



JULIA WROTNIAK

On 22 January 1947 in Lublin, Investigating Judge from the Fourth Region of the District Court in Lublin with its seat in Lublin, this in the person of Judge A. Kowalski, heard the person named below as a witness. Having advised the witness of the criminal liability for making false declarations, of the provisions of Article 107 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, and of the significance of the oath, the judge took an oath therefrom pursuant to the provisions of Article 111 and 115 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, following which the witness testified as follows:

Name and surname	Julia Wrotniak
Age	32 years old
Parents' names	Stanisław and Franciszka
Place of residence	Lublin, Sieroca Street 7
Occupation	nurse
Religion	Roman Catholic
Criminal record	none
Relationship to the parties	none

I stayed in Auschwitz from October 1942 to 1945, i.e. until the liquidation of the camp. I was incarcerated in several camps there: A, B, in Birkenau, and in the women's and men's camps. I was sent to Auschwitz as a clerk, a political prisoner from the prison in the Lublin Castle.

I don't recall the surname of Höß. Hessler [Hössler] was the last commandant of the women's camp, but I don't remember his first name. When Hessler was in office, the conditions in the camp improved in comparison to the rule of his predecessor, Schulz;



although the inmates were still beaten by the SS men, there were fewer lynchings of women by the Germans. I know Maria Mandl very well – she was a commandant of the women's camp.

Hössler himself signed the lists of people selected for gas chambers – I know it for certain as I was employed at receiving the transports, and I was present during the selection of people for gassing. These selections were held immediately after the arrival of the transports. Old, weak, ill and pregnant women were picked from among the newcomers and sent to the gas chambers without delay. It was often the case that the chosen women and children of up to 15 years of age had to wait their turn for a day or two, depending on whether or not they could be crammed into the chambers. Sometimes a few transports would arrive throughout the day, and each numbered from 6,000 to 8,000 prisoners. The biggest transports came from Hungary, but a transport comprising some 15,000 people – including men, women and children – also came from Warsaw; these people, however, were placed in camp bunkers in lager A.

All transports were received by Hössler. When one such transport with people of various nationalities came in August 1944 and was placed in a transit camp, I heard some conversations that Hössler held with a German doctor by the surname sounding much like Mengele and another German doctor about whether this transport should be sent to a gas chamber or the camp barracks. They argued over who should make the decision and what should be done with this transport. The transport didn't receive any provisions for the whole week, and the people had to rely on their own food supplies and the help of the inmates of Auschwitz. A week after their arrival, the entire transport was sent to the gas chambers and the furnace. This transport included some Poles from Wilno. I heard one of them who claimed to be from Wilno say, "Praised be Jesus Christ". There were many Poles in the transport, but I cannot give the exact number. I don't know who signed the order to send that transport to the gas chamber, but I heard the doctors and Hössler quarrelling over who should sign it.

From May 1944 on, all furnaces, six crematoriums in Birkenau and two pits (30 by 15 meters large) were fully operational. Up to 5,000 people were burned and up to 8,000 gassed every single day. People of various nationalities were being burned at the time, Poles included, but I would like to emphasize that the largest number of Poles was burned in 1943, under the predecessor of commandant Schulz, whose surname I don't recall at the moment.



I lived some 50 meters from the crematorium and very often heard the screams of suffocating people and children calling their mothers in various languages. The majority of the victims ended up in the pits, in which a layer of firewood would be placed first, then a layer of bodies and again a layer of firewood and a layer of people, although I cannot say how many layers there were. The piles were then doused with some flammable liquid and set on fire. I learned about it from a *kapo* from Lublin by the name of Józef, who performed some tasks connected with burning the piles. I know that he agreed to become a *kapo* because he had been sentenced to death and already stood in line, awaiting his execution. In order to save himself from the furnace, at the last moment he agreed to work as a *kapo*.

The Germans made people of various nationalities an offer to work in the *Sonderkommando* [special unit], and those who declined invariably ended up in the gas chambers. To perform this very hard labor, the Germans picked strong, robust and healthy people. A lot of people who refused to work as *kapos* were gassed, the Poles and the Russians being the most numerous among them. Later on, Hungarian and Greek Jews were assigned to the *Sonderkommando*. The Jews from Greece proved to be the most humane: they tried, to the best of their abilities, to assist the most unfortunate, and even attempted to destroy the crematoria, although they succeeded in demolishing just one.

When Hössler was the commandant, a medical board would arrive at the camp and select women for various experiments. Many things were done to the selected women: they were artificially inseminated and given injections of various diseases, for instance gangrene. I cannot say what the results of these injections were, but I can state that many women died following these experiments, especially since women chosen for experiments received worse food than other inmates because they were locked and secluded and couldn't receive any food from the outside.

Together with prisoners from four blocks, I was present at the execution of four women – Poles and Jewesses. Hössler read out to all gathered people a death sentence from Berlin; the women were sentenced for handing over gunpowder for the burning of the crematoria. The convicts were hanged by an executioner – a Polish Jew.

Hössler liquidated the camp before the arrival of the Soviet troops. He chose the healthy and fit for marching and left the rest behind. I wanted to hide and stay with those who couldn't go. When I told one of the SS men that I wanted to stay, he told me to leave



the camp no matter what, as all people unfit for leaving the camp and those who would stay behind voluntarily would be in all probability liquidated and burned. During the march the Germans harassed the prisoners of both sexes, beating them for the most trifling reasons. 4,000 people died, or rather, were killed by the Germans then.

Maria Mandl tormented the inmates in a sophisticated way. She beat and kicked them for no reason at all or for the slightest offence, for instance, failing to stand to attention in her presence. She sentenced the inmates to death or bunkers completely on her own, and administered various punishments. She was so stern that even the German women, her helpers, were afraid of her. Whenever she was asked to do something, she did it some other way, contrary to the request, and as a result, she was never asked again.

In October 1942, she organized a roll call at 2.00 a.m., and it lasted until 9.00 p.m. in the evening of that day – and we didn't receive any food. We were driven out in light clothes. Some hundred corpses remained at the square when the roll call ended. Those who couldn't attend it due to feebleness or sickness were sent to the gas chambers – actually to the so-called death block, in which they awaited their turn. At this roll call, we were assigned subsequent numbers in accordance with the list of surnames, and then each woman had to pass, actually running, in front of "Mandelka" [Mandl], *Blockführer* Antoni Taube, and "Drekslerka" [Drechsler], and if any woman was weak or looked ill, she was immediately sent by this board to the death block, which was marked with no. 25.

At the time, the conditions in the women's camp were horrible. We had neither light nor water. We washed ourselves with herbal teas which we received to drink. At the time, apart from regular selections of Jewesses, entire blocks of Jewesses were sent to the gas chambers. The blocks housed a thousand or more Jewish inmates each, although each block was intended to hold 500–600 people. When the blocks were emptied, new transports of Jews and Jewesses from Poland, Belgium and France would arrive, along with Aryan women from France and transports of Polish women and children from the Zamość region, the latter at the beginning of 1943 – and all these transports were distributed among the blocks. Many people from these transports died as a result of awful conditions. Immediately after their arrival, the transports underwent general selection upon unloading from the trains. The selection was carried out by the camp doctor and *Blockführer* Taube. Selected people were sent to the gas chambers straight from the ramp; each time, about 50% of Jews were



chosen for gassing, while the percentage of Aryans selected for the gas chambers was usually lower. Sometimes the mothers didn't want to let go of their babies and little children, and preferred to be gassed along with them.

I came to Auschwitz with a transport of 80 women, all so-called politicals. I heard that we had all left Lublin with death sentences. Of this transport, 56 women were summoned one by one to the sick room and given lethal injections of carbolic acid. I escaped death because at the time I lay sick at a German woman's bed, and as I didn't yet have a tattoo with my number and didn't respond when called, I wasn't discovered. Later on I learned that some gravely sick Polish woman from Łódź was selected by the doctor in my place, and she was sent for injection under my name and surname.

In the spring of 1943, "Mandelka" appointed a general roll call for women of all nationalities. After the winter, all women were very weak and ill. Our numbers were taken down. Each prisoner had to jump a ditch and run across the gate, and those who were not able to do it were sent to block no. 25, that is, death. On that day the women who had been taken to block no. 25 were sent to the gas chamber. Those women who couldn't even walk out to attend the roll call were sent there as well. They were loaded onto cars and taken to the gas chamber. On their way to be gassed, the Poles were singing Polish religious songs, "Boże coś Polskę" ["God save Poland"] and "Serdeczna Matko" ["Beloved Mother"]. Several hundred women died during this roll call.

"Mandelka" would tear devotional medals from the necks of women just for fun, and I witnessed how she ordered one woman to throw a medal that "Mandelka" had just ripped off her into the toilet. "Mandelka" was so hostile toward the inmates that she would even persecute those of her German helpers who were more kind toward the prisoners. I also witnessed how in October 1943, "Mandelka" took four inmates to [illegible] and having stripped them naked, doused them with buckets of cold water in such a way that they couldn't breathe because their faces were constantly under water.

I would like to add that the Germans tortured the prisoners under all circumstances. When the transports of Aryans arrived in 1942 and 1943, all women were ordered to strip naked; then they were divested of all personal belongings, clothes and valuables, and then male prisoners cut their hair and shaved them. Polish men who shaved the women and cut their hair behaved decently. When the SS men told them, smiling, "feast your eyes, you have lots of pretty young women to shave", the prisoners soothed us, responding, "they are not women to us, but victims".



During my stay in Auschwitz I experienced and saw such atrocities that I am surprised to still be alive and to remember so many facts. Those who were weak in spirit couldn't stand these horrors and died en masse, standing at the roll call, sleeping in the barrack or working in the field.

The report was read out.