



HALINA NELKEN

A report of testimony given before the Voivodeship Jewish Historical Commission on 22 February 1947 in Kraków.

The testimony was heard by: Maria Holender, MA

The testimony was made by:

Name and surname	Halina Nelken
Date and place of birth	22 September 1925 in Kraków
Place of residence before the war	Kraków, [...]
Present Place of residence	Kraków, [...]

In the case of Luise Danz, *Aufseherin* [overseer] in Płaszów and Malchow:

I met Luise Danz in Płaszów in 1944 after returning from *Gerätelager* [warehouses] in the Zabłocie district of Kraków. She was one of many *Aufseherins* whom I feared very much. The mere fact of their appearance struck fear into the hearts of prisoners.

In the *Appellplatz*, the *Aufseherins* held roll calls, that is, counted women in given barracks. The slightest offence resulted in beatings or, at best, a shower of abuse. Among those *Aufseherins*, Luise Danz was particularly cruel. Her square face of a stubborn boy had some extremely repulsive quality to it. It was said that she was a lover of *Schutzhaftlagerführer* [head of the camp] Grimm.

Once, I saw during a roll call how she beat some woman with her signature technique: she would punch the prisoner in the chin and at the same time kick her in the stomach with her knee.

Later on I met her in the camp in Malchow (February 1945). She came there as an *Oberaufseherin* [senior overseer], and as the majority of prisoners had come from Płaszów, we hoped that since she had already known us, she would be more favorably inclined towards us.

Some 5,000 women were brought to that camp after the liquidation of the Auschwitz camp. We lived in wooden barracks, of which only three or four were furnished with pallets, and we slept three women to one pallet. In other barracks the inmates had to sleep directly on the ground. Some girls went to work in the ammunition factory hidden in the woods and others performed various temporary works, for instance, the *Aufseherins* would take us to the forest where we sawed off whole pines and had to carry them to the kitchen where they were used as firewood.

We suffered horrible hunger. A one-kilogram loaf of bread was distributed among five, later six, and finally eight inmates. The bread was often green with mold. We received half a liter of soup, or rather "soup". This was simply water, often unboiled, with potato peelings or pieces of grated beetroot, turnip or carrot floating on the surface, and worse still, with no salt whatsoever. The soup was issued very irregularly: one day at 8.00 a.m., another day at 8.00 p.m. Besides, everything was infested with lice, as we received lice-infested blankets. We were sent for a bath only once, but we didn't have any soap.

After the arrival of Luise Danz, the already bad conditions got even worse. We were emaciated from hunger, we barely made it to the roll call, and we liked best to lie on our pallets all day long. Luise Danz often came for inspections, wearing pants, a man's peaked cap, and white gloves. She walked upright as a peacock and rebuked us in a sharp barking voice. At first she didn't like it that some pieces of our underwear were drying up on the pallets, so she took them off and threw them to the floor. Then, she yelled that the place was unkempt, although the room was freshly swept. Finally, she was "concerned" that a room seven by four meters large was so crowded (80 people) and drove us out into the field. She didn't let us return until two or three hours later. She repeated this in every barrack.

Due to her orders, we had to suffer cold for several hours every day (it was in winter). Standing at the roll calls was most tiring, and we were happy to discover that Danz didn't keep us long at the roll calls.

At the beginning of March, packages from the Red Cross arrived at the camp, allegedly for the prisoners. The girls who worked at unloading these packages knew that they contained

food: chocolate, sugar, etc. The SS men took all these foodstuffs. Once, three Russian women escaped the camp, and, as a punishment, Danz made us stand at a roll call for over eight hours, and saw to it that we didn't receive any bread on that day, which was obviously a great torment for us.

In the middle of March we were to be transported away, as it turned out later to Leipzig. It was known in advance which barracks would be included in the transport, as Danz had personally carried out a selection on the previous day. We were lined up at 7.00 a.m. in front of the *Schreibstube* [administrative office] and then a search began. We were forbidden to have a pot or a blanket, and those who wore better shoes had to hand them over and received wooden clogs instead. Luise Danz carried out the search herself, whip in hand, beating us, yelling and abusing us. She took away things that couldn't have had any value to her but for us were a cherished treasure. Just next to me there stood Rysia, who had a blanket wrapped around her body under the striped clothes and who carried a flask of water. Danz tore the blanket from her, grabbed the flask, and beat the girl about the head with it until the flask shattered into pieces, and the girl, with a wound on her head and covered in blood, went to the transport.

A day before the transport, we hadn't received any bread, as it was promised to us that we would be given bread on the train. However, we didn't get any bread on the train either, so we travelled for two days and two nights extremely hungry. It turned out that the bread which we were supposed to receive had been loaded onto one of the train cars and we didn't get it only due to the ill will of the camp authorities.

I think that as the main *Aufseherin*, Danz was responsible for conditions in the camp. Therefore, I believe that she should be held accountable for terrible hunger, sanitary conditions (no soap), total lack of medicaments, irregular meals and harassment which we suffered at her hands in the barracks. All of this testified to her inhuman disposition and hateful treatment of prisoners.