



ZYGMUNT ŚLIWICKI

Wrocław, 4 July 1946. Members of the Wrocław District Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland Jerzy Majewski, judge, and Rudolf Szura, deputy prosecutor, heard as a witness the person specified below. The witness testified as follows:

My name is Zygmunt Śliwicki, born on 14 March 1903 in Sierakowice, Łowicz district, son of Leon and Maria *née* Śmigielska, Roman Catholic, nationality: Polish, doctor of medicine, currently employed in the Social Insurance Institution in Wrocław, domiciled in Wrocław at Krakowska Street 28.

From 1932 to 26 September 1940, I was working in the Social Insurance Institution in Warsaw, in its branch in Pruszków. On 26 September 1940 at 3.10 p.m. two Gestapo officers in plain clothes came to my office at Bolesława Prusa Street 3 in Pruszków and asked me (in broken Polish) whether I was a member of the organisation, and then searched me and my office and took me to their car parked in front of the Institution. Down there, three Gestapo officers in uniforms were waiting in the car and nearby. I was not interrogated at aleja Szucha that day, but I was joined with a group of other people and taken to Pawiak prison at Dzielna Street 24/26. As I was being led from the room for the arrestees at aleja Szucha to the car, I was hit very hard with a rifle butt on the small of my back. As a result of that blow I suffer to this day from a spinal cord injury revealed by an X-ray.

I spent my first night in Pawiak in cell no. 256. Eight prisoners were incarcerated in a 1.5x2m cell with one single paper mattress and a handful of powdered straw. On the second day, after a bath and disinfection, I was moved to cell no. 166 in the 4th ward. I remained in that cell until 11 October 1940, when I was appointed physician in the infirmary.



I stayed in Pawiak until 31 July 1944. When I arrived, the interior guard was kept by Polish guards, and only from 3 November 1940 was the guard kept jointly by the Polish guard and the Gestapo men.

The Pawiak prison schedule was as follows: roll call at 6.00 a.m. The roll call was in the cells, the prisoners had to stand at attention in a line, and the cell elder reported the number of prisoners in the cell. At first the elders were reporting in Polish, but after the arrival of the Gestapo guard – in German. After the roll call the prisoners were rushing to the toilet, and when they came back the so-called washing was taking place. The prisoners did not receive any soap or towels. Washing was very short, as the entire ward of 500 prisoners had to wash within 10 minutes, and there were only 4–5 taps, and sometimes some were out of order. Breakfast was at 7.00 a.m. It consisted of approximately 0.5l of black grain coffee, very watery, and black bread. The daily ration of bread was from 120 to 300 grams. The coffee was without sugar. The worst period with regard to food was from the second half of 1941 to September 1942. Then the daily ration of bread was only 120 grams. Six prisoners died at that time due to nutritional oedema.

Up until 3 November 1940, thus when the guard was kept solely by Poles, the prisoners were being taken out for walks of 30 minutes to one hour. After 3 November, the prisoners were being taken for the so-called exercise: the prisoners had to run very fast, obey commands (fall down – stand up), and do the so-called *żabki* [frog jumps] and squats. The prisoners were being tormented in this way sometimes for up to half an hour. These were the so-called normal exercises. During these normal exercises the prisoners often fainted from exhaustion. Apart from that, there were also the so-called punitive exercises. They consisted almost exclusively of squats and frog jumps. Such exercises lasted until the prisoner was completely exhausted. Depending on the political situation, they were being organised more or less frequently, sometimes every day, and sometimes even three times a day. Sometimes the entire cell would be taken for punitive exercise due to some minor offence of one of the prisoners (dust on a slat).

Dinner was at noon. It consisted of 0.75l of a soup with 4–6 lumps of rutabaga and water without any fat, or a soup of beetroots (4–6 small pieces). Supper was at 4.00 p.m., and it consisted of the same soup of rutabaga or beetroots. The evening roll call was at 6.00 p.m. Lights were being turned out at 9.00 p.m. The prisoners were allowed to go to the toilet



three times a day, that is, after the morning roll call, after dinner, and before the evening roll call, in groups, always in a great haste, with poking. In 1942 and 1943, the German prison authorities did not accept permission slips for additional use of the toilet for prisoners suffering, for instance, from diarrhoea.

As a prison physician I can assert that the following methods were being used in Pawiak in order to force statements: bestial beatings with whips containing a wire inside, with rubber truncheons, with chairs or chair legs, and kicking. Some prisoners were tortured to death. Among these was engineer Stanisław Pigulowski from the municipal board in Warsaw, who was tortured to death during an interrogation in 1943. Pigulowski was taken to the hospital, but the Gestapo men took him back to his cell where he died the following day. Pigulowski had bruises and haemorrhages on his entire body and swelling.

Sometimes the Gestapo men would not allow us to provide the tortured prisoners with any medical aid. At the end of 1941, they forbade us to admit sick Jews to the hospital or to provide them with any medical aid. We had to do it secretly. In 1943 we were allowed to provide medical assistance to those Jews who were working for the Germans in artisanal workshops in Pawiak.

In order to force statements, apart from beating, the Germans were using the dark cell or reducing the food ration by half. A tortured prisoner would be incarcerated in the dark cell for up to 10 days. Those cells were in a damp basement. They were single cells. Such a prisoner would often receive only a half of the daily ration of food. The prisoner was not being taken to the toilet at all. I remember that some major of the Polish Army was kept in the dark cell for over three months, in winter, without so much as a mattress or a blanket. Medical appeals to the prison commander to give this major at least a blanket, as it was very cold in his cell, were to no avail.

When it came to the Pawiak authorities, there was a distinction between the administrative and maintenance functions, which were in the care of the prison commander, and the political functions, meaning the direct supervision of prisoners and the way the prison staff treated the arrestees, and thus the actual attitude of the prison authorities to the prison itself. These were the responsibility of the deputy commander. During my stay in Pawiak, deputy commander Hiersemann was the biggest *polakożerca* [literally: Pole-eater]. During



his tenure, the most brutal were the following Gestapo men: *Oberscharführer* Bürkl and *Rotenführer* Thomas Wippenbeck, allegedly lived near Hamburg, nicknamed “Wieszatiel” [hangman]. The first two are already dead. As for the third one, I heard that he was seen in Poland after the Warsaw Uprising. Thomas Wippenbeck is about 35 years old, does not speak Polish; he is tall, blond, with an elongated face, allegedly an artisan by trade. The fourth murderer was *Oberscharführer* Zander, allegedly from the suburbs of Hamburg, about 32 years old, tall, handsome, blond, he did not speak Polish.

Appeals to Hiersemann to improve the living conditions of the prisoners were always to no avail. Hiersemann was obstructing the delivery of food packages from families. Before he had assumed his post, the prisoners could receive packages of up to 3kg per week, but this period was very short. When he assumed his post, Hiersemann ordered that the packages could be delivered to the prisoners only once a month and reduced the weight to 2kg. Hiersemann did not like the fact that the Prison Patronage was helping the hospital of the male ward, so he would confiscate one third of the delivered food for the Gestapo kitchen. He did not allow the retention of the sick chosen for a transport. For instance, in May 1943 they were preparing a transport for execution, and we knew about it from secret sources. A Polish man whose name I don't know was chosen for the transport, although he had undergone a difficult surgery for an incarcerated hernia (*hernia incarcerata*) only 12 hours earlier. Although the hospital doctors appealed to Hiersemann to exclude this man from the transport, he did not agree. The man was taken on a stretcher, carried out of the prison gate and shot.

With the knowledge of the prison authorities, the Gestapo men were torturing people absolutely savagely, and so for instance in summer 1943 a group of Jews were taken into the yard and told to undress. Near the boiler house, there was a pile of red-hot cinders. The undressed Jews were told by the Gestapo men, including Bürkl, to crawl over this cinder. All the Jews got serious burns, but the Gestapo men forbade us to provide them with any medical aid. I saw for myself then that Bürkl shot a Jewish prisoner from behind, without any reason. This same Bürkl killed, among others, a Polish Army lieutenant, Kruk. Apart from that, Bürkl along with Wippenbeck were hanging people in the cells, usually in the 8th ward. They got away with all these instances of murdering prisoners; no inquiry into these cases was ever made. I can recall the name of major Błęszyński, who was hanged in 1943 by Wippenbeck. The same Wippenbeck, on 31 December 1943, hanged in a cell a captain of the



British army, a certain – if I remember correctly – Watson. Apart from these, during my stay they hanged many other prisoners in the cells or shot them on the stairs.

According to the calculations of the oldest prisoners, throughout the occupation, until 13 August 1944, over approximately 100 thousand political prisoners were incarcerated in Pawiak. Of that number some 30 thousand were executed in Palmiry, Magdalenka, or in the ruins of the Ghetto. The rest were deported to the concentration camps – Auschwitz, Majdanek, Gross-Rosen, Stutthof, Buchenwald, and Ravensbrück. On 31 July 1944, on the day on which I left Pawiak, some 70 prisoners (men and women) remained there. This small group, except for five people, was executed on 13 August.

There were two kinds of transports. The so-called short ones and those to the camps. Older prisoners could tell whether they were being taken for execution (short transport) or to a concentration camp. Younger prisoners were usually unaware until the last moment.

During my stay in Pawiak, the first transport was to Auschwitz; it was on 21 November 1940 and comprised 300 prisoners. The prisoners for this transport were taken to the yard and had to stay there bareheaded, standing to attention in freezing weather, for about four hours. Upon getting into the cars each prisoner was being beaten with bullwhips. The commander of that transport was *Oberscharführer* Felhaber, nicknamed “Waluś”. As a result of this beating, the prisoners lost their shabby packages and some also their headwear. The abandoned belongings were collected by the Gestapo. Transports for execution were treated with more cruelty than transports to the concentration camps, and the treatment of these prisoners was truly bestial. Among the larger transports for execution, I can recall the following: 2 March 1942 – 100 people; 28 May 1942 – 220 people; 29 May 1943 – about 600 people; and from April 1943, from 20 to 160 people were being executed in the ruins of the Ghetto almost every day.

I remember that in 1943, after they had been incarcerated in Pawiak for two months, a group of Jews who had been interned in the Hotel Polski in Warsaw at Długa Street, were executed. These Jews held foreign citizenship. On the order of the chief commander of the security police for the Warsaw district, Dr Hahn, in 1943, the prisoners who were being executed in the ruins of the Ghetto were to be stripped of clothes, including underwear. The women were being stripped even of their bras and executed naked.



In the middle of 1942, the "Ukrainian" units came to the prison as auxiliary staff of the prison guard. According to a "Ukrainian" guard, Lisowski, before the execution in the Ghetto, the naked prisoners had to lie down in even lines, one by one, and were shot from the back with machine guns. Smaller groups, according to what I heard from Lisowski, were executed on their knees or standing, without blindfolds. The corpses of the executed were being piled in the basements of the ruins and then the basements were being blown up with grenades, so the corpses were covered with rubble, or the corpses were being burnt on the execution site. I saw for myself from the hospital window that, in the ruins in one of the back streets near Pawiak, Jews and Poles were being executed in such a manner that naked people were being brought to the gate by tens and executed with machine guns, and the corpses were being thrown into basements.

It is difficult for me to specify which friends of mine were executed or deported to the concentration camps. If someone read out to me a list of the Pawiak prisoners, I could say what had happened to them with up to 90% reliability. I can recall the names of a professor of the Warsaw University of Technology, Smoleński, who was executed in May 1943 in the Ghetto, Józef Włodarkiewicz, brother of a colonel of the same name, executed in May 1943. Dr Trochalski from Warsaw was executed in 1943 and his son Leszek on 30 September 1943, Arciszewski, codename "Kola", in May 1943 in the Ghetto.

The prisoners who were to be executed in town were being executed in their clothes, usually without overcoats. Once a group of prisoners who were later executed in town were stripped of their clothes and covered in paper clothes.

My fellow inmates in Pawiak included: the chief of the female hospital Dr Anna Czuperska (Wrocław, Jarosława Dąbrowskiego Street 62/5); an inspector in the Ministry of Labour and Social Assistance, Jadwiga Jędrzejowska (Wrocław, Krakowska Street 28, Dom Pracy Kobiet [House of Women Workers]); Dr Felicjan Loth (Warszawa, Wolski Hospital); dentist Anna Gościcka-Sipowicz (Włochy nr Warsaw, Długosza Street 4); Leon Wanat (Łódź, Główna Street 67); Zbigniew Tomaszewski (Warsaw-Praga Asnyka Street 10).

All these people carried out functions in Pawiak for a longer period of time and could complete my testimony.

The report was closed and signed.



I have just remembered one of the methods of torturing prisoners, that is, setting dogs on them. There were many prisoners with dog bites, and one Jewish man had even been bitten to death. I also remember two names of prisoners who were savagely tortured during interrogation:

Dr Henryk Czuperski spent over a year and a half in the hospital, and was then deported to Auschwitz and executed there.

Józef Ratajczak spent one year and a half in the hospital, and although he was not able to walk on his own, he was executed on 28 May 1942.

On 31 July 1944, ten prisoners were killed with injections by doctor Friederichaz.

Besides these, I remember the following names of Pawiak prisoners who were executed:

General Szpakowski – 2 March 1942

Prof. Andrzej Cierniak– 2 March 1942

Editor Stanisław Piasecki in July 1941

Composer Witold Hulewicz in 1941

Prof. [Stefan] Bryła in 1944

Vicepresident Słomiński in 1943

Colonel Surmacki on 29 May 1943

Dr Witold Szoner in 1942

Dr Jan Mokrzycki in 1943

Dr Janusz Witaszewski in 1943

Docent Bieniek in 1944

Cpt. Józef Wolski on 28 May 1942

Ed. Koecher Tadeusz in 1942

Zasztowt Janusz in 1943

The report was closed and signed.