



LUBA REISS

On 4 August 1947 in Kraków, a member of the Main Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland, Appellate Investigating Judge Jan Sehn, acting at the written request of the first prosecutor of the Supreme National Tribunal dated 25 April 1947 (file no. NTN 719/47), in accordance with the provisions of and procedure provided for under the Decree of 10 November 1945 (Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland No. 51, item 293), pursuant to article 254, 107, 115 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, heard as a witness the below mentioned prisoner of the concentration camp in Auschwitz, who testified as follows:

Name and surname	Luba Reiss
Date of birth	24 June 1908
Religious affiliation	Jewish
Nationality	Polish
Place of residence before the war	Radomyśl on the River San
Place of residence currently	Belgium, Antwerp, Dolfynstr 71

I was deported to the concentration camp in Auschwitz in a car transport from the Kraków ghetto when it was being liquidated on 14 March 1943 and stayed there until November 1944 as prisoner no. 38 327 (with a triangle). After going through a six-week quarantine in block 1, I worked in various *kommandos* in succession, living all the time in the women's camp in Birkenau. The transport in which I arrived in Birkenau numbered around 7,000 women of different ages and children of both sexes. This figure was given to us by Jewish policemen (Orde Dienst men) [order service]. This entire transport was intended for gassing, because women and children from the B ghetto were transported on it – i.e. those who had already been sorted in the ghetto as unable to work. Only by chance, as a result of a request made by a young Jewish woman who presented herself as a dentist (I don't know



her surname), and by declaring a lower age, were 24 women saved from this transport and didn't go to the gas. They were admitted to the camp, tattooed and employed in various *kommandos*.

The head of the women's camp was Maria Mandl, who was universally known since the camp's inception by name and surname, whom I can currently recognize in the photograph without any difficulty. When the *kommando* went off to work in the morning, she would be standing at the camp gate and choose from the columns any women who, despite everyone trying to march like they had been told to, like soldiers, couldn't keep up this position, women who had chapped lips because of a fever, or finally those wearing any kind of bandage. She stopped the selected women, didn't let them go to work and directed them to block 25, from where they were taken to the gas. She did the same when the *kommando* returned from work.

She participated in all the selections – i.e. choosing prisoners who were already in the camp to be sent to the gas. She didn't put too much thought into it, but was simply guided by her whims, in many cases young and healthy women fell victim to the selection carried out by Mandl. I witnessed an incident during a selection carried out by a doctor named Rohde when Mandl and Drechsel relieved him from this activity, saying that he was "a Jewish uncle", that he saved too many Jewish women during the selection and Mandl herself continued the selection in her own way. During one such selection, she noticed that among the female prisoners lined up there was a young Greek woman, a very good-looking and healthy woman in an advanced stage of pregnancy. She directed her to block 25. The woman explained that she was in her ninth month of pregnancy, that a few days after she had given birth she would be healthy and able to continue working, begging for her life. Then Mandl kicked her in the stomach and threw her over to the group for gassing. Another time I was an eyewitness to an incident when Mandl, while in the hospital, sent 14 girls who had come for a doctor's appointment to the gas. These were working prisoners who had reported to the hospital because of minor and transient ailments – e.g. toothache. Before the departure of a transport, in which in November 1944 I was sent in a group of 3,000 female prisoners from Auschwitz to Bergen-Belsen, Mandl conducted a selection. From among those that were destined to leave, she selected 700 prisoners and directed them to the gas. From what my friends told me, who arrived on later transports in Bergen-Belsen, I know that Mandl conducted a selection and directed a large percentage to the gas before any such transport left.



In April 1943, when I was in block 20 of the A section of the female camp, among the 1,500 female prisoners huddled in our block, panic erupted when a fire extinguisher exploded. The prisoners, thinking that it was a fire, rushed out of the block and knocked out the windows. The SS gave an alarm sign, because it was already after the evening roll call. Some crew members ran over, Schwarzhuber arrived on the spot, and among others Maria Mandl was also there. After ascertaining what had happened, Mandl and the others consulted each other about what punishment to impose on the prisoners. Schwarzhuber was of the opinion that escaping from the block in such circumstances was justified, that everyone would have done the same in the prisoners' shoes. Mandl demanded that the prisoners be absolutely punished. Schwarzhuber drove off without giving any instructions; he didn't specifically order the prisoners to be punished. After his departure Mandl, Drechsel and *Rapportführer* [report leader] Taube lined up at the entrance to the block and used rods to inhumanely beat each prisoner all over as they entered the block. When Mandl got tired, they stopped letting in the prisoners for a moment and it was only after she had rested and regained her strength for some more thrashing that this activity was resumed. I am not able to recount every detail of Mandl's bestial conduct towards the prisoners under her watch. She not only terrorized the female prisoners, but also her subordinates from the SS, and even some SS men.

She shook the whole camp and was in fact the one who ruled it. In the summer of 1944, when some women were placed in the BIIc section, during one of the evening roll calls, one woman was missing from this section. After completing the roll call formalities, during which the SS staff from this section confirmed that one of the prisoners was missing, Mandl came along with her retinue, started searching and found the missing prisoner. She was completely exhausted, seriously ill and couldn't drag herself out to the roll call. Mandl and her companions personally accompanied this prisoner directly to the gas chamber. She always referred to the prisoners insultingly like "Die Luder" ["Sneaky Bitch"], "Hurweiber" ["Whore women"] and other similar nicknames.

The report was read out. The hearing and the report were concluded.