

English translation

“The Witness Testified as Follows...”

Interrogation Records of Polish Railway Workers at Stations Near the Operation Reinhardt Camps

Unofficial English edition

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1. Introduction and editorial method

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Most of the Jews murdered as part of Operation Reinhardt were to be transported to death camps on trains of the General Directorate of the Eastern Railways (Generaldirektion der Ostbahn, Gedob). For this reason, when the SS and police commander in the Lublin district, Obergruppenführer SS Odilo Globocnik, decided on the location of death camps, he considered the proximity of railway lines to be a key criterion. The designation of the camp in Bełżec was based on its location at the junction of three districts, on the railway route connecting Warsaw, Lublin and Lviv, and close to a large railway junction in Rawa Ruska¹. Sobibór's advantage was its forested setting and the possibility of building a camp right next to the Lublin-Chełm-Włodawa railway line, in the vicinity of a sparsely populated village². In turn, the death camp in Treblinka was built 4 km from the railway station located on the Warsaw-Białystok route³. In addition to the German staff, Polish railway workers also worked at these stations. Below we publish a selection from their postwar testimony, taken during investigations conducted by the Main Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland in late 1945 and early 1946. We include 22 testimonies, including 11 regarding Bełżec, 4 Sobibór and 7 Treblinka.

At the beginning of the war, the Polish railways came under the Chief of Transport of the Armed Forces High Command and the Army High Command. After the proclamation of the General Government on the basis of Hans Frank's regulation on railway administration of November 9, 1939, a Railway Department was established at the Office of the Governor General to supervise the Eastern Railways (Ostbahn, OB)⁴.

NOTES

- 1 Robert Kuwałek, *Bełżec Extermination Camp*, Lublin: State Museum at Majdanek, 2010, p. 37.
- 2 Dariusz Libionka, *Zagłada Żydów w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie: Zarys problematyki*, Lublin: State Museum at Majdanek, 2017, p. 120.
- 3 Jacek Andrzej Młynarczyk, *Treblinka – obóz śmierci "akcji Reinhardt"* [in:] *Akcja Reinhardt. Zagłada Żydów w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie*, ed. Dariusz Libionka, Warsaw: IPN, 2004, p. 217.
- 4 Regulation on railway administration in the General Government of November 9, 1939, "Journal of Regulations of the General Government for the Occupied Polish Areas", November 13, 1939, No. 5, p. 29.

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Emil Beck became the head of the department as the president of the General Directorate of the Eastern Railways in Krakow. In April 1940, he was replaced by Adolf Gerteis, who held this position until the end of the war⁵. As a result of the September campaign, the PKP rolling stock was seriously damaged, and repair works progressed slowly. In December 1940, OB had 69,400 wagons and 7,090 km of track⁶. There were no express trains, and the maximum speed that passenger trains could reach was 70 km/h.

Koleje Wschodnie, in accordance with Frank's wishes, was to be owned by GG. This caused a conflict with the German State Railways (Deutsche Reichsbahn, DRB), which sought to subordinate the Ostbahn to itself. These frictions intensified especially during the period of planning aggression against the Soviet Union; The German State Railways sought to take over not only the Eastern Railways, but also the railways in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. Hitler put an end to the conflict in March 1941, while preparing to attack the USSR. He gave Julius Dorpmüller, president of DRB, authority over the Bohemian and Moravian Railway. The subordination of the OB was to take place after the conflict with the governor general was resolved. Ultimately, as a result of the lack of agreement between Frank and Dorpmüller, the Ostbahn was subordinated to the General Management of Traffic Operations (Generalbetriebsleitung) based in Berlin⁷.

Despite the conflict over the supervision of the Ostbahn, Frank and the DRB management agreed that the OB would be subject to the same procedures as the Reichsbahn⁸. In the fall of 1939, approximately 9,000 DRB employees were sent to the General Government to restore the operation of the railway and implement German administrative and operational procedures. Initially, it was assumed that Volksdeutsche and Poles, who did not pose a threat in a political sense, could work on the railway. They were to perform only manual labor and other non-operational work. A total of 36,640 Poles found employment in Eastern Railways. However, it quickly turned out that there were too few German personnel to direct the trains and control the traffic. Bringing in more German workers was impossible because it could threaten the stability and efficiency of the German railways. In January 1940, the DRB gave consent to Poles, under the supervision of the Germans, driving locomotives of freight and passenger trains and activating signals at crossings. However, the assumption that Poles could not supervise Germans still severely limited the number of positions that Poles could occupy to reduce Ostbahn staff shortages.

NOTES

- 5 See Czesław Bakunowicz, "Kolej wschodnia – Ostbahn w akcji repatriacji Niemców wołyńskich i galicyjskich do Kraju Warty na przełomie lat 1939/1940," *Dzieje Najnowsze* 28, no. 1 (1996), p. 155.
- 6 Alfred C. Mierzejewski, *The Most Valuable Asset on the Reich. A History of the German National Railway*, vol. 2: 1933–1945, Chapel Hill–London: University of North Carolina Press, 2000, pp. 80–82; Czesław Bakunowicz, *The use of railways in the General Government for the deportation of Jews*, "Biuletyn GKBZpNP IPN" 1993, Vol. 35, p. 86.
- 7 Mierzejewski, *The Most Valuable Asset on the Reich...*, pp. 79–80.
- 8 *Ibidem*, p. 79.

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In April 1940, the DRB approved another increase in the competences and responsibilities of Polish employees. In May 1940, Polish firemen and engineers joined the OB staff. By the end of 1940, OB employed 60,000 Poles and 5,300 Germans. In the spring of 1941, in connection with Operation Barbarossa, approximately 1,200 DRB employees were delegated to

work in the OB. They were to strengthen the staff of military trains⁹. The number of Polish and Ukrainian railway workers (after the creation of the Galicia district) also increased to 120,000.¹⁰ As the data quoted above show, without local railway workers it would not be possible to maintain railway traffic in the areas of the General Government.

The basic task of the Eastern Railways was to deliver goods from the General Government to the Reich. In 1941, OB transported 140,000 tons of grain, 290 thousand tons of potatoes and 20 thousand tons of meat. OB also provided special transports: military transports related to the Eastern Front, and from March 1942, transports of Jews to death camps. The locomotive drivers who took these trains to their destinations were local employees of the Eastern Railways.

The preparation of deportation trains quickly became routine. In the spring of 1942, a Special Trains Section was established in the General Directorate of the Eastern Railways in Department 33, responsible for passenger trains, managed by railway superintendent Walther Stier. His task was to prepare the timetable for trains carrying Jews to the Operation Reinhardt camps and to coordinate their movements with scheduled passenger and freight services and with military traffic. Stier determined the routes and departure and arrival times to the death camps. OB supplied the rolling stock after a request was made by the operation headquarters of Operation Reinhardt (located in Lublin) or by local SS and police commands. Special trains usually consisted of 50 freight wagons and one or two (front and rear) wagons occupied by the staff escorting the train. The crew consisted of 30 + 1 escorts, as well as a Polish steam locomotive team consisting of: a driver, a helper, and possibly a stoker. According to Czesław Bukanowicz, the special train covered a distance of 400 km in approximately 23 hours¹¹.

The arrival of each such train was recorded in railway documentation. Special transports also had their own specific markings. The symbol "P Kr" (Personenzug) meant a passenger train (even though they were cattle wagons) from the GG areas; the symbol "Lp Kr" (Leerzug, Leerpack) meant an empty train returning from the camp; the symbol "PJ" (Polnische Juden) was used to mark transports in the Białystok district. In turn, transports from abroad were no longer part of Operation Reinhardt, but instead were sent to the extermination camps at Bełżec, Sobibór, or Treblinka.

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⁹ Ibid, pp. 80–81.

¹⁰ Bakunowicz, *Using the railways in the General Government to deport Jews*, p. 85.

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 95.

They were marked with the symbol "P Da" (Aussiedler aus Deutschland)¹².

In consignment notes, the final station was often only entered as "nach Ziel", the destination. The destination stations were notified by telephone or telegraph of the number of wagons, their wagon numbers, the route, and the arrival time¹³. In his post-war memoirs, Franciszek Ząbecki wrote: "Incoming transports were notified by telegrams. The content of the telegram included the exact train timetable. From the towns where there was a larger ghetto and several transports were expected, timetables prepared a few days in advance were sent by correspondence"¹⁴.

Employees of Bełżec, Sobibór and Treblinka stations

During the occupation, the Polish staff of the station in Bełżec consisted of Alojzy Berezowski, from July 1939 a traffic dispatcher and then stationmaster, and Tadeusz Misiewicz¹⁵, who worked at the station before the war as a clerk, and during the occupation as a cashier. Also employed in Bełżec were Michał Kuśmierczak, a train driver, Jan Głąb, a stationmaster, Wiktor Skowronek, a railway worker, and Stanisław Dworak, a track worker. It is not known whether they constituted the entire station staff or which of them were employed at the station before the war¹⁶. The German stationmaster was Rudolf Göckel. When a special train arrived and had been divided into sections of eight to ten wagons, Rudolf Göckel boarded the locomotive and took it into the camp. The Polish crew operating the locomotive usually left the vehicle, but sometimes entered the camp with Göckel. In periods when there were many transports, Polish railway workers had to bring the wagons to the camp themselves¹⁷. In post-war accounts of railway workers, Rudolf Göckel is remembered positively, he reportedly defended railway workers whom the Germans threatened with execution because they knew too much about the camp¹⁸.

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- 12 See the last document cited, an expert opinion on documents preserved by Franciszek Ząbecki, the Treblinka stationmaster.
- 13 See Raul Hilberg, *The Holocaust of European Jews*, vol. 2, transl. Jerzy Giebułtowski, Warsaw: ed. Piotr Stefaniuk, 2014, pp. 595–596; Jules Schelvis, *Sobibor. A History of a Nazi Death Camp*, London–New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2007, pp. 45–46; Bakunowicz, *Using the railways in the General Government to deport Jews*, p. 94.
- 14 Franciszek Ząbecki, *Wspomnienia dawne i nowe* (Old and New Memories), Warsaw: Pax, 1977, p. 43.
- 15 Agnieszka Kozyra, *History of the settlement in the 19th–20th centuries* [in:] *Bełżec through history*, ed. Andrzej Urbański, Bełżec: Urząd Gminy, 2008, p. 82.
- 16 There were certainly more of them than those who testified in the Chief Commission's investigation. Railway employees included, among others: Mieczysław Ohirko, employed in Bełżec from 1941 as a telegraph operator, was to cooperate with the Polish underground (<http://www.tygodnikzamojski.pl/arttykul/11297/stacja-belzec-prosze-wsiadac.html>) and Waław Kołodziejczyk, a railwayman from Bełżec, working at the station from 1935. (<http://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/historia/1525291,1,belezec---stacjaostateczny-rozwiazania.read> [accessed June 26, 2017]).
- 17 Kuwałek, *Bełżec extermination camp*, p. 129.

They also went to testify in his defense during the post-war Göckel trial¹⁹. Special trains were run by, among others, three railway employees employed in Rawa Ruska, assistant locomotive driver Stefan Kirszt and two boilermakers, Marian Zbierajewski and Andrzej Janko.

A detailed reconstruction of the crew of the Sobibór station was made by Marek Bem²⁰. Before the outbreak of World War II, the station was "technically closed", which meant that it was not fully staffed. Two passenger and freight trains passed through the station every day on the Lublin–Luboml route through Chełm. Wood and wood products were also traded at the station. Among those who worked at the station during the occupation were Franciszek Parkoła, stationmaster since 1937; Jan Piwoński, a switchman; Franciszek Petlak, the second switchman; and Czesław Sójka, who ran the refreshment room with his wife, Irena²¹.

Like the other stations on the Siedlce–Małkinia line, Treblinka station came under the supervisory and marshalling station at Sokołów Podlaski, then an important rail junction where wagons were sorted according to their route or onward destination. The Polish staff of the Treblinka station included both pre-war workers and those employed during the occupation, including: Stanisław Adamczyk – switchman, Tadeusz Bąk – clerk, Włodzimierz Chomka – track worker in the permanent-way section, Feliks Gałach – rail traffic controller of the Wólka Okrąglik station, Kazimierz Gawkowski – switchman, Józef Kuźmiński, stationmaster,

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¹⁸ Kozyra, History of the settlement in the 19th–20th centuries, p. 88.

¹⁹ Rudolf Göckel was arrested in Germany; he was transported to Poland on May 28, 1947, accused of complicity in mass murder in the extermination camp and handed over to the District Court in Zamość. The trial took place on April 8, 1948. Even though the Polish judicial authorities were aware of Göckel's complicity in the crimes committed in Bełżec, they did not collect evidence against him. An acquittal was passed, but by the decision of Stefan Kurowski, prosecutor of the Supreme National Tribunal, Göckel was still imprisoned, initially in Zamość, then in Lublin, and from July 1949 in Warsaw. His subsequent fate is unknown (The extermination camp in Bełżec in the accounts of survivors and testimonies of witnesses, ed. Dariusz Libionka, Lublin: State Museum at Majdanek, 2013, p. 163).

²⁰ When the District Directorate of the Eastern Railways from Lublin began to restore the railway's operation and implement German administrative and operational procedures, five German railway workers were sent to the Polish crew of the station in Sobibór. Parkoła ceased to be the station manager. German railway workers were unable to cope with the station's operation, so at the turn of May and June 1940, Franz Sobotka, an experienced railway worker of the German State Railways, and linemen Richard Bürger and a certain Küttelsmann were sent to Sobibór. Employment among the Polish part of the station staff was dynamic. In October 1939, Ludwik Fałerek joined the station's staff, and in February 1940, Franciszek Petlak. In 1941, Ludwik Fałerek left the station. He was replaced by Józef Cholewa, delegated from the Uhrusk station. At that time, Jan Krzowski, a track worker, and Zygmunt Białucha also joined the team. In January 1943, Białucha was delegated to the station in Chełm, and Jan Krzowski to Bug Włodawski. At the turn of October and November 1941, Sobotka, Bürger and Küttelsmann were recalled from Sobibór. After their departure, only Polish railway workers remained in Sobibór (Marek Bem, Sobibór. Extermination camp 1942–1943, Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza Rytm, 2014, pp. 285–288).

²¹ Czesław Sójka's name in the testimony is Michał Sojko.

Józef Pogorzelski - rail traffic controller, Józef Pronicki - stationmaster, Karol Socha - station switchman, Włodzimierz Wierzbowski - section manager, Waclaw Wołosz - switchman, and Franciszek Ząbecki - stationmaster²². The supervisors of the Polish railway workers were Ludwig Blandowski and Hermann Lillie. A few days after the Third Reich attacked the USSR, both of them were transferred to other stations.

When trains began to arrive at Treblinka, Ludwig Blechschmidt, the stationmaster in Sokołów Podlaski, and his assistant Teufel were responsible for pushing them into the camp. Franciszek Ząbecki wrote in his memoirs that Blechschmidt appeared at the Treblinka station only a few times. On the first day, he ordered water to be given to Jews who asked for it, which apparently had unpleasant consequences for him. In the following days, Teufel was responsible for rolling the trains. This lasted until, at the turn of July and August 1942, railway workers Rudolf Emmerich and Willi Klinzmann²³ came to Treblinka.

Post-war investigations

After the end of hostilities, the Operation Reinhardt death camps became the subject of investigations conducted by the Main Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland. The main goal of the investigations was to determine the method of murdering Jews and the number of victims²⁴. The main difficulty in answering these questions resulted from the fact that no material evidence, such as waybills, had survived (apart from a dozen or so waybills from the Treblinka station), and the traces on the site were covered up by the Germans; At that time, the investigators had not managed to arrest any member of the camp staff. District commissions cooperated with local authorities, militia and security bodies, and often sought witnesses through the local press.

Similar steps were taken in all investigations: the camp areas were inspected, material evidence was collected, and ashes and bones were sent for expert opinions, which confirmed that they were human remains. The witnesses interviewed included survivors, local residents and railway workers. Due to the lack of other evidence, the results of the investigation as to the number of victims and their nationality were based on the calculations of railway employees.

The investigation into the Bełżec extermination camp was conducted by the investigating judge of the District Court in Zamość, Czesław Godziszewski, and the prosecutor of the same court, Tadeusz Chróściewicz²⁵. During the investigation work, 35 witnesses were interviewed (some of them several times), including two survivors, railway workers employed in Bełżec and Rawa Ruska, including a locomotive driver who operated a "special train"

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²² Ząbecki, *Memories...*, p. 26.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 50.

²⁴

Eugeniusz Szrojt, The extermination camp in Bełżec, "Bulletin of the Main Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland" 1947, No. 3, pp. 31-32.

- ²⁵ A thorough analysis of this investigation was conducted by Dariusz Libionka, who prepared the investigation records for publication (*Obóz zagłady w Bełżec w relacjach przeżywców i świadectwach świadków...*, pp. 101–111).

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Village residents were also interviewed. Most of the witnesses were interviewed in October 1945 in Bełżec and Tomaszów Lubelski. Alojzy Berezowski was interrogated in Jelenia Góra, where he worked after the war. The second part of the investigation was conducted in Zamość in February 1946. This time, witnesses were interrogated regarding their knowledge about the camp staff. An inspection of the camp area was carried out on October 10–13, 1945. The investigation was closed in 1946.

The investigation into the Sobibór extermination camp was conducted from October 4, 1945 to October 1946.²⁶ Initially, the case was handled by the prosecutor of the District Court in Lublin, Kazimierz Schnierstein, and the district investigating judge Sergiusz Urban. A site inspection of the camp was carried out on October 11–12, 1945. The first nine testimonies were received on October 13–18, and the next ones between October 29 and November 7. The examinations took place in Sobibór, Włodawa, and the surrounding area. A major difficulty for the investigators was that potential survivor-witnesses were leaving the places where they had previously lived. About 700 German photos were also secured, showing, among others, six members of the camp crew.

In the investigation into the Treblinka camp, prosecutor Zdzisław Łukaszkiwicz questioned 33 witnesses, including 13 who escaped from the camp during the rebellion on August 2, 1943, Poles employed in the construction of the railway line to the camp and 11 railway workers. Two of the railwaymen belonged to the Home Army, a fact they did not disclose when they testified. Franciszek Ząbecki, one of the Home Army members, carried a bundle of transport documents out of the railway station after it had been set on fire. Their importance is additionally increased by the fact that no such documents have been preserved for Bełżec or Sobibór. During the investigation, the area was inspected and physical evidence was secured (coins, fragments of prayer books and letters). Witnesses were interrogated in October and November 1945. Ząbecki, who contributed the most to the case, testified on December 21.

The testimonies obtained during the Main Commission's investigations allowed us to reconstruct the appearance and functioning of the camps, the methods of killing, and the number and nationality of the victims. Data on the number of victims entered scientific circulation and were effectively verified only years later. However, when it comes to the nationality of the victims, there are still doubts whether the Germans also killed Roma, Poles and Ukrainians in the "Operation Reinhardt" extermination camps for helping Jews.

The unquestionable value of these testimonies is the presented state of social consciousness in the 1940s. Their detail is shocking. The testimonies show that the railway workers were well aware of what was happening behind the camp fences. They obtained information about the arrival of subsequent transports, their failure to be recorded, their markings, their size, and the method of rolling the wagons into the camps (Kirsz, Chomka and Gawkowski, among others, rolled batches of wagons onto the camp ramp in Sobibór and Treblinka) by observing train movements and station operations.

NOTES

- ²⁶ Marek Bem and Wojciech Mazurek wrote about the Sobibór investigation in: Sobibór. Archaeological research conducted in the area of the former German extermination camp in Sobibór in the years 2000–2011, Warsaw–Włodawa: Fundacja Polsko-Niemieckie Pojednanie, 2012, pp. 27–52.

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Some railway workers talked to people trapped in the wagons. While driving or during stops, e.g. when trying to give them water, they asked about their origin and the reason for being in the transport.

Descriptions of the appearance and functioning of the death camps constitute the most important part of the testimonies. Railway employees obtained detailed knowledge thanks to contacts with camp crews, especially Ukrainians. In their post-war testimonies, they described in detail the treatment of the Jews brought there, starting from what happened on the ramp and in the undressing barracks, through the process of murdering and burying, and then burning the bodies. Some had extensive knowledge of the size and efficiency of gas chambers. The language of these accounts ("I was told", "I heard", "people told") shows that the murder committed in the camps was one of the most important topics of conversation both among the inhabitants of the area and with the Ukrainians, who, despite the ban, spoke quite openly about the murder in the gas chambers. The content of some testimonies indicates that railway workers had not only frequent, but also good, even friendly relations with the Ukrainian and German staff of the camps, although several testimonies also include information that railway workers were intimidated and sometimes physically attacked.

Railway workers reported stories from Ukrainians about terror and torture used both on newly arrived Jews sent to the gas chambers and on prisoners of the camp. Ukrainians talked about valuable items, jewelry and gold stolen from Jews (and also traded in them). These stories helped spur the practice of digging through the mass graves by the so-called grave diggers, which began as soon as the Ukrainian guards left behind at the three camp sites had departed.

The selection of testimonies ends with an expert examination of railway documents (train schedules, telegrams, and consignment notes) that Franciszek Ząbecki stole from the Treblinka station. These materials, although they constitute a small part of the entire documentation, allow us to understand the logistic aspects of Operation Reinhardt.

In the documents published here, spelling has been modernized, dates standardized, and abbreviations expanded. The basis for editing the testimony regarding Bełżec are the files of investigative materials kept in the archives of the Lublin branch of the Institute of National Remembrance, in the District Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Lublin (OKBZN, ref. no. 1/15/105). Files on crimes committed in the Bełżec death camp in the years 1945–1949 were published in the source edition *Bełżec Death Camp in the accounts and testimonies of Polish witnesses* edited by Dariusz Libionka. The testimonies of railway workers in Treblinka come from investigative materials attached to the files of the trial of Ludwig Fischer before the Supreme National Tribunal in 1946–1947 (AIPN, GK 196/69, Fischer Trial). The testimonies of railway workers from Sobibór come from the archives of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw.

2. Bełżec station witnesses

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Death camp in Bełżec²⁷

Testimony of Tadeusz Misiewicz of October 15, 1945.

Witness interrogation report

On October 15, 1945, in Bełżec, the Investigating Judge of the District Court in Zamość, seated in Zamość, in the person of Judge Cz[esław] Godziszewski, examined the undersigned as a witness without oath. After warning the witness of the criminal penalties for false testimony and informing him of Article 107 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the judge took the following testimony:

Name and surname	Tadeusz Misiewicz ²⁸
Age	51
Parents' names	Józef and Maria née Jankowska
Place of residence	Bełżec
Occupation	freight cashier of the Bełżec station
Religion	Roman Catholic
Criminal record	no criminal record
Relationship to the parties	none

In October 1941, the Germans began building a camp southeast of Bełżec station. A railway siding adjoined the site on the west. The construction of the camp was completed by December 1941. In December 1941, Jews were brought by truck from the direction of Rawa Ruska to the camp. These Jews were employed in the camp. The first railway transport with Jews came from Lublin on March 16, 1942.²⁹ From then on, one or two transports arrived every day from Rawa Ruska and Lublin. As I calculated, one transport consisted of about 50 freight wagons tightly packed with people. Each wagon contained about 100 people. After the transport with Jews arrived at the Bełżec station, the transport was divided into two parts and the parts were led through a siding to the camp area. People were unloaded here, during which stronger and weaker human screams could be heard. The empty wagons were withdrawn from the camp, and the second half of the transport was then pushed in.

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- ²⁷ The investigation files were published in a scientific study by Dariusz Libionka and Robert Kuwałek in: *The extermination camp in Bełżec in the accounts and testimonies of Polish witnesses*, ed. Dariusz Libionka, Lublin: State Museum at Majdanek, 2013. I have retained the footnotes from that edition almost unchanged,

marking them [DL, RK]. Some of the footnotes were carried over from testimonies not included in this selection.

28 Tadeusz Misiewicz testified for the second time on February 19, 1946, before the prosecutor of the District Court in Zamość, Tadeusz Chróściewicz.

29 The first trains arrived in Bełżec a day later than the witness says, on March 17, 1942.

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In the period from March 1942 to mid-May 1942, transports of Jews arrived in Bełżec, mainly from Lublin, and later from Lviv. The Jews from the first transports were not killed; they were kept there to populate the camp and disguise it as a labor camp. After unloading, the next transports of Jews had to strip naked and, after placing their belongings and valuables in designated places, go to the barracks to supposedly take a bath, from where they did not return alive. In the first weeks of the death camp's operation, no screams were heard, but later the screams became louder when Jews were being driven to the gas chamber. In November 1942, rail transports to the death camp were stopped. Since then, the death camp has begun to erase the traces of the crime. The burning of corpses then began, which lasted until the first months of 1943. The complete liquidation of the death camp in Bełżec took place on May 8, 1943.³⁰ All buildings in the camp and the fence were then demolished, the area was leveled and young pine trees were planted. I cannot describe the interior of the camp because I was unable to see the interior of the camp. While traveling by train, you could see the barracks in the camp, as well as the alleys running through the camp. In order to camouflage the camp, it was surrounded by a screen made from pine and spruce. I neither heard nor saw Jews standing next to the locomotive shed and playing while the wagons were being rolled into the camp. The camp commandant was an SS man with the rank of major, whose name I do not know. Here are the names of the Germans working in the camp: Gustaw Wirth³¹, an SS captain who took command of the camp after the aforementioned major; Groth³², Oberhäuser³³, Schwarz³⁴,

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³⁰ In fact, the Bełżec extermination camp was liquidated in June 1943 [DL, RK].

³¹ Actually Christian Wirth (1885–1944), Stuttgart Criminal Police officer before the war. From mid-1940, the inspector of all centers carrying out the so-called euthanasia in the Reich. The creator of the gas chambers in Bełżec and the first commandant of the camp. On August 1, 1942, he was appointed special inspector of all Operation Reinhardt camps, and then also commander of the so-called labor camp. Flugplatz in Lublin. In September 1943, he and Globocnik were transferred to Trieste. There he organized a transit camp that served as a concentration camp in a former rice factory - Risiera di San Sabba. He died in a fight against Yugoslav partisans on May 26, 1944 near Erpelle (Kozina) [DL, RK].

³² Paul Groth (the name is incorrectly spelled in the protocols: Grot), served in Bełżec only until April 1942, then was transferred to the extermination camp in Sobibór [DL, RK].

³³ Josef Oberhäuser (incorrectly written in the records as Oberhause; 1915–1979) had served at a “euthanasia” killing center and was in Bełżec from November 1, 1941; he was one of Wirth's closest collaborators. In Lublin, he served in the Flugplatz camp, and later in Trieste. In 1948, he was sentenced in Magdeburg (Soviet occupation zone) to 15 years in prison for participating in Operation T4. Released in 1956. In 1976, convicted in absentia by an Italian court for crimes committed in Italy [DL, RK].

- ³⁴ Gottfried Schwarz served as deputy commander of Bełżec, first Wirth and then Hering. He was also responsible for the so-called Camp II, which contained gas chambers and mass graves [DL, RK].

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Jirrmann³⁵, Fichtner³⁶, Girtzig³⁷, Dachsel³⁸, Kamm³⁹, Feigs⁴⁰ and Spiess⁴¹, whose first names I do not know; nor do I know what duties they performed in the camp. I managed to determine the names of the Soviet soldiers who accepted service with the Germans as follows: Schmidt, Schneider, Kunz, Trauttwein⁴², "Franz"⁴³, whose surname I do not remember.

NOTES

- ³⁵ Fritz Jirrmann (the name is incorrectly spelled in the protocols: Irmann) was one of the members of the SS crew responsible for the camp ramp. He also took part in the shooting of people deemed "unable to go to the gas chamber on their own" - the elderly, disabled, sick and unaccompanied children. Jirrmann was accidentally fatally shot on March 1, 1943 by his colleague Heinrich Gley in a bunker converted into a detention center for guards from Trawniki (Kuwałek, Obóz zagłady w Bełżec, p. 73; [DL, RK]).
- ³⁶ Erwin Fichtner (sometimes incorrectly in the protocols: Fichner) served as the quartermaster of the camp garrison in Bełżec. At the same time, he was responsible for taking cash and valuables from the deportees. On March 24, 1943, he was killed by Polish partisans near Tarnawatka near Tomaszów Lubelski (Kuwałek, Extermination Camp in Bełżec, pp. 72–73; [DL, RK]).
- ³⁷ Hans Girtzig (incorrectly written in the records as Ircyk) served in the "tube," the passage leading from the undressing barrack to the gas chamber [DL, RK].
- ³⁸ Artur Dachsel (incorrect surnames appear in the protocols: Daksel, Dadsel; 1890–?), worked as a policeman, later served in the "euthanasia" center in Sonnenstein near Dresden. In the death camp in Bełżec, he took care of the garage and locksmith's workshop at the camp commandant's office (Kuwałek, Obóz zagłady w Bełżec, p. 72).
- ³⁹ Rudolf Kamm was a Sudeten German SS man. In the Bełżec extermination camp, he supervised a commando of prisoners sorting the victims' property in the locomotive shed building and the camp ramp when transports arrived. After the liquidation of the camp, he was transferred to Sobibór (Kuwałek, Extermination Camp in Bełżec, pp. 71–72; [DL, RK]).
- ⁴⁰ Reinhold Feix (incorrect surnames appear in the protocols: Feigs, Feiks; 1909–1969), joined the camp staff probably in the summer of 1942 from the training camp in Trawniki. He was a Sudeten German, a member of the SS. He was responsible for the guard company and served in the "lock" - the corridor leading to the gas chambers. He was characterized by exceptional cruelty. After the liquidation of the camp in Bełżec, he served as the commandant of the labor camp in Budzyń in the period from December 1942 to June or July 1943 (Kuwałek, Extermination camp in Bełżec, pp. 62, 69, 72; Wojciech Lenarczyk, Obóz forced labor w Budzyń (1942–1944) [in:] *Erntefest*, November 3–4 1943. The Forgotten Episode of the Holocaust, ed. Wojciech Lenarczyk, Dariusz Libionka, Lublin: State Museum at Majdanek, 2009, p. 264; [DL, RK]).
- ⁴¹ Nothing is known about the last SS man mentioned by Tadeusz Misiewicz - Spiess. Perhaps it was Herbert Floss, who, like Paul Groth, went to serve in Sobibór in April 1942 (Kuwałek, Obóz zagłady w Bełżcu, pp. 70–73; [DL, RK]).
- ⁴² Christian (Heinz) Schmidt (the protocols incorrectly spell the surname: Schmiedt), Friedrich Schneider (the protocols incorrectly spell the surname: Scheider), Samuel Kunz (the protocols incorrectly spell the surname: Kunze), Karol Trauttwein (the protocols incorrectly spell the surname: Trautwein) are Volksdeutsche from the former Soviet Union, serving as lower commanders in a guard company. They committed brutal murders within the camp, especially when the victims were driven to the gas chambers (Dieter Pohl, *Die Trawniki-Männer im Vernichtungslager Belzec 1941–1943* [in:] *NS-Gewaltherrschaft. Beiträge zur historischen Forschung und juristischen Aufarbeitung*, ed. Alfred Gottwaldt, Norbert Kampe, Peter Klein, Berlin: Hentrich, 2005, pp. 283–284; [DL, RK]).

⁴³ Perhaps it is Kurt Franz, an SS man who served in Bełżec in the first phase of the camp's operation and commanded a guard company. In the summer of 1942, he was transferred to the Treblinka camp (Kuwałek, *Extermination Camp in Bełżec*, p. 72; [DL, RK]).

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Aleksej Pietka⁴⁴, who murdered a Pole outside the Bełżec station. The men named above were Soviet soldiers and were especially cruel to Jews. Aleksej Pietka, who is now serving as a Cossack, was recognized by residents of Bełżec. When he learned that he had been recognized, he disappeared from the Bełżec area. Jews employed at camp headquarters said that, at first, the SS men received some kind of injections every day, in three doses. In the summer of 1942, I witnessed a German gendarme shoot a Jewish woman who was leaning out through the small upper opening of a freight wagon. The Jews pushed her body out through the opening onto the railway track, and Jewish prisoners from the camp carried it into the camp. Another Jewish woman jumped from the same transport. Despite her desperate pleas, she was taken to the camp. I often saw that the people being transported to the camp were completely naked. They could be seen through missing boards in the freight wagons. The Germans forbade anyone to give the Jews drinking water. I remember that one evening in the summer of 1942, a transport of Jews consisting of 65 wagons arrived at Bełżec station. The Jews in the wagons begged for water. The men referred to in the testimony as the “Black” guards⁴⁵ - Stecenko, Huber, Korowaczenko, Litus, Hawrykuch⁴⁶, and others - brought water and poured it through the wagon hatches. They did this throughout the night because the train was not moved into the camp until the following morning. I was told at Bełżec railway station that, in one of the wagons carrying Jews to the Bełżec death camp, the Jews tore out a board. A Jewish woman leaned through the opening and called for help. A German gendarme struck her in the face with such force that he smashed her face. Through the opening, one could see naked Jews sitting on the naked bodies of other Jews; the bodies may have filled one-quarter of the wagon. Two Jewish women jumped out of the transport coming from Rawa Ruska near Lubycza and were intercepted by the Ukrainian police and taken to the camp headquarters in Bełżec. These Jewish women kissed the hands of the Ukrainians and begged them to let them go, offering them the riches they had with them. One of the transports brought to Bełżec included a Catholic family consisting of 7 people. The members of the family shouted and begged for help. This fact was confirmed by a Jewish woman working at camp headquarters, who was allowed to leave the camp area. Her name was Salcia. I learned the following from the “Black” guards and Jews employed in the death camp who were allowed to leave it:

NOTES

⁴⁴ He was probably one of the guards best known to the residents of Bełżec, remembered for the murder of a Pole trying to protect a woman from rape. This story was widely known in Bełżec and the surrounding area (Janusz Peter, *In Bełżec during the occupation* [in:] idem, *Tomaszowskie za okupacji*, Tomaszów Lubelski: Tomaszowskie Towarzystwo Regionalne, 1991, p. 199; Kuwałek, *Obóz zagłady w Bełżcu*, p. 84; [DL, RK]).

⁴⁵

This was a common term for Soviet prisoners of war who decided to serve the Germans (other names: Trawniki-Männer, hiwisi (from Hilfswillige), askars). In some sources cited here, a general term for a camp guard.

- ⁴⁶ Nothing further is known about the guards named here. Korowaczenko may be Kondratenko, tried in Kiev in 1948 (see Peter Black, *A Simple Soldier of "Operation Reinhardt"*. Troops from Trawniki and the extermination of Polish Jews [in:] *Akcja Reinhardt...*, pp. 108, 118; [DL, RK]).

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in the locomotive shed, where clothes and luggage taken from Jews in the death camp were sorted, the Germans punished one of the Jews by putting him on the ground and beating him with a board until he lost consciousness, and then he was dragged to the camp, where he was shot. While executing the Jews in the gas chamber, the motor generating electricity jammed, so some of the electrocuted Jews were killed with gas, but it was not specified what type of gas it was. According to the "Black" guards, Jews were murdered in the death camp with gas and then with electric current. While the Jews were undressing for the so-called bathhouse, one of the Jews grabbed a six-year-old child and threw him at an SS man, while the remaining Jews attacked the "Black" guards and strangled one SS man and a Volks-deutsch. There were two groups of Jews employed in the camp, one who worked outside the camp, and the other who could not leave the camp grounds and was busy dragging murdered Jews out of the gas chamber and burying them. One batch was completely isolated from the other. The Germans allowed Jews working outside the camp to marry and write to their families. They monitored those letters and used them to track down Jews in hiding. For the Jews employed in the camp, the Germans organized a football team and a string orchestra. From time to time, the Germans chose two strong Jews and ordered them to beat each other until they lost consciousness, and then the beaten Jews were buried alive. Jewish specialists sorted the confiscated valuables. At times these Jews kept back small items in order to buy food; if the Germans caught them, they were put to death. There was an incident where 17 such Jews were executed by hanging them upside down, while other Jews from the camp had to watch. The major commandant of the death camp in Bełżec once had such fun that he tied a Jew to his limousine with a rope, and he drove the limousine quite fast, forcing the Jew to run. The major's dog was running behind this Jew and biting the Jew. The major arranged such a route from the camp to the railway pump located at ul. Tomaszowska in Bełżec and back. What happened to the Jew, I don't know. People in Bełżec saw this fact. The "Black" guards paid our people for food with money that smelled strongly of corpses, and many times these banknotes were greasy and had traces of blood on them. This shows that they were taken from murdered Jews. In 1942, when I was traveling by train to Zamość, on the way near the track, along the Bełżec–Zwierzyniec nad Wieprzem section, I saw a number of bodies of shot Jews. Some of these corpses were naked. According to the railway workers, they were Jews transported to Bełżec who tried to escape on the way. During the German occupation, the Bełżec station had its own dynamo machine generating electricity, which was initially used by the Bełżec camp. Later, the camp had its own dynamo machine supplying the camp with electricity. Ignacy Maner⁴⁷ currently does not work at the railway in Bełżec, but has been transferred to the west. His address can be provided by the Bełżec stationmaster.

NOTES

47 Misiewicz also mentions Maner in his second testimony, in which the surname is recorded as Ignacy Mazur.

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As far as I remember, the electric current produced by the railway dynamo was 220 volts. During the German occupation, the Polish stationmaster at Bełżec was Alojzy Berezowski, who now works on the railway in Jelenia Góra, west of Wrocław. He was on close terms with the German stationmaster at Bełżec, Göckel⁴⁸, and through his position had regular contact with SS men from the Bełżec camp headquarters. He undoubtedly knows the headquarters staff and will be able to give the exact names of those Germans. People said that, through his acquaintance with Göckel, Berezowski had been able to see inside the Bełżec death camp. At the end of 1942 and during the first months of 1943, the Germans began using a special machine to exhume the bodies of those murdered, which they burned on pyres. It was said that wood was laid down, bodies were placed on it, and alternating layers of bodies and wood were added several times. The pyre was then doused with some kind of liquid and set alight. Several pyres could burn at once, but I saw only one large fire and smoke on the camp hill. Rumors circulated that the Germans passed the ashes of the burned bodies through grain-cleaning grinders in search of gold and valuables. I saw the Bełżec camp administration send two or three chests (trunks) of gold to Germany two or three times a week. Together they weighed between 200 and 500 kg. A German SS man escorted each shipment. This concludes my testimony.

TESTIMONY READ ALOUD AND ACCEPTED

[signed] T[adeusz] Misiewicz

[signed] Godziszewski

District Court Investigating Judge

ADDENDUM

As an additional statement, I explain that, as far as I remember, the Bełżec camp administration sent valuables to Germany from the beginning of May 1942 until November 1942. Wiktor Skowronek of Bełżec can provide more precise information about when the gold was dispatched. This concludes my testimony.

[signed] T[adeusz] Misiewicz

[signed] Godziszewski

District Court Investigating Judge

Testimony of Stefan Kirszt from October 15, 1945.

Witness interrogation report

On October 15, 1945, in Bełżec, the Investigating Judge of the District Court in Zamość, seated in Zamość, in the person of Judge Cz[esław] Godziszewski, examined the undersigned as a witness without oath. After warning the witness about criminal liability for false testimony and about the content of Art. 107 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, after which the witness testified as follows:

NOTES

- ⁴⁸ Rudolf Göckel, German stationmaster in Bełżec. In the initial period of the camp's operation, he was responsible for bringing deportation transports to the camp ramp. He also supervised Polish railway workers who later brought trains into the camp. At the railway station in Bełżec, he was also responsible for documentation related to Jewish transports [DL, RK]. See footnote 19.

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Name and surname	Stefan Kirszt ⁴⁹
Age	30
Parents' names	Antoni and Maria
Place of residence	Bełżec
Occupation	railway guard
Religion	Roman Catholic
Criminal record	no criminal record
Relationship to the parties	none

In 1942, while working on the railway in Rawa Ruska as an assistant locomotive driver, I had the opportunity to see that transports of Jews were coming to Rawa Ruska from the direction of Lviv and the Reich and were being directed to Bełżec. The first transports of Jews were in open freight wagons. The Jews said they were going to the big factory in Bełżec to work. From their appearance it was clear that they were intelligent and wealthy Jews. They carried bedding, suitcases, etc. things with them. From 2 [to] 3 transports a day passed through Rawa Ruska and went to Bełżec. These transports consisted of 60 freight wagons each, and there were from 100 to 120 people per wagon. Foreign Jews transported to Bełżec traveled in open freight wagons with full luggage, while Jews from Poland traveled in closed freight wagons. The Jews in the closed freight wagons asked for water and said that there were many bodies of people inside who suffocated from lack of air. There were cases where the bodies of Jews who had suffocated were thrown out onto the railway area through the windows of freight wagons. About one hundred transports of foreign Jews from Romania and the Czech lands passed through Rawa Ruska on their way to the Bełżec death camp. As far as I was able to determine, the transports of Jews from Poland came from the following cities: Lviv, Rzeszów, Jarosław, Kamionka Strumiłowa, Sokal, Kraków, Tarnów, Bochnia,

Wieliczka, Stryj, Tarnopol, Równe, Nowy Sącz and Przeworsk. As an assistant locomotive driver, I often drove a locomotive transporting Jews to Bełżec from the Rawa Ruska station. Three times during the summer of 1942, I found that, apart from Jews, Poles from Lviv, arrested by the Germans for political activities, were also transported to Bełżec⁵⁰. Each time, four wagons of Poles were transported. I talked to them and they told me that they were Poles arrested by the Germans for political activities hostile to the Germans. According to what they told me, they came from Lviv itself and the surrounding area. The transports that I took from Rawa Ruska to Bełżec were divided into three sections at Bełżec; each section of twenty wagons was then pushed into the camp along the siding.

NOTES

- 49 In 1988, Stefan Kirszt, as part of the Polish Witnesses to the Holocaust Project run by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, gave an interview to Michał Sobelman and Michael Trengenza. In addition to his account of his work on the railway connected with the death camp in Bełżec, he talks about his fate at the beginning of the war. You can listen to the interview on the USHMM website (<https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn507890>).
- 50 In fact, transports with political prisoners - Poles and Ukrainians from the Galicia district - passed through Bełżec, but these trains were directed to Lublin, where the prisoners were imprisoned in the Majdanek concentration camp [DL, RK].

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The wagons were at the front and the locomotive pushed them. The locomotive stopped in front of the border embankment of 1939–1940. After stopping the wagons on a siding within the camp, the Jews were unloaded. Within 3 to 5 minutes, 20 wagons were completely empty of people and baggage. I saw that apart from living people, dead bodies were being taken out. These people were ordered to fold their luggage on one side and strip naked. They folded their clothes on one side and their shoes on the other, and then they walked naked in single file to the barracks located next to the railway siding, from where they were pushed to the gas chamber. I was able to see this because I went onto the camp grounds and pretended that I needed to shift coal closer to the firebox door. The Germans did not allow anyone to look at the camp area. Every time I was near the death camp with a steam locomotive, I tried to see something, but I couldn't hear the screams of Jews being herded along. While at the Bełżec station, I saw transports of Jews arriving from Zawada. As I found out, there were transports from Szczepieszyń, Zamość, Zwierzyniec nad Wieprzem, Krasnystaw, Izbica, Lublin and Chełm. These transports consisted of 60 wagons, and each wagon contained from 100 to 120 people. We transported the clothes, luggage and shoes taken from Jews in the death camp in wagons to the locomotive depot in Bełżec, where they were sorted and sent west. At the end of 1942, railway transports with Jews stopped passing through Rawa Ruska towards Bełżec. While passing through the Bełżec station at the end of 1942 and the beginning of 1943, I saw bonfires in the Bełżec death camp. Several fires were burning at the same time. At that time, a terrible stench of burnt and decaying human bodies emanated from the camp area. The corpses were extracted with a machine and stacked in pyres with wood, then doused with some liquid and set on fire. As far as I could see, the

Bełżec death camp was surrounded by barbed wire and a fence of pine and spruce trees. The camp area was adjacent to the railway siding and the border embankment and was built with barracks. There was a gas chamber in one of these barracks. When I was rolling the wagons with Jews into the death camp, about 10 Jews standing next to the locomotive shed were playing a march and singing. This was repeated every time the wagons with Jews were rolled into the camp. I did not see naked Jews in railway transports transported through the Rawa Ruska station towards Bełżec. This concludes my testimony.

TESTIMONY READ ALOUD AND ACCEPTED

[signed] Kirsz Stefan

[signed] Godziszewski

District Court Investigating Judge

Testimony of Michał Kuśmierczak from October 16, 1945.

Witness interrogation report

On October 16, 1945, in Bełżec, Judge Cz[esław] Godziszewski, Investigating Judge for the District Court in Zamość, examined the person named below as an unsworn witness. After warning the witness of the criminal penalties for false testimony and informing him of Article 107 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the judge took the following testimony.

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Name and surname	Kuśmierczak Michał ⁵¹
Parents' names	Józef and Petronela
Place of residence	Bełżec
Age	56
Occupation	train driver
Religion	Roman Catholic
Criminal record	no criminal record
Relationship to the parties	none

The camp in Bełżec was surrounded by wire and a fence made of pine and spruce trees, and adjoined a railway siding. Its construction began at the beginning of October 1941 and was completed at the end of February 1942. First, a gas chamber and several barracks were built, and then a number of other barracks were built. In February 1942, the first test killing in the death camp was carried out on Jews from Lubycza Królewska. About fifty people were killed. One of the “Black” guards told me that Jews were poisoned, or rather suffocated, with exhaust gases produced by a 250-horsepower motor located 30 meters from the chamber and hidden in the ground at a depth of about 3 meters. A pipe led from this engine to the gas

chamber. The exhaust pipe was 7 inches in diameter, with 2 1/2 inch diameter pipes extending from it. As soon as a transport with Jews arrived at the station, the engine was started immediately. At the end of March 1942, the first railway transports of Jews arrived in Bełżec from Lublin, and then from Lublin and Rawa Ruska. Initially, there were two transports a day, but later the number increased to three. There were cases where 4 or even 5 transports arrived. At that stage many wagons in the transports were empty. On average, the wagon had about 100–120 people. The transport consisted of 40 to 60 freight wagons. The first transports were packed tightly with people. There were no empty wagons then. I remember that, out of curiosity, I asked the operating staff at Bełżec station how many Jews there were in the transport, they told me 1,500 people, and another time I was told 1,800 people. At that time, the transport had thirty-something wagons, some of which were empty. The transport was usually divided into two parts, and sometimes into three, depending on the number of wagons, and was rolled into the camp in batches. After the transport entered the camp, the doors were opened and the Jews were ordered to get out of the wagons. The empty wagons were returned to the station. I was told that the Jews were addressed and that music was sometimes played. The Jews were told that they had to go to the bathhouse to wash themselves and then they would be sent to work. Therefore, they were ordered to strip naked, fold their clothes and hand over their valuables for safekeeping.

NOTES

- ⁵¹ Kuśmierczak testified for the second time on February 19, 1946.

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Naked Jews were chased into the gas chamber and there were terrible screams and moans. Especially the screams of women and children could be heard. Women went with their children separately, and men went separately. The men were first pushed to the gas chamber, followed by the women and children. The gas chamber door was locked and the gas was released. At the same time, 500 people were placed in the gas chamber. I know this from the story of a “Black” guard called Waśka⁵²; I do not know his surname. The poisoning process lasted from 10 to 15 minutes. The gas chamber had windows and electric light. Through these windows they checked whether everyone had suffocated. When it was found that everyone was asphyxiated, the doors were opened and the dead Jews were dragged outside into the pit. Only Jews worked there and were guarded by “Black” guards. During the German occupation, I worked at the railway power plant in Bełżec and I know the intensity of electric current generated then. It was too weak to kill people en masse with electricity. The camp had its own electricity generating machine. It was a motor weaker than the railway one. During the operation of the gas chamber, the electric motor in the camp also operated because light was needed for this chamber. When this motor broke down, our machine had to operate during the day to provide electricity to the camp. Normally our machine worked at night. I only know that the transports included Jews from Lublin and Lviv, but I cannot provide further details. In March 1943, I left Bełżec because the Germans accused me of

sabotage and wanted to shoot me at the power station in Bełżec. Since then I had been hiding, so I had no way of knowing what was happening in the death camp. As far as I remember, in the spring of 1943, the Germans completely liquidated the Bełżec camp, taking away the barracks, fence and other equipment. In late autumn 1942, railway transports with Jews stopped arriving at the camp. From then on, the Germans began burning the bodies in the burial pits. The bodies were removed from the pits by machine and laid on pyres with wood; some substance was poured over the pyres before they were set alight. Because the earliest bodies were badly decomposed and mixed with soil, they did not burn readily. Grates made from railway rails were then used; wood and human bodies were laid on them and likewise doused with the substance. Such piles burned better. The bodies of those murdered most recently burned well, and the machine simply lifted them and placed them on the fire. These fires were without grates. After the camp was liquidated, the Germans leveled the camp area and planted it with young pines. People from the area immediately started looking for gold in the camp, so the Germans appointed a Volksdeutsch caretaker who was to watch over the area of the former camp. The Germans built a house and farm buildings for him on the site of the former camp. When the Germans left Bełżec in 1944, people nearby dismantled the buildings and the house and started digging the camp area, looking for valuables and gold abandoned by the murdered Jews. As a result, the camp area is now scarred. The camp commandant was Captain Wirth, an SS man. I do not know the names of any other Germans employed at the camp command. I also do not know the names of any “Black” guards employed in the camp.

NOTES

⁵² Member of the guard crew with an unknown name [DL, RK].

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They called each other only by their first names, such as Grishka, Sashka, etc. This concludes my testimony.

TESTIMONY READ ALOUD AND ACCEPTED

[signed] Michał Kuśmierczak

District Court Investigating Judge

[signed] Cz[esław] Godziszewski

Testimony of Jan Głąb on October 16, 1945.

Witness interrogation report

On October 16, 1945, in Bełżec, the Investigating Judge of the District Court in Zamość, seated in Zamość, in the person of Judge Cz[esław] Godziszewski, examined the undersigned as a witness without an oath. After warning the witness about criminal liability for false testimony and about the content of Art. 107 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, after which the witness testified as follows:

Name and surname	Jan Głąb
Age	33
Parents' names	Wojciech and Antonina
Place of residence	Bełżec
Occupation	PKP railway section supervisor
Religion	Roman Catholic
Criminal record	no criminal record
Relationship to the parties	none

At the end of September 1941, the Germans began building a camp southeast of Bełżec railway station, immediately beside the railway siding. First, the area was fenced and covered with pine and spruce trees, and barracks were built inside the camp. One of the barracks was intended for the gas chamber, it was located about 100 meters from the southern border of the camp and about 50 meters from the siding. I do not know what its interior looked like. When the chamber was ready, the first attempt to kill the Jews was made at the end of January, and at the beginning of February 1942, Jews from Lubycza Królewska were used, who had been employed in the camp during the construction of the death camp for some time. It was said that 50 Jews were gassed then. At the end of March and at the beginning of April 1942, rail transports of Jews in freight wagons began to regularly arrive in Bełżec. The first transport came from Lublin, and later transports came, one from Lublin and the other from Lviv. Later, the number of transports increased, so that there were 2 to 3 transports a day, and sometimes even 4, and once there were 5 transports. The transports consisted of 40 to 60 wagons. In the first transports, the wagons were packed tightly with people, but towards the end of the camp's existence, transports arrived with several wagons full of Jews, while the rest were empty. A wagon could hold about one hundred people.

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As I was able to observe, from the Rejowiec side, transports brought Jews from Lublin, Krasnystaw, Izbica, Zamość, Szczepieszyn, Turobin, Zwierzyniec nad Wieprzem, while from the Rawa Ruska side, transports were from Kraków, Dębica, Rzeszów, Łańcut, Przeworsk, Jarosław, Przemyśl, Lviv, Żółkiew, Kamionka Strumiłowa. Three transports of Czech

Jews arrived from the direction of Rawa Ruska⁵³. After the transport arrived at the Bełżec station, it was divided into parts because the siding was short and the parts were rolled into the camp. At most 30 wagons were introduced. After the wagons entered the camp, the Jews were herded from the wagons to the assembly square, where speeches were given to the Jews brought there. First the SS man spoke, and then the Jew. It was explained to the Jews that this was a temporary camp from where they would be distributed to other camps in the east. First they had to be disinfected by going to the baths, so they were asked to undress, sort their things and stand in rows. At that time, there was a great cry and lamentation, as well as invocations to God in Polish. There was an incident when the Jews rebelled and slashed an SS man with knives. Naked Jews were forced into an alleged bathhouse, i.e. a gas chamber, where they were murdered with gas. The murder lasted about 15 minutes. It is difficult to determine what was used to suffocate the Jews in the gas chamber. While the Jews were being driven into the gas chamber, a large motor with a power of 250 HP was operating in the camp. It was said that Jews were being suffocated with exhaust gas. It is not true that Jews in the death camp were killed with electric current. The intensity of the current was too weak to kill people en masse. During the operation of the death camp in my railway workshop, "Black" guards made forty-eight pairs of special hinges and bent a considerable quantity of narrow-gauge rail for turntables. From this I conclude that the hinges were used for the floor in the gas chamber, which opened after the Jews were killed and the bodies fell into the pit, from where they were transported in wagons to mass graves. It is difficult to determine what actually happened, because the Jews working in the camp and the "Black" guards would not talk about it for fear of being killed. In mid-May 1942, there was a break in the arrival of transports to Bełżec, which lasted through June, July and August 1942. As far as I remember, after August 20, 1942, transports began to arrive to Bełżec again⁵⁴. At the end of 1942, transports to Bełżec stopped altogether. Then the Germans began to cover up the traces of the crime by burning the recovered bodies. The bodies were exhumed with derrick cranes and by Jewish prisoners. Initially, corpses were burned on wood pyres, with a layer of wood over the bodies. To ignite such a pile, something was poured over it and lit. Since such burning of corpses was very difficult, the camp management took railway rails from the Bełżec railway station, from which grates were made on which bodies and wood were laid.

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- ⁵³ They were probably transports from Slovakia, which were then sent to the transit ghetto in Izbica [DL, RK].
- ⁵⁴ The break in the functioning of the camp lasted from mid-June to July 7–8, 1942. It was caused by the construction of new, larger, brick gas chambers. The camp ramp was also rebuilt to enlarge it (Kuwałek, *Extermination Camp in Bełżec*, p. 44; [DL, RK]).

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Then stacks arranged this way burned much better. At the same time, several fires were burning in the upper part of the camp. This caused a terrible smell. As far as I remember, the burning of the bodies was completed in April 1943, and the camp was completely liquid-

ated in June 1943. The barracks were dismantled and transported, the fence was removed, the area was leveled and afforested with young pine trees. The Germans packed the Jews employed in the liquidation of the camp into freight wagons and sent them towards Rejowiec. As the story goes, they were taken to Sobibór. During the camp's operation, the Germans sometimes brought Jews and Roma to the camp by truck. Jews came from nearby towns. In July 1944, the Bełżec station was completely demolished and burned as a result of the explosion of ammunition stored on the station's premises. Then, as I know, all the documents and station registers at Bełżec were burned. The founder of the camp was SS captain Wirth, who, after being transferred to Lublin, supervised the camp in Bełżec. According to the witness, Schwarz, Hering, Barbel, Feix⁵⁵, and Jirmann deputized for Wirth. Toward the end of the camp's operation at Bełżec, Wirth was promoted to major for his services in the death camp. This concludes my testimony. Read.

[signed] Jan Głąb

District Court Investigating Judge

[signed] Cz[esław] Godziszewski

Testimony of Wiktor Skowronek of October 16, 1945.

Witness interrogation report

On October 16, 1945, in Bełżec, the Investigating Judge of the District Court in Zamość, seated in Zamość, in the person of Judge Cz[esław] Godziszewski, examined the undersigned as a witness without an oath. After warning the witness about criminal liability for false testimony and about the content of Art. 107 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, after which the witness testified as follows:

Name and surname	Wiktor Skowronek
Age	49
Parents' names	Kazimierz and Agnieszka née Jarosz
Place of residence	Bełżec
Occupation	railway worker
Religion	Roman Catholic
Criminal record	no criminal record
Relationship to the parties	none

NOTES

- ⁵⁵ Wirth's deputy was Schwarz, also responsible for Camp II. Hering (the name is incorrectly spelled in the protocols: Herring) was Wirth's successor as camp commandant. Josef Barbel, an Austrian, served briefly as an electrician and plumber in Bełżec. In the spring of 1942, he was transferred to Sobibór, where he worked on the construction of the first gas chambers. Reinhold Feix never served as Wirth's deputy [DL, RK].

All I know is that in 1941, the Germans started building a camp in Bełżec, and in March-April 1942, transports of Jews began to arrive from Lublin and Lviv, and later only from Lviv. The first transports consisted of up to 40 freight wagons, and later up to 60 wagons. In June 1942, the transports began to increase and then there were 3 and 4 transports of Jews. The transports were divided into 2 and 3 parts depending on the number of wagons and then they were rolled into the camp. I don't know what happened next with the Jews in the camp. In the evenings, moans and screams could be heard from the camp, as well as single shots as wagons with Jews were being rolled into the camp. Many times, at the request of Jews in the wagons, we gave water and asked how many of them were in the wagon. They replied that about 100 people. The ages of these people ranged from small children to elderly people of both sexes. It happened that Jews jumped out of the wagons at the Bełżec station, but were shot by "Black" guards. Once, in the summer of 1942, after such a transport had stopped overnight, about 30 people of both sexes and different ages were shot at the station who had jumped out of the wagon to save their lives. At the end of 1942, transports of Jews stopped coming to Bełżec. During the operation of the camp, it was said that the Germans were transporting Jews to the camp in cars. I didn't see it. As far as I remember, beginning in October 1942, the Germans burned bodies in the camp. It was said that the bodies of those murdered were removed from the pits by machines and placed on pyres in layers alternating with wood. Such pyres were poured with some liquid and lit. At the same time, 4–5 fires were burning in the upper part of the camp. This process lasted until February 1943. After burning the bodies, the Germans began to liquidate the camp. They removed the barracks and fences and took them west. All camp equipment was then taken away, the area was leveled and covered with small pine trees. In order to guard the area of the former camp, the Germans built farm and residential buildings on the area, placing there a man whom the witness described as a "Black German". When the Germans escaped from Bełżec in 1944, the local population began to dig up the camp area, looking for gold and diamonds. As a result, the area is dug up and has numerous pits, and on the surface of the ground there are human bones, hair and ash. The citizens' militia authorities are unable to prevent further excavation of the area. I saw how clothes, underwear, shoes, etc. were transported from the death camp in wagons to the locomotive depot in Bełżec, where specially employed Jews sorted them, and then the Germans sent them in wagons to the west. These items had belonged to Jews murdered in the camp. Some time after the death camp began operations, a German SS man in civilian clothes began to come to Bełżec and take away a box covered with sheet metal and closed with two locks once a week. There was a courier sticker on this box. This box was delivered from the death camp to the station by Jews employed in the camp under the supervision of "Black" guards. At the end of the liquidation of the camp, the mentioned courier was taking from one to four such boxes a week, with a total weight of 320 kg. The Jews said that these chests contained gold and valuables left by the murdered Jews. The single weight of such a box was from 70 to 80 kg. After the passenger train arrived, the boxes were loaded into the baggage wagon⁵⁶.

I don't remember where the Jews brought by rail transport to the Bełżec camp were from. It was only said that they were Jews from the areas of Lviv, Lublin and Zamość. This concludes my testimony.

TESTIMONY READ ALOUD AND ACCEPTED

[signed] W[iktor] Skowronek

District Court Investigating Judge

[signed] Cz[esław] Godziszewski

Testimony of Alojzy Berezowski of November 5, 1945.

Witness interrogation report

The Investigating Judge of the District Court in Jelenia Góra, Józef Kleszcz, M.A., with court clerk Stanisława Spasowska, examined the person named below as a witness. The witness was Alojzy Berezowski, aged 34, son of Kajetan and Joanna, currently living in Jelenia Góra, a railway official, Roman Catholic, with no criminal record and unrelated to the parties. After being cautioned as required by law and instructed, with reference to the oath entered in the same record on 5 November of that year, he testified as follows:

From July 1939 to July 7, 1944, I was employed at the Bełżec station, initially as a traffic dispatcher, and then as a stationmaster. Sometime at the end of December 1941, a dozen or so guards arrived in Bełżec, most of them former Soviet prisoners of war and some still wearing Soviet uniforms, and it was obvious that they were not familiar with the local area, because, for example, they initially greeted me in Hitler's way with the raised-hand Nazi salute, even though I was wearing the uniform of a Polish railwayman. Perhaps it was even at the beginning of January 1942. Later, more and more of them began to arrive, and SS men also arrived. Later, these guards were dressed in brown uniforms with black collars and barracks began to be built. From the station in Bełżec, there was a single-track siding, long enough to accommodate 25 wagons, leading south from the station. The barracks were built beside the siding, enclosed with barbed wire, and screened with cut conifer branches. This work lasted until March 1942. In the meantime, announcements appeared in German and Polish that approaching the fence was punishable by death. The first transport of Jews arrived one evening, sometime in March 1942, and consisted of about 15 wagons.

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- ⁵⁶ The items taken from Jews deported to the extermination camp, including valuables and money, were then transported to Lublin, to the warehouses and sorting centers of Operation Reinhardt. Clothing and other textiles were sorted at the labor camp on the so-called Flugplatz on Wrońska Street, while jewelry and cash were delivered to the SS-Standortverwaltung on Chmielna Street. There, a special commando composed of

Jewish prisoners melted down gold, silver and platinum into bars, which were then transported to Germany. The money was deposited in a special Operation Reinhardt account at the Bank of Poland, located at the corner of ul. Krakowskie Przedmieście and 3 Maja in Lublin. (Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute [hereinafter AŻIH], 301/6260, Report by Ignacy Winiarz; [DL, RK]).

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The train was then directed onto the siding. Later that evening, at about 9 p.m., I heard from my apartment at the station the terrifying screams of children, women, and men coming from the siding, mixed with sporadic rifle and machine-gun fire. I cannot say how many people arrived in this transport, but I can only guess that there could have been about 40 people in one wagon. They were covered freight wagons. Only then did we realize that it was a death camp for Jews. The next transports arrived differently. There was a period when two transports arrived a week, there was a period of maybe a month when transports arrived every day. The transports varied in length, sometimes comprising 40 wagons and sometimes 15. A period of about a month in which transports arrived would be followed by a break of about a month. As far as the first transport is concerned, it was known that it was a transport of Jews because they could be seen through the window hatches, and this train was notified at the station as the so-called Judenzug. Subsequent transports were notified at the station either in the above way or with the abbreviation Pkr.⁵⁷ The transports came mainly from Eastern Małopolska, and also from the directions of Kraków, Przemyśl, Przeworsk, and Lublin; one came from Włoszczowa. I did not encounter any transports from abroad, but in the camp offices, which were located in buildings belonging to the railway outside the camp, where I went to settle accounts with the railway regarding the lease of a siding, I met Jewish women who spoke only German. The trains were escorted by the so-called Schutzpolizei. Depending on the attitude of the convoy, local people approached the transports and gave them water, which was later prohibited by the camp command and was strictly enforced. Göckel informed me, and SS non-commissioned officers from the camp also told me, instructing me to inform the Polish railway workers that we must not talk about what is happening there, i.e. in the camp itself and in the transports, because doing so may result in the death penalty. The convoy from the Schutzpolizei did not enter the siding to the camp, but the train from the station to the siding of the camp was led by a German railwayman, Rudolf Göckel, who was initially the stationmaster, and then, after the German station crew had withdrawn, I was appointed stationmaster, and Göckel was simply a liaison between the station and the camp, and he was usually on the steam locomotive, leading it to the camp and supervising the Polish locomotive staff, so that the Polish crew could not observe the camp. Initially, attempts were made to use only German locomotive crews. If someone managed to jump off the train while traveling from the station to the camp siding, he or she must have been caught either by the escort remaining at the station or by the camp guard, because the distance was so short. I have never been to this camp personally, I was only twice on that siding, on the platform, but I did not see the camp itself, because it

was also covered with coniferous trees from that side. When the needles fell from the branches, you could see a camp consisting of about 15 wooden barracks and one brick building, about 60 meters from

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- ⁵⁷ "P.Kr." is a cipher used to mark transports from the General Government. See testimony of Franciszek Ząbecki, stationmaster in Treblinka, from December 21, 1945.

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People had different stories about the method of killing people in the camp - some said it was with electric current, which is unlikely because there were no high-voltage wires, others said they were killed with gas. The German Göckel told me in the summer of 1942 that there was a gas chamber in the camp and that people were killed there with gas, but he did not say what kind. People who came into contact with the camp guards said that there was a diesel engine in the camp and that people were killed with exhaust gases. Today it is difficult for me to estimate the number of transports that arrived at the camp, and based on this number it would also be difficult to calculate the number of people brought to the camp, because transports often arrived with a large number of wagons, but only some of the wagons were loaded with people, the rest were empty. Moreover, it should be assumed that people were also brought by motor vehicle, because vehicles arrived at the camp at night, although I knew only from what people said that these vehicles were carrying people. Between us at the station, we estimated the number of people transported to the camp at about one million people, and I explain that the transport documents were collected by Göckel, but it happened that the transport staff also handed them to Polish workers, so from time to time we learned about the number of people transported. I remember one time when we calculated based on such documents and the average was 100 people per freight wagon. These transports continued until the winter of 1942/43. During that winter, liquidation of the camp began: machines were used to exhume the buried bodies, which were then burned in the open air. This could be recognized from the distinctive smell of burning bodies. The barracks were abolished and all the buildings and material from them were taken away, everything was simply razed to the ground, and pine trees brought from nearby towns were planted in their place. By the spring of 1943, the camp was liquidated, the crew left, and then the local and surrounding population arrived at the camp site, digging the ground for valuables they supposedly found [sic!]. Today I don't remember the name of the camp commandant, I only know that he was supposed to come from Berlin and if someone told me his name, I would remember it. As for Göckel, he came from Eisenach⁵⁸, ul. Tiefenbacher 17, what I know from his words and addresses in his correspondence. Hackenholt⁵⁹ from Berlin, I don't know the address - initially a chauffeur, and later a technical specialist, e.g. in a railway forge he forged some bars as if for hinges for some heavy doors. Later he was transferred to the Treblinka camp, from where he returned with excavators⁶⁰ to dig up graves during the liquidation of the camp.

NOTES

58 A city in Thuringia.

59 Lorenz Hackenholt (the name is incorrectly spelled in the protocols: Hockenhold) (born 1941), served at one of the "euthanasia" centers and, from 1941, at Bełżec. He took part in designing and building gas chambers in all "Aktion Reinhardt" camps. In 1954, he was officially declared dead on December 31, 1945. However, according to the accounts of his SS colleagues, he survived the war [DL, RK].

60 From German: Bagger - excavator.

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Kamm – he spoke Polish and Czech, I don't know his function. Usually, soon after a transport entered the camp and the people had been unloaded, the empty wagons returned to the station. About an hour later, Jews from the so-called Arbeitskommando, a labor detachment of about 2,000 people, pushed flatcars loaded with clothing and shoes from the siding to storage in the old locomotive shed at the station. In the summer of 1942, these belongings were then dispatched onward. People said that Poles were also executed in this camp. The Polish train drivers who were bringing the transports to this siding told me that they saw groups of naked people in the camp, but I do not know their names because they were not locals. After the liquidation of the camp, this Arbeitskommando [was sent] in a transport of about 10 wagons to Sobibór, where they were to be executed. I am currently submitting [a photograph] of this Göckel Rudolf to this report, which may facilitate his capture, and Göckel could provide the names and addresses of the German staff of the camp. The above photograph has been adopted as Annex 1 to this protocol. Read. /–/ A[lojzy] Berezowski

[signed] Mgr Józef Kleszcz
District Court Investigating Judge

[signed] S[tanisława] Spassowska, court trainee and recording clerk

Testimony of Jan Głąb of February 19, 1946.

Witness interrogation report

On February 19, 1946, in Tomaszów Lubelski, I, T[adeusz] Chróściewicz, acting Prosecutor of the District Court in Zamość, examined the person named below as a witness under Article 20 PWKPK⁶¹. After being warned of criminal liability for false testimony, the witness testified as follows: My name is Jan Głąb. I am 33 years old, the son of Wojciech and Antonina, resident in Bełżec, a PKP railway maintenance-section supervisor, Roman Catholic, with no criminal record and unrelated to the parties. I knew Wirth well by appearance, he was a tall, broad-shouldered man, about 50 or maybe a few years old, dark blond, coming, as I heard, from Germany, near the French border, he was an SS captain, I do not have a photo of him, nor am I able to provide further details about his origins and family relations, I know that before Hitler came to power he had been a criminal-police gendarme. Wirth

dressed very elegantly, wore a monocle, had a very sharp temper, everyone was very afraid of him, I once saw him punch a “Black” Soviet in the face, the German Barbel told me that Wirth was a gendarme under Wilhelm⁶², I know for sure that Wirth was the camp commandant only until the summer of 1942, i.e. until the end of the first round of murdering Jews, then there was a two-month break, and then a new phase of murdering Jews began.

NOTES

⁶¹ Provisions introducing the Code of Criminal Procedure [DL, RK].

⁶² Wilhelm II Hohenzollern (1859–1941), last German Emperor and King of Prussia, abdicated in 1918.

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At that time Hering (I don't know his first name) was the commandant of the Bełżec camp. Hering was short, broad-shouldered, brown-haired, with glasses, with a malicious expression on his face, as I heard, he was supposed to come from Hamburg, I think, with the rank of lieutenant, or maybe captain, what position he held in Germany before the war, I don't know, in the army, as I heard, he was supposed to serve in the cavalry, he was very fond of horses. After the liquidation of the camp, Hering went, as I heard, to Italy. Barbel, whom I mentioned, told me that Hering and other members of the German staff of the Bełżec camp, and he, Barbel, as well as some “Black” guards, went to Italy to eliminate the “Tito gang”⁶³. Wirth was promoted to major in the summer of 1942 and was transferred to Lublin, where he took command of the camps in Treblinka, Sobibór and Bełżec, and probably also in Majdanek. I know that Wirth later came from Lublin to inspect Bełżec. He was quartered in Lublin in the barracks at Litewski Square behind the park there. Schwarz was first Wirth's deputy, then Hering's, I actually cannot say whether he was Wirth's deputy. Schwarz was in Bełżec throughout the existence of the camp, tall, blond, about 26-27 years old, long in the face, with a bit of a lisp. Hering was around Wirth's years. Schwarz also left Bełżec for Italy. Barbel was also on staff at the camp, he was about 42 years old, short, a drunkard, blond, he came from Vienna, as he told me, the son of a Viennese baker. In the death camp, he was responsible for keeping the sewerage and lights in good order. As he told me, before the war he worked in Vienna on the sewage system. I don't know his name, I don't have any photos of him or any of the camp members. He also left for Italy after the camp was liquidated. I don't know Feix's origins, I think he came from the Czech Republic, he supervised transports, and Jirrmann had the same function. Feix, aged 26–27, was slim, small-faced, of average height, with a rather pleasant demeanor. He was there, it seems, for the entire duration of the camp's existence. What happened to him - I don't know. Jirrmann was tall and dark-haired, in his thirties, and an SS noncommissioned officer; I do not know where he came from (I would like to point out that all the Germans I mentioned were SS men). I don't know how long he was in the camp, I know that two of them died. I also knew Hackenholt well, he came from Berlin, about 30 years old, non-commissioned officer, tall, medium build, brunette. He served throughout as a chauffeur.

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- ⁶³ SS men from the camp crew and some guards from the guard company from Trawniki, mostly Volksdeutsche, were transferred to Trieste in September 1943, where Odilo Globocnik was given the position of senior SS and police commander. One of the tasks assigned to Wirth and his subordinates was to fight the Italian and Yugoslav resistance. In addition, they rounded up Italian Jews, who were then deported to KL Auschwitz-Birkenau. The term "Tito's gang" refers to the communist Yugoslav partisans commanded by Josef Broz-Tita (Michael Tregenza, Christian Wirth. *Inspekteur der SS - Sonderkommando Aktion Reinhardt*, "Zeszyty Majdaneka" 1993, no. 15, pp. 7-58; Joseph Poprzeczny, *Odilo Globocnik. Hitler's Man in the East*, Jefferson-London: McFarland & Company, 2004, pp. 336-337; [DL, RK]).

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In 1943 he also worked as a crane operator⁶⁴, using the machinery to exhume the bodies of murdered Jews. Hackenholt often smelled of corpses after such functions. After the camp was liquidated, he left with the cranes. I do not know where he went or what happened to him. Groth performed the same functions as Feix. Average height, over 30 years old, full face, I don't know where he was from, an SS non-commissioned officer. Oberhäuser, Wirth's very intelligent adjutant, SS officer, tall, brunette, of German origin, pleasant-looking, always sad, never hit anyone, not even any Jew. While all the others I mentioned abused Jews. He left Bełżec together with Wirth. I know he also went to Italy. Fichtner was a secretary in the camp and ran the food department. I knew him well and talked to him many times. He was small, short, light blond, very gaunt, maybe 23-24 years old, SS, non-commissioned officer, his mother was Polish, his father was German, he came from the areas now annexed to Poland, he told me that his mother knew the Polish language perfectly and prayed in Polish. The office where Fichtner worked as secretary was located outside the camp, about 300 meters away. Fichtner was very liked by the Jews, he did not pick on any of them. During the raid, he was shot by Polish partisans near Tomaszów. However, he was a fierce Nazi. I know that Niemann⁶⁵ was in the camp, but I do not remember his description or any data regarding him. I knew Kamm, he was about 40 years old, tall, he performed the same functions as Feix, apart from that I don't remember any information about him. In particular, I don't know where he came from or what he did before the war, sometime in mid-1942 he was transferred to the Trawniki camp. What his behavior was like, I don't know. In my opinion, he was no better than other SS men from Bełżec, almost all of whom were cruel. I did not know Girtzig, Dachsel, or Spiess. I knew Schmidt, one of the so-called "Black" guards, well. He belonged to the group involved in murdering Jews. He knew how to murder by ordering a Jew to lie down on the ground and pouring sand into his mouth until the Jew choked. Schmidt came from Russia, medium height, brown hair, 22-24 years old, I don't know exactly whether he came from Russia or Latvia. Schneider was also a "Black" guard, short, stocky, twenty-something, also sadistic, I don't know where he came from. Kunz, short and in his twenties, probably came from Russia and was initially Wirth's interpreter; he was red-haired. I knew him. He too belonged to the so-called "Black" guards. He was in his twenties, short, with light-blond hair and a hoarse voice, and was probably of

Jewish origin. All these “Black” guards were Soviet prisoners of war, they mostly knew how to speak German, they were involved in murdering Jews, they distinguished themselves by their cruelty.

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⁶⁴ It is a type of crane or excavator.

⁶⁵ SS Untersturmführer Johann Niemann (the name is incorrectly spelled in the protocols: Neman) supervised construction works in the Bełżec camp from September 1, 1941. Later he served in Camp II. In April 1942, he was transferred to the Sobibór extermination camp, where he died on October 14, 1943 during a prisoners' revolt [DL, RK].

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They sought great privileges from the Germans, they were even allowed to kill a Pole if they believed he was acting to the detriment of the German state, they did not suffer any criminal consequences for such a murder. There was an accident when one of these “Black” guards, Aleksy Pietka, killed a Pole near the station in Bełżec for no reason and he suffered no consequences. Pietka was tall and dark-haired, 29 or 30 years old. In the fall of 1945, I saw Pietka in Bełżec, he served in the Cossacks. This concludes my testimony.

TESTIMONY READ ALOUD AND ACCEPTED

[signed] Jan Głąb

[signed] T[adeusz] Chróściewicz
Prosecutor

Testimony of Stefan Kirs from February 20, 1946.

Witness interrogation report

On February 20, 1946, in Tomaszów Lub[elski], I, T[adeusz] Chróściewicz, acting Prosecutor of the District Court in Zamość, examined the person named below as a witness under Article 20 PWKPK. After being warned of criminal liability for false testimony, the witness testified as follows: My name is Stefan Kirs. I am 30 years old, the son of Antoni and Maria, resident in Bełżec, a railway guard, Roman Catholic, with no criminal record and unrelated to the parties. I did not know the staff of the death camp in Bełżec, neither German nor composed of “Black” Soviet prisoners of war, because during the existence of the death camp I worked on the railway in Rawa Ruska. I am rectifying my testimony from October 15, 1945 in the sense that not every transport of Jews taken to Bełżec also contained wagons with Poles, but there were cases, which I and my colleagues also observed, in which some transports contained one or two wagons of Poles, but it did not happen that the transport contained as many as four such wagons. I established the facts of the imprisonment of Poles eight times, and not three times, as I pointed out, when I was interrogated previously. I

talked to one such Polish woman who was being transported to Bełżec, she told me that she was the wife of a policeman from Rzeszów, that she was going to Bełżec because she was hiding Jews, the same was confirmed by the driver from Rzeszów who was driving the train from there, I also talked once to a Ukrainian who was being transported, who told me that he was from Rawa Ruska and that he was imprisoned for politics. I did not talk to other Christians transported to Bełżec, because the Germans did not allow us to enter the wagons; in any case, we could hear voices from the wagons. Naked Poles also looked out from the wagons [as in the original - J.M.], and it was apparent that they were not Jews but Christians; whether they were all Poles, I cannot say. Since I saw such wagons with Christians eight times, two wagons each time, I conclude that over 1,000 Christians were deported. Moreover, I would like to add that my colleagues also recalled [that] when they were traveling, there were wagons with Christians in the transports. This concludes my testimony.

TESTIMONY READ ALOUD AND ACCEPTED

[signed] Stefan Kirsz

[signed] T[adeusz] Chróściewicz
Prosecutor

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Testimony of Wiktor Skowronek from February 20, 1946.

Witness interrogation report

On February 20, 1946, in Tomaszów Lub[elski], I, T[adeusz] Chróściewicz, acting Prosecutor of the District Court in Zamość, examined the person named below as a witness under Article 20 PWKPK. After being warned of criminal liability for false testimony, the witness testified as follows: My name is Wiktor Skowronek. I am 49 years old, the son of Kazimierz and Agnieszka née Jarosz, resident in Bełżec, a railway worker, Roman Catholic, with no criminal record and unrelated to the parties.

The construction of the camp in Bełżec was started by a German, red-haired, tall, stout, with the appearance that Germans from Thuringia usually have, what his name was, where he came from - I don't know. After him, Wirth came, but whether it was still during the construction of the camp or when the camp was already functioning - I cannot determine. Wirth was a rather tall, dark-haired man of medium but sturdy build, with a harsh manner. I heard him talking several times, and since I know German well, as I come from Lesser Poland and was an Austrian subject before World War I, I recognized from Wirth's accent that he came from Württemberg⁶⁶. I would like to mention that during the last war I talked to German Württemberg soldiers more than once, and they had the same accent as Wirth, from which I conclude, and even firmly claim, that Wirth came from Württemberg. Apart

from that, I don't know any further details about him, and in particular I don't have any photos of him or anyone else from the camp staff. I know that Wirth was promoted to major while he was in Bełżec, but I cannot determine exactly when it happened. Similarly, I do not know anything about the fact that Wirth was awarded the "millionth medal"⁶⁷. It seems to me that Wirth was the commandant in the Bełżec camp until the end of the murder of Jews, that is, until the late autumn of 1942, and then he was transferred to - I don't know, I heard it was to build the camp in Treblinka. What happened to him next - I don't know. After him, there was a German commander - an SS captain, blond, medium height, stout, about 30 years old, I don't know what his name was. Schwarz, I don't know his name, a slim, tall, dark-haired man about 35 years old, he was an Oberscharführer, i.e. a senior sergeant, in my opinion he could not be Wirth's deputy - because he was not an officer. He came from the Sudetes, spoke perfect Czech and the "Black" guards told me that Wirth came from Württemberg. Schwarz directed the entire killing operation within the camp. I know that he brought some cylinders from Lviv, which camp staff then took into the camp⁶⁸.

NOTES

⁶⁶ Christian Wirth was born in Oberbalzheim in Baden-Württemberg.

⁶⁷ The witness refers to the rumor that Christian Wirth received a medal for murdering a million Jews. This unconfirmed information is repeated in several other testimonies.

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Schwarz stayed until the very liquidation of the Bełżec camp, took the camp equipment with him, as well as some 150 Jewish men and women employed in the camp, and left. What happened to him, I don't know. Jirrmann, I don't know his name - he was a slim, tall, dark-haired man about 30 years old, he worked unloading transports, I don't know any further details about him, nor do I know where he came from. Jirrmann was shot, I think, in the summer of 1942. Fichtner, about 25 years old, tall, slim, dark-blonde, with an accent similar to Austrian, from which I conclude that he probably came from Bavaria, was the head of the camp office, and I believe that he was not involved in any murders within the camp. He died in the summer of 1942, killed by partisans. I didn't know any other members of the German service, especially the names read out to me [all the names of the Germans listed on page 134 were read to him]. I knew Schmidt from the Soviet camp staff - slender, quite tall, maybe 24 years old, from Zhytomyr, as Sievert⁶⁹ told me, involved in murdering Jews. Sievert, stout, quite tall, maybe 20 years old, dark blond, coming from Volhynia, which belonged to Russia before [19]39, Schneider, medium height, maybe 22 years old, brunette, also from Volhynia, Schitz, slim, quite tall, brown hair, maybe 24 years old, coming from the interior of Russia, Kunz, 18 years old, blond, short stature, coming from one village with Sievert. Besides, I didn't know anyone from the staff. I don't recognize any of the Germans shown to me (photos with a note on p. 64). This concludes my testimony.

TESTIMONY READ ALOUD AND ACCEPTED

[signed] Skowronek Wiktor

[signed] T[adeusz] Chróściewicz
Prosecutor

Testimony of Alojzy Berezowski from April 12, 1946.

Witness interrogation report

On April 12, 1946⁷⁰ in Jelenia Góra, the Investigating Judge of the District Court in Jelenia Góra, in the person of Judge T. Jankiewicz, with the participation of the Recorder, Court Trainee, examined the below-mentioned witness without oath. After warning the witness about criminal liability for false testimony and about the content of Art. 107 of the Code of Criminal Procedure and the meaning of the oath. The judge took the oath from him pursuant to Art. ... of the Code of Criminal Procedure, and the witness testified as follows:

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- ⁶⁸ Initially, carbon monoxide or hydrogen cyanide in bottles were used in Bełżec, the same as that used in "euthanasia" centers (Hilberg, *The Holocaust of European Jews*, vol. 3, p. 1087).
- ⁶⁹ It is probably Richard Sievert vel Siebert (the name is incorrectly spelled in the protocols: Sibert), a Volksdeutsch from Volhynia, commanding one of the subunits of the guard campaign from Trawniki (R. Kuwałek, *Obóz zagłady...*, pp. 79, 81; [DL, RK]).
- ⁷⁰ On the same day, Alojzy Berezowski gave another testimony regarding his acquaintance with Germans working in the camp (Hackenholt, Wirth, Schwarz).

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Name and surname	Alojzy Berezowski
Age	36
Parents' names	Kajetan, Joanna
Place of residence	Jelenia Góra, Wyspiańskiego 16
Occupation	PKP traffic dispatcher
Religion	Roman Catholic
Criminal record	no criminal record
Relationship to the parties	none

From August 1, 1939, until July 7, 1944, I worked continuously as a rail traffic controller and, for a time, as stationmaster at Bełżec.

¹ The Bełżec death camp was established in the winter of 1941/1942.

- ² I was never inside the camp, but I was nearby. From being near it, and from what Jews and Germans told me, I know that the death camp was divided into two sections. Trains entered Camp No. 1 along a siding. It contained barracks in which Jews lived and from which they went to work outside the camp. Camp No. 2 also consisted of several barracks. As far as I know, Jews placed there no longer left the camp. Both sections were enclosed by barbed wire. I was told that, after leaving the wagons, the Jews undressed in a long barrack and then walked alongside it to the supposed bathhouse, that is, the gas chamber, which was directly connected to the barrack.
- ³ The people in the first transport, which arrived in March 1942, were shot. Those arriving in later transports were killed in the gas chamber. They were kept there first for 20 minutes and later for 24 minutes. Germans told me that all the work connected with killing the Jews was carried out by Jews themselves, the so-called Arbeitskommando; the Germans only oversaw them.
- ⁴ Jews were brought to the death camp in freight trains. The trains arrived irregularly: sometimes three arrived in one day, sometimes only one, and sometimes an entire month passed without a train. Each train consisted of between 15 and 45 wagons. Most came from Małopolska, but transports also arrived from Kielce, Radom⁷¹, and Lublin. I do not remember any further details concerning item 4.
- ⁵ I estimate that about one million Jews in total were brought to Bełżec from different parts of Poland.
- ⁶ The killing of Jews in the death camp continued from March 1942 until the end of April 1943, when the camp was dismantled.
- ⁷ It seems that in January and February 1943 the Germans began erasing the traces of the camp. They lit two or three huge bonfires in which they continuously burned corpses removed from the mass graves using special machines.

NOTES

⁷¹ Transports from the Radom district were sent to the Treblinka extermination camp.

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- ^{7 cont.} After the bodies had been burned, in the spring of 1943, the Germans, with the help of Jews, dismantled all the barracks, the gas chamber, and even the one brick building they had erected. They removed the building materials, leveled the ground, and planted the area with conifer saplings.
- ⁸ Only Jews were brought to the death camp by train. I heard that on several nights Poles were brought to the death camp by car, including people with mental illness, physical disabilities, and infirmities. I do not know how many were brought and killed.

- ⁹ After the camp was dismantled in the spring of 1943 and the Germans had left, local residents began searching for valuables and digging on the camp grounds.

At present I cannot recall the first and last name of the camp commandant, although I knew him personally. He was about 50 years old, of average height and build, blond, wore glasses, appeared intelligent, came from Berlin as far as I remember, and held the rank of SS captain. I remember the surnames of two other members of the German staff. One was Schwarz, whose first name I do not know. I do not know where he came from. He was about 35 years old, of average height, slim, brown-haired, and even-tempered. The other was Hackenholt from Berlin, about 30 years old, tall, slim, brown-haired, and a chauffeur by profession. The German staff at the camp numbered about 15 men, in addition to about 100 guards who were former Soviet prisoners of war and Volksdeutsche from Russia. The German staff left for Lublin, and I don't know what happened to them. I explain that the first commandant of the camp and its founder was Gustaw Wirth, an SS captain, tall, about 50 years old, medium build, medium build, with a large belly. I didn't know him personally and I don't know whether or why he received the "millionth medal" after he was transferred to Lublin.

However, I knew his successor personally and I described him in my current testimony.

I explain that I had already been questioned in this case about the same matters, I believe in January 1946, by the Investigating Judge in Jelenia Góra acting by way of judicial assistance. At that time I attached a photograph of Rudolf Göckel to the interrogation record.

[signed] A[lojzy] S. Berezowski

Investigating Judge /-/ T. Jankiewicz

[signed] [signature illegible], Recording Clerk

3. Sobibór station witnesses

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Sobibór extermination camp

Testimony of Franciszek Petlak from October 31, 1945.

Chełm Protocol, October 31, 1945 The examinee named below as a witness in compliance with Art. 107. KPK – testifies: Petlak Franciszek – 49 years old, retired railway worker, resident Chełm, ul. Wiejska 20, Polish, no criminal record.

I served as a railway switchman from February 1940 until the Germans left at the Sobibór station. The Sobibór Death Camp was built from 1941 to the spring of 194[2]. In May 194[2], around 1 p.m. one day, I don't remember the date, the first transport of Jews from Vienna arrived - among them there were many doctors⁷². There were about 50 Pullman wagons in this transport. Men and children were brought there, all intelligentsia. Because the train was too long, in order to put it on a siding, it had to be divided into three parts. I remember that some of the passengers asked me how far it was from Sobibór to Kowel, from which I concluded that they were unaware that Sobibór was the last point of their journey. After placing the wagons at the ramp on the siding, i.e. after entering the camp, everyone was ordered to go to the barracks. The first transport included two luggage wagons loaded with huge amounts of cold meats and white bread. These products were transported on special narrow-gauge wagons by Jews from workers' brigades to the camp. Other work teams consisting of Jews took passengers to other barracks. Such transports sometimes arrived five times a day, and sometimes there were breaks of up to a week. The guard in the camp consisted of Gestapo men and Ukrainians. Over time, the number of Ukrainian guards reached 160. There were much fewer Gestapo officers, [2?]4 people. The Ukrainians themselves told me about it. Guards were guarding barbed wire around the area and were guarding 5 towers. One of the Ukrainians, named Borys, once told me that he was a captain of the Red Army himself - he was captured by the Germans near Zdołbunów⁷³, and then was recruited by the Germans to perform guard duty in this camp. Among the Gestapo men I remember that there were:

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⁷² The first transport from Vienna arrived in Sobibór on June 5, 1942. There were 800 Jews on the train. The next transport - of a thousand Viennese Jews - arrived on June 14, 1942. Petlak could recall the transport from Wiesbaden and Frankfurt am Main, which arrived on May 26. It was the first transport of German Jews (Robert Kuwałek, New findings regarding the number of victims of the German extermination camp in Sobibór, "Zeszyty Majdanka" 2014, no. 26, p. 38).

⁷³ Zdołbunów, a city in western Ukraine, Rivne Oblast.

- 1 Frenzel, Obersturmführer – stores officer⁷⁴.
- 2 Niemann, killed during the rebellion.
- 3 Kazier – volksdeutsch⁷⁵.
- 4 Richter – SS⁷⁶.

After unloading the transport, I often saw barrels with some liquid and bundles being loaded into the empty wagons. I don't know whether hair or clothing was loaded. When it comes to the regulations and life of prisoners in this camp, I generally have little information. There was usually a wake-up call at 5 a.m. At 1[?] lunch. Whether there were breakfasts and dinners, I don't know. What they were fed with, I don't know either. I assume that these prisoners were given some of the products brought in the transports, because I myself often saw Gestapo men carrying away long loaves of white bread whose appearance differed from German bread. Once, on the orders of the Germans, farmer Wojtkowicz from the village of Sobibór delivered his dead horse to the camp, I suppose in order to feed people with the carcass. During subsequent transports, I often saw elderly and unfit [for work] passengers being shot by the Gestapo and Ukrainians in groups of a dozen or so people. These executions took place near a chapel, which has survived to this day. Initially, within a few months, the transport documents were deposited with the stationmaster, Mr. Parkoła. Later, however, the Gestapo men stopped giving him these documents. The railway manager in charge of the long section from the Ruda-Opalin station to the Bug via Sobibór, German Franz Sobotka⁷⁷, took the transport documents. Parkoła often told me that there were 30-35, or even 40,000 people in the transports. In total, according to the same person

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- ⁷⁴ Karl Frenzel (the name is incorrectly spelled in the protocols: Frendzel; 1911–1996), in the NSDAP from 1930. He participated in the "T4" operation as a stoker in the facilities in Grafeneck, Bernburg and Hadamar. The duties of stokers and disinfectors included removing dental gold and burning bodies. After the end of Operation Euthanasia, in March 1942, as an experienced staff member, he was sent to Lublin, from where he was sent to Sobibór on April 28. In the camp he managed the so-called Lager I, where Jews selected for work were imprisoned. After closing the camp, he was sent to Trieste (Patricia Heberer, *Continuity of extermination. Perpetrators of "T4" and "Action Reinhardt"* [in:] *Akcja Reinhardt...*, p. 72).
- ⁷⁵ It may be about Aleks Kaiset, a Ukrainian guard who took part in the shooting of prisoners at the beginning of December 1943, after the liquidation of the camp (Bem, *Sobibór...*, p. 642).
- ⁷⁶ Richter Kurt (1914–August 13, 1944), in Sobibór from the end of 1942. In the camp, he was responsible for taking the sick from the ramp to the so-called Lager III and supervised the barbers. After the liquidation of the camp in Sobibor, he was sent to Trieste, where he died during fights with partisans (Schelvis, *Sobibor...*, p. 260).
- ⁷⁷ Franz Sobotka, employee of the German State Railways. In October 1939, he was delegated to work in Zemborzyce near Lublin, and at the turn of May and June 1940 to the station in Sobibór, where he supervised Polish railway workers as a stationmaster. Sobotka worked at the station in Sobibór until November 1941, so he was not present there when the death camp began to operate.

According to Parkoła, about 800,000 people in all were brought there during the camp's entire existence. I heard nothing about millions.

Prisoners in this camp were treated in the most cruel way. Once, in the spring of 1943, one of the Ukrainian guards killed a Jew with a pickaxe while working outside the camp. He aimed him in the chest from behind and pierced him through the chest. I often saw Gestapo men beat prisoners at work with whips and then set dogs on them. Dogs were also set on prisoners without their first being beaten. I often saw women carrying water beaten with riding whips 'for nothing' [as in the original - J.M.]. The people in the first transports were kept in the camp for quite a long time, sometimes for several weeks⁷⁸. Later arrivals, however, were killed within a few hours. One of the Ukrainians once said that he himself was employed in storing valuables brought by prisoners. He said that these valuables were placed in chests, that he had constant access to them and could sell them in handfuls. He had a gold signet ring with a watch on his finger, but he did not want to sell it to anyone. The camp was divided into three fields: Lagier No. 1, where Gestapo men and Ukrainians lived, No. 2 - where the workshop and apartments of the workers' teams were located, Lagier 3 - the actual death chamber and next to it the place where the bodies were burned.

In October 1943, there was a rebellion in the camp and the escape of the prisoners. I heard the above-mentioned Gestapo officer Frenzel reporting by phone that 600 people had made a break for freedom and that 300 had escaped. I don't know whether he gave an exact number then. Perhaps he gave a much larger number so that more troops would be sent to catch those fugitives in the forests. The revolt took place that evening, at 4:40 p.m.⁷⁹ The army arrived at night. A raid was organized in the forest and the Jews found there were killed. The day after this revolt, I saw two captured Jews attached to harnessed horses. Gestapo men were riding in the carts, and the Jews attached had to run. However, they soon fell and the horses continued to drag them along.

I heard that transports of Jews delivered to Sobibór came from Vienna, the Netherlands, France and various Polish cities. And, among others, from Lida and Mińsk Podolski⁸⁰. Moreover, transports were sometimes carried out by car, usually at night. There were cases in which naked people were transported in closed railway wagons. Anyone who jumped out when the train stopped was killed. On one occasion, three Jewish women escaped naked from the camp to the neighboring village of Żłobek. The Gestapo caught them and brought them back to the camp naked.

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⁷⁸ These are Jews from Rejowiec, Włodawa and the surrounding area who were hired to build the camp.

⁷⁹ The leader of the uprising was Red Army lieutenant Alexander Pechersky, brought to Sobibór from Minsk on September 23, 1943, with a group of 60 soldiers. The rebellion broke out on October 14 at 15.30. 11 SS men and several guards were killed. 350 prisoners managed to escape. In the manhunt that began the next day, police and gendarmes captured and killed 100 fugitives. Of the entire group taking part in the uprising, 47

prisoners survived until the end of the war (Libionka, Zagłada Żydów w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie..., pp. 227–228).

- ⁸⁰ The transport from Lida arrived in Sobibór on September 18, 1943. About 750 people were confined in the wagons. Between 3,000 and 5,000 Jews from Minsk were brought to the camp between September 14 and 19, 1943 (Kuwałek, New findings on the number of victims of the German extermination camp in Sobibór, p. 59).

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Other than that, I can't testify to anything. Signature: Petlak Franciszek Recorded by: Dutkiewicz

Investigating District Judge – URBAN

Source: AŻIH, 301/5374, [Record of testimony] by Franciszek Petlak.

Testimony of Jan Piwoński from December 2, 1945.

Chełm Protocol, December 2, 1945. Examined as a witness in compliance with Art. 107. KPK, testifies Jan Piwoński⁸¹, 45, switchman, resident in Chełm, ul. Okszańska [2?]0, no criminal record, Pole.

I was a switchman at the Sobibór station until the Germans left, that is, until mid-July 1944. The witness named the stationmaster as Franciszek Fartola⁸². The construction of the Sobibór Death Camp began in the spring of 194[2]. I don't know who led this construction. Just two weeks after construction began, the first transports of Jews from Poland, then from the Netherlands, Belgium and Czechoslovakia, began to arrive in Sobibór. In the first transports there was only intelligence. The Ukrainian guards said that they were lawyers, judges, doctors, dentists and their families. Foreign transports were delivered in Pullman wagons. Hand luggage was delivered in elegant suitcases. After the first transports arrived, the Gestapo ordered the segregation of those transported. They selected healthy, strong men and sent them to a labor camp in the village of Osowa⁸³, 5 km away from the Sobibór station. They employed the remaining Jews in work inside the camp, or in clearing the square for the camp. In my opinion, the chamber in which people were killed was operating from the very beginning, while the other buildings were still under construction, because I could already hear noise and the roar of an engine. As for the method of annihilating people, there were different stories about it in Sobibór at that time.

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- ⁸¹ Jan Piwoński was one of Claude Lanzmann's interlocutors in the film *Shoah* (1985). The conversation took place at the Sobibór station. Piwoński recalled, among others: arrival of the first transport, which dated to the beginning of June 1942
- ⁸² This is Ludwik Faferek, employed at the station until October 1939 as a rail traffic controller.
- ⁸³ The labor camp for Jews in Osowa operated from 1941 to 1943. A total of 4,000 forced laborers worked there to regulate the Tarasienka River. After the liquidation of the camp, the Jews were deported to Sobibór (Sławomir

Some said that the Germans used some kind of gases, others said that the air was pumped out of the chamber. A certain Bielecki, a Pole taken prisoner by the Germans in Lviv, forced by the Germans to serve as a guard at the gas chamber, said that the engine emitted some gas, which was introduced through pipes into the chamber and that people died from this gas within 15 minutes. At first, until the autumn of 194[2], the bodies of those murdered were deposited in pits, sprinkled with chlorine, and covered with earth. Later the bodies were removed from the pits with special mechanical cranes and burned. Ukrainian guards said that the piles were placed above the pits, with dry, very flammable pine logs placed between the layers of bodies. I haven't heard of pouring gasoline on corpses.

The transports were large, 40-60 wagons. I saw for myself that the Germans treated foreign Jews politely, but they treated Polish Jews the worst. They were still beating them while they were unloading them. I remember that at the beginning of December 194[2] a young Ukrainian translator was brought to the camp, she told a Ukrainian guard named Kudra that the Germans had seized her only because she had worked as a servant for Jews in Lviv, and she begged him to report this to the Germans. Kudra ignored her plea. Therefore, I believe that there were also Christians among the Jews. I must mention here that Franciszek Szymaniec from the village of Żłobek⁸⁴ once told me that one day a Ukrainian guard brought him a priest's dress for sale, but Szymaniec did not buy it. I heard from the Ukrainian guards that in this camp there were Catholics of [third] generation Jewish descent. The fact that there were not only Jews in the camp is proven by the fact that local people later dug out rosaries, medallions, crosses and prayer books from the ground. I don't know exactly how many people were annihilated in the camp. The stationmaster, Franciszek Parkoła, once told me that, according to his calculations, up to 800,000 people died there. However, I believe that many more died there. The railway traffic officials were: Sobotka, Bürger⁸⁵ and Küttelsmann⁸⁶, but they were there even before the camp was established. Among the Polish railway officials outside Parkoła, [I remember] the rail traffic controller Jarocki - currently working in the office of the Szczecin Railway Directorate, and Józef Cholewa - currently the station manager of Żyżno near Chełm. The regulations in the camp were very strict. I think from what the Ukrainian guards told us that they were never allowed to leave the camp, and in fact they did it secretly, for which they were often beaten by the Gestapo. I don't know what the regulations were like inside the camp regarding prisoners. However, I saw that the Jewish guards were beating Jews with batons. Once I saw two Ukrainians pushing an elderly Jewish man with a gray beard in a child's stroller.

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⁸⁴ It's about the village of Żłobek.

⁸⁵ Richard Bürger (the name is incorrectly spelled in the reports: Bergier), a lineman at the Sobibór station.

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They shot him near the chapel. In February 1943, the bodies of many children aged six or seven were brought to the camp. I have the impression there may have been about 200 bodies. Regarding the revolt that took place in the camp on October 14, 1943, I cannot say anything specific, because at that time I was at home, i.e. in the village of Żłobek, 2 km away from the camp. However, I remember that the next day there were a lot of German troops near the Sobibór station. A manhunt was ordered in the forest. The Germans captured several Soviet and Dutch Jews. I saw Gestapo men drag two Jews who had been tied to the ladder of a cart driven at a gallop. I heard that about 600 people escaped from the camp at that time, and that about 150 people died immediately from mines and machine gun fire. Of the rest, the Germans shot many during raids in the forest. The Gestapo men organized drinking parties and various brawls in the station cafeteria. During these drinking parties, village musicians played for them.

I didn't see any prisoners of war. However, in the summer of 1943, a transport of people stripped naked arrived. They were Jews. In my eyes, one young Jewish woman jumped out of the window naked. But she was soon shot by the gendarmes. The second, older, Jewish woman also jumped out near the ramp in front of the main gate, but was also shot, after which every passing German shot the corpse several times. There were about thirty Gestapo men at this camp, and about one hundred and fifty of the Ukrainian guard. The Germans transported shoes, clothes, underwear and even the ashes of burnt bodies from the camp by train. Of the Germans who served in the camp, I remember the following names: Michel⁸⁷, Frenzel, the provisions officer holding the rank of Obersturmführer, Kaiset the interpreter, and Gomerski. Of these, the aforementioned Frenzel was characterized by ruthlessness. I often saw him beating Jews at work. One day I saw Ukrainians catching two naked Jews in the forest, bloody and with wounds on their bodies, and rushing them back to the camp. As for the shipping documents relating to the transports, I am convinced that they were all lost, because after the Germans escaped and the Red Army entered, I saw a lot of papers scattered around the station. The two remaining cabinets in the station office were empty. Moreover, I believe that the Gestapo officers themselves took away such documents. Apart from that I don't know anything else. Signature: Jan Piwoński

Recorded by: Ludkiewicz

District Court Investigating Judge: Sergiusz Urban

Source: AŻIH, 301/5369, [Report of testimony] of Jan Piwoński.

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⁸⁷ Oberscharführer SS Hermann Michel.

Testimony of Michał Sojko from November 21, 1945.

Report of the witness's hearing in Biła Podlaska on November 21 [1945] Municipal Court in the person of Judge Kempisty with the participation of the recorder Z. Kaczonow. After warning the witness about criminal liability for false testimony and about the content of Article 107 of the Code of Criminal Procedure and the meaning of the oath, the Judge took the oath from him pursuant to Art. 111 and 113 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, then the witness testified as follows:

Name and surname: Michał Sojko, born on April 13, 1903, parents' names: Jan and Anastazja Janowicz, place of residence: Biła Podlaska, ul. Kołychawa 8, occupation: railway worker, Roman Catholic, no criminal record.

From September [19]39 until [2]0 November [19]43, I was at Sobibór station while the death camp existed, as the tenant of the railway buffet⁸⁸. The construction of the camp began after the Germans declared war on Russia. I don't know who the manager was. There was a Gestapo officer. I do not know how many buildings were occupied by the camp, because the camp was fenced with barbed wire and access to the camp was closely guarded. I know that the Forest District building, the post office and two adjacent barracks were occupied. Later, the area was expanded and barracks and wooden houses were added. I heard that there were Jews there from the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Poland. Apparently there were also Poles there. The railway transport consisted of 40 wagons, which is approximately 1,700 people. The transports arrived irregularly. Sometimes one, sometimes even four, arrived, and there were breaks of up to 14 days. Transports came from Chełm. I cannot say how many people were annihilated during the entire period of the camp's existence, because I went shopping very often, so I cannot determine the exact number of transports. I don't know what work the prisoners did in the camp. Outside the camp, however, [the prisoners were] employed unloading wagons of construction materials, such as beams, stone, bricks, and cement, as well as fuel (coal) [the testimony breaks off at this point - J.M.]. People were brought to the camp on foot from Włodawa. There were also occasions when they were brought by motor vehicle or horse-drawn cart, in groups of up to two or three motor vehicles or up to eight carts. I saw this on three or four occasions. As for the treatment of prisoners inside the camp, I don't know. I remember some of the names of the Gestapo men who worked in this camp, namely: Frenzel, who supervised the prisoners when unloading the wagons, Hermann Michel, Hubert Gomerski, Franz Sobotka, who served as the station-master. The worst was a German living in Linz, I don't remember his name. I don't know how the bodies were burned and what was done with the ashes. I know that they were burned because the strong smell of burning flesh carried with the wind. On October 14 [19]43, a rebellion broke out in the camp. The prisoners attacked the guards, broke through the wire, and ran into the mined fields. Others followed once the way had been cleared.

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- ⁸⁸ Sojko rented the cafeteria together with his wife, who was also interrogated during the investigation (AŻIH, 301/5377, [Interrogation report] of Irena Sójko).

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Five Germans died there. It is difficult to say how many prisoners were killed. About a thousand people escaped⁸⁹. Several days after the uprising, prisoners who could not go into hiding because of wounds or illness were shot. I was not present during the rebellion itself, but I know from the stories of others who were at the station at the time. My wife was also present, and I partly heard about it from her.

I know that the camp had a siding where wagons were loaded and arrived at the station already sealed. The consignment notes did not specify the loads, only the direction was specified: Germany. Such loading of wagons from the camp took place once a month to the number of 3-4 wagons. During my stay at the station, on three occasions I saw a biplane land inside the camp and take off again⁹⁰. The landings and takeoffs occurred during the day. The camp had tailoring, shoemaking, carpentry, and blacksmith workshops, as well as a laundry. When the camp was liquidated, the Germans blew up all the facilities. My personal observations: The Germans murdered people in broad daylight. Because a large number of people entered and only a few came out. Their behavior outside the camp was below criticism, let alone what was happening inside the camp. They beat people outside the camp. They struck me several times and wrecked the buffet premises. Signature: Michał Sojko

Recorded by: Z. Kaczonow

Municipal Judge: Kempisty

Source: AŻIH, 301/5378, [Record of testimony] by Michał Sojko

Testimony of Bronisław Łobejko of January 8, 1946.

Excerpt from the court report of January 8, 1946, Municipal Court in Oleśnica In the person of Judge Zieliński F. Recorded by Łapacz [?]

Łobejko Bronisław, 46, son of Prokopiusz and Anna née Michwia [?], residing in Oleśnica, Moniuszki 67, railway official by profession, Roman Catholic, no criminal record. From the spring of [19]42 until July [19]44, I served as a relief switchman at Sobibór station. I lived at Uhrusk station⁹¹, and once or twice a week I was on duty at Uhrusk or Bug Włodawski⁹².

NOTES

- ⁸⁹ See footnote 79.

- ⁹⁰ Himmler visited the Sobibor camp at least twice, on July 19, 1942 and February 12, 1943 (Bem, Sobibór..., p. 85; Schelvis, Sobibor..., p. 94).

⁹¹ The Uhrusk railway station is located in the village of Wola Uhruska, approximately 13 km from Sobibór.

In July [19]44 we were evacuated from there by the German authorities.

The construction of the death camp began in March 1942⁹³. I don't know who the works manager was⁹⁴. Along its entire front side, the camp was enclosed by a high fence interwoven with spruce branches. Guards were also posted outside at intervals of 50 meters, so that a person passing the camp was not even permitted to look toward it. The guard consisted mostly of Ukrainians, Soviet citizens (Vlasovtsy⁹⁵). From what the Ukrainian guards told me, there were only Jews in the camp, as well as Poles and Ukrainians who hid Jews in their homes. In addition, there were supposed to be some Gypsies. Jews were brought from various countries: Czechoslovakia, the Netherlands, Austria, and probably even France. We sometimes found [sic!] documents on the tracks that had been blown away by the wind while transports were being unloaded. Some had been issued in Austria, Vienna, and Prague. One document was even from France, but I don't remember the name of the city. The documents indicated Jewish nationality (Jude). Two to three transports, consisting of 40–45 wagons, arrived at the station daily, and there were up to six transports on one day. There were probably 2,000–3,000 people in the transport. Transports started arriving [from] May 1 [19]42,⁹⁶ until late autumn of that year. In winter, and then in spring and summer, that is, until July [19]44, transports came rarely, probably once or twice a week, and finally in summer [19]44 they stopped completely⁹⁷.

The transports came from the countries mentioned above, which we inferred from the documents we found. According to the calculations of the rail traffic officials, especially the stationmaster Parkoła, approximately 800,000 Jews may have died in the camp. The bodies were burned on grates erected on supports and constructed from railway rails.

NOTES

⁹² The Bug Włodawski railway station was located in the village of Orchówek, about 5 km away from the station in Sobibór. Since 1951, it has been operating under the name "Włodawa".

⁹³ The incorrect date of 1943 was given in the text of the testimony.

⁹⁴ The construction of the camp in Bełżec and Sobibór was supervised by SS Obersturmführer Richard Thomalla.

⁹⁵ The witness incorrectly uses the term "Vlasovtsy", quite commonly used to name various military units collaborating with the Germans, whose members came from among Soviet prisoners of war. These are members of auxiliary units trained at the Trawniki camp, the so-called Trawniki or Trawniki-Männer.

⁹⁶ The text of the testimony gives an incorrect date of 1943. Kuwałek determined that the first transport arrived in Sobibór on March 31, 1942. It carried 3,000 Jews from Kazimierz Dolny, Wąwolnica, and Opole Lubelskie. Regular transports started arriving on May 6. At that time, liquidation operations of the ghettos in the Puławy district were underway (Kuwałek, *New findings regarding the number of victims of the German extermination camp in Sobibór*, p. 38).

⁹⁷ The witness confuses the years. The death camp in Sobibór operated until October 14, 1943. In 1944, there were no transports. Between July and October 1942, significantly fewer Jews were sent to the camp, which was due to the renovation of the line between Lublin and Włodawa.

The prisoners carried the bodies out of the death chambers and removed valuables from them, including rings, earrings, and gold teeth⁹⁸. They then placed the bodies on grates, lit branches beneath them, and poured liquid over them, probably kerosene, because kerosene could be smelled while the bodies were burning. I note that at first the bodies were not burned. They were thrown into a huge pit and covered with chlorine. Later, to erase the traces, the Germans brought in a crane, removed the remains from the pit, and burned them on pyres. They mixed the ashes with slag from railway locomotives and spread the mixture on paths and roads in the camp. Jewish prisoners smashed incompletely burned bones into small pieces with hammers, and these too were mixed with slag. I know the above details from the stories told by the Ukrainian guards. I also know from them about the course of the revolt on October 14 [19]43. About 600 prisoners revolted. They killed 11 SS men in the barracks, and then a fight began that lasted about an hour and a half, during which about one hundred and fifty prisoners died and the rest escaped into the forest.

The Germans took 40 wagons of clothes and underwear from the camp, then several wagons each, and others were also transported by bus.

According to the stories of the Ukrainian guards, there were five gas chambers in the form of bathrooms with electric lighting in the camp. 500 people were driven into each chamber, closed hermetically and probably killed by gas, as evidenced by cylinders similar to oxygen cylinders, many of which were brought there⁹⁹.

Shots could be heard almost every day. According to the Ukrainian guards, prisoners were being shot. The guards also said that SS men amused themselves by ordering prisoners to climb trees and jump; anyone who refused was shot.

The prisoners were treated badly. Beatings were routine. They were beaten mainly with whips. The SS men beat them, and the Ukrainian guards treated them even worse.

Among the Germans serving in the camp, I remember Frenzel, Wagner¹⁰⁰, who was probably the deputy commandant and camp administrator, and Gomerski¹⁰¹. Franz Sobotka was the stationmaster and had nothing to do with the camp.

NOTES

⁹⁸ The looting of items such as jewelry took place before the victims entered the chamber. After death, the bodies were robbed of their dental gold.

⁹⁹ Initially, there were three gas chambers in Sobibór, and then six chambers. The victims were murdered using exhaust fumes from an eight-cylinder gasoline engine with over 200 HP, Soviet production, which produced a mixture of carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide (Hilberg, *The Holocaust of European Jews*, vol. 3, p. 1087).

¹⁰⁰ Gustaw Wagner (1911–1980), deputy commandant of the Sobibór camp. An Austrian born in Vienna, in the NSDAP since 1933. Described by former prisoners as a brutal, fanatical Nazi. After the liquidation of the camp, he was transferred to Italy. After the war, he fled to Brazil. In 1978, the Brazilian authorities did not agree to his expulsion, as requested by Austria, Israel, Poland and the Federal Republic of Germany (Schelvis, *Sobibor...*, p. 91).

- ¹⁰¹ Hubert Gomerski (1911–1999), a member of the NSDAP from 1929, took part in Operation "T4" as a crematorium worker at Hartheim and Hadamar. He began service at Sobibór in April 1942 as a member of its initial staff. He worked in the camp until its liquidation. He was later transferred to Trieste. According to prisoners, he was one of the cruelest crew members. After the war, he was acquitted in the trial of participants of the "Euthanasia" operation in Hadamar. In 1950, for the crimes committed in Sobibór, he was sentenced to life imprisonment. In 1957, the sentence was commuted to 15 years in prison (Heberer, *Continuity of extermination...*, pp. 80–81).

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Arriving transports entered the camp along the siding and were unloaded there. Groans and gunshots could continually be heard from the camp. When bodies were being burned, columns of fire and smoke were visible, and the stench reached the station so strongly that it was impossible to breathe, especially when the wind blew from the direction of the camp.

[signed] Bronisław Łobejko

F. Zieliński, Municipal Court Judge

Łapacz, recording clerk

Source: AŻIH, 301/5363, [Record of testimony] of Bronisław Łobejko.

4. Treblinka station witnesses

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Treblinka II extermination camp¹⁰²

Testimony of Józef Kuźmiński of October 16, 1945.

Record of witness examination On October 16, 1945, in Siedlce, judge Z[dzistaw] Łukasziewicz examined the person named below as a witness, without administering an oath. Forewarned of criminal liability for giving false testimony, the witness testified as follows:

Name and surname	Józef Kuźmiński
Age	36
Parents' names	Józef
Place of residence	Siedlce, ul. 10 Lutego 4
Occupation	PKP employee
Religion	Roman Catholic
Criminal record	no criminal record

In early January 1943, I was transferred to the Treblinka station, where I was to perform the duties of a stationmaster. I worked there until the Red Army entered. I had already known from previous stories that next to the Treblinka station there was a camp intended for the destruction of Jews and another camp where Poles were staying. All transports intended for the extermination camp reached the Treblinka station, because there was a siding from the station to the gravel pit (gravel mine). This branch had an additional branch directed to the extermination camp. During my time in office, a dozen or so transports of Jews arrived at the Treblinka extermination camp, with an average of 5,000 people in each.

NOTES

- ¹⁰² These testimonies come from the Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance. They are held in the fonds of the Main Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation under reference GK 196/69: The Trial of Ludwig Fischer before the Supreme National Tribunal, 1946–1947.

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Among these transports, one came from Greece, one from Belgium, two from Białystok and the rest from the Warsaw Ghetto. I am completely sure about the transports from Greece and Belgium, because they were completely different from normal transports from Poland. Usually, the transports came in closed freight wagons under the supervision of armed guards (Ukrainians and Lithuanians), while foreign transports arrived under entirely different conditions. The trains consisted of Pullman coaches. Each passenger had a ticket and a

great deal of luggage, and special baggage cars were attached to the trains. As for the transport from Greece, I handled the books of passenger-ticket counterfoils; these books were lost at Treblinka station during the final fighting¹⁰³. The tickets covered 6,500 people, because I checked that number myself. As for transport from Belgium, I am also completely sure, because I talked to the people traveling and found out from them where they were coming from. It should be explained that the passengers on foreign transports were allowed to move freely at stations and believed that they were going to a labor camp. During my term of office, apart from the two foreign transports mentioned, there were no other foreign transports. From the stories of my colleagues who worked before me at the Treblinka station, I know that during the peak period (autumn and winter of 1942), on average, two transports came to Treblinka a day, and there were days when six transports arrived. Each transport consisted of 60 wagons intended specifically for transporting Jews. These trains usually ran as so-called shuttles. From my work at the Treblinka station, I know exactly how the transport was handled from the moment it arrived at the Treblinka station. Such a train was announced by phone from Siedlce or Małkinia, depending on the direction it came from. The announcement was made using a code that the Polish staff did not know, but it was already known that when they announced it using a code, it meant the transport of Jews. Ordinary freight trains were accompanied by waybills and recorded in the station registers. Transports of Jews arrived without any waybills, and no entries concerning them were permitted in the station registers. Two special employees, Germans¹⁰⁴, worked at the Treblinka station to forward the transports from the station to the camp ramp, whose task was to take the transports to the camp. The transport was usually divided into parts of 20 wagons, which were pushed onto the camp ramp by a shunting locomotive. However, the driver and the shunting locomotive staff did not enter the camp, but after pushing the transport through the gate, they reversed the shunting locomotive and after 10 minutes, at a given signal, they drove through the gate to collect the empty wagons, and then introduced the second part of the transport. The interval between the train's arrival and the return of the empty wagons to the station was usually more than half an hour.

NOTES

¹⁰³ The Germans blew up the station building.

¹⁰⁴ These were Rudolf Emmerich (whose surname is incorrectly written as "Emerich" in the records) and Willi Klinzmann (whose given name appears in the records as "Willy").

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I would like to add that while a transport of Jews was being handled, the Polish staff at Treblinka station were forbidden to leave their posts, in order to prevent them from observing what was happening. As I know from the inscriptions on the wagons, they contained from 50 to 100 people. In the winter of 1943, shortly after my arrival in Treblinka, I traveled on a locomotive to the gravel pit to collect wagons of gravel (the track to the gravel pit ran close to the extermination camp). I then saw men, women and children being herded out of

the transport that was currently on the camp ramp and ordered to put their coats and hand luggage in piles. I couldn't observe any further because they started shooting at the steam locomotive from the observation tower. However, I heard screams, cries, shots, dogs barking and, most interestingly, an orchestra playing¹⁰⁵.

I don't know what the method of killing people in the camp was. I do know, however, that chambers were in operation there. I also do not know whether people were killed in those chambers with gas. I assume they were killed in a different way, because no transports arrived at the Treblinka station from which it could be assumed that they contained gas. However, tanker transports arrived with some liquid and were immediately taken away by the camp staff¹⁰⁶. I assume that this liquid was intended to facilitate the burning of corpses.

As for the burning of bodies, it was already taking place when I arrived, but only on a small scale. Later, shortly after my arrival, it began on a large scale and continued day and night until the camp uprising of August 2, 1943¹⁰⁷. Excavators were used to remove bodies from the pits. I myself saw, also from the locomotive on the way to the gravel pit, excavators lifting bodies. After the uprising, during which the residential barracks, the gas chamber, and the gasoline stores were burned, the liquidation of the camp began. The dismantled barracks that had not burned, the excavators, and property from the storerooms were removed. By the spring of 1944, only three Ukrainians remained at the camp¹⁰⁸, and the camp itself had been plowed and planted with various crops. These Ukrainians fled before the arrival of the Red Army.

NOTES

¹⁰⁵ The orchestra was conducted by the well-known musician Artur Gold (1897–1943), a composer of prewar popular songs (Młynarczyk, *Treblinka – death camp...*, p. 230). It played during roll calls and at the request of camp staff. Survivors, including Richard Glazar, also recalled the orchestra of Jerzy Petersburski and Gold, in which the Schermann brothers, the tenor Salwe, and an accordionist named Edek were said to have performed (Richard Glazar, *Stacja Treblinka*, transl. Ewa Czerniakowska, Warsaw: Ośrodek Karta, Dom Spotkań z Historią, 2011, p. 126 et al.).

¹⁰⁶ We are probably talking about gasoline powering the engine of the tank whose exhaust fumes were used to murder Jews.

¹⁰⁷ The uprising broke out on August 2, 1943, on the initiative of Officer Cadet Dr. Julian Chorążyczki. Its leaders were Zoltan Bloch, who commanded the Sonderkommando, and Marcelli Galewski, who commanded the remaining prisoner functionaries. As a result of the exposure, the uprising began ahead of schedule and its course was not fully coordinated. They failed to blow up the gas chambers of the crematorium, eliminate the firing positions or cut off the camp telephone line, so the Germans were able to quickly call for help. Seventy insurgents survived to the end of the war (Libionka, *Zagłada Żydów w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie...*, pp. 217–219).

¹⁰⁸ According to Henryk Gosek, who worked as a farmhand on this farm, two families lived there: Strobel with his wife and children - or, according to another account, with his wife, her sister, mother, and children - and Saszka with his wife (Martyna Rusiniak, *Treblinka II extermination camp in social memory (1943–1989)*, Warsaw: Neriton, 2008, p. 21).

In general, the camp staff consisted of SS men and Ukrainians. I don't remember their names.

THE RECORD WAS READ ALOUD AND THEN SIGNED BY THE WITNESS ON EVERY PAGE.

[signed] J[ózef] Kuźmiński

Z[dzisław] Łukasziewicz
Acting Investigating Judge

Testimony of Wacław Wołosz of October 18, 1945.

Record of witness examination On October 18, 1945, in Sokołów Podlaski, judge Z[dzisław] Łukasziewicz examined the person named below as a witness, without administering an oath. Forewarned of criminal liability for giving false testimony, the witness testified as follows:

Name and surname	Wacław Wołosz
Age	52
Parents' names	Jan
Place of residence	Sokołów, railway station
Occupation	PKP switchman
Religion	Roman Catholic
Criminal record	no criminal record

From pre-war times, throughout the war and currently, I work at the railway station in Sokołów. From August 1942, if my memory serves me right, transports full of Jews, destined for the Treblinka station, began to pass through the Sokołów station. As far as I remember, in the period from the above-mentioned date to New Year's Day 1943, transports arrived very often, and I might even say every day, sometimes there was one transport, sometimes two, three, or even four transports a day. I suppose I am not exaggerating when I say that during this period there were on average two transports a day. Each one contained 60-70 wagons, and each wagon held from 100 to 150 people, which I know from the chalk inscriptions on the wagons. The transports arrived outside the timetable, and the Sokołów station was notified of the approaching transport only by providing the train number. The transports were escorted by Germans and Ukrainians, who sometimes allowed the passengers to be given water, but usually they allowed no one to approach the train. Whenever anyone tried to get out through the small windows, since the doors were locked, the guards opened fire. After a train had passed, many bodies lay at the station and along its route. The German gendarmerie from Sokołów then arrived at the station and finished off all the wounded. In general, from Siedlce to Treblinka, "the whole line is one grave."

I would like to add that I managed to talk several times with people traveling in the first transports. They were convinced that they were going to a labor camp. Later they knew they were going to a death camp.

THE RECORD WAS READ ALOUD AND THEN SIGNED BY THE WITNESS.

[signed] Waław Wołosz

Z[dzisław] Łukasziewicz

Acting District Investigating Judge

Testimony of Józef Pogorzelski of October 18, 1945.

Record of witness examination On October 18, 1945, in Sokołów, judge Z[dzisław] Łukasziewicz examined the person named below as a witness, without administering an oath. Forewarned of criminal liability for giving false testimony, the witness testified as follows:

Name and surname	Józef Pogorzelski
Age	34
Parents' names	Kazimierz
Place of residence	Kostki railway station
Occupation	PKP rail traffic controller
Religion	Roman Catholic
Criminal record	no criminal record

As far as I remember, I was transferred in June 1942 to Treblinka station, where I was to work as a rail traffic controller. I worked in this capacity until the arrival of the Red Army. At the time of my arrival, there was already an active labor camp for Polish people next to the Treblinka station, and I heard that a second camp was being prepared, the purpose of which was still unknown. Some time after my arrival in Treblinka, the first transport of Jews arrived. At the same time, an instruction came from the railway directorate in Warsaw that trains with displaced persons (Umsiedlungszuge) would pass through the Treblinka station. Some time after the first transports (I remember that the first transports arrived in the second half of July 1942), a terrible smell of corpses began to reach the station, and then we all became convinced that in Treblinka, next to the labor camp, there was a second camp - a death camp. As for the treatment of transports at the Treblinka station, it was as follows. Upon arrival, each transport was taken over by two German railwaymen employed at the station specifically for that purpose. They usually divided it into three sections, which a shunting locomotive gradually pushed onto the siding leading to the camp. No one from the

Polish station staff had the right to enter the camp, so I do not know what happened to the transports after they entered the camp and what the method of exterminating people was. The transports usually consisted of 50 to 60 wagons, each carrying large numbers of people.

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I remember chalk inscriptions on the wagons, which stated that there were 180-200 people in some of the wagons. The train escorts consisted of Germans and Ukrainians, who killed many people for attempting to escape from the wagons. After a transport departed, many bodies remained at the station. I remember one transport from Międzyrzec¹⁰⁹ in which, according to a gendarme in the escort, 10,000 people were being carried. There were reportedly very many bodies in the wagons. From conversations with the two German railwaymen mentioned above, I know that individual transports held four, five, six, or more thousand people.

As far as the intensification of transports is concerned, due to the passage of time I am not able to shed light on this matter today. Anyway, I know that there was a long period of time when transports arrived non-stop, every day. I suppose that the most accurate definition of the period of these frequent transports was between the beginning of August 1942 and New Year's Day 1943. Then there were still transports, but less frequently. During the peak period, I suppose that at least two transports arrived each day on average. There were days when there were three, and I also remember four, transports a day. Initially, as I heard, the victims' bodies were buried in pits, then they began to burn them (I cannot determine the date). The burning took place continuously and continued for some time after the uprising in the camp (if I am not mistaken, August 1943), during which part of the camp was destroyed. Very often, trains with forty or fifty wagons, full of clothes and destined for Germany, passed through the Treblinka station. I suppose that several dozen such trains passed through the station. I also know that Jews from abroad were brought to Treblinka. I especially remember transports from Bulgaria and Greece.

While working at the Treblinka station, in the belief that data on the death camp would be needed in the future, I tried to determine the total number of victims deported to the death camp. I did not keep any records for this purpose, because if the Germans found such notes it would result in death, but I kept a mental tally of the number of transports. According to my calculations, I guess that at least two million people died in Treblinka.

Here are the names of the Germans working at the Treblinka station. The first was named Rudolf Emmerich, and the second was Willi Klinzmann. All documents regarding train traffic were destroyed during the war at Treblinka station, and trains with Jews ran off schedule and were not recorded in the station books.

THE RECORD WAS READ ALOUD AND THEN SIGNED BY THE WITNESS ON EVERY PAGE.

[signed] Józef Pogorzelski

NOTES

- ¹⁰⁹ These may be transports from Międzyrzec Podlaski, sent to Treblinka on August 25–26, 1942. The wagons held approximately 10,000 Jews (Libionka, Zagłada Żydów w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie..., p. 173).

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Additionally, I report that in the spring of 1943, several transports of Jews from the north (from the Małkinia station) passed through the Treblinka station¹¹⁰. These transports passed without stopping and were destined for the Sobibór station.

Z[dziśław] Łukasziewicz
Acting District Investigating Judge

Testimony of Lucjan Puchała dated October 26, 1945.

Record of witness examination On October 26, 1945, in Kosów, judge Z[dziśław] Łukasziewicz examined the person named below as a witness, without administering an oath. Forewarned of criminal liability for giving false testimony, the witness testified as follows:

Name and surname	Lucjan Puchała
Age	48
Parents' names	Jan
Place of residence	Wólka Okrąglik, pow. sokołowski
Occupation	PKP level-crossing keeper
Religion	Roman Catholic
Criminal record	no criminal record

During the occupation, I worked as a railway employee at the Małkinia station. In June 1942, I was assigned as works supervisor for the construction of a branch line leading from the Treblinka station to the so-called gravel pit¹¹¹. The work began on June 1, 1942. As supervisor, I received a pass in German, which I am currently submitting. Initially, we did not know what the purpose of building the branch track was, and only near the end of the work did I learn, from overhearing Germans speak, that the branch track was to lead to a camp for Jews. The works lasted two weeks and ended on June 15, 1942. Earthworks were carried out simultaneously with the construction of the track. The works supervisor was a German, an SS captain¹¹². Initially, Polish workers from the labor camp that was already active in Treblinka were initially used as the labor force, and later Jews from Węgrów and Stoczek Węgrowski were transported in cars. Every day two or three vehicles full of Jews arrived.

NOTES

- ¹¹⁰ Perhaps it is about transports from Białystok arriving on August 15–20, 1943 (Kuwałek, New findings regarding the number of victims of the German extermination camp in Sobibór, p. 59).

¹¹¹

The Central Construction Board of the Waffen SS commissioned the construction of the Treblinka extermination camp to the companies Schönbrunn from Legnica and Schmidt and Münstermann from Warsaw, which in 1940 built a wall around the Warsaw ghetto. The workers who physically built the camp were Jews sent to Treblinka from the Warsaw ghetto (cf. Hilberg, *The Holocaust of European Jews*, vol. 3, pp. 1085–1086; Jacek Andrzej Młynarczyk, *German extermination camp for the Jewish population in Treblinka* [in:] *What do we know about Treblinka? The state of research*, ed. Edward Kopówka, Siedlce: Muzeum Regionalne, 2013, p. 64).

- ¹¹² As in the case of the two previous death centers, the construction of the Treblinka camp was also supervised by Thomalla.

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Of the workers brought to work, the SS men and Ukrainians who supervised the work killed several dozen people every day, so that when I looked from where I was working to the area where the Jews were working, the field was constantly covered with corpses. The laborers brought in were used to dig deep ditches and build various barracks. In particular, I know that a building was built of brick and concrete, which, as I later found out, housed chambers for killing people. I heard that there were eight chambers, and each could accommodate about 700 people¹¹³. At the same time, large fences were built around the entire camp area, and inside, a second fence around the building housing the chambers. On July 1, 1942, after completing the work on the branch track, I was sent to work as an officer of the gravel pit management, where I worked until May 14, 1943, i.e. until I was sent to a labor camp. Since the gravel pit is located near the site of the death camp, I could observe many facts related to its functioning. I know that immediately after July 1, 1942, three excavators were brought in to dig pits several dozen meters long, about fifteen meters deep, and about ten meters wide. On the day the work on the railway branch was completed, the building intended for the chambers was almost ready. From mid-July, railway transports of Jews began to arrive immediately. Initially, it was one transport a day, sometimes two. Transports were brought to the track in groups of 20 wagons, because more could not fit on the branch line. There were 200 to 280 people in the wagons (chalk inscriptions on the wagons). While working in the gravel pit, I could observe the camp area from the hill. I know that after the transport arrived, the SS men and Ukrainians drove the Jews out of the wagons and separated the men from the women and children. After being separated, they were ordered to strip naked, then they were driven to the square and shot with machine guns¹¹⁴. The bodies were buried in ready-made pits. This state of affairs lasted approximately until mid-August 1942, when graves filled with bodies and covered only with earth burst open as the bodies decomposed, creating an enormous stench. The transports were then stopped for about two weeks and during this time the surface of the graves was cemented¹¹⁵.

NOTES

- ¹¹³ In the first phase, one building containing three gas chambers was built at Treblinka. Each chamber measured 25 square meters, and together they could hold 680 to 750 people. In mid-October 1942, ten additional gas chambers, each measuring 50 square meters, began operating in a neighboring building (Libionka, *Zagłada Żydów w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie...*, pp. 135, 157–158).

¹¹⁴

During the first period of the camp's operation, Jews were sometimes shot. Later, executions took place mainly in the so-called infirmary, where the sick and disabled were shot. The remaining Jews died in gas chambers (Młynarczyk, Treblinka - death camp..., p. 220).

- ¹¹⁵ The transports were suspended because the first commandant of Treblinka, Dr. Irmfried Eberl, an Austrian doctor and director of the "T4" centers in Brandenburg and Bernburg, could not cope with the entrusted task. There was chaos in the camp. The change of commandant, the appointment of the experienced Franz Stangl, who had previously run the Sobibór extermination camp, and the transfer of part of the Bełżec staff put an end to this. The literature does not mention the cementing of graves (ibid., p. 221).

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Around September 1, 1942, the camp began to operate more intensively¹¹⁶. Then the chambers were launched and people began to be killed in great numbers. Every day two or even three transports of 60 wagons each arrived without any interruption. I am sure that during this period, until about January 1943, never fewer than two transports arrived per day. After New Year's Day 1943, the number of transports was much smaller, but I cannot provide details on this matter. As for the burning of corpses, it started already in the fall of 1942. In the winter, probably after Himmler's visit¹¹⁷, burning began on a massive scale and - as I heard - Himmler gave an order to remove the victims' gold teeth. A certain number of Jewish workers were constantly employed in the death camp¹¹⁸. The treatment of these workers was cruel and they were killed en masse. In the fall of 1942, I saw myself how 18 Jews were killed while they were working on burying the bodies. These bodies were lying in a field outside the camp and I assume that they were the bodies of people who tried to escape from the camp. Ukrainians supervising the burial of these bodies then killed 18 Jews who were digging the grave and collecting the bodies. After the uprising in August 1943, a certain group of workers remained in the camp and worked on the liquidation of the camp. The camp area was plowed and sown. A Ukrainian named Strebel was installed there as a farmer. The workers I mentioned, who were engaged in liquidating the camp, were loaded into wagons. They were then taken out ten at a time and shot. A certain number of them were transported to Majdanek¹¹⁹. The camp was finally liquidated at the turn of 1943 and 1944. The camp was staffed by SS men and Ukrainians, whose names I do not remember. As for the Treblinka labor camp, as I have already mentioned, it was located a short distance from the death camp. I was imprisoned there on May 14, 1943. I was sentenced to six months for delivering food parcels to the camp. On one occasion I was searched, and parcels and letters addressed to people in the camp were found in my possession. I was sentenced to be placed in the camp by its commandant, van Eupen¹²⁰.

NOTES

¹¹⁶ Deportations resumed on September 4, 1942.

¹¹⁷ Himmler visited Treblinka in the spring of 1943. According to the witness, after his visit to the camp, the bodies of the murdered began to be burned on a grate made of railway tracks. This was a method developed by Sonderkommando 1005, which from 1942 onward worked to erase traces of crimes, including at the Chełmno nad Nerem extermination camp (Młynarczyk, Treblinka – death camp..., p. 226).

¹¹⁸ From 700 to 1,500 people (ibid., p. 228).

¹¹⁹ They were taken to Sobibór, where they worked on the demolition of the camp buildings. After finishing the work, they were shot and their bodies burned.

- 120 Theodor van Eupen (1907–1944), commandant of the Treblinka I labor camp, trained lawyer, member of the SS. He took part in the second liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto in January 1943. He was considered a sadist. He died in an ambush organized by a partisan unit commanded by Vasyl Tikhonin near the village of Lipówka (Edward Kopówka, Penal labor camp in Treblinka [in:] What do we know about Treblinka?..., p. 49).

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While I was held there, the camp contained 500 to 1,000 Poles and about 3,000 Jews. The camp was divided into two parts. One contained separate barracks housing Jewish craftsmen and the workshops in which they worked. The other contained barracks for Polish and Jewish manual laborers. Manual workers were sent by train to work in Małkinia, and the second group worked in the gravel pit. While working, a very large number of Jews were killed. I remember that 20-30 corpses were brought from Małkinia every day. Jews were also killed en masse while working in the gravel pit, and there were cases of people being buried alive. As for Poles, they were also killed and I remember at least six such incidents that I witnessed. I also know that the bodies of Jewish women whom the Germans had taken to the casino for their entertainment were often found in the morning. In the fall of 1943, a typhus epidemic broke out in the camp. Together with Dr. Paciorek from Żyrardów, we voluntarily took up the care of the sick. I have a list of 147 people who died of typhus between November 12 and December 20, 1943. I will submit a copy of this list. There were constant executions in the forest near the camp and, as far as I know, there are 32 graves there. As for the food, it consisted of 15 decagrams of bread, black unsweetened coffee and watery soup.

THE RECORD WAS READ ALOUD AND THEN SIGNED BY THE WITNESS ON EVERY PAGE.

[signed] Lucjan Puchała

Z[dziś] Łukaszkiwicz

Acting District Investigating Judge

Testimony of Władysław Chomka of November 16, 1945.

Report of the witness's hearing Treblinka, November 16, 1945. Judge Z[dziś] Łukaszkiwicz questioned the person mentioned below as a witness, without an oath. After warning the witness about criminal liability for giving false testimony, the witness testified as follows:

Name and surname	Władysław Chomka
Age	52
Parents' names	Jan
Place of residence	Prostyń, Węgrów County
Occupation	PKP senior trackman
Religion	Roman Catholic
Criminal record	no criminal record

I have been working on the railway continuously since 1929 until now. The track section I supervise extends from Małkinia to the second kilometer after the Treblinka station towards Kosów Lacki.

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I remember clearly that in July 1942 the Treblinka stationmaster received a telegram from the Warsaw Railway Directorate announcing that, beginning on July 22, a regular shuttle train of 58 freight wagons and three passenger coaches would run between Warsaw and Treblinka. According to the telegram, this train was to transport the inhabitants of Warsaw who, due to overcrowding in Warsaw, would be settled in Treblinka. Knowing the local conditions, we were very surprised what the purpose could be in sending people to Treblinka since there was no suitable accommodation for them. In fact, on July 23, 1942, transports of Jews began to arrive, first from the Małkinia station, and later from Siedlce. The greatest volume of transports continued approximately until Christmas, although there was a break of two or three weeks not long after the transports began. During the period of intensification, there were two to three transports a day without interruption. After the New Year, the intensity of transports was not great. At the end of July 1943 (if I am not mistaken)¹²¹, the prisoners of the death camp staged an uprising, during which most of the barracks were burned down, but this was not the end of the camp's complete operation, as I remember clearly that later several small transports were brought from Białystok¹²². The final liquidation of the camp took place in the fall of 1943. The remaining barracks were dismantled and transported by train, while the rest of the Jewish prisoners were shot, and some were reportedly taken in the direction of Siedlce, possibly to Majdanek¹²³. While working on the railway tracks, I had the opportunity several times to talk to Jews who were used by the Germans for railway work. They belonged to the labor detail of the extermination camp. From these stories I know that during the period of the greatest intensity of transports, 7,000 to 10,000 people were killed each day, and on one day 18,000 were killed. I remember that one of these workers, named Sadowski, told me that a Ukrainian was standing near the chambers, herding people inside with a pole, and at the same time having fun by cutting off various parts of the victims' bodies with a knife. Once, from a steam locomotive that was pushing wagons full of Jews onto the camp ramp, I watched people being driven out of the wagons. Immediately after emptying the wagons, they were ordered to hand over their luggage, men and women were separated and ordered to strip naked. After some time, a huge scream could be heard, and at the same time an orchestra began to play and a hammer could be heard banging on iron. After some time, everything went quiet. I heard that the Petersburski and Gold orchestra was kept on by the Germans until the last moment and used to drown out the screams of the victims. As for the burning of the bodies, it began only some time after the camp began operating.

NOTES

¹²¹ The uprising broke out on August 2, 1943.

- 122 The last transports from Białystok arrived on August 18 and 19, 1943. There were 7,600 people in the wagons (Młynarczyk, Treblinka - death camp..., p. 232).
- 123 On November 17, 1943, SS Untersturmführer Kurt Franz, Bredow and SS Unterscharführer Willi Mentz shot the last members of the Jewish commando in the forest and burned their bodies (Młynarczyk, Treblinka - death camp..., p. 231).

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Burning took place on grates, under which special devices blew air.

THE RECORD WAS READ ALOUD.

[signed] Władysław Chomka

Z[dziśław] Łukasziewicz

Acting District Investigating Judge

Testimony of Kazimierz Gawkowski of November 21, 1945.

Record of witness examination On November 21, 1945, in Treblinka, judge Z[dziśław] Łukasziewicz examined the person named below as a witness, without administering an oath. After warning the witness about criminal liability for giving false testimony, the witness testified as follows:

Name and surname	Kazimierz Gawkowski ¹²⁴
Age	46
Parents' names	Henryk
Place of residence	Treblinka
Occupation	PKP switchman
Religion	Roman Catholic
Criminal record	no criminal record

I have been working continuously since 1926 until now as a railway worker at the Treblinka station. It seems that from the beginning of July 1942 until New Year's Day 1943, railway transports with Jews arrived continuously. I estimate that during this period there were on average two transports a day, but there were also days when four transports arrived. After the New Year, the number of transports decreased significantly. The transport consisted of an average of 60 wagons and after arriving at the Treblinka station, it was divided into three parts of 20 wagons each, which were gradually brought to the ramp of the Treblinka death camp. These activities were performed by a shunting locomotive¹²⁵, which came to the Treblinka station from Małkinia especially for this purpose. Two German railway workers were permanently employed at the Treblinka station, who took care of these transports and delivered them to the camp. The trains carrying Jews were escorted by Ukrainians, Lithuanians, or German gendarmes under Gestapo command. They fired into the wagons

whenever the Jews being transported attempted to escape. On one occasion, so many people were killed in this way at Treblinka station that four railway flatcars were later filled with bodies.

NOTES

¹²⁴ Kazimierz Gawkowski was one of Claude Lanzmann's interlocutors in the film *Shoah* (1985). He was introduced there as Henryk Gawkowski. The railwayman said, among other things, that he received vodka from the Germans. His state of alcohol intoxication allowed him to endure the screams of people trapped in the wagons and the stench coming from the camp.

¹²⁵ A locomotive designed for shunting work, usually incapable of achieving high speed.

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Because I rode on the shunting locomotive to the camp several times, I know how the separate sections of transports were delivered to the camp ramp. When the locomotive pushed the wagons onto the ramp, it backed toward the gate, leaving only the Ukrainians, SS men from the camp staff, and Jewish prisoners employed in the camp on the platform. The people were immediately ordered to leave the wagons, while all their belongings and suitcases had to remain on the platform. Everyone was directed behind a barbed-wire fence densely interwoven with branches, so that what happened to them could no longer be seen. At that time, two Jewish workers for each wagon cleaned the wagons of corpses, bundles and waste. After some time, a scream was heard, which continued for some time and then stopped. A fictitious railway station was built at the camp ramp with a fictitious clock and various inscriptions, e.g. "Ticket Office", "First- and Second-Class Waiting Room", "Freight Office" and others. I suppose this was to make the victims believe that it was an ordinary labor camp and not a death camp. Railway transports came to the Treblinka station from the direction of Siedlce and Małkinia, but I believe that more transports came from the direction of Małkinia. The wagons usually contained over 100 people, which I remember because the number of people in each wagon was marked with chalk on the doors. The transports came mainly from various places in Poland, but also from Bulgaria, Vienna and Germany. I remember that the last transports, which were much smaller than the initial ones (35 to 40 wagons each), came from the east. I cannot determine when these last transports arrived, but I assume it was already in the summer of 1943. As for the burning of the bodies, I know that it lasted about a year and during that time clouds of smoke constantly rose over the camp, and a terrible stench of burning could be felt within a radius of several kilometers. The entire camp area was surrounded by high fences made of barbed wire and branches, and guard towers stood at intervals on which Ukrainians stood with machine guns and shot at anyone who approached the fences. While traveling along the track past the camp toward the gravel pit, I also saw four excavators digging pits inside the camp.

THE RECORD WAS READ ALOUD AND THEN SIGNED BY THE WITNESS ON EVERY PAGE.

[signed] Kazimierz Gawkowski

Testimony of Franciszek Ząbecki of December 21, 1945.

Record of witness examination On December 21, 1945, in Treblinka, judge Z[dzisław] Łukasziewicz examined the person named below as a witness, without administering an oath. Forewarned of criminal liability for giving false testimony, the witness testified as follows:

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Name and surname	Franciszek Ząbecki ¹²⁶
Age	38
Parents' names	Franciszek
Place of residence	Treblinka, railway station
Occupation	stationmaster
Religion	Roman Catholic
Criminal record	no criminal record

I began working in May 1941 at the Treblinka station as a rail traffic controller. As far as I remember, from the end of July 1942, transports with Jews began to arrive at the station. As far as the number of these transports is concerned, it is not easy to calculate now due to the passage of time and the blurring of these details in memory. In any case, I can say that in the period from the end of July 1942 to New Year's Day 1943 there was the greatest intensity of transports, so it is no exaggeration to say that they arrived every day. After the New Year, the number of transports decreased significantly and there were quite long breaks between individual transports, sometimes lasting two weeks. After the camp burned down during the uprising, there were still small transports, probably from Białystok. Transports with Jews ran outside the normal schedule and in order to regulate their operation, German railway authorities sent timetables of these trains to the stations. These schedules included one or several transports. In addition to the schedules, messages were sent announcing or changing individual transports. In dispatches and timetables, trains were marked with a code. It was the following code: for transports from the General Government - "P.Kr", for transports from the north-eastern areas (outside the General Government) - the code "Pj", for transports from the Reich - "Da". Empty trains were routed according to schedules. Foreign transports from Greece, Germany, and Austria arrived in passenger coaches with tickets. The ticket counterfoils were counted and returned to the railway directorate. During the fighting in 1944, when the Germans were retreating under the pressure of the Red Army, the front remained in the vicinity of the station for some time. Then the station was blown up and burned by the Germans. Station documents that would constitute evidence were destroyed, but I managed to hide some of them, risking my life. I now submit them as documentary

evidence in this case. These documents include: timetables, dispatches and various types of waybills for wagons sent from Treblinka (these waybills bear the signatures of SS men from Treblinka) and lists of the wagons in individual transports.

NOTES

- ¹²⁶ Franciszek Ząbecki from Treblinka was called as a witness in four trials: against Hubert Franz, deputy commandant of the Treblinka camp (Düsseldorf in 1965), against Wilhelm Altenloh (Bielefeld in 1966), against Adolf Beckerle, the Reich ambassador to Bulgaria during the war, and Fritz von Hahn, an official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Frankfurt am Main in 1968) and against Franz Stangl (Düsseldorf in 1970). He quoted his testimony in the book *Wspomnienia dawne i nowe* (Old and New Memories). He is also the hero of the documentary *Witness for the Prosecution*, made at the "Czołówka" Film Studio (1971).

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I would like to emphasize once again that these documents are only a portion of the complete set. As for the transports with the victims' belongings sent from the camp to the Reich, I suppose I will not make a mistake in estimating that about a thousand wagons with clothes, shoes, etc. passed through the station.

While working at the Treblinka station, I tried to note down the most important events in the camp. Keeping such notes was very dangerous, because there were always SS men from the camp at the station, and there were two German railway workers at all times. I remember that in the spring of 1943, a certain Konczkowski, an engineer from the "Rudzki" company, working on the construction of a bridge on the Bug, was arrested by the Gestapo and later shot for such a note. As far as my notes are concerned, they have only partially survived. Based on them, I provide the following facts about the camp:

- ¹ On August 2, 1943, the extermination camp burned from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. At that time, two shifts of Ukrainian guards from the camp were bathing in the Bug River. All the Jews fled the camp carrying weapons taken from the broken-open storehouse.
- ² On August 18, a transport of Jews (Pj. 201), consisting of 32 wagons, passed through the Treblinka station to Lublin.
- ³ On the same day, transport Pj. 202 arrived in Treblinka from Białystok, consisting of 37 wagons.
- ⁴ On August 19, transport Pj. 203, consisting of 40 wagons, passed through en route to Lublin.
- ⁵ On the same day, transport Pj. 204 arrived in Treblinka from Białystok, consisting of 39 wagons.
- ⁶ On August 24, transport Pj. 209, consisting of nine wagons, passed through en route to Lublin.
- ⁷ On September 8, transport Pj. 211, carrying Jews in 31 wagons, passed through en route to Lublin.

- 8 On September 17, transport Pj. 1025, consisting of 50 wagons, passed from Mińsk Litewski to Chełmno.
- 9 On September 30, a German railwayman, Rudolf Emmerich, left the station and went to Warsaw to join the railway service. I know his wife's address: Hilma Emmerich, Dresden, Grossenhainer Str. 97 II. I copied this address from the envelope of the letter written by Emmerich.
- 10 On October 20, three wagons of Jews were sent from the Treblinka death camp to Sobibór.

THE RECORD WAS READ ALOUD AND THEN SIGNED BY THE WITNESS.

[signed] F[ranciszek] Ząbecki

Z[dzisław] Łukasziewicz

Acting District Investigating Judge

Record of inspection

Railway documents from Treblinka station

On December 27, 1945, Z[dzisław] Łukasziewicz, Investigating Judge of the District Court in Siedlce, with the participation of expert Józef Kuźmiński, a PKP rail traffic controller and former Treblinka stationmaster known in this case, inspected the railway documents supplied by the witness Ząbecki.

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The documents are divided into the following groups: A. Timetables (Fahrplananordnung)

These are ten mimeographed documents, in the order of dates they are as follows:

- 1 Timetable No. 548 sent by the General Directorate of the Eastern Railways, dated in Krakow on August 3, 1942. The expert explains that this timetable provides for the operation of one train from Warsaw to Treblinka, the composition of the train - 58 covered freight wagons and 2 passenger wagons. The expert explains that the letters "P.Kr." and "Lp.Kr." appearing on the timetable are codes used at that time for trains carrying Jews to Treblinka. "P.Kr." denotes a loaded train, while "Lp.Kr." denotes an empty train.
- 2 Timetable No. 562, sent as in item 1 and dated in Kraków on August 22, 1942. The expert explains that it provides for the operation of two trains on the Międzyrzec Podlaski–Treblinka route on August 25 and 26, 1942. The trains bear the codes described in item 1. Each consist comprised 50 covered freight wagons and two passenger coaches.
- 3 Timetable No. 565, sent as in point 1, dated in Krakow on August 25, 1942. The expert explains that this timetable provides for the operation of one train on August 28, 1942 on

the Łuków-Treblinka route. Code designations as in point 1. The consist comprised 50 covered freight wagons and two passenger coaches.

- 4 Timetable No. 566, sent as in point 1, dated in Krakow on August 26, 1942. The expert explains that this timetable provides for the operation of the train on September 1, 1942 from Włoszczowa to Treblinka. Code designations as in point 1. Train composition - 50 covered freight wagons and 2 passenger wagons.
- 5 Timetable No. 587, sent as in point 1, dated in Krakow on September 15, 1942. The expert explains that this timetable provides for the operation of 4 trains: a) on September 21, 1942 and September 25, 1942 from Sędziszów to Treblinka - an empty train to Szydłowiec, b) on September 23, 1942 and September 25 1942 from Szydłowiec to Treblinka, with the last empty train returning to Kozienice, c) September 27, 1942 from Kozienice to Treblinka - empty - to Częstochowa. Code designations as in point 1. Composition of all trains: 50 covered freight wagons and 2 passenger wagons.
- 6 Timetable No. 594, sent as in point 1, dated in Krakow on September 21, 1942. The expert explains that this timetable provides for 6 trains on September 22, 25, 28 and October 1, 4, 7, 1942 from Częstochowa to Treblinka. Each train consists of 58 freight and 2 passenger wagons. Code marking as in point 1.
- 7 A letter without a number, sent as in point 1, dated in Krakow on September 21, 1942. The expert explains that this letter changes schedule no. 592 (which is not included in the physical evidence). Based on this letter, it is planned to launch trains from Łochów to Treblinka on September 24, 1942. The empty train returns to Mińsk Mazowiecki.

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- 8 Timetable No. 552, sent as in point 1, dated in Krakow on February 1, 1943. The expert explains that this timetable provides for the operation of 6 trains on February 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14, 1943, five from Białystok and one from Grodno to Treblinka. These trains are marked with a different code than before, loaded trains are designated "Pj." and empty trains "Lp.Pj." The expert adds that this system applied to trains carrying Jews to Treblinka from the northeastern territories outside the General Government. The composition of the above trains - 21 passenger coaches.
- 9 Timetable No. 567, sent as in point 1, dated in Krakow on March 26, 1943. The expert explains that this timetable applies to trains with Jews from the Reich. For camouflage purposes, the code marking has been changed again, using "Da." The timetable covers routes from Częstochowa to Treblinka, and to Częstochowa the train was to run according to the timetable of the Railway Directorate in Opole. The comments on the timetable show that each train is to be announced by special telegrams based on this timetable. Without these telegrams, it is difficult to determine the number of trains that arrived at Treblinka based on this timetable; in any case, it must have been a larger number, as the timetable is valid until May 6, 1943.

- ¹⁰ Timetable No. 290, sent by the [Railway] Directorate in Królewiec [Königsberg], dated in Königsberg on August 17, 1943. The expert explains that this timetable provides for the operation of 5 trains on the Białystok-Treblinka route from August 21 to 23, 1943. Code marking as in point 8. Each train consisted of 38 wagons.

This group also includes timetable No. 243, sent as in point 1, dated in Krakow on August 27, 1942. It does not provide for the launch of trains, but contains an order that normal passenger trains should not stop at the Treblinka station from September 1, 1942.

All the above-mentioned documents were placed in a folder marked with the letter A.

B. A separate group of documents consists of telegrams sent by Railway Directorates to the Treblinka station. As the expert explains, these telegrams were often received and noted down by Polish railway workers who did not know German well, so they contain a number of linguistic errors. They concern trains carrying Jews, as shown by the codes used in their texts, which are identical to those discussed above.

As for individual telegrams, the expert states:

- ¹ This telegram, marked with the number 1 in red pencil, was sent by the Kraków Directorate and concerned four trains carrying Jews, coded P.Kr., from Kielce to Treblinka on August 20, 22, 24 and 26, 1942. The year is not clearly marked on the telegram, but the expert states that it undoubtedly concerns the year 1942, because in August 1943, the expert was already the stationmaster in Treblinka and remembers that trains from the eastern areas arrived at that time, which is consistent with the documents previously discussed in point A-10. The trains mentioned in the telegram consisted of 50 freight wagons and 2 passenger wagons.

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- ² This telegram, marked No. 2, was sent by the Railway Directorate in Królewiec [Königsberg]. It concerns the routing of the empty consist following train Pj. 163. Renumbered Lp.Pj. 164 as an empty train, it was to be sent to Grodno, from where it would depart loaded for Treblinka on February 16, 1943, as Pj. 165. According to timetable No. 552, discussed in A-8, which lists the same Pj. 163, the consist of Pj. 165 must have comprised 21 passenger coaches.
- ³ This telegram, marked No. 3 and sent as in item 1, concerns the same train, Pj. 165, discussed in item 2.
- ⁴ This telegram (marked No. 4), sent as item 1, concerns two trains on March 27 and 28, 1943 with Jews from the Reich. The code was "Da." Each train contained 40 wagons. Judging by the route and dates, this telegram refers to timetable No. 557 [sic; A-9 lists No. 567], discussed in A-9.

- 5 This telegram (marked No. 5), sent as in item 1, is also related to timetable No. 567 and concerns the train with Jews on March 26, 1943 from the Reich to Treblinka, consisting of 40 wagons. The code was "Da."
- 6 This telegram (marked No. 6), sent as in item 1, also refers to timetable No. 567. It announces a train with Jews from the Reich (Da.) on April 2, 1943. The consist comprised 22 wagons.
- 7 This telegram (marked No. 7), sent as item 1, clearly refers to timetable No. 567. It announces a train with Jews from the Reich (Da.) on April 4, 1943.
- 8 This telegram (marked No. 8) also refers to timetable No. 567, but announces the diversion of a train with Jews from the Reich (Da.) on March 30, 1943 to Sobibór.
- 9 This telegram, sent as in item 1 and dated March 28, 1943, orders the exact counting of people in transports of Jews from Greece and Bulgaria, coded "Da.," and requires all changes to be reported to the Railway Directorate. The expert states that the telegrams mentioned in points 2 to 9 do not have the exact year of sending, but only days and months, but they undoubtedly refer to 1943, because all of them were sent in the spring, and in the spring of 1942 there were no transports carrying Jews from Treblinka at all [the source says "from Treblinka"; context suggests "to Treblinka"], and in 1944 Treblinka was already closed.
- 10 This telegram (marked No. 10) was sent from the Warsaw Directorate on August 18, 1943, and concerns a train with Jews from the north-eastern areas (Pj.) on August 19, 1943, consisting of 35 wagons.

All documents discussed above were placed in a folder marked with the letter B.

C. The third group of documents are wagon lists (Wagenzettel). These are documents containing detailed calculations and numbers of individual wagons included in a given transport.

After reviewing these documents, the expert states that the lists were compiled by the conductors of the individual trains and that they make it possible to establish with complete precision both the number of wagons in each consist and their individual wagon numbers. There can be no doubt that these were trains carrying Jews, because of the code used in these documents (e.g. Pj. ...).

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- 1 The list dated December 17, 1942, concerns train Pj. 39, carrying Jews from Prostki (East Prussia) through Małkinia to Treblinka in a consist of 37 wagons.
- 2 The list concerns transport P.Kr. 9110, carrying Jews from Szydłowiec to Treblinka on January 13, 1943. The consist comprised 60 wagons.

- 3 The list dated February 10, 1943, concerns train Pj. 129, carrying Jews from Białystok to Treblinka in a consist of 12 wagons.
- 4 The list dated March 25, 1943, concerns transport Da. 201, carrying Jews from the Reich to Vienna. The consist comprised 23 wagons.
- 5 The list dated March 26, 1943, concerns transport Da. 101, carrying Jews from Thessaloniki to Treblinka. The consist comprised 46 wagons.
- 6 The list dated March 28, 1943, concerns transport Da. 102, carrying Jews from Skopje to Treblinka. The consist comprised 44 wagons.
- 7 The list concerns transport Da. 203, carrying Jews from Vienna to Treblinka on April 1, 1943. The consist comprised 19 wagons.
- 8 The list concerns transport Pj. 200, carrying Jews from Białystok to Treblinka on August 17, 1943. The consist comprised 41 wagons.
- 9 The list concerns transport Pj. 202, carrying Jews from Białystok to Treblinka on August 18, 1943. The expert explained that all lists that did not expressly mention Treblinka as the train's destination nevertheless referred to this station due to the fact that they could not be found at the Treblinka station otherwise. This group also includes a list of the empty wagons following a train carrying Jews, coded Lp.Pj. 30 and dated November 29, 1942. This empty consist was sent from Treblinka to Grodno. All documents mentioned in this group were placed in a folder marked with the letter C.

D. The next group consists of military waybills (Wehrmachtfahrschein). There are 8 of them, some of them have lists of wagons attached. They are dated August 22, September 2, 9, 13 and 21, 1942. All of them bear a round official stamp with the inscription "Der SS-Polizeiführer SS-Sonderkommando im Distrikt Warschau". The expert explains that these waybills concern trains loaded with the victims' clothing and sent from the camp, chiefly to the Reich; some describe the cargo as "Bekleidung der Waffen SS"¹²⁷. Together, the waybills cover 293 wagons. All were placed in the folder marked D.

E. The final group consists of 86 duplicates of military waybills (Wehrmacht-Frachtbrief-Doppel) dated from September 30 to November 17, 1943, covering 92 wagons; some waybills cover more than one wagon.

NOTES

¹²⁷ Waffen SS clothing (German).

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The expert explains that these are waybills for wagons loaded in the Treblinka extermination camp and sent in various directions during the liquidation of the camp. The waybills bear the signatures of SS men from the Treblinka extermination camp; the expert, a former

Treblinka stationmaster, recognizes the signatures. Some, though not all, bear a round official stamp reading "Generalgouvernement Der SS-Polizeiführer im Distrikt Warschau SS-Sonderkommando Treblinka". Other waybills bear the stamp "Waffen SS-Sa-St. O. Verwaltung Lublin. Altsachenverwaltungsstelle"¹²⁸. The expert states that as their contents show, most of the wagons covered by the waybills carried sections of barracks, boards, chlorinated lime, and similar material. Most were consigned to SS-Arbeitslager Lublin. Notably, four of the waybills concern four wagons of prisoners (Häftlinge) sent from Treblinka to Sobibór¹²⁹. All documents in this group are placed in a folder marked with the letter E.

This concludes the inspection.

[signed] Łukaszkiwicz

Acting Investigating Judge

Keywords Eastern Railways, railway workers, extermination camps, Polish witnesses, investigations into death camps

Abstract The article presents a selection of testimonies given immediately after the war by Polish railway workers employed at the stations in Bełżec, Sobibór, and Treblinka. Collected during Polish investigations of the extermination camps, the testimonies reveal how much these Polish witnesses knew about the crimes committed in the Operation Reinhardt camps.

Key words Ostbahn, railway workers, death camps, Polish witnesses, immediate post-war investigations regarding the death camps

NOTES

¹²⁸ Altsachenverwaltungsstelle der Standortverwaltung Lublin (Used-Goods Administration Office of the Lublin Garrison Administration), a camp at Flugplatz in Lublin subordinated to the SS and police commander in the Lublin district, Odilo Globocnik.

¹²⁹ AIPN, GK 196/70, Waybills of October 30 and November 4, 1943, fols. 120, 126, 128, 130.

About this edition

This is an unofficial English translation. It was prepared with machine assistance and checked against the Polish text for names, place names, archive references, witness roles, and recurring railway and camp wording. It has not been reviewed by the author or journal. For formal citation, consult the Polish original.