



LEON WANAT

On 3 June 1946 in Łódź, the investigating judge S. Krzyżanowska heard as a witness the person specified below; the witness did not swear an oath. Having been advised of the criminal liability for making false declarations and of the wording of Article 106 of the Polish Code of Criminal Procedure, the witness testified as follows:

Name and surname	Leon Wanat
Age	40 years old
Parents' names	Marian and Maria
Place of residence	Łódź, Stalina Street 67
Occupation	clerk
Religious affiliation	Roman Catholic
Criminal record	none

I was incarcerated in Pawiak prison from May 1940 until 17 June 1944. As I speak German, for some period I was employed as a prisoner-secretary in the administrative office for the admission of prisoners.

After I had been quartered in the prison, I was interrogated at aleja Szucha, from where I was brought back severely beaten. My admission to Pawiak was free from harassment or beating. As I was working later in the admission room, I witnessed many brutal scenes of newcomers being beaten. I remember, for instance, that citizen Białokuz was beaten and kicked, and then thrown into a cell like a rag.

The first period of my incarceration in Pawiak was a period of overcrowding, with all the torments this entailed. Single cells would be occupied by a dozen prisoners. A lack of mattresses, bedbugs, lice. At that time the prison staff was still Polish. Nevertheless,

the Gestapo men would sometimes storm into the corridors and cells for inspection, and then they would beat the prisoners without any reason or organise punitive exercise sessions, very long and exhausting. From that period I remember as being the worst Tober [sic] Felhaber, SS *Oberscharführer*, a thin, blond man of average height who was from Bydgoszcz. After one such exercise I was so exhausted that I could not sleep for two nights, and so swollen that I could not raise my hands to my mouth. Many of us had to be carried off the yard after that exercise. I know that some prisoners died shortly afterwards. But generally this period was still bearable.

Later, when Pawiak was taken over by the SS men and the "Ukrainians", everything changed. The Polish prison guards had to leave the prison building in order to avoid possible contacts with the town. At that time I was given a function in the admission room. Or rather I was kept there, as I was already working with the Polish staff. As a result, I saw a lot.

The prisoners who were being brought to or taken away from Pawiak were being kicked and beaten. Many of those prisoners were already covered in blood and bruised. I remember transports containing many people from the provinces, that is, from Łowicz. Some of them were beaten so hard that they had black and festering buttocks. I remember a ranger from the Łowicz transport: he could not stand on his own legs, his buttocks were one festering sore. He was howling with pain. Even the sergeant, seeing his condition, did not touch him or beat him.

One of the Germans, *Oberwachmeister* Zander, had a dog and used to set it on prisoners. This dog was biting the flesh down to the bone. The prisoners were being taken from the admission room downstairs, to the 7th ward, where a German named Krummschmidt was torturing the newcomers. No prisoner was spared a kick. Krummschmidt would also beat them with a stick about the back, the head etc. The 7th ward was where the quarantine was taking place. This was accompanied by a meticulous search, and those prisoners who tried to keep some items of sentimental value were being especially harassed. When a prisoner got to the ward, his or her situation would not improve; punitive exercise, dark cell (up to two weeks), every minor thing accompanied by yells, curses etc. Being let out of the cell twice a day, and the time given for taking care of natural needs, was not long enough. Food was meagre, with almost no fat, a small quantity of bread and almost no potatoes. Food packages from town were allowed once a week, later once a month. The packages once a week were allowed for a very short time, and on the decree of the prison commander,



Junk, were limited to once a month. Clothes package could be delivered only once, at the beginning of the stay. Besides, packages from town were always robbed of fat and meat by the sergeants.

There was a hospital on the premises, but it was extremely difficult to get admitted to it, and it often happened that if the Germans believed the number of sick to be too big, this group was subjected to punitive exercise instead of medical aid and had to go back to their cells. Zander, Bürkl would do such things. Naturally the number of sick people radically diminished as a result of this.

I know that the sergeants had periodic briefings, during which they were being instructed how to treat prisoners. Generally, those sergeants who were kind to the prisoners were frowned upon by the authorities. Besides, the Germans were afraid of one another, and when there were more of them gathered, harassment was often for show, to show off to the authorities. But there were also sadists among them, who tortured people for pleasure. I remember that when the last commander of Pawiak, Pitz [sic], prohibited punitive exercise in the wards, they would still be organised by some of them.

Generally, interrogations took place at aleja Szucha, but sometimes also in Pawiak. Especially after mass round-ups (May 1943). These round-ups were called actions. Such interrogations were being carried out in a trice, and then in May the Gestapo from the Radom district came to help. After those "interrogations" some prisoners died due to the beating. After an individual "interrogation", a woman named Szczukówna died in the administrative office, a few minutes after the end of the interrogation. As a result of the cruel treatment of the prisoners, there were many suicides and individual executions by the sergeants of those prisoners who were behaving "inappropriately". One could also die as a result of being shot through the window.

There were also deportations to the camps and death transports. The word "death", however, was entirely banned. There was no differentiation in the books: everything was noted down as a transport. Lists of names for the transport were coming from the Gestapo, but without dates. We knew the difference as information about deportations to the camps would come earlier, and the transport was being prepared for several days. Death transports were sudden, often on the same day. For one transport they woke up the prisoners in the middle of the night and took them away so quickly that some prisoners were wearing their nightgowns.

Until 1942, the death transports usually went to Palmiry. From 1943 on, the so-called *Überführungs* to the already depopulated Ghetto were introduced. Prisoners were being executed on various spots there and their corpses were being burnt in piles. The prisoners would be taken from the cells with all their belongings, in order to create the impression that they were not being taken for a death transport. All clothing and luggage were being taken away from them. There were *Überführungs* to town and to the Ghetto. When the prisoners were being taken for execution to town, they would wear their trousers and shirts and have wide blindfolds (old rags, socks) wrapped around their eyes. The prisoners who were to be executed in the Ghetto would have only their trousers on, sometimes only underpants, without shoes. They would be tied in twos. Even during those last moments, that is, of getting ready, loading the cars, everything was happening accompanied by yells, bellows, beatings, poking etc. The prisoners would be loaded on their knees and taken away in groups to the Ghetto. The prisoners who were taken thus, without clothes, were marked in the records with a word *Überführung* (escorting [sic]). As the same term was used for those prisoners who, for instance, did not return from aleja Szucha, the sergeants later began to mark the names of the executed with an "e" in order not to confuse them. Not all groups of prisoners were being taken in cars somewhere far away in the Ghetto grounds. Many executions were carried out in the gate of a house at Dzielna Street 25 and 27. The prisoners would be taken there in their clothes, and groups of Jews had to clean the execution site and take the clothes, which the prisoners had to take off before the execution. Some executions took place on the way to that house. As soon as the prisoner crossed the gate of the prison, they would shoot him in the back of the head. The clothes would also be torn off after the death of the prisoner.

I remember that a group of 500 people (in May 1943) was taken away in smaller groups, in clothes, and these were executed on various spots in the Ghetto. They were all marked as sent in a transport. In cases where the sergeants hanged prisoners in their cells or shot them, the records would have it that the prisoner hanged himself or herself or was shot on the run. Sergeant Krummszmidt from the 7th ward, from Śląsk, about 38 years old, bald, bowlegged, has an especially large number of hanged prisoners on his conscience.

During the period when the Pawiak staff was entirely German, I mean in the main prison building, there were two mass arrests of prison guards, some of whom were executed, I think in Palmiry, and some sent to concentration camps.



As for the average number of people incarcerated in Pawiak, I think it might be estimated at about 1800 men and about 550 women. The prison was for political prisoners who were to be interrogated, so the turnover of prisoners was substantial. In 1944, when there was a great or even the greatest number of arrests, some 9 thousand prisoners were put in the books until July, and this number did not comprise people from mass round-ups and the Jews. People from mass round-ups were included only in the food books, and only after the first segregation were those who remained being put in the books.

The commanders of the prison were: Junk, Grabert and Pietsch. Deputy commanders were: Bürkl, Vohsberg, Hiersemann. The admission room was in charge of Karl Brockmann from the Hannover area.

I know that the last street executions were carried out by Berg, von Trieps, and Wittosek, both Gestapo officers and SS men.

My wife was employed as a clerk in a separate administrative building of Pawiak, and she cannot provide any new facts as a witness.

The report was read out.