

**Report W**  
**KL Auschwitz**  
**1940-1943**

by  
**Captain**  
**Witold Pilecki**

*He who loves much, does much.*

*He who does good, does much.*

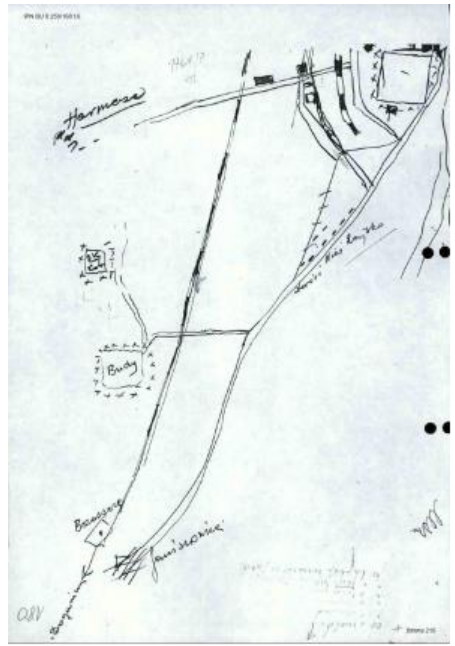
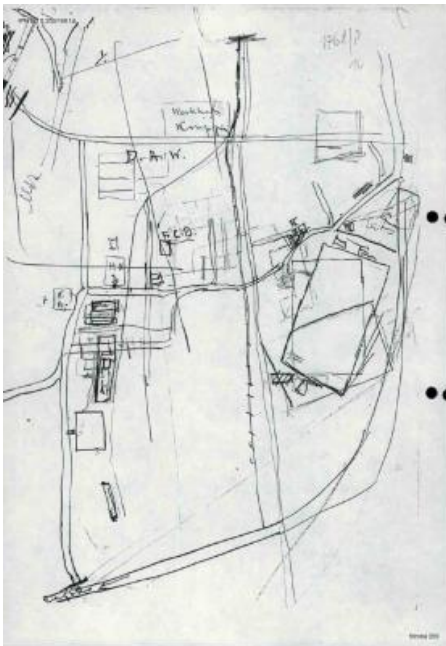
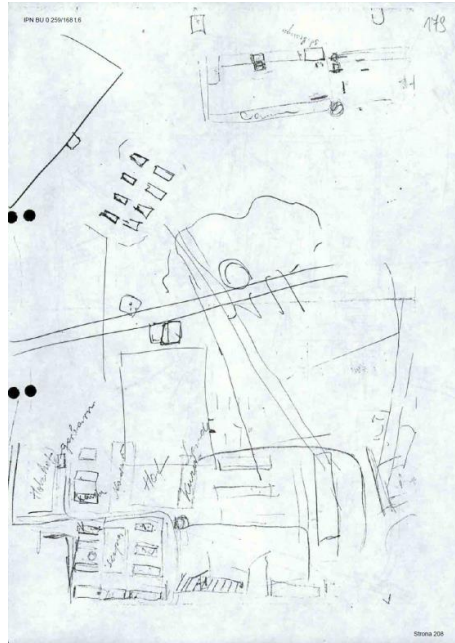
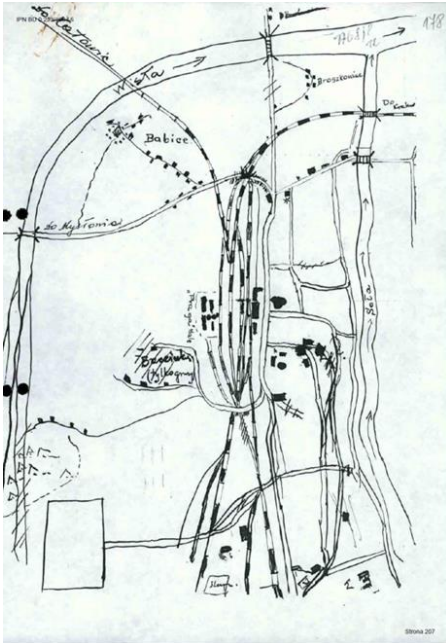
*He who is a servant to his fellow men,*

*Rather than to his own will, does good.*

Thomas à Kempis,

*The Imitation of Christ*

# Auschwitz Maps drawn by Pilecki



## Introduction to Report “W”

After 31 months, when things came to the point that a further extension of my stay at the camp would not only have meant a continued burden of torment, but also would have produced – in my view – no further gain [for the cause - addition by this translator], I decided to leave the Vernichtungslager 1 [Extermination Camp 1].

From my colleagues who at that time were still with me in the camp I handpicked two very determined ones: „J” and „E”. Even though I received a light gunshot wound during our escape, with God’s help I have succeeded.

Each one of us described their own experience, what they saw and went through at Auschwitz. In so doing, we divided our respective duties with "J" i "E" in such a way that they were to provide their general camp’s description, whilst my aim was to preserve, for eternity, various particular events [that took place there]. My separate report on our „S” activity I kept strictly coded as it turned out, once we have escaped, that the enemy’s intelligence penetrated almost everywhere. Whilst our descriptions may have some shortcomings, be they of style, or due to our failure to include certain pictures from this hell due to our inability to squeeze them all into less than twenty pages, there is no falsehood in these recollections. We did not write a lot. There is not one superfluous word in our accounts.

(-) Witold

## Report "W"

by Witold Pilecki

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On 14, 15 and 16 September 1939, on General Piekarski's order and assisted by Major Mandzenko, I formed in Włodawa a cavalry detachment - 185 horses, and an infantry detachment over 160 men strong. On 16 September, an officer from the same brigade as I, and a friend of mine, Major Jan Włodarkiewicz, came to Włodawa; due to his seniority in rank I handed over to him the command of these detachments.

The above-mentioned cavalry and infantry detachments fought on until 17 October 1939. This campaign has been recorded by my younger colleagues-in-arms.

Those very detachments became a nucleus of an organization we named Tajna Armia Polska (TAP) [Secret Polish Army] which was established in early November 1939, in Warsaw.

In Warsaw I served as TAP's Chief of Staff (my *nom de guerre* was "Witold"). I sought to merge TAP with ZWZ [Związek Walki Zbrojnej - Union for Armed Fight]. I had difficulties with it. There were differences of opinion [on it] (witnesses still alive: Janina Pieńkowska, Stefan Bielecki, and Major Zygmunt Bończa-Bohdanowski). The [respective] decision was taken on 19 September 1940 (witness: Eleonora Ostrowska).

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**At the third anniversary of the establishment of the Auschwitz camp I present this report about the fate of those who, in their lion's part, having completed their way of torment through this hell left it through the barrel of the crematorium's chimney becoming, as we would call it, "puffs of smoke", "little clouds". or "foglets".**

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Below I mention the fate of members of Organizacja Wojskowa [Military Organization] in Auschwitz as known to me at the moment of my escape from the camp.

### **Murdered during an interrogation**

Platoon Leader Bolesław Kupiec (Inmate No 792).

### **Executed by shooting**

Eugeniusz Obojski (No 194), Col. Aleksander Stawarz (No 11513), Lieut.Col. Karol Kumuniecki (No 8361), First Lieut. Tadeusz Biliński (No 830), First Lieut. Włodzimierz Makaliński (TAP, No 12710), Sec. Lieut. (Res.) Stanisław Gutkiewicz (No 11003), Stanisław Stawiszyński (TAP, No 13689), Sec. Lieut. (Res.) Tadeusz Lech (No 9235), Col. Jan Karcz (nr 23569), Off. Cad. (Res.) Zbigniew Ruszczyński (No 1360), First Lieut. St. Dobrowolski (No...), Leon Kukiełka (No 16465), Stanisław Dubois (No 3904), Maj. Edward Gött-Getyński (No 29693), First Lieut. (Res.) Eugeniusz Zaturski (TAP, No 1387), Cav.Capt. Włodzimierz Koliński (No 3135), First Lieut. Mieczysław Kolinski (No 68844), Capt. Tadeusz Dzedzic (No 16246), Capt.Dr. Henryk Suchnicki (No 19456),

Off. Cad. (Res.) Aleksander Jaskierski No 2450), Corp.. ...nicki, TAP, No ... (the surname in the names code partly illegible - A.C.), Capt. Tadeusz Chróścicki - father (TAP, No 13484), Tadeusz Lucjan Chróścicki - son (TAP, No 16655), Antoni Suchecki (No 595), Sec. Lieut. (Res.) Stanisław Wierzbicki (TAP, No 3558), Stefan Niebudek (No 18531), Stanisław Arct (No 12654) Roman Radoliński (No 13471), Sen. Uhlan Stefan Stępień (No 12970), Plat. Lead. Edward Berlin (No 19490).

### **Murdered by lethal injections**

Sailor Lolek Kupiec (Karol Kupiec No 794), Zygmunt Masewicz (No 1394), Alfred Stössel (No 435).

### **Died (killed in the camp's public area or died as a result of the prevalent conditions or epidemics in the camp)**

Cav.Capt. (Res.) Jerzy de Virion (in the camp known as Jan Hlebowicz, TAP, No 3507), Roman Zagner (No ...), Capt. Michał Romanowicz (No ...), Capt. Eugeniusz Triebelin (No 6995), Eugeniusz Dublin (No 31007), Teofil Banasiuk (No 1698), Jan Hrebenda (No 3665), Jan Mielcarek (No 3569), Off.Cad. (Res.) Remigiusz Niewiarowski (TAP, No 13957), Maj. Waclaw Chmielewski (TAP, No 37995), Tadeusz Dobrowolski (No ...), Jerzy Wierusz-Kowalski, father (TAP, No 31356), Plat. Lead. Stanisław Kotarski (No ...), Plat.Lead. Józef Chramiec (No 101), Stefan Gaik (No ...), Serg. Maj. Zygmunt Jaworski (TAP , No 18435), Prof. Roman Rybarski (No 18599), Kazimierz Rogalewicz (No 3473), Bolesław Leśniewicz (No 21991), or

Stanisław Leśniewicz (No 14449), Czesław Sikora (No 76159), Stanisław Polkowski (No 6398), Teofil Staniszki (No 18624), Off. Cad. (Res.) Jan Wysocki (TAP, No 13436), Alojzy Fusek (No ...), Józef Gałka (No 10611), Cav. Cpt. (Res.) Tadeusz Czechowski (No 18369), Witold Myszkowski (No 2606), Andrzej Marduła (No 18855).

### **Released by the camp's authorities**

Aleksander Wielopolski (No ...), Corp. Czesław Wąsowski (No 5298), Sec. Lieut. (Res.) Tadeusz Burski (No ...), Off.Cad. Krzysztof Hoffman (No 2738), Dr. Marian Dipont (No 2186).

### **Released by the authorities – took a report for the Organization**

Col. Władysław Surmacki (TAP, No 2795), Cpt. Ferdynand Trojnicki (No 5145), Serg. Antoni Woźniak (No 5512), First Lieut.(Res.) Karol Świątorzecki (No 5360), Aleksander Paliński (No 8253).

### **Transferred to Dachau when ill (arranged)**

Jan Dangel (TAP, No 13486).

### **Transferred to other camps**

Sec.Lieut. (Res.) Mikołaj Skornowicz (No ...), Tadeusz Słowiacek (No 1069), Plat.Lead. Władysław Kupiec (No 793), Col. Tadeusz Reklewski (Np 6471), Sec.Lieut. Konstanty



Piekarski (No 4618), Col. Jerzy Za1ewski (No 21514), Off.Cad. (Res.) Zbigniew Różak (No 6609), Off.Cad. (Res.) Zygmunt Wanicki (No 2199), Wiktor Śniegucki (No 6274), Tadeusz Pietrzykowski "Teddy" (No 77), Cpt. Julian Trzęsimiech (No ...), Stanisław Ozimek (TAP, No ...), Henryk Kowalczyk (No 64276), Leszek Cenzartowicz (No 870), Sec.Lieut. (Res.) Jerzy Wiśniewski (No 31361), Sec. Lieut. (Res.) Lech (No...), Father Zygmunt Ruszczak (No 9842), Wacław Kafarowski (No 12079), Czesław Darkowski (TAP, No 8121), Lolek Słowiacek (No 1054), Cav.Serg. Jan Miksa (No ...), Edward Nowak (No 447), Sec.Lieut. (Res.) Władysław Rapa (No 30901), Aleksander Bugajski (No 74503), Kazimierz Radwański (No 16788), Dr. Zygmunt Zakrzewski (TAP, No 39249), Tadeusz Kowalski (No ...), Józef Putek (No 267), Michał Szarzyński (No 82795), Olek – room supervisor at Block 6 (No...), Wawrzyński, (TAP, No ...).

### **Requested transfer to attempt escape while in transit**

Col. Kazimierz Rawicz (known in the camp as Jan Hilkner No 9319), Off. Cad. Witold Szymkowiak (No 938), through whom I send this report.

### **Shot dead during an escape**

Plat. Lead. Stanisław Maringe (TAP, No 12691), First Lieut. (Res.) Jerzy Poraziński (TAP, No ...).

## **Left the camp in an arranged escape to deliver a report to the Organization**

Wincenty Gawron (No 11237), Stefan Bielecki (TAP No 12692), Off.Cad. Mieczysław Januszewski (No 711), Stanisław Jaster (No 6438), Sec.Lieut. (Res.) Jan Redzej (known in the camp as Jan Retko, No 5430), Edward Ciesielski (No 12969), and myself - Witold Pilecki (TAP, No 4859).

## **Still at the camp**

Cpt. Dr. Władysław Dering (TAP, No 1723), Off.Cad. (Res.) Antoni Rosa (No 923), Off.Cad. Michał Ziółkowski (No 1055), Plat.Lead. Tadeusz Szydlik (No 2198), Col.Teofil Dziama (No 13578), Sec. Lieut. (Res.) Jan Olszowski (No 6157), Sec.Lieut. (Res.) Jan Pilecki (No 808), Henryk Bartosiewicz (No 9406), Cpt. Stanisław Kazuba (No 1630), Sec.Lieut. (Res.) Bernard Świerczyna (No 1393), Off. Cad. (Res.) Mieczysław Wagner (No 5831), Maj. Zygmunt Bończa-Bohdanowski (TAP, No 30959), Off.Cad.(Res.) Zygmunt Bujanowski (No ...), Zygmunt Kotecki (No...), Jan Zięmba (No 66), Zygmunt Sobolewski (No 88), Antom Trzaskowski (No 13321), Col. Juliusz Gilewicz (No 31033), Cpt. Tadeusz Lisowski (No 329), Motyka (No...), Alfred Włodarczyk (No 1349), Witold Kosztowny (No 672), Dr. Rudolf Diem (nr 10022), First Lieut.(Res.) Marian Moniczewski (No 18859), Sec.Lieut. (Res.) Leon Murzyn (No 820), Sec.Lieut. Witold Wierusz (No 9479), Sec. Lieut. (Res.) Edmund Zabawski (Nr 19547), Jan Machnowski (No 724), Off. Cad. (Res.) Zbigniew Goszczyński (No 1728), Zdzisław Uliasz (No 12988), "Alojz" from the uniform store (Bekleidungskammer) (No...), Andrzej Gąsienica (No 5654),

Roman Frankiewicz (No 9430), Tadeusz Jakubowski (No 2541), Cav.Serg.Maj. Stefan Gąsiorowski (No 9201), Wacław Weszke (No 9530), Stanisław Kozuch (No 325), Serg.Maj. Szczepan Rzeczkowski (TAP, No 13600), Jerzy Wierusz-Kowalski (TAP, No 31357, son), Plat. Lead. Antoni Koszczyński (No 4075), Cpt. Michał Więcki (No 1036), First Lieut. "Włodek Owczarz" (No ...), Serg. Władysław Kielczyk (No 4266), Sailor Aleksander Kasper (No 3894), Cpt. Janusz Goślinowski (No 8252), Konstanty Jagiełło (No 4507), Cpt. Stanisław Machowski (No 78056), "Czesiek" (presumably: Czesław Sowul, No 167), "Tadek" (nr ...), Tadeusz Stulgiński (TAP, No 31315), Henryk Szklarz (No 1132), Edward Sikorski (No 25419), Józef Gralla (No 25249), Dr. Władysław Tondos (No 18871), Jan Mosdorf (No 8230), Marian Toliński (No 49), Władysław Fejkiel (No 5647), Stanisław Głowa (No 20017), Off.Cad. (Res.) Tadek, sekretarz bloku 22a (No ...), „Mały Zygmunt” from the laboratory (No ...), Ignacy Wołkowicz (No 7143), Ryszard Wiśniewski (No 9580), Zdzisław Ryndak (No 10746), Andrzej Rablin (No 1410), Off.Cad. Leon Mackiewicz (No 3618), Col. Kazimierz Stamirowski (No 86786), Karol Karp (No 626), Ficek and Tadek ..... – grave-diggers (Nos ...), Dr. Bolesław Świdorski (No 952), Edward Kowalski (No 1701), Witold Kupczyński (No 3829), Roman Kostrzewski (No 4612), Stanisław Kocjan (No 11544), Jerzy Żarnowiecki (No 616), Tadeusz Myszowski (No 593), Stanisław Wolak (No 1058), Maksymilian Piłat (No 5131), Off.Cad. (Res.) Witold Wysocki - from Vilnius (No...), Off.Cad. Jurek ..... - electrician (No ...), Stefan Dziurkacz (No ...), Stefan – a colleague of Heniek B. (No ...).

## June 1943

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The following [report] records facts and names of Auschwitz inmates who worked there for Organizacja Wojskowa [Military Organization] [It was written down - addition by this translator] after a successful individually decided escape from the camp in the night from 26 into 27 April 1943, that is after a 31 months stay in the camp. From the beginnings of the camp until March 1943 some 11200 inmates were shot there, some 34 thousands were gassed in the chambers, about 41 thousands died from various causes, were otherwise killed in public, died of diseases and due to various other circumstances; some 6 thousands have by March 1943 been transferred to other camps, and 1115 inmates have been released. In March 1943 there was about 25 thousands inmates in the camp. Numbers being allocated to new arrivals at that time were just over 121,000. Those numbers applied to inmates ["Häftlings"]. Upon their arrival they were all duly registered and had their successive inmates numbers tattooed. Numbers, however, did not apply to huge masses of people brought here for them to be instantly killed. The latter [mass killing] activity took place a few kilometers away from the Auschwitz camp, in Rajsko, where an associated Birkenau [Brzezinka] camp was established. There, whole transports of people were delivered by trains or trucks - often a few thousands people per day, a total of whose was by August 1942 more than 800,000, and by March 1943 - over 1.5 million. Most of those people were Jews, but there also were Czechs, Germans and other nationalities among them. It caused us a particularly great pain when in enormous piles of

clothes and things left by the gassed people we were able to find children's little shoes and prams, also rosaries and Polish prayer books. Among others killed in this horrific slaughter, there also were people from a few villages from the Lublin province. Furthermore, during that period there, in our camp and all its sub-camps some 11,400 war inmates [Bolsheviks] were killed in various ways.

After my arrival at the Auschwitz camp (the night from 21 into 22 September 1940) I found myself, as all new arrivals at Auschwitz do, in conditions that defied all my former experience. During the first few days I felt bewildered, as if dropped off on another planet.

With SS-men urging us with rifle butts into a floodlit barbed wire surrounded area we run past some loudly laughing Kapos [supervisors] decorated with green and red patches in places where one would display one's orders. Using poles, Kapos line us up, and, jeering wildly and exchanging jokes, they kill off sick and weak people, or those who imprudently admitted to being a judge, or a priest. All this makes me feel as if we are being locked up in an asylum.

During my first few days there, I witnessed some very gruesome incidents, such that the Dante's description of hell would pale beside. I will not describe these here, nor any of those I witnessed during the years I spent in the camp. This will be done by my colleagues: "J" and "E". I keep these to myself [the Polish phrase Pilecki uses here is: '*w e j r z a ł e m w s i e b i e...*', this phrase has to leave one guessing as to what exactly he meant here – note by this translator].

Here – out of necessity – I need to digress. After my return from the camp, when describing my experiences to a few acquaintances, I touched upon [the matter of extreme cruelty]. Their view was that ‘normal people’ would find it difficult to comprehend it. Courtesy would require not to call these people by any other name here (I will do it later in this report, though) since, for a number of years, I have referred to certain kind of these ‘normal people’ using very different expressions.

We live in time and age some people define as a threshold of two epochs. Others say, ‘we are right now taking a turn...’. Still others seek to give the humanity a new political system and write about it. All those wiser than most agree on one: that we got bogged down very badly, as scholastics got before us.

Apart from that, we (by which I mean here the ‘normal ones’) are paralyzed by a fear psychosis. It does not allow us to do, or say anything that goes beyond the framework appropriate for ‘average people’ lest they flare up. God only forbid – being ridiculed by others. For instance, I met some people, most of them males, supposedly – believers, who feel ashamed to make a clear sign of cross and only make something vaguely resembling this sign. This is an excellent example of shame and fear psychosis: not to make the sign lest some idiot from a crowd ridiculed them. Better idle away surrounded by pack of idiots than have someone point finger at themselves and regard them as someone incomprehensible to an average person. I certainly do not write this to lord it over everyone.

On the contrary! I only would like to shake everyone up, so that rather than remain at certain mob-normalized level, new

shoots emerge, at least here and there, of thoughts and deeds conceived by individuals unconcerned about a chance of some blockhead next to him hitting them on the head out of jealousy, to make sure that none of their neighbours towers over the crowd, none becomes bigger than the rest. And yet, only those who do grow beyond the average, are able to create new ideas and introduce these to other people, unfold new horizons before them.

My digression explains that in no way would I expect to be counted amongst those you could call 'normal people from a crowd'. I would not like to have to force myself to fit the tight frames of their notions. Having explained this, I hope it should be easier to comprehend what I found in myself and what I chose to write about, the very things I initially wanted to remain silent about, after I heard from my acquaintances that 'those things were very difficult to embrace'. Yet, to leave anything out could well render further parts of my story unintelligible.

Well, I found joy in myself at a moment one would think least likely to produce that kind of feeling.

It was when I stood in the rank made up of the „Bloody Alojz” block inmates and saw Krankenmann [elsewhere: Krankemann] 'smooth out' the ranks of the penal company right in front of us with a knife he would plunge into abdomen of any person who would move a few centimeters too far forward, that, with some surprise, unprepared to believe that feeling at first, I realized that I just found a joy in myself: I became aware that I again wanted to fight, that my initial crisis of a few days was luckily over. That at last, which has

been my yearning since 1939, a yearning a soldier can understand better than most, I stand in a line as straight as a tightened string, a line of furious men standing arm to arm, united by the same purpose and the same thought, a line of Poles prepared to fight. These are ideal people with which to start an organization.

This was the source of the force that told me to believe and create. So I commenced this work. After a few weeks I had the first cell of Organizacja Wojskowa established at Auschwitz. It comprised people from Warsaw. In October 1940 I sent my first message to Warsaw handing it in to Captain Michał Romanowicz who had a contact with Aleksander Wielopolski, an intelligence operative working under Tęczyński; Wielopolski was released from the camp.

I made Colonel Władysław Surmacki, whom I have known for a long time and whom in May 1940 I involved in Warsaw in TAP work as its Chief of Staff, in charge of the first "upper five" (Col. Władysław Surmacki, Cpt. Dr Władysław Dering, Cavalry Cpt. (Res.) Jerzy de Virion, Eugeniusz Obojski i Roman Zagner). In March 1941, I put together the second „upper five” (Officer Cadet Witold Szymkowiak, Officer Cadet Antoni Rosa, Tadeusz Słowiaczek, Sec. Lieut. Mikołaj Skornowicz, Władysław Kupiec, Bolesław Kupiec, Tadeusz Pietrzykowski) from those inmates who had lowest numbers. In May 1941, from among those who came in the fourth and fifth Warsaw transports, I formed the third "upper five" (Cpt. Eugeniusz Trieblich, First Lieut. Włodzimierz Makalinski, First Lieut. (Res.) Stanisław Gutkiewicz, Wincenty Gawron, Stanisław Stawiszyński), and in October 1941 – the fourth "five" (Henryk Bartosiewicz, Cpt. Stanisław Kazuba, Sec. Lieut.



Konstanty Piekarski, Stefan Bielecki, First Lieut. (Res.). Tadeusz Lech). [By the way], I never blindly stuck to the number of five.

None of those "fives" knew anything about the other fives and, in believing theirs forms the peak of our organization, they would develop it independently from each other, forming its branches reaching as far as the collective energy and capacity of its members made it possible, augmented by the capacities of members at lower rungs of this organization, whose numbers were steadily growing due to efforts from all upper fives. Our work consisted in: saving lives of our colleagues through providing supplementary food, recommending them to those in charge of individual blocks, ensuring [proper] care when at "Krankenbau" [the camp's hospital for inmates was named Häftlingskrankenbau - A.C.], providing fresh linen and underwear, finding better jobs/positions, moral support, distributing information from outside the camp, contacts with outside population, delivering camp messages to the outside world, combining all active individuals **into one system to prepare for a coordinated action to take over the camp, once an outside order has been given, or a raid is undertaken on the camp.**

For increased security, I have decided that the first five should not know about the next one. For the same reason, I **initially** did not approach senior officers, who were registered here under their own names. Some of them, colonels whose ranks were hardly a secret, were at that time already developing plans to take control of the camp. In April 1941 my colleagues would report, with increasing frequency, that Colonel Aleksander Stawarz and Lieutenant Colonel Karol Kumuniecki

were of the view, that inmates should liberate the camp. Approximate dates for it were circulated. Lieutenant Colonel Kumuniecki was to take all healthy inmates towards Katowice, and Colonel Stawarz with all sick ones was to stay put. Bearing in mind the openness and naivety of this planning I kept myself, for a while, away from it all. On May 15, 1941, I sent a corresponding message to Warsaw through Lieutenant (Res.) Karol Świątorzecki, as he was being released from the camp.

Meanwhile, our Organization (we never referred to [its true name] in the open and used [this word] only in a different meaning) has been growing quite fast.

Huge milling stones of this camp incessantly churned out new corpses. Many colleagues were dying and they had to be replaced with others. And so we had to reconstruct [our organization], again and again.

We kept on sending messages to the outside world. They were broadcast by foreign radio stations. The camp's command would go mad about it – they would strip the floors in lofts looking for something. Individual „upper fives”, once they have branched out far enough, would report to me a ‘tangible’ existence of another organization (ie, another “five”). In November 1941 I sent a message to Warsaw through Captain Ferdynand Trojnicki who was released from the camp. At the same time, in my letters to family that went by a roundabout way I wrote not to attempt to buy me out from the camp. This would have been feasible as they had no case against me. I was thrilled by this game and its expected future finale.

In December 1941, I sent a message to Warsaw through Colonel Władysław Surmacki as he was being released. Next day after his arrival at Warsaw he once again was arrested and [later] shot at Pawiak. In March 1942, he managed to pass on a mere few words about our work to his wife through Sergeant Antoni Woźniak.

In Autumn 1941, Colonel Jan Karcz and First Lieutenant Colonel Jerzy Zalewski arrived at the camp. I invited Colonel Jan Karcz to join our Organization. He agreed. A few months later he was taken to the bunker and tormented there. Since he did not admit anything he was released from the bunker and transferred to Brzezinka, an Auschwitz sub-camp. He did some work for our Organization there.

As already mentioned, out of caution, for the time being I tried to avoid involving in our organization's work officers of high ranks known here under their true names. Lest it be wrongly attributed to my 'exaggerated ambition', however, I decided to subordinate myself to Colonel Kazimierz Rawicz, who was contacted by my friend Henryk Bartosiewicz. Colonel Rawicz came here under an assumed name and was firmly, and widely, believed to be a civilian person. Colonel Rawicz joined our Organization. A work plan was agreed with him and we have since continued to work together.

Then I put together the fifth „upper five” (Sec. Lieut. (Res.) Bernard Świerczyzna, Officer Cadet (Res.) Zbigniew Ruszczański, Officer Cadet (Res.) Mieczysław Wagner, Officer Cadet (Res.) Zbigniew Różak, Platoon Leader Tadeusz Szydlik).

In March 1942 there arrived at the camp Major Zygmunt Bończa-Bohdanowski, whom I have known for many years and whom I have enlisted in TAP as its commanding officer at Warsaw. At the camp I made him an Operation Commander of all organized units in the camp.

In January 1942 I sent to Warsaw some minor messages through our colleague Aleksander Paliński.

In 1941 we had in the camp the ten-times-responsibility rule, meaning that for each escaped prisoner ten others were executed. For that reason **we did not organize escapes** [at that time]. Early in 1942 Berlin banned this, so we started our preparations for an escape. In May 1942 our colleagues Stefan Bielecki and Wincenty Gawron were successful so I was able to send my message to Warsaw through them. There were no repressions at the camp following that escape.

In June First Lieutenant Włodzimierz Makaliński from the 13th Uhlans Regiment was executed by shooting; he worked very close to me and acted very bravely during the 1939 war; I grieved over his death.

At the same time more than 80 inmates from Silesia, among them a member of our Organization, First Lieutenant (Res.) Stanisław Gutkiewicz were shot. After the November 11, 1941 execution which [among others] claimed the life of our very brave First Lieutenant (Res.) Tadeusz Lech, this one was the first execution on such a large scale.

Through Henryk Bartosiewicz's exertions we came to an understanding with Colonel Aleksander Stawarz, who joined our Organization's planning cell.

In June 1942 the camp authorities ostentatiously put on display a body of German soldier allegedly killed by Polish inmates, [presumably] seeking to provoke some reaction and unrest within the camp, and then have some [related] tension among the Polish inmates, the authorities could see what our actual reading of all this was. This stopped them from any further action and the business got eventually burked.

**At that time and for many months afterwards, until March 7, 1943, we were perfectly capable of taking over the camp at any moment and only because we had in mind the general situation on the outside, absence of an order or of an air strike either of which would have untied our hands (as a *vis maior*), a possibility of a conflict with the best understood overall interest, and similar concerns have stopped us from undertaking any voluntary actions [of that kind].**

**Our tragedy was not that, as [some] people in Warsaw thought, we were only 'walking bags of bones'. On the contrary, our tragedy was that despite being strong and having influence on our local situation, due to our concern for the general consequences [of our action - addition by this translator] (a possible repression against the population at large) our hands were tied and we thus had to fake helplessness.**

**We needed an order, a permission, an assent from our authorities in Warsaw [to undertake a liberating action] lest we were told later: Mr W., J. or H., your [excessive] ambition has cost our Nation a number of victims. Lest we**

**were pointed out as an example of our centuries old national vices: lack of discipline and licence.**

Due to individual commanding bodies being dispersed at that time between various blocks, we would then divide our forces into four main large detachments according to their respective tasks in an event of taking over the camp, two scenarios of such an event having been considered: 1/ Action taking place when the camp is at work and 2/ Action taking place when all [inmates] are at blocks (night time, lights on).

In that time I sent a message through Stanisław Jaster, who in a joint effort with his three colleagues brilliantly arranged an escape in the camp's commandant car. When en route out they encountered the Lagerführer [Camp Head] and, very cheekily, made him salute back inmates dressed in [German] military uniforms.

Only when at Auschwitz and doing our work did I experience a moment one would dream about, in vain, when free. Only when faced with heaps of corpses did our politicians abandon the mutual party-versus-party bickering - a waste of energy I have always found so loathsome. In the political cell of our Organization we had together Prof. Roman Rybacki, former MP Stanisław Dubois, our colleagues Konstanty Jagiełło, Piotr Kownacki and Kiliański. All of them worked together, very accommodatingly, and in an exemplary manner.

In July 1942, Colonel Kazimierz Rawicz and Officer Cadet from the 10th Uhlans Regiment, Witold Szymkowiak applied for, and left in, a transport to another camp, [both of them] intending an escape whilst in transit. I sent a message through

Szymkowiak. Neither Colonel Kazimierz Rawicz, nor Officer Cadet Witold Szymkowiak managed to escape whilst in transit. They are now at another camp and I have a correspondence with them via their families. Before his departure, Colonel Kazimierz Rawicz proposed to me to turn to Colonel Juliusz Gilewicz to involve him in our work in place of the departing Colonel Kazimierz Rawicz. I spoke to Colonel Juliusz Gilewicz who agreed to, and then joined our Organization. We continued our work in a new make-up as, thanks to Henryk Bartosiewicz's efforts, we were joined by Lieutenant Colonel Karol Kumuniecki. After this, there hardly were any officers left [in the camp] who would not work for our Organization.

Soon thereafter, Colonel Aleksander Stawarz and our colleague Stanisław Dubois were executed by shooting.

In August 1942, during a typhus fever epidemic, the authorities killed in gas chambers many inmates who already recovered but were still in the typhus block (No 20) as convalescents. This was under a guise of a 'delousing measure'. They went to the gas chamber with full awareness that their death is a result of them happening to be still on the block on the day they took people to kill them in the chamber. The block was closed and all, except for physicians and nurses, were taken by cars to be gassed. Much help was extended by Captain, Dr Władysław Dering, who saved lives of over 20 Poles by providing nurse uniforms to them.

I fell ill with typhus 6 days after this mass gassing but luckily managed to recover from it. Almost all "old numbers" have contracted typhus.

After general delousing, the camp authorities relocated inmates in such a way that all detachments found itself, in their entirety, in the same block. Unbeknownst to them, they made our tasks simpler in case of an action. Now that two scenarios were unnecessary (1. Detachments at work or 2. Inmates at block), I divided all our forces, ignoring the frameworks of individual „fives”, into battalions, companies and platoons, allocating areas of action for all of them, combining individual blocks into battalions and appointing, as their commanding officers:

Operation Commander - Major Zygmunt Bończa-Bohdanowski, Battalion 1 - Major Edward Gött-Getyński, Battalion 2 - Captain Stanisław Kazuba, Battalion 3 - Captain Tadeusz Lisowski and Battalion 4 - Captain Julian "Trzęsimiech".

On 28 October 1942, at a roll-call, under a pretence of a need for some inmates to go to the "Erkennungsdienst" [the records office] regarding their photos, many of our colleagues, mostly from the province of Lublin (even though there were among them also people from other regions of Poland, such as our brave Stanisław Stawiszyński) had to step forward from the line. When all camp was at work, all 265 of them were executed on Block 11 by shooting. On that occasion, for the first time ever five inmates, among them Captain Dr Henryk Suchnicki and Leon Kukielka, encouraged others to resist. However, except for these five, everyone else decided that it is their duty to die, because of the likelihood of reprisals against their families. They had a few hours to think it over. The above-mentioned five inmates already barricaded the entry into Block 11. The camp authorities, tipped off by a guy from



Silesia, their informer, arrived there, disposed of the five first and then proceeded to kill each one of them with shots to the back of head from a small caliber rifle, or an air gun.

28 October 1942 was a day of tension. At first we did not know why some of us were called out. Later – we were unable to communicate with each other. At the top of our Organization we were almost biting our finger nails. If only we could obtain a word from our kinfolk from outside.

**What we awaited from these 265 was their decision. Their mutiny would have untied our hands. Our scruples would have been pushed aside** by this change in situation, regardless of whether we would have liked it, or not. We would have **taken over our camp**. So we waited. **They decided otherwise. We saw how bravely they met their death.**

From the very moment they were arranged near Block 3 in fives by Palitsch carrying a small caliber rifle, they knew they were going to die. From Block 3 they took a bend between Blocks 14 and 15, the kitchen and [Blocks] 16, 17, 18, then proceeded between [Blocks] 25, 26, 27 and 19, 20, 21. At the timber-made canteen building, the column hesitated a second then promptly made up its mind and, turning at the right angle, aimed right at the death gates of Block 11. The day was sunny. The column of 265 inmates marched briskly, in well dressed-up fives, [all of them] strong, young, select. Quite a few cracked jokes, most mouths smiling, as most of them were camp veterans. Many a time they would have seen larger, or smaller, groups of their colleagues march to meet their death and they would later have made comments on who and how

behaved facing death. Never before though there went that many, 265, a whole column, without any escort, all alone, followed by the select pair talking to each other: „Bruno” and Palitzsch with a rifle on a belt, as if having a walk. You must admit it: Palitzsch was not a coward. It would have sufficed for the last five to do a sudden turn about and both Palitzsch and „Bruno” would have in half a minute breathed their last. They were however sure of themselves: they knew that the people who marched to meet their death had news from recent arrivals that the enemy does not spare families of those who engage in mutiny. In order to save their life, they would not condemn their mothers, wives and children to death or tortures. Their experience of hell has already elevated their souls – they simultaneously experienced here heaven and hell. Apart from those who have already died, how many of these have, more than once, risked their lives to save a friend?

Exchanging comments on this within a group of a few of my friends later in the evening we were asking ourselves: **will people outside this camp ever come to appreciate and understand this?** Maybe those five did not have any relatives, or maybe they have come to a point of breakthrough? They were unable to take the remaining ones with them, though. Maybe they made up their minds too late when they were all already locked up in Block 11. They only expedited their own death. The rest had to wait for theirs a few hours longer, until noon.

This was a pay-back for what occurred earlier in the province of Lublin. In Autumn 1942 there arrived at the camp a few people I knew from my work in Warsaw: Second Lieutenant (Res.) Stanisław Wierzbicki, Czesław Sikora, Kiliański and

Captain Stanisław Machowski, who, according to Second Lieutenant (Res.) Stanisław Wierzbicki, was a Staff Personal at the Warsaw High Command. Even though they have until the last moments before arrest worked in Warsaw, the above-mentioned four people knew very little about Auschwitz. Sec. Lieut. (Res.) Stanisław Wierzbicki knew, he needed to find "Witold", yet he knew nothing about mass killings by gas, about „Kanada”, about phenol injections, „pyramids”, the Block 10 secret, or about the Block’s 11 „Wailing Wall”. Sec. Lieut. (Res.) Stanisław Wierzbicki brought me good news: Stefan Bielecki we sent luckily has got to Warsaw and was now working. He himself gave him once a lift by car to Mińsk Litewski. This has cheered us up, as up to that moment we have had no news about our **emissaries**. All of them would melt into thin air.

When asked, what people on the outside think about escapes from Auschwitz, Sec. Lieut. (Res.) Stanisław Wierzbicki answered: There are two opinions on that. The society condemns it, as it believes that up to this time ten people are executed for each escapee, yet the Warsaw High Command decorates escapees from Auschwitz with Virtuti Militari. Now that I got out myself I can only laugh about it. Poor thing – he told us this story to talk us into an escape from Auschwitz, possibly together with him. He did not survive even two months.

All of them: Sec. Lieut (Res.) Stanisław Wierzbicki, Czesław Sikora i Kiliański told us they were surprised at our physical condition (in Warsaw they had a picture of Polish inmates here as “bags of bones”). They brought us some unpleasant news: generally, **very few** people think about Auschwitz and

**there is no intention to save Auschwitz inmates, as this would not pay off**, after all they are all ‘**good-for-nothing**’, just bags of bones. Thinking about it was both bitter, and funny, as our Polish colleagues stood before us – all of them pictures of health. We were **not asking** anyone for any help, all we were waiting for was an order, **a permission** for us to commence an action of our own. Or, for an order **banning** it.

At the end of their briefing the newly arrived asked us for help. Captain Stanisław Machowski was taken care of by his former acquaintance and subordinate Motyka, who worked for us, and the rest was taken care of by others. We found light jobs for all of them.

History repeats itself: both those who die in camps, and those who **live on** in camps are **misunderstood**. It will take many years for their dusts to be given due tribute.

From time to time – over these couple years I have spent in the camp, some sought to persuade me that one should not get involved in any conspiracy when at the camp, as this is against the ‘wishes of the society’. I could not believe this, since following this line of thinking, as if fulfilling the ‘wish of the **rest of the society**’, each Pole brought to the camp should die, and die as quickly as possible, should not fight for better conditions, or take care of his colleagues, or provide moral support to anyone. [All that] so that he, when such moment arrives, if he is still alive by then, could melt into a pack of torpid blockheads, who – naturally – would not any longer be of any threat to the enemy, or to other Poles. The latter, consciously or otherwise, appear to see in their brothers imprisoned in camps future competitors for laurels.

However, those in the camp had other things than laurels on their mind. **In our daily work we fought to strengthen our Polish brothers in their fight, so that as few as possible Polish beings would leave through the crematorium's chimney. Sometimes, one day appeared to us as long as a year.**

Apart from that, some people, even when in the camp, would maintain only they have the authority to do underground work. Others, apparently, have in minds of the former ceased to be Poland's sons. For example: "Czesiek" i "Tadek", who had good contacts with local population and whose communication lines reached thus further. Their "upper five" has branched out the widest and has gone so far from the trunk that they suggested to me through Second Lieutenant Konstanty Piekarski, that it is only them that are authorized by Warsaw to do the work in the camp's area (reports, photos). All others, in 'Warsaw's view', so claimed "Czesiek" i "Tadek", should cease their [conspiratorial] work. That amounted to almost the same as if to tell the former to cease to exist. Earlier in Warsaw, I got used to that kind of exaggerated self-opinion which is quite widespread among Poles, and namely that he, and only he can do some thing and thus [only] he is **authorized** to do it. Because of that, I did not take it too much to my heart, all the more that it usually appears to be a way to fight competition, an activity to secure future gains **for oneself**.

What concerns our wireless [communication]: apart from our portable radio station that we had to dismantle in Autumn 1942 due to some careless tongues, and one receiver, I managed to get access, together with Second Lieutenant

Konstanty Piekarski, to the local German camp radio station. There we replaced our former Commander Sokołowski, who had become a bit clumsy. Our task there was to prepare maps for the camp authority. With help from Officer Cadet (Res.) Zbigniew Ruszczyński we managed to set up our cell there. From there I took out a complete set of slips, coded abbreviations used by „Funkstelle” [radio and telegraphic communications centre at the Oświęcim SS garrison headquarters –A. C.]. They were referred to as "Verkehrabkürzungen" [communication abbreviations – a note by this translator].

Through my colleague Eugeniusz Dulin [elsewhere in this report: Dublin] I passed on these slips, taking advantage of contacts some inmates had established with civil workers in Brzeszcze, themselves Organization's civil members on outside, who maintained a „recapture” of Auschwitz camp and avenging the death of so many martyrs was in their plans. Inmates with weaker morale were quick to pick it up and would since contend we should ourselves do nothing of the kind but only wait for us to be “freed” by others. It turned out we were to wait [for it] in vain.

In 1942, with great ease I was able to relocate our Organization's members to appropriate Kommandos [camp work details – a note by this translator] to prepare the ground there for the commencement of work for our Organization. That was possible due to a member of our Organization, Officer Cadet Mieczysław Januszewski, managing to secure an Arbeitsdienst [work assignment officer] job. On a large scale, members of our Organization were able to secure convenient jobs, ie jobs with a good „Kommando” [a camp work detail]

with a greater chance of staying alive, or from the perspective of Organization's work, or in Kommando in which it was easier to organize an escape (as was the case with Wincenty Gawron and Stefan Bielecki who took a message to Warsaw; we thus saved the life of these two colleagues who already had death sentences for possessing weapons).

1942 ended with a prank four inmates from the camp's elite, all of them being Arbeitdiensts, and namely Mieczysław Januszewski, German Otto Küsel, Bolesław Kuczbara and Jan Baraś-Komski, played on the Lagerältester Bronisław Brodniewicz, Inmate No 1, a Pole who spied for Germans and was dubbed "Bruno - Black Death" (Bruno - czarna śmierć). The first and the second Arbeitsdienst - Mietek (Officer Cadet Mieczysław Januszewski) and Otto (prisoner's number - 2), both brave, of amiable appearance, popular with inmates and enjoying a lot of freedom of movement within the camp and around the outer chain of sentries, accompanied by two other colleagues escaped by horse-drawn cart. At the same time, they did a great favour to us inmates by sending a letter to one of the camp's torturers, the Lagerältester [Head Inmate] Brodniewicz. The letter was written in a friendly tone (even though Inmate No 1 and Inmate No 2 hated each other's guts and made it very well known) and said that all fell out in such a way that they had to hurry and could not, despite an agreement, take the Lagerältester with them. Even though [for us inmates] no agreement with Bruno was possible, let alone one regarding an escape, the camp's authorities took away freedom from that butcher and punished him with bunker where, for three months, he had to explain this matter. The escape took place on December 30. Locking Bruno up on the

New Year's Eve caused all the festive season, until January 6, abound in parties, masquerades, boxing matches, concerts and dancing events, all unheard of before. To oldest inmates all that business looked like a folly before storm.

**The discipline in the camp has been weakening, slowly but steadily, from the very beginning.** [The experience of] someone who arrived at the camp a month later than someone else did not so much differ in that the former has spent here 30 days less than the other but rather in that he had experienced fewer methods of tormenting [inmates]; some of these could simply have been discontinued since last month. A multitude of these was always available to those in all sorts of positions of authority and to their tout pack. Some used these methods because of their urge to destroy lives of those they hated, others – to endear themselves to the former ones. Often, SS-men would openly say, as if explaining their behaviour: 'Das ist ein Vernichtungslager' ['This is an extermination camp']. No wonder that those who stayed at Auschwitz the longest reacted to the above-mentioned festive riotousness saying: 'There used to be Lager Auschwitz. But now, thanks to God, it is no more. Barely, its last syllable has remained: 'wic' only'. [The German word 'der Witz' means 'joke'; the colloquial Polish uses a derived word 'wic' which has the same, informal, meaning – a note from this translator]. At evening, when returning to our blocks behind the barbed wire after all-day work, it did not trouble us at all when we saw a scene that could appear ghastly to people from outside the camp: our orchestra made up of our colleagues-musicians (a very good job), very much admired by all commissions from Berlin and our Camp Commandant's pride (whenever it



had a vacant position, a replacement was easily found on the outside and brought to the camp) with much zest plays a march tune, usually very lively one. Sometimes Kommandos would march to the tune of polka or oberek [two popular Polish folk dances – a note by this translator]. However, not all of these march as briskly as “old numbers” do, most of whom work at workshops. Some Kommandos only shuffle along – these are “new numbers”. They carry those who have fainted or haul those who are too weak to walk by themselves. Bloodied heads knocked out by hands of some moron from Silesia or Germany droop inertly or are supported by shoulders and carried by their colleagues their distressed faces beside [these heads]. One cannot help but ask oneself a question: which of these heads are alive still? Here they haul a half-cadaver, his abdomen touching the ground. Those who carry it barely can walk themselves, yet you are supposed to match the rhythm of this lively march, if you do not want to get one on your head.

Our detachment is five hundred men strong, all of us work at workshops: we are healthy, strong, cheerful whenever possible. You see different faces here, most of us are camp veterans. Our step is firm, we now walk past a group representing camp authorities and can still see on their faces, and in their eyes, amusement caused by the passage of the previous, pitiable column. Strong step of our colleagues, most of whom belong to our „fives”, wipes away that smirk from our tyrants’ faces. Even though they do take pride in the workshops, our work and ourselves being often presented, as model-inmates, to all sorts of commissions, now they are reluctant to look straight into our eyes and turn theirs away.

Our thought: when will we finally be able to spring at you? Next to them – as an emergency – there are two detachments of heavily armed soldiers. Yet, this means nothing to us, we would not even give them time to breathe. **Yet, we must not! Colleagues, we must not! The outside society would have to pay dearly for that** – so seem they to suggest from afar. **Don't we deal here with some calamitous misjudgment?**

We walk past the crematorium. Next to its entry there is a group of men and women. Poles. Our impression as if we were a few steps from a slaughterhouse. My God – these Polish women, as soon as we enter the camp, will be taken alive into the crematorium, issued a soap and a towel and these males and females will think that they will have a bath (sometimes [the authorities] do not consider it necessary to play this comedy). When in the crematorium, a window in the ceiling will be opened and a container with gas thrown in through it. It will break open on impact. This metal container will contain diatomite crystals saturated with prussic acid, so-called cyclone-B. And such will be their lives' end. A small group will even be grudged the gas – they will simply stun them with a head hit and carry them, while still alive, right to the [crematorium's] grate. We walk past them, we almost brush past them. Us – healthy, strong men. We hope we do not see scorn in their eyes. Maybe they still have some hope. They do know, though, that people come here to die. We have passed them. In many eyes we saw death, but not scorn! In many eyes - even pride that they would die at Auschwitz. Among them there was a young boy, maybe ten years of age; he stood on his tiptoes to see us better. He smiled at us, maybe looked for someone he would know. We all have our beloved women,

some of us - small tots at home, we have seen here many infernal scenes, yet the eyes of these people keep us later awake at night. Further down, at the gate, there is another group of women and men: they are turned away from us. They will remain there, until this ghastly procession entering the camp has all walked past them. Then they will be taken to Block 11 for examinations and then to the end of their peregrination - to the Wailing Wall. Then their bodies will be brought out in bloodied coffins to the same place to which the bodies from the first group would go and their ashes, together with "Häftlings" [inmates'] ashes, will be blown about by wind on fields. Looking at these women, how many of my colleagues would think: maybe Mother, maybe sister, maybe daughter. Yet, the camp resident's heart is hardened - only a half an hour later his thoughts are exclusively occupied with where to find some extra food and so he strikes with a colleague some „margarine deal", paying no attention that an enormous heap of naked corpses killed on order by phenyl injections is just a step away from him. Today "only" hundred odd of those. They are thrown down one on the top of another as they are brought from the hospital, their limbs spread, their dead pupils watching the business deal being struck, waiting for a cart to take them, in a few hours, to the crematorium. No-one would shudder if they happen to inadvertently touch, or even step on, one of these naked ones. Yesterday he may have been his colleague, today he lies here quietly, tomorrow maybe my body will lie here - big deal!

And so, after the festive season, year 1943 brought, apart from the change of Lagerältester [the Head Inmate] and a further softening of discipline, a continued supply of the usual

camp scenes. In January 1943 they execute Colonel Jan Karcz and First Lieut. (Res.) Eugeniusz Zaturski, once a TAP worker in Warsaw, by shooting. On 16 February they shoot First Lieut. (Res.) Stanisław Wierzbicki, also a former TAP worker. Later, they in the end shoot a group they have kept for a long time in the bunker: Lieut. Col. Karol Kumuniecki, Major Edward Gött-Getyński, First Lieut. Tadeusz Biliński, Cav. First Lieut. Włodzimierz Koliński and First Lieut. Mieczysław Koliński – brothers and others, all with a single shot from an air gun to the back of their heads, a slight variation from the Katyń way.

Similarly to Katyń, bodies of those killed by gas were, at first, buried in Brzezinka in huge trenches. For that, they used a special Kommando, of Jews only, who were given two weeks to live and then were killed by gas themselves. Later, they found out that this was not a good idea as the local groundwater acquired a nasty smell and “clues” were left behind. So they started digging up corpses, piled them up and burned. At first it was a manual work, but later they applied a crane. It was out of question to burn them in the [existing] crematorium as all crematoria were lagging behind [with work]. As a new project, they designed two new crematoria, with eight body burning grates each. Electricity body burning was to take three minutes there. Calculations were made that working two shifts and burning two corpses on each grate at a time, the two crematoria could burn down about 5 million corpses yearly. The project was expeditiously approved of in Berlin and the construction of these commenced. They were to be ready by 1 February 1943. Out of necessity, this deadline was later extended. By April 1943 they were ready.

Witnessing killing healthy people by gas makes a strong impact only when you first see it. A few months after the war with Bolsheviks commenced, the camp authorities received the first transport of war inmates: about seven hundred of them. In front of some kind of commission they were crammed into one room at Block 11 (gas chambers were not ready for use, yet) so that they could hardly stand by themselves. The whole room got sealed up and, in the presence of onlookers protected by gas masks, [all of them were] killed by gas. Those who were able to peep in as the room was being aired, spoke of most gruesome scenes there. Judging by the uniforms, in which they have been gassed, they were all high Bolshevik rank from various units. It looked as it was a gas trial.

In November 1941 I witnessed, soon after I left the block in the morning, a march of several columns of completely naked people towards the crematorium. There were several hundred of them. Icy snow was falling at that time and I shuddered at the thought how cold they must have been. They were all Bolsheviks. As this was the first instance of taking people alive to crematorium I at first wondered what might be the purpose of this given that there was no time there for anything else but burning corpses. The inmates that work there in two shifts can hardly cope with the heaps of our colleagues' bodies. It turned out they were made to undress and were brought straight to [be burnt in] the crematorium in order to save time.

From the very beginnings of the camp, yet very rarely, some inmates, particularly those rounded up on streets of Warsaw, were released. However, as soon as killing by gas started, all

releases stopped, until late in 1942, when many inmates, particularly those from Silesia, were able to leave the camp after they signed the so-called Volksdeutsch [ethnic Germans] list. That said, they were promptly drafted into [German] military units, so that they had little time left to put information about the camp around.

From the start, the camp authorities sought to deprive us of our private time after work, however little of it was left to us, as we also worked on Sundays. This was done by arranging various uniform reviews ["Sachenappell"], keeping us locked up inside blocks ["Blocksperre"], and – from the moment typhus epidemic started – looking for louses and checking by nurses of our linen ["Läuseappell"]. Under the guise of hygiene concern the main idea was to leave to inmates as little time as possible in which they could communicate between themselves.

Once the authorities realized, that Poles were doing well (solidarity, control of better jobs, supporting ill inmates, high percentage of recoveries made by ill persons, as well as „accidental“ deaths of stool pigeons planted on us), an inkling started developing with them. Then, in Autumn 1941, they deprived us of two hours of our private time on Sunday – between 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. – forcing us to sleep during that time. It was strictly enforced by the camp authorities, since a prisoner who did not sleep after Sunday lunch was treated as a saboteur who wasted his energy.

Seeing that the efficacy of this order was only minute, the authorities adopted another approach in 1942. Outside Block 15 they set up a mail box into which they ordered (this was

announced in all Blocks) to drop anonymous or signed information destined for the authorities about various, pried out, or overheard conversations, or like.

## **We Decided to Fight It**

The matter was taken care of by: First Lieut. Tadeusz Biliński, our colleague Tadeusz Jakubowski and Capt. Tadeusz Dziedzic. A few hours before Palitzsch or someone else from the authorities were to open it, our colleagues would open it using a self-made key. They would look through the letters dropped in there and would leave those we considered harmless to us. We would find out who was an informer. Sometimes we would write anonymous letters ourselves to provide some food for thinking to the authorities about „the gold procurement” or other activities we were uninterested in, but the authorities were greatly absorbed by. Sometimes we achieved good results with it, instigating investigations against informers.

„Gold procurement” was a reference to all that concerned gold, notes or precious stones hidden in briefcases, suitcases, tubes with cream, toothpaste, shoe soles, soap, anywhere where one would least expect them. All these have been left behind by, mostly, but not necessarily, Jews who came here expecting they were being taken to Germany to get work, and got gassed. They would come here from France, Czech Republic, Greece, the Netherlands, Norway and elsewhere. They were allowed to take a hand luggage with them. It contained all their wealth: gold, dollars and brilliants they

wanted to smuggle through. After a cursory, incompetent examination by SS-men or Kapos, inmates involved in this work were able to, due to their shrewdness, find such objects and, if unburdened by scruples, would often extract from them (I witnessed it myself many a time) very fine brilliants, gold and notes, as well as all sorts of women's and men's outfitting, anything that a well-off lady or gentleman would need to have.

I then worked at the tannery where they would bring suitcases, children's prams, ladies' handbags and many other objects, sometimes luxurious ones, for them to either be immediately burned down in a large industrial furnace, or sorted out and made pairs from whole pyramids of men's, women's and children's shoes, of all forms, colours and sizes. If we add a huge quantity of very fine underwear, then we will get a rough idea what this particular „Kanada“ was.

Another type of "Kanada" were food reserves brought by the people who thought they were going to get work in Germany and **were going there through the crematorium's chimney at Auschwitz**. All sorts of canned meat and fish, sardines, oranges, lemons, sugar, chocolate, cocoa, sweets, cakes, dates, figs and like. This was just a part of what made up the other "Kanada". All those articles were subject to exchange between inmates and gave SS-men and Kapos an excuse to daily revisions, which resulted in rich booty for them and in many inmates ending their lives in the bunker, or in SK [Strafkompanie – penal company].

[In other words], "gold procurement" was possession of objects that belonged to people killed by gas, and the business



of exchanging these. [Even] an accidental one-time exchange between inmates who had not known each other was mutually binding and required discretion from both parties involved. An investigation that followed detection of gold [with one inmate], would sometimes, after beating in the bunker, lead to arrests of a number of other inmates, to which the respective clues were leading. The greed for gold among the SS-men was also a cause of investigations inside that group.

Auschwitz soon became a centre, from which small streamlets of gold and brilliants would start flowing in various directions. Camp authorities had themselves their hands in it. The camp commandant who had good relationships with the greatest thug at our plant (tannery), Oberkapo Erik, officially allowed, having probably his cut in the spoils, for suitcases containing selected watches, perfumes from Paris, scissors and like to be delivered to Eric by car. From there such objects were sent on to Germany.

Along roads from Auschwitz you could see sentries stopping even military cars, doing personal searches of SS-men and anyone else who would drive, or walk, from our camp's direction.

It was because of this „gold fever” (gold procurement) that duping SS-men by providing them some related leads could serve as an effective „lightning-rod” for our Organization's work.

People reacted to gold differently. Personally, I never thought, brilliants or gold with blood on them could bring me

happiness. Frankly – in a way I never expected, I would go past these with almost perfect indifference. Yet, I knew some people who worked in the [camp’s] slaughterhouse and would sell smallgoods for gold. Later, when preparing to leave the camp, I turned to one of my colleagues who had some money, and proposed a joint escape with me. We could need some of this money on our way. When I asked him how much he had already gathered, it turned out he had more than one kilogram of gold. A few weeks later he had over a kilogram and a half. As it happened, we did not leave the camp together and I instead took others with me who had no penny to bless themselves with.

It was not gold alone but the camp conditions and experiences in general that would set characters apart. [People have] individual values. Some would slide down, becoming ever worse cads with no scruples, others, as if to compensate [for the others] would continuously rise morally, sculpting their characters strongly [as it were] in the manner of crystal. Surprises would still happen, yet: some who looked very strong would break down, and some weak persons would suddenly experience moral revival.

Putting aside „Kanada”, we would also experience surprises courtesy of new arrivals, our colleagues who would come from Pawiak, Montelupi and other prisons as well as from street round-ups. Our “fives” would look for their kinfolk, acquaintances and Organization’s workers among those. We would take good care of them [providing them with] linen, [extra] food, a better job. We always scrutinized them with caution as you never knew how a [former] colleague [of yours], fresh from outside, would behave. Major Wacław

Chmielewski, to name one, who worked with us at TAP in Warsaw (his *nom de guerre* was „Sęp”), and who I thought I could rely on, spotted me during my walk along the camp’s assembly square. Before a dozen, or so colleagues who stood close by, he embraced me with a great joy, almost shouting: “And you are here! Under your own name. Think of it, the Warsaw Gestapo cut all my bottom into squares, trying to get out of me where Witold was” Luckily, there was no informer close by at the time. We later had to work on it to undo it. First Lieut. (Res.) Karol Świątorzecki, currently out of the camp, witnessed this [incident].

Sometimes old inmates would also surprise us. Take a typical schizophrenic, Janusz Kuczbara, rumored to be of Jewish faith, [someone] deprived of principles, ethics, scruples. To take advantage of the opportunity to get rich through “Kanada”, he managed to attain sway over „Czesiek”, „Tadek” and Sec. Lieut. Konstanty Piekarski. The last one maintained Janusz Kuczbara **was an extraordinary person**, the only person who had Warsaw’s approval to carry out [underground] work here. Advised by Sec. Lieut. Konstanty Piekarski about who leads our Organization, [Kuczbara] resorted to an unusual ruse to hamper our work. When his efforts to frighten us off failed, Janusz Kuczbara, while sparing my person owing to Sec. Lieut. Konstanty Piekarski’s intervention, sought to ridicule a few persons from our top. To achieve his aim, with assistance from another prisoner, on Bristol board sheets he painted “Diplomas of Honour” to vest “Order of Garter” on our colleague Henryk Bartosiewicz and Colonel Juliusz Gilewicz (with their names, caricatures, and stamps on them) for “their work for the cause of independence inside the camp”.

With these sheets, made into rolls with garters obtained from „Kanada”, in plain daylight, during a lunch break, making no attempt to disguise anything, he went to the hospital, to get credit there for this strange exploit in front of his acquaintances. It looked senseless. Any SS-man or someone else from the camp’s leadership could ask him what he was carrying under his arm. His motives aside, his conduct was more than inappropriate – he was recklessly putting two of his colleagues into peril of investigation, and a danger of death. [Moreover], this could well lead to a further investigation in the camp. Our colleagues, Cpt.Dr. Władysław Dering and Dr. Rudolf Diem managed to take these diplomas from Janusz Kuczbara and destroy them. Apart from that he was a smart person: one evening I saw him in the camp before Block 23 wearing an SS uniform. This suited him well on 30 December 1943 [an error – should be 1942 – a note by this translator], when it made his escape, I earlier mentioned, possible.

In February 1943 they brought to Block 2a four hundred fifty men and women. They were tortured in various ways and forced to make confessions. For weeks they had to lie face down. They were Poles. In Block 11, Palitzsch, a particularly dedicated torturer, would hunt children. He told girls to run around a closed yard and would shoot at them, killing them like rabbits. He would snatch a child from its mother’s embrace and would smash its little head against a wall, or a stone. A true degenerate, tears and death followed him. Having committed a most heinous crime, he would come out smiling, handsome and polite, calmly smoking a cigarette.

From Spring 1942 till Autumn 1942 our camp was divided by a wall. Behind it, there was a women's camp. Later on, all women were transferred to the camp in Brzezinka, where they would die in conditions worse than us and in filth, as water and other conveniences were lacking there. At first, our camp consisted of twenty blocks, all of them separated [from the outside] by a fence. Six of them were double storey, and fourteen – single storey. During my stay at the camp they built eight new blocks on the former parade square and all blocks obtained a first floor. All of them had sewage installations. Open air toilets and pumps were moved to blocks. All these construction projects cost thousands of human lives. Bricks and roof tiles were carried by hand over a distance of several kilometers.

In March 1943 they brought to Brzezinka Gypsy families for which a separate camp was established. Later, some Gypsy males were brought over to us. Together with Dutch, Norwegians, French, Jews, Germans, Yugoslavs, Greeks, Russians, Ukrainians, Belgians, Bulgarians and Rumanians we together made a virtual Babel Tower.

Rumors were in circulation at that time about all Poles going to be taken out of the camp. At the beginning we thought camp authorities would not decide to take all Poles elsewhere, as they were, after all, the best workers of all.

Yet, they decided to take Poles out of there. The justification of it was that keeping such a large group of Poles on Poland's territory, surrounded from all sides by the local Polish population, was very dangerous, due to the ease of communication between them, and considering a possibility

of an air ride, or a weapons drop-off. **What was not [earlier] taken into consideration by our friends, our enemy has, after all, acknowledged.**

During the night from 7 into 8 March 1943, numbers of all Poles were called whom the local political department had no intention to interrogate, or execute. After that night, further numbers were called over the next two nights. They did it at night to leave no time to anyone to try and somehow stay in the camp. It was a common knowledge that Polish camp inmates who stayed there the longest would always find an excuse, such as a violent onset of an illness [to stay in the camp]. Apart from that, had it been done at day time, individual SS-men responsible for various work areas and those in charge of Kommandos would have very gladly helped Poles out – they always preferred Poles as workers. At night one could undertake nothing of the sort. From one locked-up block, inmate walked to another block that was assigned for this purpose. All doors were locked up there, as well.

[Visibly] agitated, inmates followed numbers called. A load was off many a heart, when their number was called: “it means they have given up on tormenting me here”. “well, so I am leaving”, “they will not shoot me here”. One would also hear here and there some of our colleagues say: “God, why they have not called my number yet?”

Yet, those inmates who had jobs offering good food and contacts with local population did not, in the least, like the prospect of their transfer. At the new place they will be again „new arrivals” [Zugangs]. They will need to start anew, try to once again come up close to the top. And yet not all will

succeed. A ruthless selection, once again. The prevailing opinion, however, was that it would be a good thing to leave.

It has been known for quite some time (based on opinions from inmates who came from other camps) that there is no hell like this anywhere else. Apart from that, attachment to colleagues [whose names had already been called – a note by this translator] encouraged [many] to transfer. It was impossible to know before whose number would be called. Our „[top] fives” members who would always provide to us detailed news, including those from the political department, could not help at all in this situation. Two camp gods – Grabner and Palitzsch – kept the inmates transfer lists close to their chests.

From „our” SS-men – and there was in the camp a dozen, or so, SS-men who had contacts with Volksdeutsche some of whom once served in the Polish Army as NCO's - we usually had early warnings about all types of actions as well as other news that always proved to be true. They assured us that – if it comes to [confrontation – a word added by this translator] – they would be on our side and would hand in keys to armories. To tell the truth we would have hardly needed those keys. Whilst repulsive and two-faced, they were very useful to us in this hell and could be even more so. It was already known to us that the camps we were being transferred to were best of all in Germany. It would not have made sense to try and wriggle out of these, as the next transports were likely to be to camps worse than the first ones.

My number was called already on the first night. I was to go to the Neuengamme camp. They kept us locked up for the rest of the night in Blocks 12a and 19. On the next day we stood all day in files along "the Birch Avenue", examined by a medical commission. The examination continued on over the next night. I stood next to my friend Tadzio (Colonel Tadeusz Reklewski) and Kazio (Kazimierz Radwański) [both of whom were] destined to go to Buchenwald.

My mind worked frantically. A transfer meant for me to drop all my work here. I had to make up my mind. A very good team of my friends and colleagues was due for a transfer.

A camp friendship is a feeling that is founded on a level far higher than what free people call a friendship. Many a time, when rescuing their [camp] friend's life people were putting their own one in danger. Oftentimes, as a retribution, they would later join the penal company where they would soon die.

In my mind I quickly went through all their profiles classifying individual persons and adding their current [status], for instance: shot, died other death, alive, leaves, or stays. It was a massive review.

I want to mention here names of those fellow inmates whose work for our Organization at Auschwitz deserves a special distinction (however, they form a line so long that it is impossible to mention all relevant names here). Still, I do so, **as I believe that this should, after all, be of interest to someone in the future.** On the top of those already mentioned, **all those listed on the separate sheet,** with



numbers from eight to two hundred eight, **have worked for us.**

Over the last six months (I write about it separately), an outstanding contribution was made by Cpt. Dr. Władysław Dering and Dr. Rudolf Diem. In his area of work – by Sec. Lieut. Bernard Świerczyna. Isolated from others, but mentally very strong: Henryk Szklarz, Sergeant Major Stefan Gąsiorowski, who was transferred to Brzezinka with a special authority, and Cpt. Dr. Henryk Suchnicki, who bravely faced his death. Officer Cadet (Res.) Zbigniew Ruszczynski and Officer Cadet Antoni Rosa and the unforgettable "Wernyhora" - Jan Mielcarek [take the credit for] shutting off power supply to the fence and for taking control of the camp's radio station.

From the early pioneers who gathered in Warsaw at the memorable tea at number 40 building I met here, among others, Cpt. (Cavalry) (Res.) Jerzy de Virion, whom, regrettably, despite all our efforts, we were unable to save, due to his breakdown and him being eaten by "kreca" [comes from a polonised German word: die Krätze = scabies]. Stanisław Ozimek, who had a stopover here on his way to a quarry and Jan Dangel, whom we provided with an ill person's documents and then secured his transfer to Dachau. Apart from that, when planning [anything] I would regularly contact a member of our Organization, Col. Teofil Dziama, and my friend Tadzio (Col. Tadeusz Reklewski), a very brave person, who did not die despite his emaciation, owing this, presumably, to his strength of will alone. He would always be such a wonderful example to others. It was him I stood next to immediately before we were examined by the medical commission.

Tadzio was happy to go to Buchenwald, as it was one of the best camps. Rumors circulated that from there they were to send us on to do some voluntary work somewhere in Germany, and so on. Tadzio i Kazio were at the time of the view, that it was better to transfer. I also sincerely wished them that, as it was, similar to Neuengamme, one of the best camps. Soon they were to examine us.

Having considered everything, and after some quandary, I decided (Tadzio agreed with that after giving it some thought) that because of my duty to the Organization I needed to stay, for the time being, in this hell. That meant we unfortunately had to bid farewell of each other.

One therefore had to act swiftly. The decisive moment was approaching: either-or. I was healthy and weighed 75 kilograms. In a hurry, I put on a truss provided to me by one of my friends, „Staszek”, who was not to be transferred. I never suffered rupture in my life and so I stood before the commission.

It was two o'clock at night and the commission was tired. Tadzio, who compared to me was a weakling, more than ten years older at that, was accepted for transfer. As for me, as soon as they spotted me, without uttering a word they pointed towards exit. So my hoax was successful. Through the transfer block I returned to my own, and on the next day – to my regular work.

During the examination, doctors shook their heads with admiration when they looked at the robust, muscular and well fed bodies of Polish inmates. That obviously was a result of

their work. "Kanada" has likewise made its contribution. Since they started to kill larger transports by gas, we no longer suffered hunger, not by camp standards, anyway. Half of the Poles (all those who were "organized") had enough food. Besides, since November 1942 we could receive food parcels.

On 10 March, a total of five thousands of Poles were transferred: one thousand to Neuengamme, one thousand to Buchenwald, one thousand to Sachsenhausen, one thousand to Gross-Rosen and one thousand to Flossenbürg.

Since all most significant operatives from Organizacja Wojskowa were able to avoid a transfer, we worked on.

One week later we again had a commission for all remaining Poles, to reduce the amount of work at next transports. They would take down, next to our numbers, notes to be kept permanently: „A”, or „U”. (Possibly these were abbreviations: A - **a**rbeitsfähig (capable to work) and U - **u**nfähig (not capable to work). To me it was a surprise, for to get category A meant to be in the next transport, and to get U - meant to be recognized as not capable to work. On the other hand, they were supposed to take us [all] to Dachau. Who could guarantee, though, that if they need to kill people by phenyl injections, or by gas, they will not take from the „U” reserve. So I decided to have category „A” and I did receive it. After that I decided to shirk transports by acquiring the status of “indispensable” worker. Whilst, in principle, they would keep skilled workers, it was difficult for me to pretend I was one in my Kommando, as my last job there was to handle parcels in the post office. Still, as one of only five, out of forty inmates who worked in the post office in two shifts, I managed to

avoid two next transports. On 10 and 11 April **two thousand and five hundred healthy Poles** were sent to Mauthausen.

The second medical commission, the one entrusted with the task of dividing Poles into categories A and U loudly expressed their admiration of our supreme physical fitness. They said: 'What a regiment you could form from such guys, how they have been able to retain a physical condition like that?'

At mass executions by shooting or gas, Krankenbau would receive victims lists with an order to proceed fifty numbers daily to the main Schreibstube [camp's office - in the original Pilecki uses a spelling "Szrajbsztube"], as a cause of the death giving heart [disease], typhus, or another "natural" illness. Family was advised only against a special order from the political department. Often, six months later family would still believe that their relative was alive, only not writing letters, and would thus [continue to] send him parcels.

Recently, I worked at parcels' reception. Each day we would select a great number of food parcels that were addressed to colleagues who had already died. SS-men who supervised this would eagerly put aside better parcels. These were next taken in baskets to the SS mess room. "Worse" parcels were destined to the inmates' kitchen. Since the parcel section was headed by a fairly decent SS-man, an Austrian, after a few parcels have arrived addressed to a deceased person he would try to stop that family from sending next ones by sending the last one back with a stamp on it: "Neue Anschrift abwarten" (wait for the new address). In so doing, he would stop these from continuing to arrive. Despite the original

weight limit of 250 gram on these, arriving parcels were often quite big, as big as a suitcase. All of them were delivered and never confiscated. Naturally, it depended on the boss. SS-men particularly liked parcels from Czech Republic, as they, apart from cakes and sugar, would always contain wine, oranges and lemons. Wines were always confiscated through the authorities. As most Czechs and French Jews who received such attractive parcels were already dead, whole parcels [addressed to them] went to SS-men.

From time to time SS-men would make evening calls at a block, gather Jews and tell them to write letters to their homes with the standard phrase: „I am well and doing nicely”. Those letters were bringing new transports of Jews as they, at learning how well their coreligionists were doing, would more readily present themselves „for work in Germany”. They were also bringing new parcels for SS-men, as authors of these letters would in the meantime get killed.

Transferring Poles out [of Auschwitz] was, as Kapos and some SS-men explained, a consequence of escapes organized by Poles, and of their contacts with local population.

Among SS-men there also were such chefs of Kommandos, some of them Austrians, who had for quite some time been on a good footing with Polish inmates. They would happily accept food organized by Poles and apologetically explain they never hit a Pole. They clearly hinted that they would gladly escape with one, or a few inmates, provided only that the latter would find a [safe] place for them in Poland to stay in until the war is over. In February 1943 there were two such SS-men who maintained it was ‘high time’ (an incident with

our colleagues, Officer Cadet (Res.) Zbigniew Goszczyński and First Lieut. (Res.) Marian Moniczewski).

One should underline here, at least in a few words, a very brave conduct by priests, to tell the truth – not by all of them. In the beginning, a priest would not survive here longer than a few days. At the assembly square, they would be killed with clubs. Jews, on the other hand, were [often] killed as they pulled a roller they were harnessed to, or as they did another “work” that would be deliberately thought out to torture them. Later, in early 1941, following an intervention from Rome, priests were transferred to Dachau where, apparently, they had bearable conditions. The next transport of priests to Dachau took place in summer 1942. It was between these two transports that I got to know a few brave priests, among them Father Zygmunt Ruszczak (Nr 9842), who was our (Military Organization’s) chaplain. In spite of, one would think, insurmountable difficulties, apart from confessions we would also (secretly) celebrate Masses. Wine and hosts we would obtain from outside [the camp].

## **Escapes**

Ever since the camp was established and [also] during my stay there many escapes were attempted. About a half of them were successful. How they resonated in inmates’ hearts depended on how the camp authorities would respond to each one of these. We would sometimes witness fundamental changes in those reactions.

First escapes were unsophisticated - across the fence that at that time was a single barbed wire one with no electricity connection were organized either at night, or at day - from a work place outside the fence. [Inmates] would hide for the night in sheds, barracks or behind other screening objects. Those escapes all resulted in orders for all inmates to stand at attention at the parade square for many hours [a so-called "stójka" - punishment parade], assaults on individuals, beating inmates by raving mad SS-men, annoyances in blocks and searches. Sometimes they would find run-offs hidden somewhere where they worked ("Industriehof I" or "Industriehof II"). They were either **killed** immediately after detection, or sent **to the bunker**.

The name of the first prisoner to make off in the first few months of camp's existence was, as if out of spite to the camp authorities, Tadeusz Wiejowski (Nr 230) [the surname has affinity with the Polish verb "zwać" = to make off]. His colleagues paid **an inordinate price** for it. All inmates stood at attention lined up at the square without food, or a chance to go to toilet for eighteen hours. At day they were fainting from heat, at night they were shivering from cold. At the end of this very long "stójka" they were all very miserable: half of them had dropped to the ground.

In time, such punishment became shorter and inmates would remain standing only until the escapee was found. If he was not, we would stand only until the evening roll-call. Yet, even a few hours' "stójka" **would often be hard on us**. For instance, on 28 October 1940 we had rain mixed with snow. We had neither coats nor caps. I belonged to the large majority of those who did not have socks, either. A cap I got

on 8 December 1940. Before the **escapee was found and killed** and the standing drill was called off, about one hundred forty of **weakest inmates died** of fatigue, food deprivation and cold combined.

Later on, standing drills as retribution for escape got even shorter, their duration calculated in such a way, as to leave enough time for dinner before the night rest's gong. That did not mean we were not, on occasions, at sub-zero temperatures or when it was raining, kept for hours when gathered for roll-call at the assembly square.

[Sometimes], even when **nobody escaped**, they pretended inmates were missing. So they would go indoors to "do their calculations". This was meant to finish us off.

At the end of November 1941, during an absence of the camp's commandant, with his deputy in charge, we had Seidler's Week ("Tydzień Seidlerowski").

Each day, after our return to the camp from work, **even though no-one was missing we stood at the evening roll-call** almost until the night rest's gong and only then would quickly gulp down our soup which by then was cold like ice. The gusts of wind were penetrating, frost would creep down our heads, backs and limbs. With the whole resistance our bodies could muster, we fought not to catch a cold.

From Spring 1941 escapes became more common. It was then that the camp authorities came upon the idea to apply **collective responsibility** to the entire block. For one escaped, they would select **ten inmates from the same block to be killed**. First, they would go to the bunker and then they



were **killed** by shooting, or in any other way practiced. The moment when the commandant selected ten inmates to die was **very difficult** for the entire block. Yet, we also experienced some **very lofty** moments, such as when an elderly man, a priest, offered his life for a younger man who had been selected to die. The priest's sacrifice was accepted, and the latter was allowed to live.

**It was during that period that our Organization developed its negative view of escapes. During 1941 we organized no escapes and would condemn all independent attempts at these.**

From the day a letter arrived from Berlin forbidding escape related reprisals in the Auschwitz camp (the message came from our „top fives” who worked at the political section) we have never since had ten inmates killed for one escapee. The ban on these, allegedly, was introduced first in camps for Germans. So, once again, escapes were on and we commenced planning them.

Only then, from Spring 1942 until the end of that year did we organize escapes I already mentioned about.

In early 1943 (on 27 February) seven colleagues escaped who worked in the SS-kitchen. These were: Kazimierz Albin -No 118, Tadeusz Klus - No 416, Adam Klus - No 419, Bronisław Staszkiwicz - No 1225, Franciszek Roman - No 5770, Włodzimierz Turczyniak - No 5829 i Roman Lechner - No 3505.

Inmates were no more responsible for escapes of colleagues; not only the death penalty, but also the punishment with

bunker was banned, and – from early 1943 – the „stójka” [punishment parade] as well (in 1943 we never were punished with the latter at the roll-call following an escape). Apart from that, inmates who worked inside the camp’s fenced-off area were issued civil clothes from „Kanada” with red stripes painted on them. All this **encouraged inmates to attempt an escape**. That is why the camp authorities found a new way [to discourage us].

At all blocks an announcement was made that in retribution for an escape all escapee’s family will be brought to the camp. One day they even arranged a „demonstration”. When returning from work my colleagues noticed a scene that made them very uncomfortable. Two women accompanied by an SS-men stood next to a post with a board affixed to it saying: ‘Seeking to salvage himself, a prisoner very unwisely chose to escape; by this he put the lives of his mother and his fiancée in danger; his thoughtlessness brought them to the camp’.

At first, this made our hearts ache. What a scumbag [we thought] - to deliberately expose one’s Mother or fiancée to such a danger. Or, any woman. A few years of separation from the opposite gender had its significance. We certainly had our tender feelings for women. On the first evening all camp reviled the monster that would expose an elderly woman and such a nice fiancée to all those dangers. Yet, it appeared that the numbers these two women had on their uniforms were much lower than the current day numbers [given] in the women’s camp. We were too clever for this trick. On the next day we found out what was the current number in the women’s camp: the trick was only played on us to impress us.

So, we after all relaxed and the whole episode encouraged, rather than otherwise, some inmates to attempt an escape.

Two of our colleagues escaped soon after. Yet, we were not absolutely sure that [by escaping] we do not put our families in danger. For that reasons, most of our colleagues would shudder at a mere thought of escape.

One more time we later saw another young and nice-looking woman at that post with an announcement on the board, yet this was able to impress only new arrivals amongst us.

Since mid 1942 all escapees who were caught were hanged publicly and with great fanfare. They were hanged by inmates who were to be hanged themselves two weeks later. This was done to increase the latters' torment.

From early 1943 I had a contact with a Montelupi [prison] hero - Aleksander Bugajski alias "Szczęściarz" [„The Lucky One”] who had a death verdict. He was in no doubt that they would finish him off here. He got closer with me to help him organize an escape. I suggested a route I had in mind for myself – just in case. That was why I worked the night shift at the post office. At the same time, in December 1943 [an error – should be 1942 – a note by this translator]. Sec. Lieut. (Res.) Witold Wierusz, who worked in the land-surveying Komando, often a few kilometres away from the camp, presented to me an escape idea. His project had a particular condition, though: if not feasible otherwise, and calling off the escape is no longer possible, we would have to resort to violence. For this reason, I took a negative view of this idea, and I explain it below.

Escaping from the camp was not easy to start with. It was becoming even more difficult by the need to escape in such a way, as not to bring about death of colleagues [in the camp]. This was the hard part.

With some Kommandos that worked a few kilometers away from the camp, one would be very tempted to organize an escape. The obstacle to it was – oh, what an irony – the life of one, or a few SS-men. Their death, while opening the road to freedom, could well cost many lives of our Polish colleagues [at the camp]. This being so, an escape involving killing SS-men would have been an act of such ruthless selfishness that no decent Pole would commit it.

An escape plan had to therefore be conceived in such a way as to consider not only its success prospect, but also its consequences for those remaining in the camp.

Once we have introduced a few corrections to the plan developed by Sec. Lieut. (Res.) Witold Wierusz, I acquainted the latter with Aleksander Bugajski. Since "The Lucky One" Aleksander Bugajski considered the Witold Wierusz plan to be less risky than my own, he transferred to the Komando where Sec. Lieut. (Res.) Witold Wierusz worked and started preparations for this escape. A few days later, "Szczęściarz" proposed to prepare an escape plan for me, as well.

As I have already mentioned, on 10 and 11 April 1943 two thousand and five hundred Poles were sent in two transports to Mauthausen. **This has finally forced my decision.** Staying on in Auschwitz ceased in my view to be a necessity [due to my duties here]. What I could have done, I already did. The

“better” half of my colleagues had already been gone. Awaiting “something” to happen has proved to be in vain. Threats were made for the rest of Poles to be transported [out of the camp], as well. Having formed a view that I could be of more use on the outside, than when remaining inside [the camp], I chose to leave the camp.

The other reason encouraging me to leave the camp was the news that has since early March been circulating in the camp about Janusz Kuczbara having been captured in Warsaw and being at Pawiak prison. I regarded him as someone with no scruples, who to save his own life may spill the beans about the top of our Organization, all the more likely that he already attempted to do it when at the camp, and in no need, in relation to Col. Juliusz Gilewicz and our colleague Henryk Bartosiewicz. So, on 11 April 1943 I discussed this issue with my colleague, Sec. Lieut. (Res.) Leon Murzyn.

Bearing in mind my [imminent] „departure” from the camp, I had a few talks with Maj. Zygmunt Bończa-Bohdanowski and my colleague Henryk Bartosiewicz, informing them about all this and entrusting them with all further work.

On 13 April I spoke to my colleague, Cpt. Stanisław Machowski. I told him that after the two-and-a-half years long wait I no more wish, or **need** to stay here. Maybe, when on the outside, I will be able to help my colleagues in the camp sooner. [Colleague; Stanisław] Cpt. Machowski put a question to me: ‘Well, is it however all right to come here, when one so wills, and leave it likewise?’ I answered: ‘Yes, it is’. And indeed, for a few months it was possible for me to escape from the camp on any night, even though, admittedly, [the idea of

it] was rather uncomfortable and a bit risky. Besides, "Szczęściarz" prepared an alternative escape route.

As it happened, I used an entirely different route, leaving the first one to the colleagues I let into the secret: Henryk Bartosiewicz, Maj. Zygmunt Bończa-Bohdanowski, Zdzisław Uliasz and Andrzej Gąsienica.

Prior to my escape I also spoke to my colleague "Tadek" regarding his communication with Warsaw and the absence of instructions. Referring to his communications, he said: „now Warsaw thinks about Auschwitz differently”. I do not know what he meant and I did not change my decision.

The date of our escape from the camp as set by Aleksander Bugajski unfortunately for him coincided with a jocular night escape of our colleagues from the Brzezinka camp through what we dubbed "Diogenes barrel". All soldiers were involved in the search for these escapees. As there were no Posts [=guards], the camp was closed. For three days we were not let out for work. This was taken advantage of by the authorities to de-louse the camp. During these few days the boss and Kapo from the Kommando where Aleksander Bugajski previously worked (post office/parcels) realized that "Szczęściarz" transferred to a new Kommando illicitly which could be interpreted as „**an attempt to escape**". Consequently, for his willful change of Kommando Aleksander Bugajski was sent to the penal company. The date for our escape attempt was set on the day after the „Diogenes barrel" night.

So, in this instance "Szczęściarz" was out of luck. As for me, I had to try something else.

One of my colleagues, Jan Redzej, was in a Kommando which transported bread to the camp from a bakery in the town. He noticed that [at the bakery] there were large, iron made gates, at first look - a formidable obstacle, yet a possible gate to freedom. To have a closer look, he managed to get his Kapo's permission to stay in the bakery for a few days. The work in the bakery was very hard, one had to bake thousands of loaves daily, as ordered. For any underperformance at work you were sent on the next day to the bunker. A few civil bakers and a few inmates worked [in that bakery]. Over these few days he needed to have "a closer look" at the door, our colleague Jan Redzej, a ninety five kilogram tall strapping fellow, lost six kilos. In the end, he came to the view that even when some tricks are used the door will not yield and open up, so he returned to his Kommando.

After a further consideration of this matter we **jointly developed a plan we later implemented.**

Through my colleague Waclaw Wieszke I had Redzej perfectly legally placed at the bakery by an Arbeitsdienst. We used the Easter mood in the camp and a reduced alertness from the celebrating authorities. To save my block and work colleagues from possible repressions, I misled my block's and my Kommando's authorities on Easter Saturday by faking illness. I got transferred to Krankenbau, to play even safer - to Block 20 (the typhus one), that the authorities would make calls at only very reluctantly. On the first day (Easter Sunday) "I was ill", as the bakery had the time off. On the next day

(Easter Monday) I had to leave the hospital, as the bakery was resuming its work. Immediately after a festive break workers substitutions were less likely to be noticed.

The success of this all depended on me being sent back not to my own block, as they would normally have to in accordance with camp regulations, but to another one, Block 15, where bakers resided, and also, on me to be kicked out from the typhus block after two days, against hospital rules (one was not allowed to leave prior to completing a quarantine) and, [finally], on no-one from my Komando or the block authorities seeing me „recovered”. After all, at the very time I, after a transfer to a new block and a new work, was starting my baker’s „work” [authorities bosses and colleagues] needed to be convinced I was ill [at the hospital].

The hospital check-in and check-out formalities when leaving to another block were taken care of my colleague Edward Ciesielski (Marian Toliński helped me with the check-in, and Władysław Fejka – with the check-out). Since Ciesielski’s assistance with my escape was to be expected to be obvious [to the authorities], on Sunday night I offered him to join me in it. My decision to offer him a joint escape, which necessitated some changes to its plan, was also influenced by his conviction for possession of weapon. He kept on saying that he only waits for his number to be called for him to be shot. During two years, whenever we met, he would finish our conversation with the same words: “Tomek, I can only count on you”. I did not want to disappoint him and contacted Jan Redzej. Edward Ciesielski promptly decided to quit his very good job at the hospital block. On Monday morning, the



second day of the holidays, together with me he reported at Block 15, where bakers resided.

We misled both the Block authorities and the bakers' Kapo. We let the bakers' Kapo believe that the block leader received the required transfer forms from the Arbeitsdienst (even though I did not want to take them lest I implicate him in assisting us with our escape) and the block leader thought we were coming to his block as new bakers to be employed at the newly established mechanical bakery. We still had to overcome the resistance from two inmate bakers. This proved most difficult.

We had to somehow convince those two bakers to give up their work spots to us for this night. We thought the bewilderment of camp authorities we deceived could not last very long. Likely, it would only be a matter of hours. We had to hurry, yet our talk with them proved tough. They could not understand why we were so keen on the night shift. And, naturally, we tried very hard they did not. However, they were fearful we wanted their bread baking jobs. Finally, we overcame that obstacle, as well.

I then went all the way. Jan Redzej and Edward Ciesielski could both safely return to the camp, if the night attempt at escape failed. For the former one, such return would be no different from any other day since he holds a permanent baker position. As for the latter, he has settled all necessary formalities with the authorities from his previous block, and – likewise – [all formalities] regarding the job he abandoned (he would only need to change his job again, as he would not be able to last long [in the baker's job]). However, my return to

the camp after a failed night escape attempt would see me transferred to the penal company, as I would not have a chance to justify my appearance on a wrong block, or my leaving for the night shift at the bakery. After all, I belonged to another Kommando and neither Kapo or head of my Kommando had any knowledge of my release from that Kommando. Moreover, we dealt here with the same parcels section whose authorities knew how to deal with „Szczęściarz” (Aleksander Bugajski) in an identical matter. A formal transfer from the parcels’ section was impossible, either, as only about two weeks earlier I sought a status of **indispensible** worker there, the status I obtained.

**We therefore decided to not return** [be what it may]. **First, however, we needed to be able to leave** [the camp]. Kapo, a Czech, has long stuck to his guns insisting that today only one of us (apart from Redzej who had a permanent position) will go to the bakery, and the other - tomorrow. **Whilst we felt as if we were at the boiling point inside, on the outside we all appeared indifferent.**

Redzej took care of Kapo by explaining him that his two colleagues are fools who were taken in [by someone] and think the bakery work is easy. The best way will be to take them for this night [shift] and he, Redzej, will put them through such a mill that they will not last in this Kommando long. Maybe they will loose all liking for it after this night. The most difficult task of them all was to overcome the resistance from the two bakers. Finally, Redzej’s glib persuasion, preserves, sugar and apples from parcels provided by myself, and a merry mood of the second day of Easter have together combined to bear enough influence on them.

It's 6.30 p.m. The SS-man calls out from the gate: "Bäckerei..." [bakery...]. We run towards the gate. As we do, I pass many inmates having a walk there and catch sight of three familiar faces (Sec. Lieut. (Res.). Jerzy Olszowski, Zdzisław Uliasz, Mieczysław ...rowiec) surprised at seeing me there. They all are my good friends. We are being counted. The number is exactly as it should be - eight. It means the other two gave up this night's work. Had there been one too many, one of us, being new ones, would have had to stay. We walk escorted by four SS-men. We pass the gate. How many times did I pass it and thought: „when will be the time I will not have to go back through it?” Today I am leaving with the thought: „**Under no circumstances must I walk back through it ever again**”.

My mood is difficult to describe. At any rate, our complete resolve lends us wings. When already in the town, we split into two groups. Two inmates and two SS-men walk to the small bakery and us – six inmates and two SS-men – we walk to the large one. This has been agreed on with Kapo. We were to be „severely tested” there, a task entrusted to our colleague Jan Redzej.

During the night five batches of bread needed to be made. We worked hard – except for Ciesielski, who already at the outset „staged” an incident with a bag that “caused” him “a sprain”. He then complained of pain in the small of the back. Not all of us were able to malingering like that.

We were to try our luck at the first, or the second, batch. Meanwhile, we have already finished the first, the second, the third and the fourth one, and we still can not move. Things were made more difficult by it being Monday – on Mondays

they would always change guards. Towards the end of the week those already used to the workers and to their slumbers. And, by then, they are almost always tired-out. On Monday, the new ones are the proverbial „new broom“. As we were leaving the camp, at the gate they loudly cautioned our guards: “Be alert”. So I thought: “do they have an inkling about what is to happen?” At the bakery, one guard took an interest in “our” door, examining it thoroughly and shaking his head in disapproval deeming the door to be unreliable. Jan Redzej had to use his persuasive powers to convince him to the contrary.

When Monday passed and, at noon, Tuesday commenced, our situation started improving (only one guard was awake, the other one snored). Still, it continued to be fairly difficult.

We worked half-naked. The heat from the ovens made us sweat profusely. We drank immense quantities of water. It would have been impossible to make sense of all moves we made to meet different objectives each of whom **was in complete conflict with another**: hurrying with work to meet the requirements of master bakers, preparations to open the door, and moves to collect our clothes. All this had to be masked before the guard that remained alert and would often follow us closely. Besides, as long as the door remained closed, we could not be 100% sure that it would open once all obstacles are removed, for one hook was fastened **on the outside**.

The accompanying feeling was as if I played solitaire, only stronger, for it was my life that was here at stake. As with the game of solitaire, where all depends on lucky cards sequels and how they have been shuffled, also here we needed some

lucky coincidences, so that with people walking in various directions, bakers running here and there with the guard crisscrossing from one corner into another, we in the end have a moment when no [guard's] eye watches the door. It had to coincide with all three of us being near that door and being able to slightly diverge to collect our clothes as we are about to open the door. That we had to escape [on that night] hanged above that all as the proverbial Damokles' sword. Particularly after we have cut out a few centimeters of a cable from a place right over our guards' heads. Our chances of escape were increasing, or decreasing, from one minute to another. And so did the tension.

Once Ciesielski, with confidence and quite cleverly completed his „surgery” on the phone's cable, and Redzej drew aside the bolt and unscrewed a nut, pushing out the catch that from outside held together the two leaves of the double door, the latter gave us signs for us all to lean with our arms against the door and force it open. It was then that the guard **came to the door to check it**. I saw it from a few steps' distance and awaited him to shout for alarm. Why did he not notice the bolts that had already been drawn aside, or the cable that had been cut through, or Redzej who was already fully dressed and pretended he only was using the toilet, I will never be able to explain. I think he was pondering this himself on the next day when in the bunker.

Finally the moment is suitable. I run up to Redzej, and at the same moment Ciesielski starts closing another door to provide a screen so that the guard who is just six steps away from us cannot see what we are doing. Together with Redzej we hurry and strongly push the door. We apply even more

strength, and, suddenly, and quietly, the door opens in front of us.

We can see stars and feel a pleasant whiffle of wind. We leap out and run as quickly as we can with our clothes under our arms. And so, in the company Jan Redzej and Edward Ciesielski, I left the Auschwitz camp, farewelled with shots by the guard who got the run of things a while too late for him.

So I leave at night. The same way as I came. And so I have spent in this hell nine hundred forty seven days. And as many nights. It is already past two o'clock, highest time we escaped. The night from 26 into 27 April 1943.

Leaving [the camp] I have a few teeth less than I had when arriving here. And a broken breast-bone. Quite cheap price for such a lengthy stay in this "sanatorium".

Going into **that night I have clean conscience** for no more are ten inmates shot for one escapee and I use an assumed surname leaving thus no traces leading to my family.

It would be hard to describe in a few words the beauty of our march on that first night and during the next few days. We must have been setting up speed records running up steep walls of gullies and then down headlong. We had a few remarkable lucky coincidences: [one] when passing a railway bridge, [the other] when our key fit [the lock] of a moored boat. Before the sunrise, from a few hundred meters, a strong forest's aroma and birds' songs hit us. Once there, we finally feel at home. Lush moss muffles our steps.

At night we would choose our direction by stars, and at day – by sun. The town where I was to meet the people who were recommended to me was dozens kilometers away. As we had to make circuits and avoid populated areas, we must have done at least one hundred thirty of them. After an incommodious crossing of the Generalgouvernement's border, at which we were greatly helped by the hospitable parish priest at Alwernia and our rest at Tyniec, at the house of our friendly Piotr Mazurkiewicz, we entered the Niepołomicka Forest. On May 1, we had an incident at a forester's lodge. I received there a light wound in my right arm, being shot by a German Vorschutz, who shot nine times but, [luckily for us], was not very good at it. At evening, we reached our destination.

After a few days spent in the warm Polish atmosphere of the Obora family home where we also met Edward Zabawski's wife, Helena, guided by Leon Wandasiewicz I went where I was meant to. My friend Tomasz Serafiński sent his reports further on. The next level was Wiatr – „Teodor”. A few days later, overcome with fear, he came to my friend and said he had a detailed plan of Auschwitz but there was no bakery there. And - only three people have so far managed to escape from Auschwitz. So, [to him]: 1. All this looks suspicious 2. One needs to cover up one's tracks; [yet he does not say, how – addition by this translator]; my friend could not cover up his tracks to him, as they knew each other well, neither could I cover up my tracks to my friend, as I have stayed at the camp for over two and a half years using his papers 3. It would be best for the three of us to move on (and break our necks, presumably). I must have met one of those “giants of

organization” who, as we used to say at the camp are so “occupied” (only in their thoughts) with their brothers at Auschwitz, until they get there themselves. However, we also meet some very wholehearted people there: apart from the Tomasz Serafiński’s family we also availed ourselves of the hospitality of another brave and selfless Pole – Józef Roman.

From the camp I wrote letters about my work there and about my plan to leave the camp. Those written in plain Polish went along a circuitous way and the “official” ones went to Eleonora Ostrowska. Only when already on the outside did I find out that the latter ones were sent on by Eleonora Ostrowska to the „Top” [„Góra”] through "Skiba" (Edward Baird) - "Zamek", currently "Klucz". The response from there was: ‘your letters are of great interest to us’ and ‘if possible, we would request further news’. They thought, apparently, that such an official response means they have settled the matter.

In October 1943, when already in Warsaw, I received a letter from Edward Ciesielski, who in Bochnia met Antoni Gargul (No 5665), a musician released from the camp in Autumn 1943. During that meeting [Gargul] said there were no retributions in the camp after the escape of three inmates via the bakery.

What I found among [free] people after my return to normal life I would simply call my return to the twilight of spiritual life. I touch upon this in the next chapter (No IX). Here, I will only say this: I thought I suddenly found myself in a children’s room where everyone was very busy playing with their own toys.



On May 10, 1944 I had the good fortune to spot, just a few meters away from me, "Szczęściarz" (Aleksander Bugajski). With a big smile on his face he approached me and said, he could not believe they released me from the camp. I expressed identical doubts about him. He said he escaped from Ravensbrück.

Throughout your stay at the camp – and throughout my life, as well, I dealt with many „coincidences”, as they are called by people whose faith can be questioned.

One of the so many of these coincidences was with „Krwawy Alojz” [Bloody Alojz]. He never spoke to me before, yet I remember very well, how, looking somehow embarrassed to me, he met me in a block’s corridor in February 1942. Remembering me clearly even though he had bloody encounters with many thousands of inmates, he stopped me and exclaimed with surprise “Du lebst noch!” [“So you are still alive!"]. This was the first and the last words we ever spoke. He soon died. [Next one] – „Otto”, a skilled tile-stove setter, salvaged me by coincidence from a slow death when I was given a „gymnastics” treatment. [Further], a cad by the name of Wilhelm Westrych, mistakingly believing I was some big fish in hiding staying under a false name, in an attempt to secure future favours with such a celebrity and to erase [the memory of] his current meanness as a Volksdeutsch, saved me from death when I was very weak, by offering a job in his workshop. He was shot dead near Warsaw in 1943. And later, in the second phase, my success in developing the Organization, getting overall camp situation under control, good recovery after pneumonia and typhus. The way I was treated by some physicians, Artur Balke, Konrad Lange, and a

few block supervisors. Throwing me out on 21 February 1943 from my good work at the tannery because of my white-collar appearance I immediately recognized as a lucky coincidence and commenced preparations for my escape. And I did not err in this regard.

The coincidence with Stefan Bielecki, when after his release from the camp with a message from us and also tasked to collect some information for us, was unable to get access to the top, or send us the information were waiting for, he was driven to his work in Mińsk Litewski by Res. Sec. Lieut. Stanisław Wierzbicki, to whom he confided [his mission], and who told me about it at the camp, as soon as he arrived there.

Of them all, the most peculiar coincidence was when at the end of 1941 copies of birth certificates from the parishes in localities named by our colleagues started flowing in, commencing from the lowest numbers (presumably looking for rogues like myself). Had I not escaped they would have found out about me, as there were only a few of us left. At every payout of money we had to queue following the order of our numbers, regardless whether one was receiving money, or not. One could easily see from there how many inmates from each hundred were still alive. You saw three, four, six, eight at the best colleagues remaining alive from each hundred. It was then that I sent through Sergeant Woźniak a message to Eleonora Ostrowska asking her to contact the Bochnia parish and explain my situation there. This was because the Tomasz Serafiński's registry data have been slightly changed to allow for a possibility of the real Tomasz Serafiński being brought to the camp.

It was now required to ask the Bochnia parish to provide my registry data identical with those I had provided to the camp's political department. Eleonora Ostrowska entrusted this task to Warzyński. As soon as he had received a recommending letter from Palutyni, Warzyński, large-hearted as he was, and a good friend of mine, took a trip to Bochnia and arranged the thing as required. With a stroke of pencil, the good people there corrected the relevant data in the book of births next to Tomasz Serafiński's name. Warzyński was able to tell me the story in person as he himself was brought to the camp soon thereafter. Having escaped from the camp I went straight to Bochnia as this was the closest place where I could receive help. My colleague Res. Sec. Lieut. Edmund Zabawski's family lived there and I had an introductory letter from him addressed to his family. As I was already there, I asked to contact me with the commandant of the local [resistance] unit. Understandably, I was quite surprised and astonished when I learned that the name of that commandant is – can you imagine – Tomasz Serafiński, a person I never saw in my life before, a person who had no knowledge that someone who had assumed his name spent more than two and a half years in Auschwitz. He opened his eyes very wide indeed when I came to his home and told him all about it. His warm attitude made us friends at first glance. I then contacted the Bochnia parish to let them know they need to rub off the pencil note.

It is why I believe that [lucky] coincidences do not occur in novels alone. Therefore, when one reads about them, one must not contend that all of them are only a figment of author's imagination.

On the original copy of Report "W" there appear the following statements written by hand that regard messages and work reports concerning Organizacja Wojskowa [Military Organization] in Auschwitz:

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### **By Aleksander Wielopolski**

*Res. Sec. Lieut. Karol Świątorzecki called on me in Warsaw in May 1941, in the second half of the month, whereupon I contacted him with 226, he described the work in Auschwitz to. I brought the first news about Auschwitz. I officially presented these to Tęczyński, 226 and Dr. Zakrzewski (of Wawelska Street). These have been passed on [to their] overseas [recipients] by the official route. Privately, I had a detailed discussion with 225. These news have been sent to Italy using a private route.*

*Signed: No 6, as per the key.*

*Warsaw, the 28th of June 1944*

### **By Stefan Bielecki**

*Having been ordered by Witold (Witold Pilecki) I left Auschwitz on 16 May 1942 and arrived at Warsaw on 30 June 1942, where I immediately lodged my written report with 227. I personally described to him the state of our organization's work in the camp. According to the statement [I was able to see] the report*

*was submitted to Commandant "Grot" (Gen. Stefan Rowecki - "Grot", The Commandant-in-Chief of ZWZ AK, arrested by Germans on 30 June 1943 and executed by shooting in the concentration camp at Sachsenhausen, after the outbreak of Warsaw Rising. Since until early 1943 I was not called on to present the details of our work, all of which could only be provided orally, I approached "Skiba" to request a clarification from the Headquarters as to the cause of that delay. I received an answer that my report had arrived and that I would be asked to come if, and when, needed.*

*I sign with No 41, as per the key.*

*Warsaw, the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 1944*

### **By Sergeant Antoni Woźniak**

*Information entrusted to me by Witold regarding the work in Auschwitz I passed on orally to Eleonora Ostrowska.*

*I sign with No 25, as per the key.*

*Warsaw, the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July 1944*

### **By Aleksander Paliński (died in the Warsaw Rising)**

*Information entrusted to me by Witold regarding the state and the activities in Auschwitz I passed on orally to Eleonora Ostrowska.*

*I sign with No 53, as per the key.*

*Warsaw, the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July 1944*

### **By Captain Ferdynand Trojnicki**

*On arriving at Warsaw I came in December 1942 to 228, and in his presence I put to 229, who was introduced to me as representing the Headquarters, an oral report regarding the organization's work at Auschwitz. When asked, if I can submit this as an official report in writing I stressed that due to the need to keep as strictest secret, if required by the High Commandant, I may talk about it, and only talk. No more was I called in later regarding this matter.*

*I sign with No 24, as per the key.*

*Warsaw, the 10<sup>th</sup> of July 1944*

### **By Eleonora Ostrowska**

*All legal and illegal correspondence from Witold about the organization's work at Auschwitz and oral reports by arriving colleagues I hand in to "Skiba". All this information went by the*

*official route to "Zamek" (now - "Klucz"). Official replies ascertain interest and usefulness of information sent to them.*

*I sign with No 5, as per the key.*

*Warsaw, the 13<sup>th</sup> of July 1944*

**By „Skiba”**

*All information I received regarding the organization's work at Auschwitz I passed on to 230.*

*I sign with 218, as per the key.*

*Warsaw, the 15<sup>th</sup> of July 1944*

**By „Jeź” (Stefan Miłkowski)**

*Report W and the entire case of Auschwitz are known to me. At all times I sought to help Witold by submitting these to appropriate authorities to receive a determinant, formal reply - a decision. As far as I am aware, despite all efforts Witold has not received any such reply, yet. If required, I am ready to provide all information and my commentaries relating to this matter.*

*(-) "Jeź"*

*Warsaw, the 18<sup>th</sup> of July 1944*

## By Witold

*After leaving Auschwitz I did not visit my family, but stayed near Cracow, in order to bring out an armed action to liberate Auschwitz into effect. To this aim I started forming a detachment near Bochnia, assisted by Tomasz Serafiński and "232". At the same time I sought to contact the Headquarters in Warsaw to receive their assent to this action, either through correspondence, or orally, by bringing here Stefan Bielecki from Warsaw. The view of this idea by our authorities in Cracow the matter being shown in certain light by „Wiatr” – „Teodor” caused me to decide to go to Warsaw in person, after a three-and-a-half month long wait near Bochnia for the decision from Warsaw.*



Rtm. Witold Pilecki



*In Warsaw, on 23 October 1943, through „Jeź” I was able to contact the Deputy of “233” (presumably it was First Lieut. Col. Jerzy Uszycki, since July 1942 Head of Signals with the Department V at the Armia Krajowa [AK] Headquarters, Chief of AK Corps of Signals and Deputy Chief of Department V at the AK Headquarters.), I presented Auschwitz issues to. Later on, on 29 October 1943, as ordered by the Deputy of “233”, I thoroughly discussed all Auschwitz issues, including planning a military intervention there, with an operations officer “233” – nom de guerre “Zygmunt”, “Wilk”. The response from him was as follows: “After the war I will show you how thick are the Auschwitz files in our archives”. When I suggested that the thickness of these files brings no relief to Auschwitz inmates, “Zygmunt” - “Wilk” responded: “I can assure you that we will contact you as soon as this matter becomes live”.*

*Witold*

*Warsaw, the 20<sup>th</sup> of July 1944*

*On 21 July 1944 I spoke to the Chief of “233” (presumably Col. Kazimierz Pluta-Czachowski, Chief of Department V /Command and Signals/ at the AK Headquarters) to pass my report through him to the Commander-in-Chief of AK. The Chief of “233” told me that this would be superfluous as the Commander-in-Chief knows the Auschwitz situation very well and has already sought to get KWP [Kierownictwo Walki Podziemnej – Leadership of Underground Warfare] to accept the necessity of this action. All efforts to obtain an order to launch this action have been in vain, though, as it was difficult to [effectively] oppose in discussion certain sober arguments and answer valid questions such as how to find near Oświęcim*

*sufficient number of people [to attack the camp], or to transport them there, or what to do with thousands of liberated people (including women, sick people, and people unable to walk longer distances).*

*Witold*

*Warszawa, the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July 1944*

*I confirm that the copies provided above are identical with original copies of statements written by their authors' own hands.*

*Maria Szelałowska*

*Warszawa, the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July 1944*

(Maria Szelałowska, born in 1905 in Lwów, daughter of Adam Szelałowski, a well-known historian, professor at the University at Lwów. [Herself] chemical engineer by profession. Worked together with Capt. Pilecki in the AK underground [organization] in Warsaw, and in summer 1945 - in Italy. Most of the time she did clerical work, typewriting secret materials and reports by Pilecki relating to his experiences and the underground military activity at KL Auschwitz).