



## JAN TRĘBACZOWSKI

On 10 September 1946, in Katowice, the District Investigative Judge Jan Sehn, a member of the Central Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland, at the spoken request of and in the presence of a member of said Commission, Deputy Prime Minister Edward Pechchalski, heard pursuant to and in accordance with art. 4 of the Decree of 10 November 1945 (Journal of Laws No. 51, item 293), in connection with art. 254, 107, 115 of the Criminal Code, the former prisoner of the Auschwitz concentration camp named below, who testified as follows:

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Name and surname	Jan Trębaczowski
Date and place of birth	22 February 1920 in Radzionków
Nationality and national affiliation	Polish
Religious affiliation	Roman Catholic
Occupation	university student
Place of residence	Lublin, Rajskiego Street 3

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I was arrested in Radzionków on 18 December 1940 by the Gestapo from Bytom. I stayed in Bytom prison until 24 January 1941, when I was taken by group transport (*Sammeltransport*) to the concentration camp in Auschwitz, where I arrived on the same day and stayed until 18 January 1945 with the prisoner number 9504.

Initially I worked in various *kommandos*, and from the summer of 1941 I was employed in the registration (*Aufnahme*) office of the Political Department. I worked in this office until the end of my stay in the camp. The heads of the *Aufnahme* office were, in order: Quackernack [Quakernack], Klausen [Claussen], Stark, Albrecht, Brott [?], Hoffer and Erber-Hustek [Houstek]. They were SS men with non-commissioned officer rank. My colleagues in

the *Aufnahme* office were: Smoleń, Rajewski, Wrześniowski, Zwarycz, Bartel, Klimek, Datko, Kłęszyn, Witoszynski and for some time Komarnicki. In that list I have omitted my colleague Wąsowicz, who also worked with us in the *Aufnahme* office.

The *Aufnahme* office was tasked with registering all the prisoners who came to Auschwitz in the camp records. For every transport we prepared a so-called *Zuganglist* for the arrivals, whose original remained in our office and copies of which were sent to the headquarters and all the camp units. Initially, the *Zuganglist* was made in 13 copies, but later there were fewer. The *Zuganglist* only included the numerical ordering of those prisoners who were admitted to the Auschwitz camp and given numbers. Of the of RSHA [*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*] transports arriving at the Auschwitz camp from 26 March 1942, only a small percentage of arrivals were included in the *Zuganglist*, given numbers, and made available for *Arbeitseinsatz*.

The rest of those who arrived on such transports—that is, the majority who went straight from the RSHA transports from the railway ramp to the gas—didn't appear on the *Zuganglist*. They were written on the transport lists (*Transportlisten*) only, prepared by the police station which had sent people of a given category to Auschwitz on the order of the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* (RSHA).

The prisoners in Auschwitz were numbered in several series, [such as] the general men's series, covering numbers from 1 to 202,499. The last number was issued to a prisoner transported on 18 January 1945 from Mauthausen to Auschwitz. He was a German professional criminal (*Berufsterbrecher*), who was transferred to Auschwitz for incorporation into the SS division under the command of Dürlewanger [Dirlewanger]. Recruitment for this division in Auschwitz began in 1944. Professional criminals (BV—*Berufsverbrecher*) and antisocial criminals (Aso—*Asoziale*), whose prison sentences for common crimes didn't exceed five years, were employed there. They were all Germans.

The general women's series comprised about 87,000. From the spring of 1944, first a Jewish men's series of 20,000 (series A) was introduced, followed by a series B of over 17,000. For female Jewish prisoners, a series A comprising over 25,000 was introduced at the same time. Gypsy men were numbered in the men's Z series, consisting of almost 11,000, and Gypsy women were in the female Z series, comprising over 11,000. The reeducation prisoners (*Erziehungshäftlings*), who came to the Auschwitz camp for a strictly defined period of time

(a maximum of two periods of 56 days each) were initially numbered in the general men's series. In this numbering there were initially over 1,100 *Erziehungshäftlings*. After reaching this number, the reeducation prisoners were excluded from the general series and a separate men's series E was created for them, amounting to over 8,600 numbers, and a female series E, which included about 1,600 women. Russian prisoners of war—around 12,000 of whom passed through the Auschwitz camp at the turn of 1941/1942—were numbered in a separate series.

Most of the Russians came to Auschwitz from the prison camp in Lamsdorf. For the Russians, a separate camp (*Russenlager*) was set up in Auschwitz, comprising blocks 1, 2, 3, 12, 13, 14, 22, 23 and 24, which were separated by barbed wire from the rest of the camp. A special commission classified these prisoners into categories A, B, and C. The first included prisoners whose political and party activities were considered dangerous to the Reich. All of them were placed in the punitive unit (SK [*Strafkompanie*]), where they died very soon. The next categories included prisoners of war who were respectively deemed to be less dangerous for the Reich, according to the commissions. Despite this classification, almost all the prisoners in the next two groups were also killed, so only a handful of them survived after a few months who were then transferred to Birkenau, to the Bla section. More than 170 Russians prisoners of war were numbered in the Au series, so that there was, for example, prisoner no. 9 and prisoner no 9-Au within the group of Russian prisoners. This Au group included specially selected political activists. They were all in the punitive unit and all of them died. Individual classes of Russians were designated by the SS commission which were called *Sondergericht*: A – as '*politisch unzuverlässlich*' [politically unreliable]; B – as '*politisch unverdächtig*' [politically unsuspicious]; and C – as '*für den Wiederaufbau geeignet*' [suitable for rehabilitation]. Because, before the introduction of the tattoo, the Russian prisoners of war exchanged numbers with each other, or took their dead companions' jackets, so that some of them ended up with three jackets, and therefore three numbers, the records were in disarray. It happened that some were entered twice in the lists of the dead, although in reality the prisoner in question was still alive. For the same reason, the POW numbers were also used in the records, which were stamped on the so-called *Erkennungsmarks*. They were identification tags, in two sections, that the prisoner wore around his neck. These numbers were designated as 'SM', 'ERN', or 'Kennummer'.

As I mentioned, the first transport sent to the Auschwitz camp on the basis of the general *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* directive, arrived at the camp on 26 March 1942. It

was a transport of Slovak Jewish women. The first RSHA transport of men, comprising 1,111 prisoners, arrived in Auschwitz from Paris on 28 March 1942. These transports were extremely numerous—the number of prisoners arriving in each of them varied between 1500 and 3000, most often averaging around 2,000 each. The general regulations of the RSHA referred to entire national or racial groups—for example, all Greek Jews came to Auschwitz on the basis of one general order issued by the Reich Main Security Office. On the basis of such ordinances, the following groups came to the Auschwitz camp: Jews from Slovakia, France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Italy, Hungary, Greece, Greece, Poland, and Aryan Poles from the Lublin region, as well as Aryan French. From these transports, only a certain number of specialists were taken and registered in the camp according to the specific needs of the *Arbeitseinsatz*. The rest went straight from the train to the gas. The items brought by these people were not recorded in the register. They were put into a pile and stored in the Canada warehouses. A report was sent by telegram to Berlin for every RSHA transport that arrived in the Auschwitz camp. The report gave the number of arrivals, the number of arrivals who were sent to the camp for *Arbeitseinsatz*, as well as the rest, who were subjected to special treatment (*Sonderbehandelt*). Later on, instead of this term, the phrase 'Gesondert untergebracht' [Housed separately] (abbreviation 'Gu') and some third term which I don't remember were used. They were all codenames, and all three meant death by gassing.

In my opinion, about 300,000 numbered prisoners died in Auschwitz and over 3 million unnumbered prisoners. I believe that the total number of victims murdered in Auschwitz amounts to 4 million. Precise identification of the victims is difficult because the *Aufnahme* files and most of the Political Department's files on those who died were burnt on 26 or 28 September 1944. This was carried out on the order of *Oberscharführer* Kirschner from the Political Department. These files were loaded onto a car, taken to Birkenau and burned in a crematorium. All reports made to Berlin were sent by telegram by the command and were signed by *SS-Obersturmbannführer* Rudolf Höß, the camp commandant.

I saw Höß for the first time in the spring of 1941. This was during an evening roll call when, due to the escape of one of the prisoners, Höß and *Lagerführer* Fritsch [Fritzsch] personally selected a dozen or so prisoners for punishment in a dark cell, where prisoners were held until they starved. In the official reports on the cause of death of these prisoners, they were reported to have been shot. After leaving the post of commandant—this was in the autumn of 1943—Höß took a high position in Berlin in the *Wirtschafts und Verwaltungshauptamt*.



A few months later, he returned to Auschwitz as a special envoy for the campaign against the Hungarian Jews (*Sonderbeauftragter für die Judenaktion Ungarn*). In this capacity, he carried out the extermination campaign of the Hungarian Jews who arrived in Auschwitz around 1944 en masse in RSHA transports. This campaign was carried out by Höß with great haste, and because such quantities of Hungarians were coming in every day, the crematoria couldn't keep up with their bodies, [and so] they were also burned in special pits.

Höß, as the camp commandant, was interested in all aspects of camp life; I remember that he was also several times in the *Aufnahme* office. All the persecutions carried out in the camp against the prisoners staying there, or groups of people transported to the camp for extermination, were carried out on his orders and with his consent. As the commandant, Höß had authority over all the units, and therefore over the Political Department too, as well as its head, Grabner. Very often he would stand with his retinue at the gate while the *kommandos* were returning from work. These *kommandos*, as we all know, had to return to the camp in full force, that is, the returning living prisoners had to bring the bodies of their colleagues back to the camp—those who had fallen from exhaustion or, more often than not, had been killed in the workplace. Höß saw it all, but during the entire period of his rule in the camp there was no change for the better.

The report was read out thus concluding the hearing of the witness and this report.