Gliwice, interviewed the person named below as an unsworn witness. Having been advised of the criminal responsibility for making false declarations and of the wording of article 107 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the witness testified as follows:

Name and surname	Franciszek Nierychło
Age	41
Names of parents	Józef and Anna
Place of residence	Gliwice prison, arrested in connection with another case
Occupation	musician
Religious affiliation	Roman Catholic
Criminal record	none
Relationship to the parties	none

From June 1940 to 1942, I worked at the camp's kitchen as a cook, and then I was promoted to senior cook, that is a kapo; I continued in that capacity until the end of May 1944.

At first, so from June 1940, there was no designated kitchen building and meals were prepared outdoors: in an area between two blocks, a brick furnace was installed with twelve 100-liter inbuilt cauldrons designed for boiling underwear. Such arrangements existed until September 1940, when a special barrack designated for a kitchen was built, where meals were cooked in 12 cauldrons whose capacity ranged from 400 to 750 liters. The number of kitchen staff depended on the number of prisoners interned at the Auschwitz camp at a given moment, so in the makeshift outdoor kitchen the total number of staff was ten, plus three kapos; then, this number increased to 22, reaching 85 in 1942. The kitchen commandant was SS man Egersdorfer, who was assisted by three SS men: Hoffmann and two others, whose names I have forgotten. All year round, the kitchen workers woke up at

2 a.m. and started preparations for breakfast, which consisted of hot, bitter black coffee or tea, issued to the prisoners at 4 a.m. in the summer and at half past four in the winter. Every evening, a prisoner received 300 grams of bread, which had to suffice for 24 hours. Each day at 4 p.m., Egersdorfer collected food items from the storage such as potatoes, cabbage, Swedish turnip, carrot, and sometimes peas and beans – but that was rare – as well as rye flour, semolina, pearl barley, meat from sick cattle, sausage, margarine, and cheese. Let me say that all the items collected ended up in a caldron and in that respect the SS men were fair. Only in cases when the number of prisoners had declined because, say, some prisoners had been gassed the previous night, Egersdorfer and the SS men went to the intermediate storage and took the surplus for themselves. The daily issue per one prisoner was as follows: 300 grams of brown bread, between 500 and 750 grams of potatoes (but throughout 1942, no potatoes were issued), varying rations of cabbage, Swedish turnip, and other vegetables, but the portions served were small: up until 1942 the lunch did not exceed three quarters of a liter, and afterward they added another half a liter.

I have to amend my testimony, in that Egersdorfer, Aumeier, Hoffmann, Justyn, Jansen, Hössler, and others would steal items from the intermediate storage, and as a result, prisoners would not receive their statutory rations. The SS men used these products to throw parties, even attended by the *Lagerführers*, whose names I have mentioned.

Theoretically, a prisoner should receive 30 grams of meat twice a week, 50 grams of sausage (also twice a week), and 50 grams of cheese, issued at irregular intervals. Regarding marmalade, it was issued every second day, 50 grams per person. The food items that would make the prisoner's meal were never weighed: instead, the entire daily quota was put into cauldrons. Independently of the SS men, stealing products from the kitchen were also prisoners working at the camp's kitchen. As I have already mentioned, Egersdorfer, assisted by prisoners working in the kitchen, collected food items from the storage and these were then placed in the intermediate storage, located in the immediate vicinity of the kitchen, where they would remain until the next day. When the meals were about to be prepared, Egersdorfer released all these products to the kitchen, to the three kapos, who up until 1942 were German prisoners, and later they were Poles. When Egersdorfer unlocked the intermediate storage, myself and Wierzbiński would go inside and issue the food items to the cooks, who approached one by one. These cooks were Rusinek, Michał Piekoń, Ludwik Sobieraj, Michał Sroka, and others, whose names I do not remember. When the meals were

ready, the contents of the main cauldron were poured off into the smaller, 50-liter cauldrons, which were arranged according to blocks, and then, at an appointed hour, block elders came with the prisoners, collected the meals from the kitchen, and the block orderlies issued the appropriate rations to the prisoners. According to the regulations, a prisoner should've received 3,600 calories daily, but in reality he received around 1,500, which suggests that the surplus was always stolen.

On the Epiphany of 1941, myself and another three musicians met in the block and, since we had instruments, we started to play. Whenever a chance presented itself, we held similar meetings. After a while, there were already nine of us, and the *Lagerältester* (camp elder) –fearing we could face consequences – reported it to *Lagerführer* Fritsch, who gave his oral permission to set up the camp band. When he learned I was a bandmaster by trade, he appointed me one. He also said that if any other prisoner had any instruments at home he could write to his family to have them delivered. This is how the band was established, which in time would number 120 people. I selected the suitable personnel from among the prisoners and ran the band. At first, the prisoners played their own instruments, which their families had sent them, but later, the camp authorities ordered that they be sent back and replaced them with their own instruments. I wanted to have a band to brighten the prisoners' free time and prevent the participating musicians from death. Once the band was formed, Fritsch ordered it to play when prisoners departed for labor and when they returned. The band appeared for the first time, on Fritsch's orders, on Höss's birthday, in a 16-person lineup. Then, each Sunday, between 2 and 3 p.m., we were ordered to perform for SS men outside the camp's perimeter, and from 7 p.m. for prisoners during the evening roll call. The band members received better treatment and were exempt from hard labor, and consequently it was easier for them to endure the conditions of a concentration camp in winter.

Concerning the photograph marked with the letter "A", it was taken in a summer, but I do not remember which year, outside the camp, when the band performed for SS men on a Sunday afternoon in front of Höss's villa. The white fence visible surrounded Höss's garden. The purpose of the stone foundations visible in the photo on which the band stood is unknown to me. The photograph marked with the letter "B" is from spring 1941 and depicts the band performing for prisoners – the band is standing by the wall of the camp's kitchen. The buildings with white walls visible in this photograph are the camp's blocks, where

prisoners lived. Right behind the kitchen, there is block 25, and to the side, counting from the left, are blocks 18, 19, and 20. The photograph marked with the letter "C" also comes from spring 1941 and depicts the band playing for prisoners. Visible to the right is the main entrance gate, and further there is a dark barrack where horses were kept; visible on the left of the photo is a watchtower.

Concerning Höss, he knew of all the methods of killing prisoners and was very often present during executions. Regarding the SS men, other prisoners told me that executing people personally was Palitzsch at block 11, while Hoffman and Hössler tortured prisoners, beating them up. I do not remember any other names. I have just recalled the name Kaduk.

I conclude my testimony at that. The report was read out.