

## TERESA LASOCKA-ESTREICHER

The sixth day of the hearing, 17 March 1947.

The witness gave the following information about herself: Teresa Lasocka, married, an office worker, Roman Catholic, no relation to the parties.

**President:** What are the motions of the parties regarding how the witness should be heard?

**Prosecutor Cyprian:** Without taking an oath.

**Defense attorney Umbreit:** Without taking an oath.

**President:** The Tribunal has decided, with the consent of the parties, to hear the witness without oath. I caution the witness about the obligation to testify the truth and about the criminal liability for making false declarations.

What does the witness know about Auschwitz, and in particular about the activities of the underground organizations at Auschwitz? What functions did the witness hold?

**Witness:** The camp in Auschwitz was set up in 1940. From the very beginning, the local peasants and laborers tried to get closer to the inmates. Seeing prisoners marching out for labor in the field, these people tried to help us somehow. It was their spontaneous initiative. They supplied food, organized collections, and came up to the wires and threw us food. When winter came, they brought some clothes, but they could only do so much as the number of prisoners was increasing all the time. They brought with them news, and also passed on information from individual prisoners to their families. This was when the outside world first learned of the conditions at the camp, and residents of Kraków started to organize aid. Collections of money and medications were organized, albeit on an ad hoc basis. Support was also sought with the Polish underground authorities and organizations, which helped us by transporting the parcels – which were getting bigger and bigger – across the border. Eventually, in the fall of 1942, the secret military organization at Auschwitz was uncovered. Also, all our female liaisons at the camp were exposed. That autumn, Helena Błotnicka and Kazimierz Jędrzejowski, among others, ended up in the camp and went on to spend a long time there; ultimately, however, they perished. An idle period followed. We lost

contact with the camp. Then, Dr. Kłodziński was interned at the camp, where he worked at the hospital. Prior to his incarceration, the entire medical staff had been compromised. There was a typhoid epidemic at the time. We undertook efforts to acquire a larger number of vaccines, and ended up smuggling tens of thousands of these medications into the camp. The drugs were either collected by the prisoners themselves, who came to the outer perimeter and took them back to the camp, or they were brought in by civilians who worked on the grounds of the camp. Obviously, this carried a huge risk, and a dozen or so people who were caught in the act were interned at the camp and perished.

In 1942, I established closer contacts with an organization of socialist youth, which was strong in the Brzeszcze region. Through them we entered into communication with a fully-fledged organization inside the camp, which towards the end of 1942 was headed by Józef Cyrankiewicz, the current Prime Minister. At the time we smuggled not only medications or newspapers into the camp, and passed information too, but we also supported the operations of the military organizations active inside the camp. At one point, therefore, we planned a defensive strategy that would have been implemented in the event of an attempted liquidation of the camp, supplying weapons and poison, while the camp passed us information which had to be radioed abroad. I think we managed to prevent, among others, Moll's action, which was discussed by the camp authorities. A prisoner working there eavesdropped on the conversation. Moll's action consisted in launching an airstrike against the camp and blaming its destruction on the British Air Force. We radioed this out within 24 hours and thereby thwarted the operation. Communications that we intercepted convinced us that the German authorities felt that the project had been compromised, and therefore abandoned it.

We suffered heavy losses. The young socialist Adam Rysiewicz, one of the noblest among us, died while organizing escapes; incidentally, by 1944 escapes were very well prepared: there were routes for smuggling prisoners and daily communication, so that escapes were always announced in advance. Prisoners would be expected at designated locations, from where couriers took them to Kraków. It was only from Kraków that prisoners were dispatched to villages and small towns, where they would be sheltered for a while, while sometimes they joined the operation. For example, there was Józef Mensel, a communist, whom we sheltered in a rural safe house right until the liberation, when it finally became safe for him to come out of hiding.

In the groups that we set up we paid no attention to one's party affiliation, race, or political sympathies. We even helped some Germans escape. This whole operation was focused first and foremost on the notion of humanity – so obviously desecrated at Auschwitz – and its protection. I believe that the opportunity that we gave these prisoners, namely to remain in touch with the outside world, was a moral and psychological boost to them; at least such was our intention.

**President:** You mentioned the so-called Moll's action. Who informed you about it, and how did the information cross the border?

**Witness:** This is an isolated incident. I don't know the details of how they got such intelligence. It was passed on to our female liaison.

**President:** Who was the contact?

**Witness:** Miss Szpak, she worked at the camp office. She excused herself somehow to leave earlier and passed the information to Brzeszcze. From Brzeszcze, it was passed on to Sosnowiec, from where Magda, presently Mrs. Motyka, immediately took it abroad. All manner of details had to be sorted so that we could protect our people as far as possible. We had our people in various bureaus or offices who issued all necessary papers for us. For example, all of Mrs. Motyka's papers were forged. It was crucial that her papers stated that she worked in a laundry in Kraków so she could commute every day from Sosnowiec. She had an *Arbeitskarte*. She would come round and we would meet at a safe-house, where we decoded messages, because they were written in code. Then the safe houses would again be in contact with the military organizations. It was already after the Warsaw Uprising and there was a radio transmitter near Kraków, so in those closing stages it was especially easy for us to send out a message. Meetings were held with representatives of the military organizations, and they would receive the message and then send it out in a particular sequence.

**President:** What was Moll's action to consist in? What was in the message which was radioed abroad?

**Witness:** The message stated that a plan was being discussed which would consist in bringing about the destruction of the camp through an airstrike – a full-scale bombardment by the British Air Force.

**President:** The plan was to make it look like an enemy action, while in reality it would have been done by German aircraft, is that correct?

**Witness:** Yes.

**President:** Was the plan decided on at the camp?

**Witness:** No, it was under discussion.

**President:** Did your intelligence suggest that the plan had been merely presented to the authorities in Berlin, or that it required Berlin's approval?

**Witness:** I don't know. We were simply trying to pick out anything that could have been a threat to us.

**President:** Was it, in connection with this action and the information coming in from abroad, [not recorded]?

**Witness:** This was broadcast in all languages on British radio. Also Soviet radio made it public. Since the German authorities hoped they could keep the situation at the camp secret, it had some effect.

**President:** So the information was broadcast by foreign radio?

**Witness:** It was broadcast a few times inside 24 hours. It made a strong impression on the camp authorities because it was proof that they were being spied on inside the camp.

**President:** So the Auschwitz camp authorities realized that classified information had been leaked abroad, is that correct?

**Witness:** Yes.

**President:** You mentioned being in contact with people inside the camp. Could you name the people from the camp with whom you were in touch?

**Witness:** The head of the organization with whom we were in contact from 1943 was Prime Minister Józef Cyrankiewicz. Previously, during the period of spontaneous activity of persons outside the camp, especially in Brzeszcze, it had been Dr. Stanisław Kłodziński. He was my contact person, while they gathered intelligence on the inside.

**President:** And you didn't know what the operations looked like inside the camp?

**Witness:** I did to an extent, but that was not my province.

**President:** Were you prepared to shelter fugitives? I mean, did they get false papers and leave the camp?

**Witness:** They escaped the camp without papers. Sometimes they received clothes or wigs.

**President:** How was this organized?

**Witness:** It had to change all the time. The escape scenario could not be repeated because it attracted attention. The way it was sometimes done was that clothes were arranged, the prisoner changed and put on the wig (because he was shaved), and then he would blend in with the civilian laborers who worked inside the camp and who left through the main gate using a camp laborer's ID. In 1943, we generally switched to setting up transit points where the prisoners left for work. You would dig up a hole, sometimes under a barrack, and the prisoner would hide there, often for a few days. When he was found missing during the roll-call, an alert was put out, while the prisoner would sit there until the large *Postenkette* [cordon of guards] was recalled. Our couriers then got to the road and picked him on the way. Sometimes the prisoner was dropped off in Brzeszcze, while others joined the partisans, the Home Army, straight away. As regards foreigners, they were sent to special hideouts.

**President:** So the operation was aimed not only at Poles but also foreigners?

**Witness:** It was said that the organization was dominated by socialists, but others were also involved. We wanted to help everybody, regardless of whether they were rightists or leftists, German or French, as long as they wanted to fight the Hitlerite regime.

**President:** What about medical assistance? Was it also organized by the laborers who went out to work?

**Witness:** In the main, we received medications from the Polish Red Cross and the Central Welfare Council, both of which had medical supplies donated by foreign countries. The medications were suitably repackaged, moved by couriers, and stored at the pharmacy in Brzeszcze. This was the primary point for storing drugs. Additionally, they were kept in Ligota, with one of the girl scouts. Next, a courier would come and transfer them. We sent

these packages to the camp, addressed to fictitious individuals, and the prisoner working in the parcel room would take them to the hospital.

**President:** Was it possible to send messages from families to the camp that way?

**Witness:** It was possible, but we feared that too much buzz could be generated around this issue and that too many people would be talking about it, so this option was not used frequently. We preferred to provide information about the camp and bring news from the outside to the camp.

**President:** Did you smuggle underground newspapers?

**Witness:** We smuggled in all kinds of newspapers. We tried, to the best of our ability, to keep the camp posted about all and any developments. For instance, if some particularly sensational story broke, if something good happened, we would even send a special liaison to lift the prisoners' spirits and bring them some happiness.

**President:** If I am not mistaken, you mentioned supplying weapons to the camp. Were there any such instances?

**Witness:** Yes, in 1943. We had serious difficulties obtaining weapons. We were not part of any military organizations, and so we had to turn to them first regarding this issue. In 1943, weapons were in short supply in Poland, however the organization inside the camp, which was planning a defensive strategy for the eventuality of the camp's liquidation, demanded that we get them weapons and explosives.

**President:** Didn't the prisoners, especially the women who worked in the German arms factories in Auschwitz, carry out such an operation? Weren't weapons supplied from there and weren't the operations coordinated from there?

**Witness:** This is something that the prisoners did on their own initiative, and I'm in no position to discuss it.

**President:** But you were informed that such an operation was taking place at the camp, is that right?

**Witness:** Yes.

**Prosecutor:** Does the witness know whether defendant Höss's dismissal from the camp resulted from the fact that information of what he did in his capacity as commandant was passed abroad?

**Witness:** This is what those in the camp told us. The camp was grateful to us, because the information which we had passed abroad pressured the authorities in Berlin into removing the then commandant and significantly relaxing their approach, to such an extent that we were told that the new commandant, Liebehenschel, following instructions from Berlin, had released everybody from the bunker, including Mr. Cyrankiewicz, the current Prime Minister, who had been sentenced to death.

**Prosecutor:** In any case, you are stating that there is a connection between relaying information about Höss and his dismissal from the camp, is that correct?

**Witness:** I believe so.

**President:** Do the defense attorneys have any questions?

**Defense attorney:** None.

**President:** I now order a recess of a few minutes.