



## EDWARD PYŚ

On 29 September 1947 in Kraków, Edward Pęchalski, Deputy Prosecutor of the Court of Appeal in Kraków, member of the Main Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland, acting in accordance with the provisions of the Decree of 10 November 1945 (Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland No. 51, item 293), with the participation of reporter Krystyna Turowicz, a trainee judge, pursuant to art. 20 of the provisions enacting the Code of Criminal Procedure, in connection with art. 106, 107, and 115 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, interviewed as a witness the person specified below, who testified as follows:

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Name and surname	Edward Pyś
Date and place of birth	11 June 1922, Rzeszów
Parents' names	Stanisław and Justyna, née Świder
Nationality and citizenship	Polish
Religious affiliation	Roman Catholic
Occupation	Economics Academy student
Place of residence	Kraków, [...]
Criminal record	none

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I was sent to the Auschwitz concentration camp on the first transport and I arrived there on 14 June 1940. I was assigned prison number 379.

Over the first year, I was assigned to various working *kommandos* [work detail], and from 1941 up until the end of my internment at the camp, that is until 18 January 1945, I had been working in the SS hospital, which was referred to at the camp as *SS-Revier*. It was a brick-built building situated next to the command building. Opposite the hospital was the

first crematorium to have been built on the grounds of the Auschwitz camp. Thus, working at the hospital building, I had an opportunity to watch everything that was taking place by the crematorium. I was part of a *kommando* which numbered a few prisoners tasked with cleaning the hospital building and the apartments of some SS men located on the premises. Among others, SS-Unterscharführer Hans Koch lived there for a while. I used to see him on the hospital premises almost daily because he was with the so-called disinfection *kommando*, which was subordinate to the camp's head doctor. The immediate superior of the *kommando* was SS-Oberscharführer Klehr. The *kommando* dealt with the disinfection of buildings and of the clothes and underwear of the SS staff, but they were also involved in the gassing of prisoners. Therefore, Hans Koch was at the SS hospital every day on official business – either to see his boss, Klehr, or the SS garrison doctor. I know him very well and I know that he was one of the SS men who were personally tasked with gassing prisoners. Neither Koch nor other SS men made any secret of it and had loud conversations about gassing. Since I know German very well, I often heard Koch complain to his friends that he had had a very busy night, because he had had to gas a large number of prisoners at the Birkenau crematoria.

At the SS hospital, Koch went by the name *Gasmeister*. A few other SS men involved with gassing were also called this, and from among them, I remember the names of Wosnitzka, Franke, and of course Klehr himself.

Once, I saw with my very own eyes a gassing of Auschwitz prisoners in the crematorium located opposite the SS hospital in the main camp. It was toward the end of summer or the beginning of fall 1942. Then, around noon, about 200 prisoners, all of them elderly Jews, were rounded up in front of the crematorium. They were ordered to undress and then go inside the crematorium. When this happened, Koch, Wosnitzka, and a third SS man – I think it was Franke – got to the flat roof of the crematorium and, having put gasmasks on, they opened the gas cans and then, through the holes in the roof, poured their contents into the crematorium, after which they sealed the holes off. It was Koch himself who had brought the basket containing a couple of gas cans. This scene was being watched by a lot of dignitaries from the Auschwitz camp crew, including Höß, the camp commandant, Grabner, head of the Political Department; Palitzsch, the Report Leader, Wirths, the camp doctor, Klehr, and many others. I could see all this very clearly through a window of the hospital building, and strictly speaking – from Wirth's, the head doctor's, office which I was cleaning at the time.



Immediately after the gas was poured inside the crematorium, terrible screams of the prisoners could be heard, lasting about two minutes, and then they died down. I know that the prisoners were being gassed with cyclone then. The said gas, contained in round cans, was stored in the theater building next to the camp. I caught a glimpse of one such can in the very SS hospital. It had a yellow paper label, which read, among other words, "Zyklon".

As regards Koch's attitude toward the prisoners working at the premises of the SS hospital, I did not notice any particular manifestations of extreme maltreatment on his part. He paid no attention to prisoners because he was constantly preoccupied with the gassing, of either people, or clothing and underwear.

At this point the report was concluded and signed after it was read out.