



## JAN PILECKI

On 28 August 1947 in Oświęcim, a member of the Main Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland, Appellate Investigating Judge Jan Sehn, upon written request of the first prosecutor of the Supreme National Tribunal, this dated 25 April 1947 (file no. NTN 719/47), in accordance with the provisions of and procedure provided for under the Decree of 10 November 1945 (Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland No. 51, item 293), in connection with Art. 254, 107, 115 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, interviewed the former inmate of the Auschwitz concentration camp specified below as a witness, who then testified as follows:

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Name and surname	engineer Jan Pilecki
Age	35
Religious affiliation	Roman Catholic
Citizenship and nationality	Polish
Occupation	technical director at the Polish Radio in Katowice
Place of residence	Lipiny Śląskie, Stalina Street 38

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I was detained in the concentration camp in Auschwitz from 20 June 1940 to October 1944 as a Polish political prisoner with identification number 808. From the end of 1942 to midway through 1944 I worked as a clerk (*Blockschreiber*) in block 11 at the parent camp. The block functioned as an in-house prison, officially named *Kommandantur* arrest. From the administrative perspective, like every other block, it was under the supervision of *Schutzhaftlagerführer* [camp leader]. The decision to place a prisoner in block 11 belonged to the Political Department and to *Schutzhaftlagerführer*, who would administer this punishment for disobeying the camp regulations. These offences were often completely trivial. I remember a specific instance when a prisoner was placed in block 11 after he



took two small pieces of leather found in the trash which came from the DAW [Deutsche Ausrüstungswerke] with the intent to fix his clogs. As punishment for this offence, he was detained in the bunker and later, when the bunker was being emptied – which I will describe later – he was shot.

Having placed prisoners in block 11, *Schutzhaftlagerführer* passed on some of their cases to the Political Department for investigation. The department had the prisoners under investigation detained in the bunker. My duties as a block clerk consisted mainly of keeping records of all the prisoners in the block. Apart from prisoners detained in the bunkers, the block also housed police prisoners (PH, *Polizeihäftlings*) on the ground floor, and prisoners under quarantine, who were upstairs.

Due to my function I had to go downstairs to the bunker whenever a commission was conducting selections of the prisoners detained in the bunker. The commission consisted of the head of the Political Department – *SS-Untersturmführer* and *Kriminalobersekretär* [police rank] Grabner, as well as *Schutzhaftlagerführer* – function held by *SS-Hauptsturmführer* Aumeier in the years 1942–1943, and functionaries of the Political Department. The commission inspected all cells in the bunker and asked every prisoner when and for what reason he got incarcerated in the bunker. Regardless of the answer, the commission then decided on the spot whether the prisoner was to be kept in the bunker, released back to the camp, or shot. Everyone who was allowed to leave the bunker walked out of their cells and I wrote down their numbers in front of the bars. Those who were to be executed stayed behind the bars. The rest of the prisoners selected from the bunker, that is those who were to be released to the camp or punished in some other way, went upstairs to the ground floor. Having inspected all the cells for men, the commission once again inspected everyone selected for execution. The prisoners were counted and then taken by the SS men to the *Waschraum* [washroom] located on the right side of the block corridor, in the courtyard of block 11. Then the commission conducted the same kind of selection in the cells for women. Just like the men, the female prisoners selected for execution were then led to the second *Waschraum* on the ground floor of block 11. The prisoners in both *Waschraums* had to strip naked. They were then escorted by prisoners tasked with maintaining order to the black wall, two at a time. The SS men shot them using the *Genickschuss* [shot in the back of the neck] from a close distance. Women were shot first, then men. The corpses were carried by prisoners – *Leichenträger* [corpse bearers] from by the wall to another location in the courtyard, where



they were arranged into a pile. The corpses were placed in such a way that the prisoners who were being led to execution had to see them.

I want to clarify that prisoners detained in the bunker were counted as prisoners housed in the block in which they stayed before the incarceration in the bunker. This applied to the prisoners who stayed in the parent camp before their detention in the bunker. Prisoners from other Auschwitz camps detained in the bunker were counted as residents of the bunker starting from the moment of their incarceration there. The camp command obligated the administrative office of block 11 to notify all block clerks whenever a prisoner from their record who had been detained in the bunker was transferred to the camp hospital. Such a prisoner was obviously dead at that point, having been shot after the selection. Despite that, he was no longer registered in the block in which he stayed before his detention in the bunker. He was registered in the hospital as one of the sick, and only after some time a false *Totenmeldung* [notice of death] was issued for him. Simultaneously with notifications to individual blocks, collective lists of all the prisoners who were shot that day were sent to the main *Schreibstube* [office] and to the hospital *Schreibstube*. All male prisoners detained in the bunker were listed in a book which contained personal data, information about the person who ordered their detention in the bunker, and the date of their release from the bunker. That last column also served as the place for marking whether the prisoner was released to the camp or shot. Executions were marked by the word “verstorben” [deceased], an abbreviation of this word, or simply a cross and a date. I marked all the instances where prisoners were shot with red pencil. I secretly sent this book outside the camp. It contained all prisoners who were shot at that time in the bunker. From watching the commission which conducted the selection in the bunker, I knew that Grabner had the final say and that the commission made decisions concerning the fate of the prisoner then and there. This is why in some instances prisoners detained in the bunker for the most trivial offences, like the man who “stole” the patches for shoes, were sentenced to death and shot. The practice of falsely registering the executed prisoner in the hospital was meant to hide the truth about their execution.

When I worked in block 11, there were some instances when the so-called standing cells were used for starving prisoners to death. I specifically remember the following people who died of starvation there: Pachala (number 24) and Herbert Roman (number 25). They were both German *kapos*. I think that Pachala had been detained in the bunker prior to being incarcerated in the standing cell. Roman was sent straight to the standing cell. Pachala was



there at the beginning of 1943, Roman much later. Both cases were recorded in the book that I sent outside the camp.

Wilhelm Gehring, *SS-Oberscharführer*, later promoted to *Hauptscharführer*, was *Kommandoführer* [squad leader] at block 11 when I worked there until March 1943. He is the person whose photograph is being presented to me right now (Wilhelm Gehring's photograph was shown). He was the strictest and one of the cruelest SS men in block 11. His colleagues from the SS said that even back at Sachsenhausen, where he worked previously, he had the so-called *Schlagverbot* [beating ban]. He beat prisoners, stole their food, and exchanged items that were meant for prisoners for his own gain. He personally shot prisoners who were sentenced to death by the commission which under Grabner's command conducted selections in the bunker.

The report was read out. At this the hearing and the following report were concluded.