



BOLESŁAW BICZ

In Kraków, on 11 July 1946, District Investigating Judge Jan Sehn, on the basis of the Decree of 10 November 1945 (O.J. RP no. 51, item 293) regarding the Main Commission and District Commissions for Investigating German Crimes in Poland, acting as a member of the Main Commission, took a deposition in accordance with Art. 254 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (in connection with Art. 107 and 115) from the person named below, who testified as follows:

Full name	Bolesław Bicz
Date and place of birth	1 April 1899 in Sporysz, Bielecki county
Names of parents	Eugeniusz and Helena Nowotarska
Religion	Roman Catholic
Nationality and citizenship	Polish
Occupation	railway clerk
Place of residence	Oświęcim, Klucznikowice 43

Both before the war and in the first months of the German occupation, I lived in Oświęcim. Since I worked as a railway clerk in the Cracow Directorate, I lost my work, but according to German regulations I had to work somewhere, so my friend who was employed in the German Job Center in Oświęcim helped me and a group of my friends to get jobs in a German building company that did some work in the concentration camp in Oświęcim. I began the work in the beginning of June 1940. I worked as an electrician, first in a group of civil workers only, because in the beginning there were no prisoners in the camp. I mean no Polish prisoners, because a group of German prisoners, professional criminals, were already in the camp – they lived in block no. 1 and were employed in building a kitchen between blocks no. 1 and 2.

In the middle of the month the first transport of Polish prisoners arrived in the camp. A couple of days after the arrival of the transport, several Polish prisoners were assigned to help us in our work. We became friendly with them at once. They told us about their terrible experiences in German prisons, about relations in the camp, how they were starved, and we tried to cheer them up saying that the Germans would lose the war. Since as civil workers we had the right to go home after work, we brought food for the prisoners and helped them to stay in touch with the outside world. I must say that we were never told that we were not allowed to do it. Neither the camp authorities nor the company we worked for gave us any such warning.

When we got more friendly with the prisoners we decided to help them escape from the camp, and it was quite possible at the time, because the camp was not fenced yet and there were not enough guards. A prisoner, Tadeusz Wiejowski from Tarnowskie region, agreed to the plan. On Saturday, 6 July 1940, he came to our room in block no. 15, changed his prison clothes for the working uniform of Józef Patek, who worked with me, put on the band worn by us as civil workers, and about 10 o'clock he went out together with us by the side entrance close to the crematorium, towards the railway station in Oświęcim. We gave Wiejowski money and food, and he got on a cargo train going towards Spytkowice.

On Sunday, SS men patrolled Oświęcim and the surroundings, searching houses, so I concluded that they were looking for the prisoner who had escaped. Nevertheless, on Monday I went to work in the camp, because I thought that my absence might be seen as suspicious. About 9.30 a.m. we were summoned to the barrack located close to the crematorium. They gathered 20 of us there, all electricians. After a while, commandant Höß, his deputy (I think his name was Seidler, I don't remember for sure) and Grabner from the Political Division came to the barrack. We were formed in a row, and then prisoners Popowicz and Baran were brought to the barrack. Höß told Popowicz and Baran to indicate the offenders. Popowicz indicated me and Emil Kowalowski, and Baran – Muszyński, Patek and Mrzygłód. All five of us were taken outside close to the commandant's office, and we had to stand there at attention, with our faces turned to the wall, from 10 a.m. till 6 p.m. Then we were led to the entrance hall of the commandant's office building where we stood for over an hour. Commandant Höß came to us, he hit Kowalowski twice in his face and called him „Du polnischer Bandit”. Then, we were led to the first floor where Grabner interrogated us. I have to say that when our group of electricians was selected, SS men, supervised by Höß, searched

us thoroughly, and Höß told us that if we didn't confess, our families would be brought to the camp and tortured in our presence until we confessed. On that day, Grabner only recorded our personal data and read aloud the protocols incriminating us with the testimonies of Popowicz and Baran. From the protocol read aloud to me I learned that Popowicz testified that I had brought food to the prisoners, told them that the Germans would lose the war, and that before his escape I had spoken to Wiejowski. When asked by Grabner whether I pled guilty, I conceded the first two accusations, but denied that I had spoken with Wiejowski. After the formal interrogation we were taken to the bunker in block no. 13.

On the next day and during the six following days, every day we were interrogated by Grabner, from morning till the night. The interrogations took place in the building of the tobacco monopoly. Both Grabner and the SS men who were present during the interrogations beat us with their hands and with a leather whip. During the seven days we were given no food. We weren't even given water. Then, they gave us prison clothes and put us in block no. 4. Under a penalty of death we were forbidden to go to other work details, and we worked sweeping the main street.

In the beginning of November 1940, during a prison roll call, my name and the names of my four colleagues were called, and in the presence of all the gathered prisoners Höß, accompanied by Grabner and other SS men, read aloud our sentence. According to Höß's statement, all those arrested in connection with Wiejowski's escape were sentenced to death by Höß, but Himmler had pardoned us and commuted the death penalty to five years' imprisonment in the concentration camp and a flogging of three times 25 sticks. He added that we would work in a quarry and that the penalty given to us through Himmler's pardon was equivalent to the death penalty. Höß spoke in German. His speech was translated to us into Polish by a translator, prisoner Baworowski. I would like to add that after having announced the first part of the sentence, i.e. after stating that we were sentenced to death, Höß made a long rhetorical pause. Before I heard the rest of his statement, I was convinced that I would die. Just after the sentence was read out, I and my four colleagues were given 25 sticks each on our naked backsides. During the flogging we were lying on a horse, held there by kapo Krankemann and his helper Max, and beaten in turns by the SS men, and they beat us with a fat electrical cable covered with leather. After leaving the horse, each of us had to stand to attention and report to Höß that we had received the punishment.

Then we were taken to the bunker in block no. 13, where, without food or water, we remained 21 days. Out of hunger and thirst we drank water dripping on the walls of the bunker and faeces from the bucket. During all this time we had no medical care, and the injuries from the beating were festering and rotting. Once, during our stay in the bunker, commandant Höß came to us accompanied by some higher-ranking SS man, probably von dem Bach, and said to him in German that these were five fanatical Poles who wanted to restore Poland on their own.

After 21 days, we were taken on stretchers in the evening by *Pflegers* to the yard before block no. 16, where in the presence of Höß, Grabner and Krankenmann we were given 50 sticks each. I fainted and was taken to the camp hospital. I regained conscience only after two weeks. I woke up in a room where 36 dead corpses were lying. I asked the doctor-prisoner Tadeusz Gąsiorowski to take me to another room and he did so, took care of me, performed surgery on me, and after about seven months under his medical care I recovered from the injuries resulting from the beating. The whole of my buttocks festered, which led to *phlegmona* and *necrosa*, and I lost most of the muscles in my right buttock. Höß grew impatient that my treatment was taking so long: he came to the hospital and asked whether my condition was good enough to transport me to another camp. Then, the doctor stripped the dressing from my wound, showed it and reported that I was not ready for transport, and Höß left.

When I got better, on 8 June 1941, I was taken directly from the hospital to the train and went to the concentration camp in Mauthausen-Gusen, where I remained till the camp was liberated by the American Army on 5 May 1945. As to my colleagues arrested with me, Muszyński, Kowalowski and Patek were killed already in 1941 in the concentration camp in Gusen, where they had been taken from Auschwitz, and Mrzygłód died from the injuries inflicted on him during the flogging when he was transported to Vienna, so out of our group of five I am the only one that has survived.

The testimony was read out. At this point, the hearing and the testimony were concluded.