



REINHOLD PUCHAŁA

Oświęcim, 9 August 1946. Regional Investigative Judge Jan Sehn, acting in accordance with the Decree of 10 November 1945 (Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland No. 51, item 293) on the Main Commission and Regional Commissions for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland, as a member of the Main Commission, pursuant to Article 255, in connection with Articles 107 and 115 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, interviewed the person specified below, who testified as follows:

Name and surname	Reinhold Puchała
Date and place of birth	17 July 1919, Chorzów
Parents' names	Piotr and Janina Zowiecka
Religious affiliation	Roman Catholic
Citizenship and nationality	Polish
Place of residence	Chorzów, Plac Świętego Jana 37

I was imprisoned in Auschwitz from 25 June 1940 to 18 January 1945. I received the number 1172. Initially, I worked in various work details for short periods of time. For three months in the autumn of 1940, I was in hospital. From November 1940, I worked in the electricians' unit in the main camp. In March 1942, I was transferred to the electricians' unit in Birkenau, where I worked until the end, with short breaks.

While working in the electricians' unit, I was able to move more freely around the camp. This resulted from the type of work we had to perform in various places. Therefore, I had the opportunity to observe life in the camp and the behavior of the SS men. For example, when I was already working in Birkenau, my task was to install floodlights along the pits where the bodies of people gassed in the temporary gas chamber in Birkenau were buried. We did this also while the gas chamber was being used and while the *Sonderkommando* [special unit] was



burning corpses on pyres. *Hauptscharführer* Moll was then in charge of the *Sonderkommando*. Camp commandant Rudolf Höß supervised the works. He would come there four or five times a day, receive reports and give orders regarding the work. After the crematoria in Birkenau were opened, I also saw him there. According to my observations, he is a cold, calculating man who always seems to be calm and composed. I did not see him beat prisoners himself. However, I witnessed that in his presence and in front of his eyes, other SS men abused prisoners.

After the first escape from the camp (the Wiejowski case), in the first days of July 1940, we stood in the roll-call square from the evening roll call on Saturday until 3.00 p.m. on Sunday. At 3.00 p.m., only about 50 prisoners were still standing; the rest had collapsed due to exhaustion and the beatings received from the block seniors and SS men. Höß watched these scenes and was present several times during the forced standing. We were not allowed to leave to answer calls of nature. One of the prisoners, unable to suppress the need, defecated in the square. The SS men ordered him to bark at it and eat the feces.

In September or October 1944, I smuggled a list of transports of prisoners who had been brought to Auschwitz up until September 1944 out of the camp. I was given that list by inmate Kazimierz Smoleń. It has been preserved until today. That list was prepared based on the numbers recorded by the registration office of the Political Department, by colleagues who were employed there.

To supplement my testimony, I would like to describe the following event, which has stuck in my memory. When the world found out what had happened in Katyń, an order was issued in Auschwitz to dig up the mass graves where people gassed in the temporary gas chamber in Birkenau had been buried. The contents of those pits were burned. The members of the *Sonderkommando*, together with the block personnel – people who did not go to work, but only performed some functions in the block – were sent to the main camp and gassed in the chamber of crematorium I. At that time, the *Sonderkommando* consisted of about 300 prisoners. This took place in December 1942, after the removal of corpses from the pits next to both temporary gas chambers in Birkenau. The prisoners in the main camp knew about it and informed others in Birkenau. After the *Sonderkommando* was gassed, another unit was formed. Only Jews worked in the *Sonderkommando*, and they were selected for that purpose by the management of the Birkenau camp.

The report was read out. At this point, the interview and the present report were concluded.