



REPORT “W”  
KL AUSCHWITZ  
1940–1943  
*by Captain  
Witold Pilecki*





**REPORT “W”**  
**KL Auschwitz**  
**1940–1943**

*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*

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by  
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**INSTITUTE  
OF NATIONAL  
REMEMBRANCE**



Warsaw 2023

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Andrzej Nowak and Jacek Glinka  
Board Coordinators of Pilecki Project



## OUR TRIBUTE TO CAPTAIN WITOLD PILECKI

I first toured the notorious German concentration camp, Auschwitz, thirty-two years ago. My sixteenth birthday was approaching. My thoughts were clouded and I didn't know what to expect of the visit to the site. The evidence of evil I witnessed there, at Auschwitz, was beyond comprehension. I felt the all-embracing presence of a nightmarish state of nothingness. Everything felt unreal around me. It was a macabre site. And yet, I saw and could imagine only a tiny part of all the terrible events that took place at Auschwitz. I did not anticipate then that this shocking truth about the enormity of the evil that man is capable of would leave a permanent mark on my memory.

I remember entering one of the numerous camp storage areas, where items confiscated from the new arrivals were kept. The area was used for sorting through and repacking of goods, stolen from the unsuspecting Nazi victims and then sent on to Germany. During the tour, we also entered a room containing a large mound of old footwear. The pile consisted of shoes in various sizes but the small shoes, children's shoes, distressed me the most! As I looked at all those children's shoes and pondered the fate of those who wore them, I had no idea Witold Pilecki, inmate number 4859, had witnessed, and described, how all those little shoes got there. Tomasz Serafiński (a *nom de guerre* chosen by Witold Pilecki) was consigned to work at this particular stockroom. The heroic deeds of Captain Pilecki were never mentioned by any of the tour guides. When I was fifteen, Poland was still a communist state and anything relating to Home Army (Armia Krajowa, AK) infiltrations and operations within Auschwitz was censored. Home Army's heroic actions were taboo in the communist Poland.

Even today, after so many years, we occasionally still witness distortions of the truth about Auschwitz. They are not uncommon in Australia where I live now. My aim is to correct these distortions. With that in mind, I, and my friend Jacek Glinka, recently undertook to publish Report "W" from the Auschwitz

camp written in 1943 by the Cavalry Captain [Rotmistrz – in Polish] Witold Pilecki after his successful escape from the place of horror.

This report is the most valuable source of truth about the extermination of Jews and many other unfortunate victims of the German Nazis. We must speak out today and bring the fight for the truth to its successful conclusion. What was the Holocaust like, who were its victims and who is responsible for it?

I would like to share with you my inner reflections, or rather pose a question to which I have not yet found an answer. On many occasions, whenever I look at the photographs of Captain Pilecki's family life, I see a loving family man, a happy man satisfied with his life. That is why, I often wonder what drove Witold Pilecki to walk into a morning round-up in a Warsaw street in autumn 1940, let Germans capture and bring him to the Auschwitz camp? He must have known his journey to Auschwitz may well be his last, that he may never again see his beloved wife and children. Most of us also have a family, children, and I imagine every one of us understands the difficult decision made by Captain Pilecki. And it is when we deeply ponder the decision made by the Captain that we may discover the greatness of the sacrifice Witold Pilecki made for the sake of a better world.

He had a deep sense of duty to alert the world to the Holocaust and to truthfully describe it. For his service to us all, and his tragic death in May 1948 at the hands of Stalinist thugs, traitors of the Polish nation, we must remember this man forever.

If there is one man worthy of being named "A Man Among the Nations" I believe this man is Witold Pilecki, "Captain Pilecki".

Andrzej Nowak

When I came to Australia, my knowledge of history was limited to the study of history which I received in the primary and middle schools in Poland of the communist regime. This limitation precludes story about the heroism of soldiers of the underground Polish Home Army (Armia Krajowa, AK) and a minimum of information about the fate of Poles of the eastern borderlands of the Second Republic of Poland. Only in Australia, thanks to the local Polish Catholic press, and contacts with the Poles, the heroes of World War II who fought in the ranks of AK such as Mr. Zbigniew Leman, the Anders Army and kresowianie (Poles of the eastern borderlands) who survived genocide of Poles by Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), I discovered a new, in-depth history of Poland in the 20th century. But I could not understand why such a rich and positive, albeit a very tragic and sad history, was hidden and distorted by communists for decades. This led me to search deeper into the topic and find more and more historical facts about the heroism of Poles who fought not one, but two occupants of Poland: Nazi Germany and the Communist Soviet Union during the World War II. My fascination with this newly discovered history clicked at the same time with a much more involved metamorphosis of my friend Andrzej Nowak, who put all his heart and soul into the community work by organising petitions, historical film screenings and exhibitions among the Polish community in Australia, followed by our collaborative exhibition for Australians in Melbourne CBD at Federation Square. It was Andrzej who introduced me to Report "W" written by captain Witold Pilecki in the German concentration camp, Auschwitz-Birkenau. Captain Pilecki was the only AK undercover soldier who volunteered to enter the camp as a prisoner by purposely walking into the street roundup in Warsaw during the German occupation of Poland and being arrested by Gestapo. Pilecki's report has made a huge impression on me and gave me the motivation to support Andrzej's efforts in organising one of the first in the world exhibition in the Jewish Holocaust Centre in Melbourne about the life and heroic actions of Captain Witold Pilecki. Captain Pilecki was a soldier and one of the first members of the Polish Home Army, the structure

of which was comparable with a nation state. In addition to the army troops, it consisted of courts of law, police, scouting, education, medical care, and secret charity organisations providing assistance to the most vulnerable national minority, Jews. Founded by AK, Żegota organisation helped the Jews hiding from the Nazi German persecution and mass killings. Any help for Jews was punishable by death during German occupation of Poland. Irena Sendler, a nurse who had access to the Warsaw Ghetto, saved over 2,500 Jewish children by smuggling them out of the ghetto. They were hidden by Polish families with false documents such as Baptism Certificates provided by Polish priests and nuns of Catholic Church to hide their real identities.

AK as a distinct underground organisation made unprecedented history. Its extraordinary 400,000 members were made up of former soldiers of the Polish Army and the newly trained Polish youth brought up in the spirit of patriotism, catholic faith, firm discipline and bravery reaching willingness to sacrifice their lives in the struggle for freedom and independence of Poland and other nations of the world. AK with its limited arsenal contributed greatly to the direct German military losses.

It is a bar so highly raised that it would be too hard to reach for a contemporary generation, but at the same time it is a great example to follow and an ambitious challenging goal to achieve for many young Poles, in whom deep patriotism and love for their own nation and fundamental values of Christian culture in Europe awakes again.

Captain Witold Pilecki is the finest representative of the interwar generation and is one the most admired role models for Polish youth of today. His universal values of patriotism, honour, high moral standards, family love, community activeness, ever positive attitude, uniting leadership and support for all in need, together with his strict army discipline are good example of past culture. They are deeply rooted in his catholic faith and his choice to follow in the footsteps of our Lord, Jesus Christ. During her last visit to the prison before Pilecki's execution, he asked his wife to tell their children Zosia and Andrzej to always read Thomas à Kempis book "The Imitation of Christ" which gave him direction and courage throughout his extraordinary life.

Today Polish streets, schools, public places, special events are named after him. His monuments are raised in parks and squares of Polish cities. Young Poles historical exhibitions, lectures, sports competitions and concerts commemorating this exceptional Polish hero. Captain Witold Pilecki makes our nation very proud. We would like to share his story and his Report "W" with you. Thank you,

Jacek Glinka

## PREFACE

At the end of 2012, the Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation was contacted by the representatives of the Pilecki Project Committee, asking for our help in completing the documents related to the activities of Captain Witold Pilecki during World War II. We decided to assist, knowing the importance of the project to the Pilecki Project Committee. In 2014, we saw the results of their activities and joint efforts with the executives of Jewish Holocaust Centre in Melbourne.

Witold Pilecki – Volunteer in Auschwitz, is a unique and symbolic man. A soldier who fought in the Polish-Bolshevik war in 1920, he later fought in the September 1939 Campaign. During the German occupation he was involved in underground activities against the German occupiers. As a volunteer, aware of the consequences and risks, he agreed under an assumed name – Tomasz Serafiński – to be caught in September 1940 in Warsaw and be imprisoned by the Germans in the Auschwitz-Birkenau German concentration camp. Whilst in the camp, he co-created the resistance movement, gathered and passed to the outside world the information about mass exterminations by the Germans against the Jewish population and their unprecedented cruelty. In April 1943, along with Jan Radziej and Edward Ciesielski he escaped from the camp. After escaping, he prepared the most important document, Report “W”, in which he described the situation in the German concentration camp, Auschwitz-Birkenau. In 1944, Pilecki fought in the Warsaw Rising. After the capitulation of the Rising he was imprisoned at the German prisoner-of-war camp in Murnau. After being released on the orders of General Władysław Anders in 1945, he returned to Poland.

After the war, when Poland fell under the Soviet influence, he decided not to escape. He was arrested and accused of hostile acts against the Communist authorities. After the sham trial, he was sentenced in March 1948 to death. He

was executed in May of the same year, and his body was buried anonymously by the Communists in an unknown location. To this day, his place of burial is not known.

Documents presented at the exhibition and in the book, relating to Captain Witold Pilecki come from the archives of the Institute of National Remembrance. Our archives hold Report “W”, and numerous hand-written plans of Auschwitz-Birkenau. We also store the images of Witold Pilecki from the camp where he worked under an assumed name of Tomasz Serafiński. Very interesting and poignant are the documents produced by the Communist security authorities after World War II, in the form of materials from the investigation and the trial. This documentation shows that, despite the brutal investigation, Witold Pilecki behaved with dignity and honour. He didn't betray his friends – brothers in arms.

Captain Witold Pilecki is a heroic example of bravery for the young generation, regardless of their nationality. He is an epitome of honour and honesty in everyday life.

In conclusion, it's worth pointing out that no other nation in the history of the World War II sacrificed as much for saving Jews and for effectively spreading the word about the crimes of the Germans against the Jewish nation as the Poles did. Captain Witold Pilecki was a hero amongst them.

Warsaw, 2 April 2017

Dr. Rafał Leśkiewicz  
Institute of National Remembrance



## FOREWORD

The story of Captain Witold Pilecki is well-known in Poland but outside of the country, this historical figure remains in the shadows, although he should be considered one of the greatest wartime heroes. Pilecki's mission was to be arrested and, once inside Auschwitz, to collect intelligence for the Polish resistance and the government in exile in London. After 947 days inside the Auschwitz camp, Witold Pilecki and two other inmates escaped. He made his way back to Warsaw, reporting to the Home Army's headquarters on 25 August 1943. When the Warsaw Rising began on 1 August 1944, Pilecki continued to fight in the underground. After the defeat of the Warsaw Rising, Pilecki surrendered to the German authorities on 5 October and was taken as a prisoner of war to a camp in Germany, where he was liberated by the U.S. Army on 28 April 1945. After the war, Pilecki returned to Poland and was asked by the Polish government in exile to gather intelligence about the communists setting up in Poland. He was arrested by the communist secret police on 5 May 1947 and accused of espionage, tortured, interrogated and executed, following a trial during which he was given three death sentences, to be shot in the back of the head.

In the foreword to the book *The Auschwitz Volunteer: Beyond Bravery* the Chief Rabbi of Poland, Michael Schudrich, said, "When God created the human being, God had in mind that we should all be like Captain Witold Pilecki, of blessed memory."

In July 2006, President of the Republic of Poland, Lech Kaczyński, awarded Witold Pilecki with the Order of the White Eagle posthumously, in recognition of his valiant merits.

I am proud that PCCV and I can be part of this project which will bring the story of our hero Captain Witold Pilecki to wider audiences.

Perhaps it will inspire the younger generation who will adopt Pilecki as their role model. I sincerely wish for that to happen.

Melbourne, 31 March 2017

Marian Pawlik OAM  
President of Polish Community Council of Victoria

## BIOGRAPHY

Witold Pilecki was born on 13 May 1901 in Olonets, a town east of Lake Ladoga in Russia. The Pilecki family was brought there in swift retaliation for its participation in the 1863 uprising against the Russian occupant, as were so many other Polish families of the time. His father, Julian Pilecki, completed his studies at the St. Petersburg Forestry Institute. He then married Ludwika Osiecimska and settled in Olonets, where he worked as a forester.

In 1910, the Pilecki family moved to Vilnius, where Witold attended a commerce school. From 1914, Witold was a member of an underground scout group (scouts were banned by the Tsar's government). A year later, due to the closing in of the World War I eastern front, the Pilecki family was evacuated from Vilnius to Orel, south of Moscow. There, Witold remained active as a scout and even formed his own unit in 1916. In 1918, together with his scout unit, he took part, under the command General Władysław Wejtko, in the Polish defence of Vilnius.

During the Polish-Soviet war, Pilecki joined the regular Polish army. Under the command of Major Jerzy Dąbrowski, he was among those who secured safe retreat of Polish military units from Kiev. Pilecki also fought in the defence of Grodno. As a member of the 211th Uhlans Cavalry Regiment, he took part in one of the most significant eighteen battles in the entire history of mankind (according to the famous Creasy-Abernon list), the Battle of Warsaw, in which the Polish Army defeated the Soviet Red Army despite the latter's significant numerical advantage. Subsequently, he took part in the battle of Rudnik Forest, and the liberation of Vilnius. During the 1920 war he was twice awarded the Cross of Valour (Krzyż Walecznych).

After the war, in 1921, Pilecki passed his matriculation exams (matura). In 1922, he commenced his studies at the Agricultural Faculty of the University of Poznań. In the same year, he also commenced his studies at the Fine Arts

Faculty of the Stefan Batory University in Vilnius: these he has however, after a short time, given up.

On 7 April 1931, Pilecki married Maria Ostrowska. They moved to Sukurcze Manor near Lida. There, they raised their two children: Andrzej and Zofia. Maria worked in the local school and Witold looked after their home and carried out social work. For the latter he received, in 1938, Silver Cross of Merit (Srebrny Krzyż Zasługi).

During the September 1939 campaign, Pilecki was a platoon commander in the cavalry squadron of the 19th Infantry Division, which formed part of the Polish Army Group "Prusy". He also served in a similar capacity in the 41st Infantry Division, which was engaged in the so-called Romanian bridgehead area. His then immediate commander was Jan Włodarkiewicz. Pilecki continued his fight until 17 October 1939, and then went with Włodarkiewicz to Warsaw to form the Secret Polish Army (Tajna Armia Polska). Pilecki was its first Chief of Staff, and then its Chief-Inspector. The organisation would later become part of the Union of Armed Struggle (Związek Walki Zbrojnej) and then the Home Army (Armia Krajowa).

On 19 September 1940, with approval from his superiors, Pilecki took on a false identity of Tomasz Serafiński and deliberately walked into a street round-up (łapanka) in Warsaw, on Wojska Polskiego Avenue, in order to so enter the Auschwitz concentration camp. He was part of the so-called second Warsaw transport which arrived at Auschwitz in the night of 21 September 1940. He later became inmate number 4859. In Auschwitz, Pilecki organized an underground Military Organisation Union (Związek Organizacji Wojskowej, sometimes referred to also as Związek Organizacji Wojskowych). The organisation provided support to fellow inmates, obtained and distributed rations and clothing, passed on information about Auschwitz to the outside world, provided inmates with news and prepared its own forces for an uprising.

Aside from his daily work in the Military Organisation Union, Pilecki would also prepare reports about the situation in Auschwitz, which were then passed on to his superiors in Warsaw either via inmates working in the laundry department, or through released inmates. From Warsaw, these reports were sent on to Great Britain through the intelligence cell "Anna," which was based in Sweden. Pilecki's reports were also delivered to the Home Army Command by Auschwitz escapees Wincenty Gawron and Stefan Bielecki (16 May 1942), as well as Eugeniusz Bender, Kazimierz Piechowski and Stanisław Jaster (20 June 1942).

On 26 April 1943, Witold Pilecki, together with Jan Radziej and Edward Ciesielski, made a successful night escape from Auschwitz. Some three months

later he reached Warsaw. There, he compiled the so-called Report “W” about the situation in the concentration camp. Parts of the report, called Report “S”, were separated from Report “W” and then classified in order to protect the identities of the Polish conspiracy members in Auschwitz.

Between 1943 and 1944, Witold Pilecki served in branch III of the Directorate for Subversion (Kedyw) at the Home Army Headquarters. He took part in the Warsaw Rising of 1944 and, after its defeat, spent several months as a prisoner of war at the Lamsdorf and Murnau camps. Following liberation, Pilecki found himself in the ranks of the Polish II Corps in Italy. There, on the orders of the Corps Commander, General Władysław Anders, Pilecki compiled his final, most comprehensive report on the Auschwitz concentration camp, numbering more than 100 typed pages. Unfortunately, even to this day some of the names appearing in that report remain unknown, since the decryption code had been lost.

In October 1945, Witold Pilecki returned to Poland to gather information about the situation there, as ordered by General Anders. He organised an intelligence network, which collected information about Polish II Corps soldiers who returned to Poland, prisoners taken and sent to the depths of the USSR by the Soviet NKVD, as well as about the activities of the Polish Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of National Defence and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

As the risk of his arrest increased, General Anders ordered Pilecki to leave Poland. It appears however that Pilecki did not obey that command. Instead, he considered coming out of hiding under the terms of the 1947 Amnesty. On 8 May 1947, Pilecki was arrested by the Public Security operatives and then savagely tortured, in a lengthy investigation supervised by Colonel Józef Różański and conducted by Lieutenants Stanisław Łyszkowski, W. Krawczyński, J. Kroszel, T. Słowianek, Eugeniusz Chimczak i Stefan Alaborski.

On 3 March 1948, a trial began in which Pilecki was accused of carrying out activities on behalf of the Polish government in exile. Major Czesław Łapiński led the prosecution and Lieutenant Colonel Jan Hryckowian presided over the proceedings. Ironically, both of them were, like Pilecki, former Home Army officers. Captain Józef Badecki served as the Lay Judge (ławnik). It should be noted that the two-judge bench was not permitted under the law of the time.

On 18 March 1948, Witold Pilecki was sentenced to death. On 25 May 1948, Piotr Śmietański (the infamous “Butcher of Mokotów”) executed Pilecki inside the Mokotów prison at Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw, by a gunshot to the back of the head. The remains of Witold Pilecki are believed to have been secretly buried in the Warsaw’s Powązki Cemetery quarter called “Łączka”.

In 1990 the Chief Military Prosecutor's Office revised the case. On 1 October 1990, the verdict in the 1948 case of Witold Pilecki and other co-accused persons was declared unlawful and repealed.

Witold Pilecki was posthumously awarded the Order of Polonia Restituta (1995) and, on 30 July 2006, with Poland's highest order, Order of the White Eagle.

The full text of Witold Pilecki's reports from Auschwitz was first published in 2000.

## TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTORY NOTE

At first glance, Witold Pilecki's report seems easy enough to translate. Factual and pragmatic, glimpses of tormented emotions he felt witnessing the horrors of Auschwitz come to the fore only from time to time. Pilecki's writing is clear, precise and eloquent, beautiful in its simplicity and turn of phrase. His words in Polish are measured and composed. He is an educated man who writes well. The report was prepared for Pilecki's military superiors but much of the writing reveals his personal journey, torment and strength of character. The powerful narrative of endurance and survival provides many strong images that are at times difficult to convey in English.

The challenge for me was to render Pilecki's words into English in such a way that the reader could see all that he could see and feel all that he could feel. His honest, raw and at times harrowing description of Auschwitz leaves an important record for future generations.

Translating Pilecki's work has been an interesting journey for me in a professional capacity but also privately as a descendant of Polish Jews who died in Auschwitz. The translation remains far from perfect but I sincerely hope that it conveys Witold Pilecki's heroic story to those who wouldn't otherwise be able to read it.



Eva Hussain  
CEO of Polaron Language Services





## REPORT “W”

... and then, after 31 months, when circumstances changed to the extent that remaining in the camp, setting the burden of my tormented feelings aside, became in my view, unnecessary I decided to leave Vernichtungslager 1.

I have selected two desperately determined colleagues, J and E, who were still in the camp and we managed to escape, even though I had a gunshot wound, still bleeding.

Each of us wrote our own account of what we went through and saw at Auschwitz. We divided our duties between J, E and I in such a way that they were to provide a general description of the camp, whereas I was to preserve other events for eternity's sake. Furthermore, I kept my separate report on the S activities strictly coded. As it turned out, once we were free, the enemy's intelligence efforts were far reaching. Whilst our accounts may have been inadequate here and there, be it to do with the writing style or because we chose to avoid describing this hellhole too graphically in places as one cannot include everything on just a few pages, the memoirs do not contain untruths. Far less was written and not one word too many.

Witold



## **REPORT “W”**

On the 14, 15 and 16 September 1939, on General Piekarski’s order, through Major Mandzenko, I formed a cavalry detachment in Włodawa – 185 horses and over 160 infantry soldiers. On the 16 September, a senior officer from my brigade, and a friend of mine, Major Jan Włodarkiewicz, arrived in Włodawa. I handed over the command of these detachments to him.

The detachments fought on – at different times on horses and with arms – until 17 October 1939, as recorded by my younger colleagues.

The detachments became the beginning of Tajna Armia Polska (TAP – Secret Polish Army) which we set up in Warsaw early November 1939.

In Warsaw, I served as the TAP’s Chief of Staff (*nom de guerre* Witold). I sought to merge TAP with (ZWZ – Związek Walki Zbrojnej – Union of Armed Struggle). I found it difficult. There were differences of opinion (witnesses still alive: Janina Pieńkowska, Stefan Bielecki, and Major Zygmunt Bończa-Bohdanowski). The decision was made on 19 September 1940 (witness: Eleonora Ostrowska).

On the third anniversary of Auschwitz – the report about the work of those who, having made their agonising way through this hellhole, left it through the barrel of the crematorium’s chimney becoming, as we would call it, “puffs of smoke”, “little clouds” or “vapour”.

The fate of the members of Organizacja Wojskowa (Military Organization) in Auschwitz (as at the time of my escape from the camp) in the report.

Murdered during cross-examination

Platoon Leader Bolesław Kupiec (camp inmate no 792).

Executed by a firing squad

Eugeniusz Obojski (no 194), Colonel Aleksander Stawarz (no 11513), Lieutenant Colonel Karol Kumuniecki (no 8361), First Lieutenant Tadeusz Biliński (no 830), First Lieutenant Włodzimierz Makaliński (TAP, no 12710), Second Lieutenant (Res.) Stanisław Gutkiewicz (no 11003), Stanisław Stawiszyński (TAP, No 13689), Second Lieutenant (Res.) Tadeusz Lech (no 9235), Colonel Jan Karcz (no 23569), Off. Cadet (Res.) Zbigniew Ruszczyński (no 1360), First Lieutenant St. Dobrowolski (no...), Leon Kukiełka (no 16465), Stanisław Dubois (no 3904), Major Edward Gött-Getyński (no 29693), First Lieutenant (Res.) Eugeniusz Zaturski (TAP, No 1387), Cav. Captain Włodzimierz Koliński (no 3135), First Lieutenant Mieczysław Koliński (no 68844), Captain Tadeusz Dziezdzic (no 16246), Captain Dr Henryk Suchnicki (no 19456), Off. Cadet (Res.) Aleksander Jaskierski (no 2450), Corp. ...nicki, TAP, no ..., Captain Tadeusz Chróścicki – father (TAP, no 13484), Tadeusz Lucjan Chróścicki – son (TAP, no 16655), Antoni Suchecki (no 595), Second Lieutenant (Res.) Stanisław Wierzbicki (TAP, no 3558), Stefan Niebudek (no 18531), Stanisław Arct (no 12654) Roman Radoliński (no 13471), Senior Uhlan Stefan Stępień (no 12970), Platoon Leader Edward Berlin (no 19490).

Murdered by lethal injections

Sailor Lolek Kuplec (Karol Kuplec, no 794), Zygmunt Masewicz (no 1394), Alfred Stossel (no 435).

Died (killed on the plaats or died as a result of the conditions or illnesses in the camp)

Cav. Captain (Res.) Jerzy de Virion (known in the camp as Jan Hlebowicz, TAP, no 3507), Roman Zagner (no ...), Captain Michał Romanowicz (no ...), Captain Eugeniusz Trieblin (no 6995), Eugeniusz Dublin (no 31007), Teofil Banasiuk (no 1698), Jan Hrebenda (no 3665), Jan Mielcarek (no 3569), Off. Cadet (Res.) Remigiusz Niewiarowski (TAP, no 13957), Major Waclaw Chmielewski (TAP, no 37995), Tadeusz Dobrowolski (no ...), Jerzy Wierusz-Kowalski, father (TAP, no 31356), Platoon Leader Stanisław Kotarski (no...), Platoon Leader Józef Chramiec (no 101), Stefan Gaik (no...), Sergeant Major Zygmunt Jaworski (TAP, no 18435), Professor Roman Rybarski (no18599), Kazimierz Rogalewicz (no 3473), Bolesław Leśniewicz (no 21991), or Stanisław Leśniewicz (no 14449), Czesław Sikora (no 76159), Stanisław Polkowski (no 6398), Teofil Staniszkis (no 18624), Off. Cadet (Res.) Jan Wysocki (TAP, No 13436), Alojzy Fusek (no ...), Józef Gałka (no 10611), Cav. Captain (Res.) Tadeusz Czechowski (no 18369), Witold Myszkowski (no 2606), Andrzej Marduła (no 18855).

Released by the camp's authorities – went with a report to Organisation:  
Aleksander Wielopolski (no ...), Corporal Czesław Wąsowski (no 5298),  
Second Lieutenant (Res.) Tadeusz Burski (no ...), Off. Cadet Krzysztof Hoffman  
(no 2738), Dr. Marian Dipont (no 2186).

Released by the authorities – took a report for the Organisation:

Colonel Władysław Surmacki (TAP, no 2795), Captain Ferdynand Trojnicki  
(no 5145), Sergeant Antoni Woźniak (no 5512), First Lieutenant (Res.) Karol  
Świętorzecki (no 5360), Aleksander Paliński (no 8253).

Transferred to Dachau having fallen ill (arranged)

Jan Dangel (TAP, no 13486).

Transferred to other camps

Second Lieutenant (Res.) Mikołaj Skornowicz (no ...), Tadeusz Słowiacek (no  
1069), Platoon Leader Władysław Kupiec (no 793), Colonel Tadeusz Reklewski (no  
6471), Second Lieutenant Konstanty Piekarski (no 4618), Colonel Jerzy Zalewski  
(no 21514), Off. Cadet (Res.) Zbigniew Różak (no 6609), Off. Cadet (Res.) Zygmunt  
Wanicki (no 2199), Wiktor Śniegucki (no 6274), Tadeusz Pietrzykowski “Teddy”  
(no 77), Captain Julian Trzęsimiech (no ...), Stanisław Ozimek (TAP, Second ...),  
Henryk Kowalczyk (no 64276), Leszek Cenzartowicz (no 870), Second Lieutenant  
(Res.) Jerzy Wiśniewski (no 31361), Second Lieutenant (Res.) Lech (no...), Father  
Zygmunt Ruszczak (no 9842), Waclaw Kafarowski (no 12079), Czesław Darkowski  
(TAP, no 8121), Lolek Słowiacek (no 1054), Cav. Sergeant Jan Miksa (no ...), Edward  
Nowak (no 447), Second Lieutenant (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 in order to attempt escape while in transit

Colonel Kazimierz Rawicz (known in the camp as Jan Hilckner, no 9319),  
Off. Cadet Witold Szymkowiak (no 938), via whom I sent this report.

Shot dead during attempted escape

Platoon Leader Stanisław Maringe (TAP, no 12691), First Lieutenant (Res.)  
Jerzy Poraziński (TAP, no ...).

Left the camp in an arranged escape with report to the Organization

Wincenty Gawron (no 11237), Stefan Bielecki (TAP, no 12692), Off. Cadet  
Mieczysław Januszewski (no 711), Stanisław Jaster (no 6438), Second Lieutenant  
(Res.) Jan Redzej (known in the camp as Jan Retko, no 5430), Edward Ciesielski  
(no 12969), and me – Witold Pilecki (TAP, no 4859).

Remained at the camp

Captain Dr. Władysław Dering (TAP, no 1723), Off. Cadet (Res.) Anto-  
ni Rosa (no 923), Off. Cadet Michał Ziółkowski (no 1055), Platoon Leader

Tadeusz Szydlik (no 2198), Colonel Teofil Dziama (no 13578), Second Lieutenant (Res.) Jan Olszowski (no 6157), Second Lieutenant (Res.) Jan Pilecki (no 808), Henryk Bartosiewicz (no 9406), Captain Stanisław Kazuba (no 1630), Second Lieutenant (Res.) Bernard Świerczyna (no 1393), Off. Cadet (Res.) Mieczysław Wagner (no 5831), Major Zygmunt Bończa-Bohdanowski (TAP, no 30959), Off. Cadet (Res.) Zygmunt Bujanowski (no ...), Zygmunt Kotecki (no...), Jan Zięmba (no 66), Zygmunt Sobolewski (no 88), Antoni Trzaskowski (no 13321), Colonel Juliusz Gilewicz (no 31033), Captain Tadeusz Lisowski (no 329), Motyka (no...), Alfred Włodarczyk (no 1349), Witold Kosztowny (no 672), Dr. Rudolf Diem (no 10022), First Lieutenant (Res.) Marian Moniczewski (no 18859), Second Lieutenant (Res.) Leon Murzyn (no 820), Second Lieutenant Witold Wierusz (no 9479), Second Lieutenant (Res.) Edmund Zabawski (no 19547), Jan Machnowski (no 724), Off. Cadet (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. Sergeant Major Stefan Gąsiorowski (no 9201), Waclaw Weszke (no 9530), Stanisław Kożuch (no 325), Sergeant Major Szczepan Rzeczkowski (TAP, no 13600), Jerzy Wierusz-Kowalski (TAP, no 31357, son), Platoon Leader Antoni Koszczyński (no 4075), Captain Michał Więcki (no 1036), First Lieutenant "Włodek Owczarz" (no ...), Sergeant Władysław Kielczyk (no 4266), Sailor Aleksander Kasper (no 3894), Captain Janusz Goślinowski (no 8252), Konstanty Jagiełło (no 4507), Captain 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. Cadet (Res.) Tadek, block secretary of 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. Cadet Leon Mackiewicz (no 3618), Colonel 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 Myszkowski (no 593), Stanisław Wolak (no 1058), Maksymilian Piłat (no 5131), Off. Cadet (Res.) Witold Wysocki – from Vilnius (no...), Off. Cadet Jurek... – electrician (no ...), Stefan Dziurkacz (no ...), Stefan – a colleague of Heniek B. (no ...).

June 1943

This account is being written to commemorate the facts and names of Auschwitz prisoners who worked there for Organizacja Wojskowa (Military Organization) – following a successful and daring escape from the camp during the night of 26/27 April 1943 and after 31 months at the camp. From the very beginnings of the camp until March 1943 some 11,200 prisoners were shot by a firing squad there, some 34,000 were gassed in the chambers, some 41,000 died from various causes, were otherwise killed in public, died of diseases and from other causes. By March 1943, some 6,000 have been transferred to other camps and 1,115 inmates have been released. In March 1943, the camp held approximately 25,000 inmates. Numbers allocated to new arrivals at that time reached just over 121,000. Those numbers applied to inmates. Upon arrival, everyone was registered and had their prisoner number tattooed. Many people brought here were destined for instant death and were never tattooed. The mass killings were carried out a few kilometres from the Auschwitz camp, in Rajsko, where an associated Birkenau camp was set up. There, whole transports of people were brought by trains or trucks – often a few thousand people daily, a total of 800,000 by August 1942 and over 1.5 million by March 1943. Most of those people were Jews, but there also were Czechs, Germans and other nationalities among them. Seeing the massive piles of clothes and things left behind by the people who were gassed was a great source of pain to us. Amongst all of that, we were able to find children's shoes and prams, as well as rosaries and Polish prayer books. Among others killed in this horrific slaughter, there were villagers from the Lublin province. During this period, in our camp and all its sub-camps some 11,400 prisoners of war were killed.

After my arrival to Auschwitz (the night of 21/22 September 1940) I found myself, just as any new arrival at Auschwitz, in a situation unlike any of my previous experiences. During the first few days I felt bewildered, as if living on another planet.

With SS-men urging us with rifle butts into a floodlit barbed area, we trotted past some cackling Kapos decorated with green and red patches in place of medals. Using poles, Kapos line us up, and, jeering wildly and joking around, they kill the sick and the weak, or those who inadvertently admit to being a judge or a priest. It feels as if we have all been locked up in a mental asylum.

During my first few days there, I witnessed such gruesome incidents that Dante's description of hell would pale beside them. I will not describe these here, nor any of those I witnessed during the years I spent in the camp. My colleagues J and E will do that. I'm keeping these to myself.

Here, I need to digress. After my return from the camp, when describing my experiences, I mentioned the matter at hand to some people I know. Their view was that "normal people" would find it difficult to get their heads around it all. Courtesy would require me 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 these "normal people" using very different expressions.

We live in times some people define as a threshold of two epochs. Others say, 'things are changing right now'. Yet others attempt to give the humanity a new political system and define it. All those wiser than most agree on one thing, however. We are stuck, and badly so, like academics before us.

Apart from that, we, the "normal people" are paralysed by anxiety. It stops us from doing or saying anything that goes beyond the framework appropriate for "average people", lest things get worse. Or God forbid – we are ridiculed by others. I met some people, mostly men and supposed believers, embarrassed to cross themselves proudly in public. This is an excellent example of shame and anxiety: do not make the sign of the cross, lest some idiot in the crowd makes fun of you. Better stick around with a pack of idiots than have someone point a finger at you and be considered strange by an average person. I am certainly not writing this to elevate myself above everyone else.

On the contrary! I simply want to shake everyone up, so that rather than remain at a certain mob-normalised level, new thoughts and actions emerge, at least here and there, conceived by individuals unconcerned by some jealous fool, making sure no neighbour towers over the crowd, none raises above the rest. And yet, only those who do excel above average, are able to create new ideas and introduce these to others, expand over new horizons.



My digression tells you that in no way would I expect to be counted amongst those “normal people”. I don’t want to force myself to fit the tight framework of their ideas. I hope it is easier now for the reader to understand 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 friends that “those things are very difficult to comprehend”. Yet, to leave anything out could make other parts of my story incomprehensible.

Well, I found joy in myself at times least likely to produce that kind of feeling.

It was when I stood in rank amongst the “Bloody Alojz” block inmates and saw the Krankenmann “smooth out” the ranks of the penal company with a knife he plunged into the abdomen of anyone who dared to move a fraction, that, with some surprise, unprepared to believe it at first, I realised I just found joy in myself. I became aware of wanting to fight once again. My initial crisis of a few days was luckily over. At last, as has been my yearning since 1939, a yearning a soldier can understand better than most, I stand in line, straight as a rod, a line of furious men standing arm to arm, united by the same purpose and the same thought, a line of Poles ready to fight. These people are ideal for starting an organisation.

This was the source of the force that made me believe and create. So, I made it. After a few weeks, I had the first cell of Organizacja Wojskowa all set up at Auschwitz. It was made up of people from Warsaw. In October 1940, I sent my first message to Warsaw, handing it in to Captain Michał Romanowicz who was in touch with Aleksander Wielopolski, an intelligence operative working under Teczyński. Wielopolski was released from the camp.

I nominated Colonel Władysław Surmacki, whom I have known for a long time and whom I involved in Warsaw in TAP work in May 1940 for the position of the Chief of Staff, in charge of the first “top five” (Colonel Władysław Surmacki, Captain Dr. Władysław Dering, Cavalry Captain (Res.) Jerzy de Virion, Eugeniusz Obojski i Roman Zagner). In March 1941, I assembled the second “top five” (Officer Cadet Witold Szymkowiak, Officer Cadet Antoni Rosa, Tadeusz Słowiaczek, Second Lieutenant Mikołaj Skornowicz, Władysław Kupiec, Bolesław Kupiec, Tadeusz Pietrzykowski) from those inmates who had lowest numbers tattooed. In May 1941, from those who came in the fourth and fifth Warsaw transports, I formed the third “top five” (Captain Eugeniusz Triebing, First Lieutenant Włodzimierz Makaliński, First Lieutenant (Res.)

Stanisław Gutkiewicz, Wincenty Gawron, Stanisław Stawiszyński), and in October 1941 – the fourth “five” (Henryk Bartosiewicz, Captain Stanisław Kazuba, Second Lieutenant Konstanty Piekarski, Stefan Bielecki, First Lieutenant (Res.), Tadeusz Lech). I never blindly stuck to the “fives” system, though.

None of those “fives” knew anything about the other “fives” and, in believing theirs was at the top of our organisation, they would develop it independently of each other, forming branches reaching as far as the collective energy and capacity of members allowed, topped up by the capacities of members in lower rungs, whose numbers were steadily increasing thanks to the efforts from all the top “fives”. Our work consisted of saving lives of our colleagues through providing additional food, recommending them to those in charge of individual blocks, providing care at “Krankenbau”, providing fresh linen and underwear, finding better positions and jobs, offering moral support, distributing information from outside of the camp, contacts with outside population, delivering camp messages to the outside world, gathering 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 undertaken.

For increased security, I have decided that the first “five” should not know about the other group. For this reason, I did not approach senior officers initially. They were registered here under their own names. Some of them, colonels whose ranks were no secret, were already developing plans to take the camp over. In April 1941 my colleagues would report, with increasing frequency, that Colonel Aleksander Stawarz and Lieutenant Colonel Karol Kumuniecki formed the view the inmates should liberate the camp. Approximate dates for the liberation were communicated. Lieutenant Colonel Kumuniecki was to take all healthy inmates towards Katowice and Colonel Stawarz with all the sick and infirm was to stay put. Noticing the naivety of this plan, I kept to myself for a while, not getting involved. On 15 May 1941, I sent a message to this effect to Warsaw through Lieutenant (Res.) Karol Świętorzecki, as he was being released from the camp.

Meanwhile, the organisation (we never referred to it in the open and even then, only spoke of it in code) has been growing steadily and fast.

The massive milling stones of the camp constantly churned out new corpses. Many colleagues were dying and they had to be replaced with others. And so, we had to continue rebuilding it.

We continued sending messages to the outside world. They were broadcast by foreign radio stations. The camp's command was furious – they would strip the floors looking for things. Individual “top fives”, once they had branched out far enough, would report to me the existence of another “five”. In November 1941, I sent a message to Warsaw through Captain Ferdynand Trojnicki who was being released from the camp. At the same time, in letters to my family smuggled out of the camp, I asked them not to attempt to buy me out of here. This was possible as they had no case against me. I was thrilled by this game and its future finale.

In December 1941, I sent a message to Warsaw through Colonel Władysław Surmacki as he was being released. He was arrested again in Warsaw as soon as he arrived and shot at Pawiak. In March 1942, he managed to pass on a few words about what we were doing 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 organisation. He agreed. A few months later he was taken to the bunker and tortured. Since he did not admit anything, he was released from the bunker and transferred to Birkenau, the Auschwitz sub-camp. He did some work for our organisation there.

As I said, out of caution, for the time being I tried to avoid involving high ranking officers known here under their true identities in our organisation. Lest it be wrongly attributed to my “egoistic ambitions”, 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 widely believed to be a civilian. Colonel Rawicz joined our organisation. A plan of action was prepared with him and we have since continued to work together.

Then I organised the fifth “top five” (Second Lieutenant (Res.) Bernard Świerczyna, Officer Cadet (Res.) Zbigniew Ruszczański, Officer Cadet (Res.) Mieczysław Wagner, Officer Cadet (Res.) Zbigniew Różak, Platoon Leader Tadeusz Szydlik).

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

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

In 1941, the responsibility-times-ten rule was introduced in the camp, meaning that for each escaped prisoner ten others were executed. For that reason, we stopped organising escapes. In the early 1942, Berlin banned the rule and we started preparing for an escape. In May 1942, our colleagues Stefan Bielecki and Wincenty Gawron were successful so I was able to send a message to Warsaw through them. There were no repressions at the camp following their escape.

In June, the First Lieutenant Włodzimierz Makaliński from the 13th Uhlans Regiment was executed by being shot. He worked closely with 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 organisation, First Lieutenant (Res.) Stanisław Gutkiewicz were shot. After 11 November 1941, an execution claimed the life of our brave First Lieutenant (Res.) Tadeusz Lech. These were the first executions on such a large scale.

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

In June 1942, the camp authorities put a body of a German soldier on display. He was allegedly killed by Polish inmates who wanted to provoke a reaction and cause unrest within the camp, and then create tension among the Polish inmates. The authorities could see what our reading of all this was. This stopped them from any further action and the issue was eventually buried.

At that time and for many months afterwards, until 7 March 1943, we were perfectly capable of taking over the camp at any time. We were concerned about the general situation on the outside, absence of an order or of an air strike which would have untied our hands (as a *vis maior*). With the best interest at heart, a chance of a conflict and other similar concerns, have prevented us from taking any voluntary actions.

Our tragedy was not, as people in Warsaw thought, that we were simply "walking bags of bones". On the contrary, our tragedy was that despite our strength and influence on the local situation, due to our concern for the possible

consequences (repressions against the population at large) our hands were tied and we thus had to pretend we were helpless.

We needed an order, a permission, a go ahead from our authorities in Warsaw, lest we are told later: Mr. W, J or H, your ambition has cost our nation a number of victims. Lest we are pointed out as an example of our centuries' old national vices, excess and lacking in discipline.

As our individual commanding bodies were dispersed between various blocks, we divided our forces into four main large detachments according to their duties, should the camp be taken over. Two scenarios were considered: action during working hours or action with everyone in their blocks (at night, lights on).

I sent a message through Stanisław Jaster, who with his three colleagues brilliantly arranged an escape in the camp's commandant's car. When en route, they encountered the Lagerführer and, very cheekily, made him salute back inmates dressed in military uniforms.

Only when in Auschwitz and doing our work did I ever experience a moment one would dream of, in vain, when free. Only when faced with masses of corpses did our politicians abandon their party infighting – a waste of time I have always found infuriating. In the political cell of our organisation we had Prof. Roman Rybacki, former MP Stanisław Dubois, our colleagues Konstanty Jagiełło, Piotr Kownacki and Kiliański. They all worked together, harmoniously and hand in hand.

In July 1942, Colonel Kazimierz Rawicz and Officer Cadet from the 10th Uhlans Regiment, Witold Szymkowiak applied for and left in a transport for another camp, intending to 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 been corresponding with them via their families. Before his departure, Colonel Kazimierz Rawicz asked me to turn to Colonel Juliusz Gilewicz and involve him in our work to replace the departing Colonel Kazimierz Rawicz. I spoke to Colonel Juliusz Gilewicz who agreed and then joined our organisation. We continued our work in a new set-up as, thanks to Henryk Bartosiewicz's efforts, we were joined by Lieutenant Colonel Karol Kumuniecki. After that, there were barely any officers left who did not work for our organ-

isation. Soon after, Colonel Aleksander Stawarz and our colleague Stanisław Dubois were executed by being shot.

In August 1942, during a typhus fever epidemic, the authorities killed many inmates in the gas chambers. They already recovered but were still in the typhus block (no 20). This was disguised as 'delousing measures'. On the day, they went to the gas chambers fully aware their death was a result of their presence on the block. The block was closed and everyone, except for the doctors and nurses, was driven in cars to be gassed. Much help was given by Captain Dr. Władysław Dering, who saved lives of more than twenty Poles by giving them nurse uniforms.

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

After general delousing, the camp authorities relocated inmates in such a way that all detachments were in the same block.

Unbeknown to them, they made our tasks simpler in case of an action. Now that the two scenarios no longer applied (detachments at work or inmates at block), I divided all our forces, ignoring the frameworks of individual "fives", into battalions, companies and platoons, allocating activities to them, combining individual blocks into battalions and appointing, as their commanding officers:

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

On 28 October 1942, at roll-call, pretending some inmates needed to go to the "Erkennungsdienst" regarding their photos, many of our colleagues, mostly from the province of Lublin (even though there were people from other regions of Poland amongst them, such as our brave Stanisław Stawiszyński) had to step forward from the line. When the entire camp was at work, all 265 were executed on Block 11 by being shot. And then, for the first time ever, five inmates, among them Captain Dr. Henryk Suchnicki and Leon Kukiełka, encouraged others to resist. However, except for these five, everyone else decided 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 five inmates already barricaded the entry into

Block 11. The camp authorities, tipped off by an informer, a guy from Silesia, arrived and disposed of the first five and then proceeded to kill each one with a shot to the back of the head from a small calibre rifle or an air gun.

28 October 1942 was a day of tension. At first, we did not know why we were called out. Later, we were unable to communicate with others. Being at the top of our organisation, we felt on edge. We were the only people who could get a word from our kinfolk outside.

We awaited the decision of the 265 inmates. Their mutiny would have untied our hands. Our scruples would have vanished through this turn of events, whether we would have liked it or not. We would have taken our camp over. So, we waited. They decided otherwise. We saw how bravely they met their death.

From the moment they were lined up near Block 3 in fives by Palitsch's small calibre 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 25, 26, 27 and 19, 20, 21. At the timber canteen building, the procession hesitated a moment, 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, strong, young, select. Quite a few cracked jokes, many smiling, as most were camp veterans. They would have seen larger and smaller groups of colleagues march to meet their deaths and they would later comment on who and how faced it. Never before though there were so many. A whole column of 265, without an escort, all alone, followed by the select pair talking to each other: "Bruno" and Palitzsch with a rifle on their belts, as if going for a walk. Admittedly, Palitzsch was not a coward. It would have been enough for the last five to do a sudden turn about and both Palitsch and "Bruno" would have given their last breath in less than a minute. They were, however, so sure of themselves. They knew the people who marched to meet their death had news from recent arrivals that the enemy did not spare the families of those who rebelled. In order to save their life, they would not condemn their mothers, wives and children to death or torture. Their experience of hell has already elevated their souls – they experienced both heaven and hell here. Apart from those who have already died, how many of these have, more than once, risked their lives to save a friend?

Commenting on this within a group of my friends later in the evening we asked 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 no return? 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 death for a few hours longer, until noon.

This was a pay-back for what occurred earlier in the province of Lublin. In autumn 1942, a few people I knew from my work in Warsaw arrived: Second Lieutenant (Res.) Stanisław Wierzbicki, Czesław Sikora, Kiliański and Captain Stanisław Machowski, who, according to Second Lieutenant (Res.) Stanisław Wierzbicki, was a staff member of the Warsaw High Command. Even though they have worked in Warsaw until the last moments before their arrest, these four people knew very little about Auschwitz. Second Lieutenant (Res.) Stanisław Wierzbicki was aware he needed to find “Witold”, yet he knew nothing about mass killings in the gas chambers, about “Kanada”, about phenol injections, “pyramids”, the Block 10 secret, or about the Block 11’s “Wailing Wall”.

Second Lieutenant (Res.) Stanisław Wierzbicki brought me good news. Stefan Bielecki we sent to Warsaw got there and was now working. He once gave him a lift in his car to Mińsk Litewski. This has cheered us up, as this was the first news about our emissaries. They all disappeared into thin air.

When asked what people on the outside thought about escapes from Auschwitz, Second Lieutenant (Res.) Stanisław Wierzbicki answered: there are two points of view. The society condemns it, as it believes that currently 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 escaping from Auschwitz, possibly with him. He survived for less than two months.

All of them: Second 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 plan to save Auschwitz inmates, as this would not work. After all they are simply “good-for-nothing” 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 people 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 acknowledgement.

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. So that he, when such moment arrives, if he is still alive, could melt into a pack of fools, who – naturally – would no longer be a threat to the enemy or to other Poles. The latter, consciously or otherwise, appear to see future competitors in their brothers imprisoned in camps.

However, those in the camp had other things than accolades in mind. In our daily work, we fought to strengthen our Polish brothers in their fight, so that as few as possible Polish souls leave through the crematorium’s chimney. At times, a day seemed as long as a year to us.

Some people, even when in the camp, would maintain only they had the authority to do underground work. Others, apparently, had in mind of the former ceased to be Poland’s sons. For example, “Czesiek” and “Tadek” had good contacts with the local population and their communication lines reached thus further. Their “top five” has branched out the widest and has grown so far from the trunk that they suggested to me through Second Lieutenant Konstany Piekarski, it is only them that would be authorised by Warsaw to work in the camp (reports, photos). All others, in “Warsaw’s view”, or so claimed “Czesiek” and “Tadek”, should stop working. That sounded like telling the former to cease to exist. Earlier in Warsaw, I got used to that kind of exaggerated self-opinion. It is quite widespread among Poles that he, and only he, can do certain things and therefore is authorised to do so. Knowing it, I did not take it to heart, as it usually seems to be a way to fight the competition, an activity to secure future gains for oneself.

As for our wireless, apart from our portable radio station that we had to dismantle in autumn 1942 due to some gossiping tongues, and one receiver, I managed to get access with Second Lieutenant Konstanty Piekarski to the local German camp radio station. We replaced our former Commander Sokołowski who had become a bit clumsy. Our task was to prepare maps for the camp authority. With help from Officer Cadet (Res.) Zbigniew Ruszczyński we managed to set our cell up. I took out a complete set of slips, coded abbreviations used by “Funkstelle”. They were referred to as “Verkehrabkürzungen”.

Through my colleague Eugeniusz Dublin, I passed on these slips, taking advantage of contacts some inmates had established with civil workers in Brzeszcze, themselves organisation’s civil members on the outside, who claimed a “recapture” of Auschwitz and avenging the death of martyrs was in their plans. Inmates with weaker morale were quick to pick it up and would say we should do nothing ourselves and instead wait for us to be “freed” by others. It turned out we waited in vain.

In 1942, with great ease I was able to relocate our organisation’s members to appropriate Kommandos to prepare the ground and start the work. That was possible due to a member of our organisation, Officer Cadet Mieczysław Januszewski, managing to secure an Arbeitsdienst job. On a large scale, members of our organisation were able to secure convenient jobs, i.e. jobs with a good “Kommando”, with a greater chance of staying alive, or from the perspective of organisation’s work, or in Kommando in which it was easier to an escape (as was the case with Wincenty Gawron and Stefan Bielecki who took a message to Warsaw; we thus saved the lives of these two colleagues who already had death sentences for weapon possession).

1942 ended with a prank four inmates from the camp’s elite, all of them being Arbeitdiensts, that is Mieczysław Januszewski, German Otto Küsel, Bolesław Kuczbara and Jan Baras-Komski, played on the Lagerältester Bronisław Brodniewicz, inmate no 1, a Pole who spied for Germans and was dubbed “Bruno – the Black Death”. The first and the second Arbeitsdienst – Mietek (Officer Cadet Mieczysław Januszewski) and Otto (inmate no 2), both brave, of handsome, 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 a 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 Brodniewicz. The letter was written in a friendly tone (even though

inmate no 1 and inmate no 2 hated each other and made it very obvious) and said that had to hurry and could not, despite a previous agreement, take the Lagerältester with them. Even though no agreement with Bruno was possible, let alone one regarding an escape, the camp's authorities took away the butcher's freedom and punished by putting him into a bunker for three months, where he had to explain everything. The escape took place on 30 December. Locking Bruno up on New Year's Eve triggered the festive season, until January 6, abound in parties, masquerades, boxing matches, concerts and dancing events, all unheard of before. It looked like a folly before a storm to the oldest inmates.

The discipline in the camp has been weakening, slowly but surely, from the very beginning. The experience of people who arrived at the camp a month later was maybe no different than those who arrived 30 days earlier but at least they experienced less torture. Some 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 to explain their actions: “Das ist ein Vernichtungslager”. No wonder that those who stayed at Auschwitz the longest reacted to this festive boisterousness by saying: “There used to be Lager Auschwitz. But now, thanks to God, it is no more.” The last syllable barely remained: “only”. During the evening, when returning to our blocks behind the barbed wire after day's work, it did not trouble us at all when we saw a scene that would seem shocking to people from outside the camp. Our orchestra made up of our colleagues-musicians (this was 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 marching tune, usually a very lively one. Sometimes Kommandos would march to the tune of a polka or oberek. However, not all of these march as energetically as the “old numbers”, most of whom work at the 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 on their own. Bloodied heads knocked out by hands of some idiot from Silesia or Germany droop inertly or are supported by the shoulders and carried by their colleagues, their distressed faces beside them. It's hard not to ask a question: which of these heads are still alive? Here they haul a half-cadaver, his abdomen touching the ground. Those who carry it can hardly walk themselves, yet you are supposed to match the rhythm of the dynamic march, if you do not want to get one on your head.

Our detachment is five hundred men strong, all of us work at the 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 the amusement caused by the passage of the earlier, wretched column on their faces, and in their eyes. The strong steps of our colleagues, most of whom belong to our "fives", wipes away the sneer 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 jump at you? Next to them, as an emergency, there are two detachments of heavily armed soldiers. Yet, this means nothing to us, we wouldn't give them time to breathe. Yet, we must not! Colleagues, we must not! The outside society would have to pay dearly for it, they seem to suggest from afar. Are we not dealing with some outrageous misjudgement?

We walk past the crematorium. Next to its entry there is a group of men and women. Poles. It feels 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. These males and females will think they will be taking a bath (sometimes they 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, the so-called cyclone-B. And this is how their lives will end. Some will even begrudge the gas. They will simply stun them with a head hit and carry them, still alive, right to the grate. We walk past them, we almost brush past them. Us – the 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, we even saw 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 looking for someone known to him. We all have our beloved women, some of us – small children at home, we have seen here many infernal scenes, yet the eyes of these people keep us awake at night. Further down, at the gate, there is another group of women and men. They are facing 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 journey, 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' 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 half an hour later his thoughts are exclusively occupied with where to find some extra food. And so, he strikes a "margarine deal" with a colleague, paying no attention to the massive heap of naked corpses killed on order by phenyl injections, just a step away. Today "only" a 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 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 accidentally touch or step on one of these naked bodies. 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 Lagerälteste and a further softening of discipline, a continued supply of the usual camp scenes. In January 1943, they execute Colonel Jan Karcz and First Lieutenant (Res.) Eugeniusz Zaturski, once a TAP worker in Warsaw, by shooting him. On 16 February, they shoot First Lieutenant (Res.) Stanisław Wierzbiński, also a former TAP worker. Later, they shoot a group they have kept in the bunker for a long time: Lieutenant Colonel Karol Kumuniecki, Major Edward Gott-Getyński, First Lieutenant Tadeusz Biliński, Cav. First Lieutenant Włodzimierz Koliński and First Lieutenant Mieczysław Koliński – brothers and others, all with a single shot from an air gun to the back of the head, a slight variation from the way it was done in Katyń.

Just like in Katyń, bodies of those killed with gas were initially buried in enormous trenches in Birkenau. For that, they used a special Kommando of only Jews. They were given two weeks to live and then were killed by the gas themselves. Later, they found out that this was not a good idea as the local groundwater attained a nasty smell and "hints" were left behind. So then they started digging up corpses, piling them up and burning. At first it was a manual work, but later they applied a crane. It was out of question to burn them in the crematorium as all crematoria were lagging behind. As a new project, they designed two new crematoria, with eight body burning grates each. The body burning with electricity 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 in Berlin and the construction of these started. They were to be ready by 1 February 1943. Out of necessity, this deadline was later extended. By April 1943, however, they were ready.

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

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

When the camp was first set up, yet very rarely, some inmates, particularly those rounded up on streets of Warsaw, were released. However, as soon as killing with 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 list. That said, they were promptly drafted into military units, and they had little time to distribute information about the camp. 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, keeping us locked up inside blocks, and from the moment the typhus epidemic started looking for lice and checking of linen by nurses. Under the guise of hygiene concern, the idea was to leave as little time as possible to inmates so that they couldn't communicate between themselves.

Once the authorities realised 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), they became suspicious. 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 wasting 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 messages destined for the authorities about various collected or overheard conversations, etc.

### **We Decided to Fight It**

The matter was taken care of by: First Lieutenant Tadeusz Biliński, our colleague Tadeusz Jakubowski and Captain Tadeusz Dziedzic. A few hours before Palitzsch or someone else from the authorities was due to open it, our colleagues would open it using a self-made key. They would look through the letters dropped and leave those we considered harmless. We would find out who the informers were. Sometimes we would write anonymous letters ourselves to provide some food for thought for the authorities about “gold procurement” or some other activities we were not interested in but the authorities were greatly engrossed by. We achieved some good results with it, initiating investigations against informers.

“Gold procurement” was a reference to gold, banknotes or precious stones hidden in briefcases, suitcases, tubes of 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 but got gassed instead. They would come here from France, Czech Republic, Greece, the Netherlands, Norway and elsewhere. They were allowed to take some hand luggage with them. It contained all their wealth: gold, dollars and diamonds 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 astuteness, find such objects and, if unburdened by scruples, would often extract from them (I witnessed it myself many times) very fine diamonds, gold and banknotes, as well as all sorts of women’s and men’s outfits, anything that a well-off lady or gentleman would need.

I then worked at the tannery where they would bring suitcases, children's prams, ladies' handbags and other objects, some luxurious, for them to either be immediately burned down in a large industrial furnace, or sorted out and made pairs from pyramids of men's, women's and children's shoes, of all forms, colours and sizes. If you add a vast quantity of very fine underwear, then you will get a rough idea what "Kanada" means here.

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 the 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 treasures for them and in many inmates ending their lives in the bunker, or in SK.

The "gold procurement" were objects that belonged to people killed with gas and the business of exchanging these. 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, would sometimes, after a beating in the bunker, lead to arrests of a number of other inmates, to which clues led. The greed for gold among the SS-men was also a reason the group was investigated.

Auschwitz soon became a centre from which gold and diamonds would start flowing in various directions. Camp authorities had their hands in it. The camp commandant who had a good relationship with the greatest thug at our plant (tannery), Oberkapo Erik, officially allowed, most likely with a cut in the spoils, for suitcases containing selected watches, perfumes from Paris, scissors and like to be delivered to Eric by car. From there, the 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 drove or walk from the direction of our camp.

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 organisation's work.



People reacted to gold differently. Personally, I never thought, diamonds 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 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 were penniless.

It was not gold alone but the camp conditions and experiences in general that would set people apart. Own values. Some would decline, becoming ever worse, with no scruples. Others, as if to compensate would continuously rise morally, shaping their character like crystals. Surprises would still occur, yet some who appeared very strong would break down and some weak persons would suddenly experience a moral revival.

Putting “Kanada” aside, we would also experience surprises courtesy of new arrivals, our colleagues who would come from Pawiak, Montelupich and other prisons and from street round-ups. Our “fives” would look for their kinfolk, acquaintances and organisation’s workers among those. We would take good care of them giving them linen, food or a better job. We always scrutinised them carefully as you never knew how a colleague, fresh from outside, would behave. Major Waclaw 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: “You are also here! Under your own name. Think of it, the Warsaw Gestapo cut my bottom into squares, trying to get out of me the whereabouts of Witold”. Luckily, there was no informer close by at the time. We later had to work on it to undo it. First Lieutenant (Res.) Karol Świętorzecki, currently out of the camp, witnessed this.

Sometimes old inmates would also surprise us. Take a typical schizophrenic, Janusz Kuczbara, rumoured to be of Jewish faith, deprived of principles, ethics or scruples. To take advantage of the opportunity to get rich through “Kanada”, he managed to attain some influence over “Czesiek”, “Tadek” and Second Lieutenant Konstanty Piekarski. The last one maintained Janusz Kuczbara was

an extraordinary person, the only person who had Warsaw's approval to carry out work here. Advised by Second Lieutenant Konstanty Piekarski about who the leader of our organisation was, resorted to an unusual ruse to hinder our work. When his efforts of scaring us off failed, Janusz Kuczbara, while sparing me owing to Second Lieutenant Konstanty Piekarski's intervention, sought to ridicule a few persons from our top echelons. To achieve his aim, with assistance of another prisoner, he painted on board sheets "Certificates of Honour" to vest "Order of Garter" on our colleague Henryk Bartosiewicz and Colonel Juliusz Gilewicz (with their names, caricatures, and stamps) 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 the lunch break, making no attempt to disguise anything, he went to the hospital, to get credit for this strange deed in front of his friends. It looked stupid. Any SS-man or anybody else from the camp's leadership could have asked 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 in danger of being investigated, and risk of death. This could lead to a further investigation in the camp. Our colleagues, Captain Dr. Władysław Dering and Dr. Rudolf Diem managed to take these diplomas from Janusz Kuczbara and destroy them. Apart from that he was smart. One evening I saw him in the camp before Block 23 wearing an SS uniform. This suited him well on 30 December 1943, when it made his escape I mentioned earlier possible.

In February 1943, they brought four hundred fifty men and women to Block 2a. 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 enthusiastic torturer, would hunt children. He told girls to run around a closed yard and would shoot them, killing them like rabbits. He would snatch children from their mother's embrace and smash their little head against walls or stones. 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 Birkenau, 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 by a fence. Six of the 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 Birkenau 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 Romanians we made a virtual Babel Tower.

Rumours 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 transfer Poles elsewhere, as they were after all the best workers of all.

Yet, they decided to remove Poles. The reason 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 taken into consideration by our friends, our enemy has, after all, acknowledged.

On the night of 7/8 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 common knowledge that Polish camp inmates who stayed there the longest would always find an excuse, such as a violent onset of an illness. Apart from that, had it been done during the day, 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.

Upset, inmates followed numbers called. A load was off many hearts when their number was called: "it means they have given up on torturing me here". "well, so I am leaving", "they will not shoot me here". One would also hear here and there some of our colleagues saying: "God, why have they not called my number yet?"

But 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 become once again “new arrivals”. 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 of inmates who came from other camps) that there is no hell like this anywhere else. Apart from that, attachment to colleagues encouraged transfer. Nobody knew whose number would be called. Our “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 Volksdeutschs 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 it, they would be on our side and would hand in keys to armouries. Honestly, 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 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 “Birch Avenue”, examined by a medical commission. The examination continued during the next night. I stood next to my friend Tadzio (Colonel Tadeusz Reklewski) and Kazio (Kazimierz Radwański), destined to go to Buchenwald.

My mind worked frantically. A transfer meant dropping 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 much higher than what free people call friendship. Many times, when saving their friends, people

were putting their own lives at risk. Often, 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 individuals and adding their current status. For instance: shot, died by other means, alive, leaves or stays. It was a massive review.

I want to mention here names of those fellow inmates whose work for our organisation 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. In addition to 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 talk about it separately), an outstanding contribution was made by Captain Dr. Władysław Dering and Dr. Rudolf Diem. In his area of work – by Second Lieutenant Bernard Świerczyna. Isolated from others, but mentally very strong: Henryk Szklarz, Sergeant Major Stefan Gąsiorowski, who was transferred to Birkenau with a special authority, and Captain Dr. Henryk Suchnicki, who bravely faced his death. Officer Cadet (Res.) Zbigniew Ruszczyński and Officer Cadet Antoni Rosa and the unforgettable “Wernyhora” – Jan Mielcarek 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 the building number 40 I met here, among others, Captain (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”. 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 organisation, Colonel Teofil Dziama, and my friend Tadzio (Colonel Tadeusz Reklewski), a very brave man 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 difficulty, I decided (Tadzio agreed with that after giving it some thought) that because of my duty to the organisation I needed to stay for the time being in this hell. That meant we unfortunately had to bid farewell to each other.

One therefore had to act swiftly. The decisive moment was approaching: this or the other. I was healthy and weighed 75 kilos. 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, was accepted for the transfer. As for me, as soon as they spotted me, without another word they pointed towards the exit. My hoax was successful. Through the transfer block I returned to my regular work the very next day.

During the examination, doctors shook their heads with admiration when they looked at the strong, 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 with 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 thousand 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 continued working. One week later we stood before a commission for all remaining Poles once again, 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". To me it was a surprise, since category "A" meant being included in the next transport, and category "U" meant to be recognised as not capable of work. On the other hand, they were supposed to take us to Dachau. Who could guarantee, though, that if they need to kill people

by phenyl injections, or with 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 “useful” 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, entrusted with the task of putting the Poles into categories “A” and “U” loudly expressed their admiration for our supreme physical fitness. They said: “What a regiment you could form from these guys! How have they been able to stay in such good physical condition?”

At mass executions by shooting or with gas, Krankenbau would receive victim lists with an order to proceed fifty numbers daily to the main Schreibstube, listing heart, typhus, or another “natural” cause as cause of death. Families were only advised with a special order from the political department. Often, six months later family would still believe their relative was alive but stopped writing letters, and would continue to send him parcels.

Recently, I worked at the parcel 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”. By doing this, he would stop these from continuing to arrive. Despite the original weight limit of 250 gram, parcels arriving were often quite large, as large as a suitcase. All of them were delivered and never confiscated. Naturally, it depended on the boss. SS-men particularly liked parcels from the Czech Republic, as they, apart from cakes and sugar, would always contain wine, oranges and lemons. Wines were always confiscated by the authorities. As most Czechs and French Jews who received such attractive parcels were already dead, whole parcels 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

fine and doing well”. Those letters were bringing new transports of Jews as they, at learning how well their kinfolks 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 get killed in the meantime.

Transferring Poles out as, 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 Lieutenant (Res.) Marian Moniczewski).

I should add, at least in a few words, a very brave conduct by priests. But 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 killed as they pulled a roller they were attached to with a harness, or as they did another “job” deliberately devised 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 met a few brave priests, among them Father Zygmunt Ruszczak (no 9842), who was our (Military Organisation’s) chaplain. In spite of, one would think, overwhelming difficulties, apart from confessions we would also (secretly) celebrate mass. We got wine and hosts from outside.

## **Escapes**

Since the camp was set up and 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. They 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 during a ‘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 (no 230). His colleagues paid an excessive 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 felt 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. Even a few hours of “stójka” would often be hard on us. For example, 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. I got a cap on 8 December 1940. Before the escapee was found, killed and the standing drill was called off, about one hundred forty of the weakest inmates died of fatigue, food deprivation and cold.

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.

Even when nobody escaped, they pretended inmates were missing. Then 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.

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. We also experienced some very uplifting 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 younger man was allowed to live.

It was during that period that our organisation started viewing escapes in a negative light. During 1941 we organized no escapes and would condemn all independent attempts.

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

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

In early 1943 (on 27 February) seven colleagues who worked in the SS-kitchen escaped. 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" 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 civilian clothes from "Kanada" with red stripes painted on them. This encouraged inmates to attempt an escape. This is why the authorities came up with a new way.

An announcement at all blocks was made that in retribution for an escape, escapee's family would 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 – to deliberately expose one's mother or fiancée to such danger. Or any woman for that matter. A few years of separation from the opposite gender made a difference. We certainly had our tender feelings towards women. On the first evening, the entire camp reviled the monster who exposed an elderly woman and such a nice fiancée to such risk. But it appeared that the numbers these two women had on their uniforms were much lower than the current day numbers in the women's camp. We were too clever for this trick. The next day we found out what was the current number in the women's camp. A trick was played on us. So we relaxed and the whole episode encouraged, rather than not, some inmates to attempt an escape.

Two of our colleagues escaped soon after. However, we were not really sure we did not put our families at risk. For that reasons, most of our colleagues would shudder at a mere thought of escape.

Later on, we did see another young and nice-looking woman at that post with an announcement on the board, yet this was able to affect only the 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 torment.

From early 1943 I had contact with a Montelupich hero – Aleksander Bugajski alias "Szczęściarz" who was sentenced to death. He was in no doubt that they would finish him off here. We got closer and he wanted me to help him 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, Second Lieutenant (Res.) Witold Wierusz, who worked in the land-surveying Kommando, often a few kilometres away from the camp, presented to me an escape idea. His project had a special condition, though. If not feasible other-

wise, 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 which I explain here.

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. This was the hard part.

With some Kommandos that worked a few kilometres away from the camp, one would be very tempted to 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. 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 Second Lieutenant (Res.) Witold Wierusz, I acquainted the latter with Aleksander Bugajski. Since Aleksander Bugajski considered the Witold Wierusz plan to be less risky than my own, he transferred to the Kommando where Second Lieutenant (Res.) Witold Wierusz worked and started preparations for this escape. A few days later, “Szczęściarz” suggested escape plan for me as well.

As I said already, on 10 and 11 April 1943 two thousand and five hundred Poles were sent in two transports to Mauthausen. This has finally forced my hand. Staying on in Auschwitz ceased in my view to be necessary. I already did all that I could. The “better” half of my colleagues were gone. Awaiting “something” to happen proved to be in vain. Threats were made for the rest of Poles to be transported, as well. Having formed a view that I could be of more use on the outside than inside, I chose to leave the camp.

The other reason why I wanted to leave the camp was the news circulating in the camp since early March that Janusz Kuczbara has been captured in Warsaw and held at the Pawiak prison. I regarded him as someone with no scruples, who to save his own life may spill the beans about our organisation, all the more likely that he already attempted to do it when at the camp, and in no need, in relation to Colonel Juliusz Gilewicz and our colleague Henryk Bartosiewicz. So,

on 11 April 1943 I discussed this issue with my colleague, Second Lieutenant (Res.) Leon Murzyn.

Considering my “departure” from the camp, I talked with Major 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, Captain 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. Captain 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, 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, Major 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 light-hearted night escape of our colleagues from the Birkenau camp through what we dubbed “Diogenes barrel”. All soldiers were involved in the search for these escapees. As there were no posts, the camp was closed. For three days, we were not let out for work. The authorities took advantage of it to delouse the camp. During these few days, the boss and Kapo from the Kommando where Aleksander Bugajski previously worked (post office/parcels) realised that “Szczęściarz” transferred to a new Kommando illicitly which could be interpreted as “an attempt to escape”. Consequently, for his wilful change of Kommando, Aleksander Bugajski was sent to the penal company. The date for our escape 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 from a bakery in the town to the camp. He noticed that 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 challenging, he had to bake thousands of loaves daily as ordered. For any underperformance at work you were sent to the bunker the next day. A few professional bakers and a few inmates worked there. Over these few days he needed to take “a closer look” at the door, our colleague Jan Redzej, a ninety-five kilos, tall burly man, lost six kilos. In the end, he came to the view that even if tricks are used, the door will not yield and open, so he returned to his Kommando.

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

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. The next day (Easter Monday), I had to leave the hospital, as the bakery was starting work again. Soon after a festive break, worker substitutions were less likely to be noticed.

The success of this all relied on me being sent back not to my own block, as they would normally do as per camp regulations, but to another one, Block 15. The bakers lived there. Also, it relied 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 on no-one from my Kommando or the block authorities seeing me “recovered”. After all, at this time, after a transfer to a new block and a new job, I was starting my “work” as a baker and they needed to be convinced I was ill.

The hospital admission and discharge formalities when leaving to another block were taken care of my colleague Edward Ciesielski (Marian Toliński helped me with the admission and Władysław Fejka with the discharge). Since Ciesielski's assistance with my escape was so obvious, on Sunday night

I offered him to join me. My decision to offer him a joint escape, which required changes to the plan, was also influenced by his conviction for weapons possession. He kept saying he was waiting for his number to be called only to be shot. During the 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 the Block authorities and the bakers' Kapo alike. We led the bakers' Kapo to believe 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 that night. We didn't think the confusion of camp authorities we deceived could last long. Most likely, it would only be a matter of hours. We had to hurry, yet our talk with them turned out to be difficult. They could not understand why we were so keen on the night shift. No matter how hard we tried, they did not. They were fearful we wanted their 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 Jan, such return would be no different from any other day since he held a permanent baker position. As for Edward, he has settled all necessary formalities with the authorities from his previous block, and – likewise – regarding the job he abandoned (he would only need to change his job again, as he would not be able to last long). However, my return to the camp after a failed night escape attempt would see me transferred to the penal company. I would not have a chance to justify my presence on the wrong block, or my leaving for the night shift at the bakery. After all, I belonged to another Kommando and neither the Kapo or the head of my Kommando had any knowledge of my release from that Kommando. Moreover, we dealt with the same parcels section whose authorities knew how to deal with "Szczęściarz" (Aleksander Bugajski) in the same matter. A formal

transfer from the parcels' section was impossible, either, as only about two weeks earlier I sought the essential worker status, which I got.

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

Redzej took care of the Kapo by explaining his two colleagues are fools who were taken in and thought the bakery work is easy. The best way would be to take them for the night and he, Redzej, would put them through such a mill that they would not last in this Kommando very long. Maybe they would lose all the passion for it after the night. The most difficult task of them all was to overcome the resistance from the two bakers. Finally, Redzej's simple story, preserves, sugar and apples from parcels provided by me, and a happy occasion of the second day of Easter have influenced them.

It's 6.30 p.m. The SS-man calls out from the gate: "Bäckerei..." We run towards the gate. As we do, I pass many inmates walking and catch sight of three familiar faces (Second Lieutenant (Res.) Jerzy Olszowski, Zdzisław Uliasz, Mieczysław ...rowiec) surprised at seeing me there. They are all my good friends. We are being counted. The number is exactly as it should be – eight. It means the other two gave up the 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 the time come that I do not have to go back through it?" Today I am leaving with the thought: "Under no circumstances shall I walk back through it ever again".

My mood is difficult to describe. At any rate, our full resolve gives 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 the 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, and we still cannot 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 were almost always exhausted. On Monday, the new ones are the proverbial “new brooms”. As we were leaving the camp, they loudly cautioned our guards at the gate: “Be alert”. And I thought: “Are they suspecting what is about 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 ended and Tuesday commenced, at noon our situation began to improve (only one guard stayed awake, the other one was snoring). Nevertheless, things were still difficult. We worked half-naked. The heat from the ovens made us sweat profusely. We drank vast amounts 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 completely sure that it would open once all obstacles are removed, as one hook was secured on the outside.

It felt like I was playing solitaire but more intensely. It was my life that was here at stake. Just like with solitaire, where all depends on lucky card sequence and the shuffling, here too we needed some luck 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 nobody is watching the door. It had to coincide with all three of us being near that door and being able to wander a bit to get our clothes as we were about to open the door. The escape hanged above as the proverbial Damocles’ sword. Especially after we cut out a few centimetres of a cable from a place right over our guards’ heads. Our chances of escape were going up and down, from one minute to another. And so did the tension.

Once Ciesielski, confidently and cleverly completed his “surgery” on the phone cable and Redzej drew aside the bolt and unscrewed the nut, pushing out the catch holding together the two leaves of the double door from outside,

he gave us signs for us all to lean against the door with our arms and force it open. It was then that the guard came to the door to check it. I saw it from a few steps away and waited for him to raise the alarm. How come he didn't notice the bolts which had already been drawn aside or the cable that had been cut through, or Redzej who was already fully dressed and pretending to be using the toilet, I will never be able to explain. I think he was pondering this himself the next day, sitting in the bunker.

Finally, the moment is right. 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 push the door with all our might. We apply even more strength when suddenly and quietly, the door opens in front of us.

We can see stars and feel a nice flow of wind. We leap out and run as quickly as we can with our clothes under our arms. And so, in the company of Jan Redzej and Edward Ciesielski, I left the Auschwitz camp, accompanied by shots by the guard who realised what happened a little too late.

I leave at night. The same way as I came. I have spent nine hundred forty-seven days in this hell. And as many nights. It is already past two o'clock, high time we escape. The night of 26/27 April 1943.

When I leave, I have fewer teeth than when I arrived. And a broken breastbone. Quite a cheap price for such a lengthy stay in this "sanatorium".

Going into the night I have clean conscience. Ten inmates shot for one escapee no longer applies and I use an assumed surname leaving no traces leading to my family.

It would be hard to describe in a few words the beauty of our journey on that first night and during the next few days. We must have set some speed records running up the steep walls of ravines and then down headlong. We had a few remarkable lucky coincidences, too. When passing a railway bridge, our key fit a moored boat. Before the sunrise, from a few hundred metres away, the strong smell of the forest and the birds' song reached us. Once there, we finally feel at home. Plush 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

of kilometres away. As we had to make circuits and avoid populated areas, we must have done at least one hundred thirty of them. After a bothersome crossing of the General gouvernement's border, where we were greatly helped by the welcoming parish priest at Alwernia and our rest at Tyniec, at the house of our friend Piotr Mazurkiewicz, we entered the Niepołomice Forest. On 1 May, we had an incident at a forester's lodge. I was wounded lightly in my right arm, being shot by a German Vorschutz, who shot nine times but was not very good at it. In the evening, we reached our destination.

After a few days spent in the warm Polish environment of the Obora family home where we also met Edward Zabawski's wife, Helena, guided by Leon Wandasiewicz I left for my destination. My friend Tomasz Serafiński sent his reports 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 1. All this looks suspicious 2. One needs to cover up one's tracks. 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 organisation" 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 sincere people there. Apart from the Tomasz Serafiński's family we also enjoyed the hospitality of another brave and selfless Pole, Józef Roman.

I wrote letters from the camp about my work there and about my plan to leave it. Those written in plain Polish went via an indirect 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" through "Skiba" (Edward Baird) – "Zamek", currently "Klucz". The response was: "your letters are of great interest to us" and "if possible, we would like to ask for more information". They thought, apparently, that such an official response means the matter is settled.

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

What I found among 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). 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 find, just a few metres 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 same amazement when it came to his story. 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 many coincidences was "Bloody Alojz". He never spoke to me before, yet I remember very well, how, looking somehow embarrassed, 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!". This was the first and the last words we ever spoke. He soon died. "Otto", a skilled tile-stove setter, rescued me by accident from a slow death when I was given a "gymnastics" treatment. A man called Wilhelm Westrych, mistakenly believing I was some big wig in hiding under an assumed name, in an attempt to secure future favours with such a celebrity and to erase his cruelty 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 organisation, getting the camp situation under control, quick recovery after pneumonia and typhus. The way I was treated by some physicians, Artur Balke, Konrad Lange, and a few block supervisors. Being kicked out on 21 February 1943 from my good work at the tannery because of my white-collar appearance, I immediately recognised it as a lucky coincidence and began preparing for my escape. And I was right 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. Second Lieutenant Stanisław Wierzbicki, to whom he confided and who told me about it at the camp as soon as he arrived.

Of them all, the strangest coincidence was when at the end of 1941 copies of birth certificates from the parishes in localities named by our colleagues started arriving, starting with the lowest numbers (presumably looking for rogues like myself). Had I not escaped, they would have found out about me. There were only a few of us left. At every payout of money we were required to queue up by 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 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 just like I had provided to the camp's political department. Eleonora Ostrowska asked Warzyński to do it. As soon as had received a letter of recommendation from Palutyni, Warzyński, generous as he was, and a good friend of mine, took a trip to Bochnia and arranged everything. With a stroke of a pencil, the good people there corrected the relevant data in the birth registry next to Tomasz Serafiński's name. Warzyński could tell me the story in person as he was brought to the camp soon after. Having escaped from the camp I went straight to Bochnia as this was the closest place where I could receive help. My colleague Res. Second Lieutenant 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 be put in touch with the commandant of the local unit. Understandably, I was quite surprised and astonished when I learned that the name of that commandant is – can you imagine – Tomasz Serafiński. A man I never met before, a man who had no knowledge 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 the story. His warm attitude made us friends at first glance. I then contacted the Bochnia parish to let them know they needed to rub off the pencilled note.

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

On the original copy of Report “W” the following statements appears, written by hand, concerning messages and work reports concerning Organizacja Wojskowa in Auschwitz:

By Aleksander Wielopolski

*Res. Second Lieutenant 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 onto overseas 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, 28 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, 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 verbally, 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, 30 June 1944*

By Sergeant Antoni Woźniak

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

*I sign with No 25, as per the key.  
Warsaw, 2 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 verbally to Eleonora Ostrowska.*

*I sign with No 53, as per the key.  
Warsaw, 2 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 Commandant-in-Chief, 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, 10 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, 13 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, 15 July 1944*

By "Jeż" (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.*

(–) "Jeż"

Warsaw, 18 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 verbally, 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.*

*In Warsaw, on 23 October 1943, through "Jeż" I was able to contact the Deputy of "233" (presumably it was First Lieutenant Colonel Jerzy Uszycki, since July 1942 Head of Signals with the Department V at the Armia Krajowa (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, 20 July 1944

*On 21 July 1944 I spoke to the Chief of "233" (presumably Colonel 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 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 oppose in discussion certain sober arguments and answer valid questions such as how to find near Oświęcim sufficient number of people, 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, 22 July 1944*

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

*Maria Szelałowska*

*Warszawa, 23 July 1944*

(Maria Szelałowska alias "Rysia", born January 19, 1905 in Lwów, died August 3, 1989 – engineer, chemist, Home Army (AK) soldier, took part in the Warsaw Rising 1944, after the war in the anti-communist organisation underground, cooperated with the captain Witold Pilecki rewriting his secret reports on the activities at KL Auschwitz-Birkenau).





Karelia, Witold Pilecki's place of birth



Orthodox Church in Olonets



The manor house in Sukurcze



Ludwika Pilecka, mother of Witold Pilecki



Julian Pilecki, father of Witold Pilecki



Ludwika Pilecka with children, Olonets, 1905



Witold Pilecki, sitting on the lap of his nanny, a native Karelian, Olonets, 1902



Witold Pilecki with his older sister Maria



Witold Pilecki with his younger sister Wanda

Witold Pilecki, portraits, 1920s



Witold Pilecki, 1920s



Witold Pilecki, court intern, Godziesiszki, 1922



Witold Pilecki, Wilno, 1923

Witold Pilecki with his wife Maria





Witold Pilecki with his wife Maria and children Andrzej and Zosia





Witold Pilecki, pre-1939



Witold Pilecki leading a parade in Lida



Witold Pilecki at a shooting range, 1931



In the flat of Major Jan Włodarkiewicz ("Drawicz") – Commanding Officer of TPA (Secret Polish Army)



Second lieutenant Witold Pilecki with Major Jan Włodarkiewicz ("Drawicz") – Commanding Officer of TPA (Secret Polish Army)



Witold Pilecki, 1940s



The place where Witold Pilecki was arrested by the Germans



Witold Pilecki, prisoner of Auschwitz no. 4859, 1940



Tomasz Serafiński, his identification documents were used by Witold Pilecki in order to get to KL Auschwitz



Standing from the left: Jan Redzej, Witold Pilecki, Edward Ciesielski – escapees from Auschwitz. Here, standing in front of the Serafiński family house in Nowy Wisnicz, summer 1943

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**Geheime Staatspolizei — Staatspolizeistelle Litzmannstadt**  
Nachrichten-Uebermittlung

Aufgenommen Tag Monat Jahr 10 7 April 1943 durch Dr.	Raum für Eingangsstempel Kripo hat Abschrift erhalten. Dr. 119	Befördert Zeit Tag Monat Jahr an durch
D. Nr. 6242	Telegramm — Funkspruch Fernschreiben Fernspruch	Verzögerungsvermerk 188

KL AUSCHWITZ NR . 15214 27.4.43 1256 = KA =  
 AN ALLE OESTL . STAPO ( LEIT ).-  
 KRIPO ( LEIT ) STELLEN U . GREKO , BESONDERS WARSCHAU  
 AN DAS RSHA , IV C 2, BERLIN .-  
 AN DAS WVHA , AMTSGRUPPE D , ORANIENBURG .---  
 BETRIFFT : 1. SCHUTZH . POLE S E R A F I N S K I  
 THOMAS , GEB . 18.3.02 IN BOCHNIA .-  
 2. SCHUTZH . POLE R E T K O JOHANN ,  
 GEB . 1.5.04 IN MINSK LITEWSKI .---  
 BEZUG : O H N E .---  
 DIE OBENGENANNTEN WURDEN AM 22.9.40 VOM KDR . SIPO  
 U . SD WARSCHAU IN DAS HIESIGE LAGER EINGELIEFERT UND  
 SIND AM 27.4.43 IN DER NACHT VOM KOMMANDO  
 " BAECKEREI LANDSMANN . AUSCHWITZ " GEFLOHEN .  
 DIE SOFORT EINGELEITETE SUCHAKTION BLIEB BISHER OHNE  
 ERFOLG . ES WIRD GEBETEN , VON DORT AUS WEITERE  
 FAHNDUNGSMASSNAHMEN EINZULEITEN UND IM ERGREIFUNGSFALLE  
 DAS KL .- AUSCHWITZ SOFORT ZU BENACHRICHTIGEN .---  
 ZUSATZ FUER KDR . WARSCHAU .: DIE AUSSCHREIBUNG DER  
 OBENGENANNTEN IM SONDERFAHNDUNGSBUCH FUER POLEN BITTE  
 ICH VON DORT AUS ZU VERANLASSEN .---  
 ZUSATZ FUER WVHA : WEITERER BERICHT FOLGT .---  
 GEZ . HOESS SS - OSTUBAF . U . KOMMANDANT .+++

German telegram re Tomasz Serafiński's escape from KL Auschwitz, 27 April 1943

Witold Pilecki in front of Koryznówka, the  
Serafiński family house in Nowy Wiśnicz,  
1943



Witold Pilecki, 1943

False authentication documents used by Witold Pilecki in the underground





Soldiers of the Chrobry 2 Group of the Home Army following liberation of the Murnau camp. First from the right: Witold Pilecki



Witold Pilecki with Polish soldiers of II Corps in Italy, September 1945

RZECZPOSPOLITA POLSKA  
MINISTERSTWO BEZPIECZEŃSTWA PUBLICZNEGO  
W WARSZAWIE

118/91/3894

Sr. 103/48

ARCHIWUM  
Sprawiedlitwość  
239/58

**KTA**

sprawy Nr. 195/47, 201/47, 202/47, 208/47, 205/47, 215/47, 200/47, 203/47

p-ko Pileckiemu Witoldowi s. Juliana i innym

osk. z art. 7 Dekr z dn 13 VI 1946r art 13 § 1 i 2 Dekr z dn 13 VI 1946r oraz z art. 15 § 3 Dekr z dn 13 VI 1946r, art 6 Dekr z dn 13 VI 1946r i in.

Zaczęto 13 maja 1947 r.

Skończono 10 grudnia 1947 r.

IPN BU 944/414

Tom. Nr. I

Akta zawierają 303 l.

The cover page of the files on the case Sr 103/48 brought up against Witold Pilecki and others

Nr. akt

Do sprawy podejrz.

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# Protokół rewizji domowej

Krawczyński dnia 12. maja 1947 r. godz. 10:00  
 Ja, funkcjonariusz Ministerstwa  
 w kancelii Skarżyska Stefani ppw. Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego  
 działając na mocy polecenia Ministerstwa Bezpieczeństwa  
 Publicznego w kancelii z dnia 12. maja 1947.

które przy rozpoczęciu rewizji okazałem  
 przy udziale jako protokulanta  
 w obecności świadka (ów) Józefa Poiratowskiego, Oudkiewicz Poni  
 udałem się do Jozierskiego Rowianina  
 zam. w kr. ul. Skarżyskiego 20 w 1 u Janyńskiej Stanisławy  
 i zastawszy w lokalu  
 powiadomiłem o celu rewizji i wezwałem do obecności przy rewizji.  
 poczem zażądałem dobrowolnego wydania

Wobec odmowy dokonałem rewizji w następujących pomieszczeniach pokoju, kuchni i piwnicy

- W wyniku rewizji 4 pokoje znalazłem:
1. pod podłogą przy oknie - jeden pistolet typu Vis nr. 15567
  2. kal. 9mm. mrocz. z pochwa i trzy magazynki z ładunkami, jeden
  3. magazynek do "M.P.", dwa do trzy "kal. 9mm. dwie
  4. paczki trotylu, książki: "Powstanie Gierziowe" 12 szt. i "Koinwizja"
  5. i "Kasymir" 2 szt., 1 szt. pisma z napisem "Kochanie", album
  6. P.P.S. "Do ludności krajowej" 12 szt.

a) Odebrałem przedmioty pod poz.  
 b) Przedmioty pod poz. oddałem na przechowanie i pod nadzór  
 odpowiedzialny zam.

z obowiązkiem dostarczenia na każde zapytanie Oficera Śledczego, Prokuratora, lub Sądu.

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12  
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The protocol of a home search, as executed on 12 May 1947 by the officers of the Ministry of Public Security in the flat of Witold Pilecki



Witold Pilecki, prisoner of the Ministry of Public Security, 1947

MINISTERSTWO  
BEZPIECZEŃSTWA PUBLICZNEGO  
DEPARTAMENT I WYDZIAŁ I

5

KWIT DEPOZYTOWY Nr. 117/47

Nr. \_\_\_\_\_

Nazwisko i imię *Pilecki Witold vel Jankowski Roman*

Podpisani stwierdzają, że do depozytu U.B.P. złożono:

1. pistolet typu „Vir” - nr 35 pat. nr. 15567 nr. 24030;
2. trzy naboiki do tego pistoletu a 8 cali naboii;
3. jeden magazynek do pistoletu „M.P.”;
4. dwie paczki brotyli;
5. kabur wraz z naboikiem do pistoletu;
6. szalik i dwie trzy naboii;
7. 10 szt. egz. p.t. „Pomocnik niegimnastyczny” wyd. N.P.N.”;
8. 10 sztuk do ludzkiej Warszawy wyd. N.P.N.”;
9. kieszonka p.t. „Komunisty i partyzantów”;
10. jedna kartka zapisana; \_\_\_\_\_ razem dwieście pozycji.

W-ws dn. 12. 5 1947 r.

Wł. Wł. II

*Jankowski*  
Podpis przysięsnego

W-ws. Wł. Jankowski  
*Jankowski*  
Podpis

1-1 Aiereto

Drak. M. B. P. - Łódź

Deposit receipt made out to Witold Pilecki following the search of his flat on 12 May 1947

"ZATWIERDZAM"  
NACZELNIK WYDZ. III DEP. ŚLEDZIEGO M.B.F.  
(-) H u m e r A. P. R.  
Warszawa, dnia ..... 1948r.

230  
743

A K T O S K A R Ż E N I A.

przeciwko :

1. Pileckiemu Witoldowi s. Juliana, osk. z art. 7 Dekr. z dnia 13.VI.1946r., art. 13 § 1 i 2 Dekr. z dn. 13.VI.1946r. w związku z art. 1 § 2 i 3 Dekr. z dnia 13.VI.1946r., art. 6 Dekr. z dn. 13.VI.1946r., art. 4 § 1 Dekr. z dn. 13.VI.1946r., art. 117 § 1 i 2 K.K.W.F. i art. 187 K.K.
2. Szelażowskiej Marii c. Adama, osk. z art. 7 Dekr. z dn. 13.VI.1946r., art. 6 Dekr. z dnia 13.VI.1946r., art. 4 § 1 Dekr. z dnia 13.VI.1946r. i art. 187 K.K.
3. Płużańskiemu Tadeuszowi s. Wacława, osk. z art. 7 Dekr. z dn. 13.VI.1946r., art. 13 § 1 i 2 Dekr. z dn. 13.VI.1946r. w zw. z art. 1 § 2 i 3 Dekr. z dn. 13.VI.1946r., art. 6 Dekr. z dn. 13.VI.1946r. i art. 187 K.K.
4. Jamonttowi - Krzywickiemu Ryszardowi s. Adolfa, osk. z art. 7 Dekr. z dn. 13.VI.1946r., art. 6 Dekr. z dn. 13.VI.1946r. i art. 188 K.K.
5. Kauckiemu Maksymilianowi s. Karola, osk. z art. 7 Dekr. z dn. 13.VI.1946r., art. 187 K.K. i art. 199 K.K.
6. Nowakowskiemu Jerzemu s. Bolesława, osk. z art. 7 Dekr. z dn. 13.VI.1946r. i art. 6 Dekr. z dn. 13.VI.1946r.
7. Różyckiemu Witoldowi s. Leona, osk. z art. 7 Dekr. z dn. 13.VI.1946r.
8. Sieradzkiemu Makaremu s. Jakuba, osk. z art. 7 Dekr. z dn. 13.VI.1946r. i art. 4 § 1 Dekr. z dnia 13 czerwca 1946r.

*Przebieg*  
*Przebieg*  
*Przebieg*  
*Przebieg*  
*Przebieg*

( Oskarżeni - zaareztowani )

W okresie maja i czerwca 1947r. przez władze Bezpieczeństwa na terenie Polski została zlikwidowana grupa szpiegowska kierowana przez rezydentów wywiadu II korpusu Andersa - Pileckiego Witolda i Płużańskiego Tadeusza. Grupa ta miała za zadanie zbieranie i przekazywanie do sztabu II korpusu Andersa wiadomości i dokumentów stanowiących tajemnicę państwową i wojskową, a charakteryzujących całokształt życia państwowego. Dla utrzymania stałej łączności ze sztabem II korpusu przez członków grupy Pileckiego zostało zorganizowane na pograniczu Polski szereg punktów przerzutowych. W czasie likwidacji władze Bezpieczeństwa zdobyły archiwum kierowanej przez Pileckiego grupy szpiegowskiej zawierające kopie raportów i tajnych dokumentów z dziedziny wojskowej, politycznej i gospodarczej.

Odnosnie całokształtu działalności oskarżonych niniejszym aktem w toku śledztwa ustalono:

4. W dniu 9 lipca 1945r. osk. Pilecki Witold z obozu Murnau, gdzie dotychczas przebywał, wraz z grupą oficerów udał się do Włoch, gdzie w San Giorgio po wypełnieniu formalności wstąpił do II korpusu Andersa, otrzymując przydział do dyspozycji płk. Hadezy i płk. Rijkaka oficerów sztabowych II oddziału, kierujących pracą szpiegowską w Polsce, od nich otrzymał polecenie zmontowania grupy szpiegowskiej, w celu udania się do kraju dla prowadzenia wywiadu wojskowego, politycznego i ekonomicznego. ( T.I.E. 8, 99, 76 )

5. Wykonując to polecenie osk. Pilecki Witold w końcu lipca 1945 r. po uprzednim porozumieniu się z obozem w Murnau, sprowadził do sztabu II korpusu w San Giorgio swoją znajomą osk. Szelażowską Marię, kontaktując się z płk. Hadezą i Rijkakiem, za pośrednictwem których ta przystąpiła do pracy w II oddziale sztabu II korpusu Andersa. ( T. I. E. 76, 99, 124, 157 )

6. W październiku 1945r. w sztabie II korpusu w San Giorgio osk. Pilecki Witold przeprowadził szereg rozmów z płk. Rijkakiem i przebywającym tamże gen. Istoczyńskim, podczas których powzięto decyzję natychmiastowego wyjazdu osk. Pileckiego i osk. Szelażowskiej

An indictment against Witold Pilecki and the other accused persons

P R O T O K O Ł  
W Y K O N A N I A W Y R O K U S M I E R C I

Warszawa, dnia 25 maja 1948 r. Wiceprokurator Naczelnej Prokuratury Wojskowej, mjr. Cypryszewski Stanisław w wykonaniu prawomocnego wyroku Wojskowego Sądu Rejonowego w Warszawie z dnia 15 marca 1948 r. Nr. Sr. 103/48 zatwierdzonego postanowieniem Najwyższego Sądu Wojskowego w Warszawie z dnia 22 maja 1948 r. Nr. Sn. Odw. B. 924 i wobec nieskorzystania z prawa łaski przez Prezydenta R.P. na zasadzie art. 314 i 315 KWKP zgłosił się do więzienia na Mokotowie w Warszawie o godzinie 21 m. 30 i w obecności:

- 1/ Naczelnika więzienia - por. Moroko Ryśca
- 2/ Lekarza: dr. Drągiewicz Kazimierz
- 3/ Duchownego: ks. 1. Matusiewicz Wincenty

za pośrednictwem Dowódcy plutonu egzekucyjnego: S. S. [signature] .....  
..... Piłka ....., po odczytaniu sentencji wyroku Nr. Sr. 103/48 skazanemu PILECKIEMU Witoldowi vel Jezierskiemu Romanowi s. Juliana i Ludwika i po stwierdzeniu prawomocności tego wyroku oraz oświadczeniu, że Prezydent R.P. z prawa łaski nieskorzystał - powyższy wyrok wykonał [signature] z d. Oświęcimskiej, ur. 13 maja 1901 r. w Wilnie - przez rozstrzelanie.

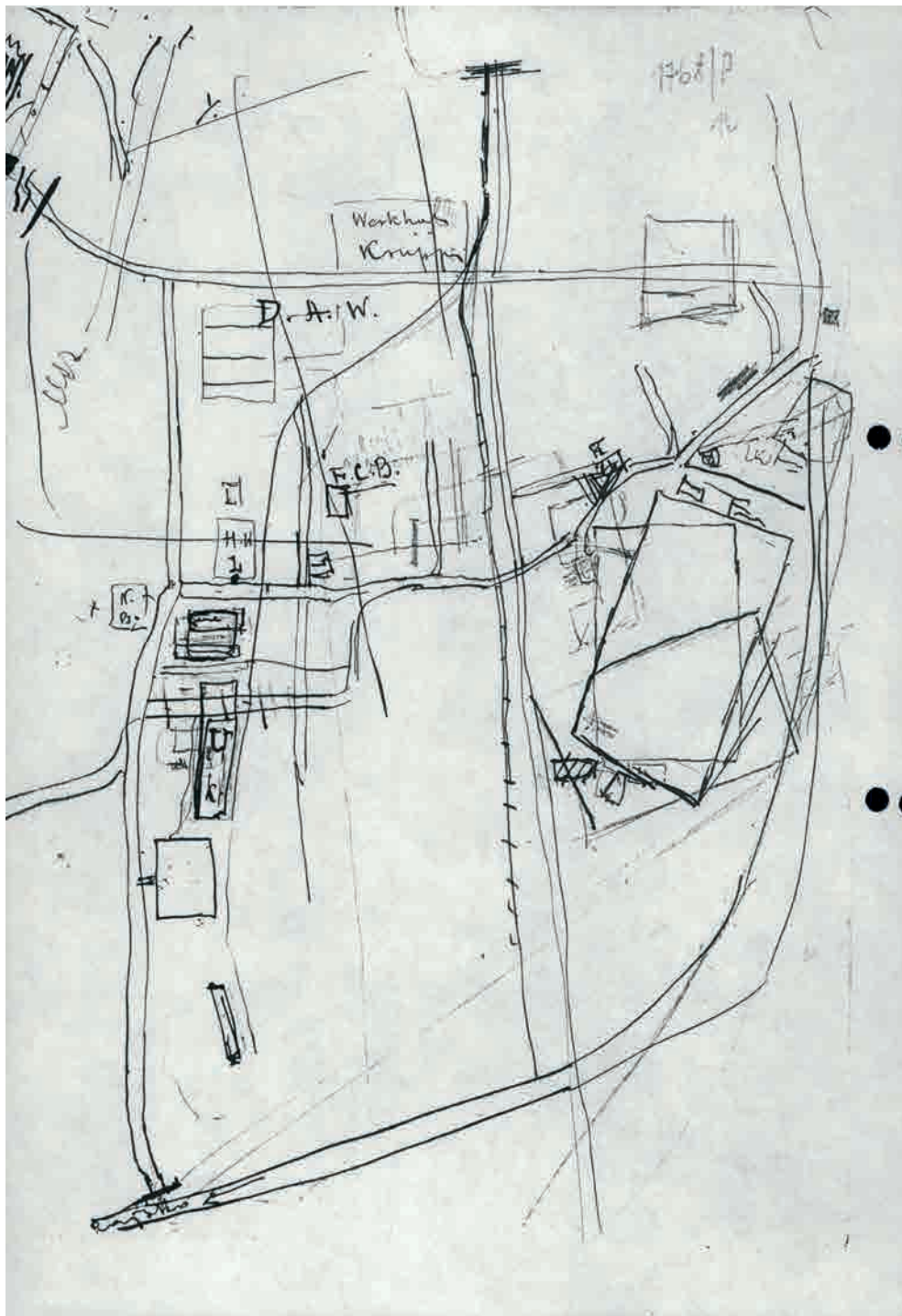
Zgon w/w PILECKIEGO został stwierdzony przez lekarza.

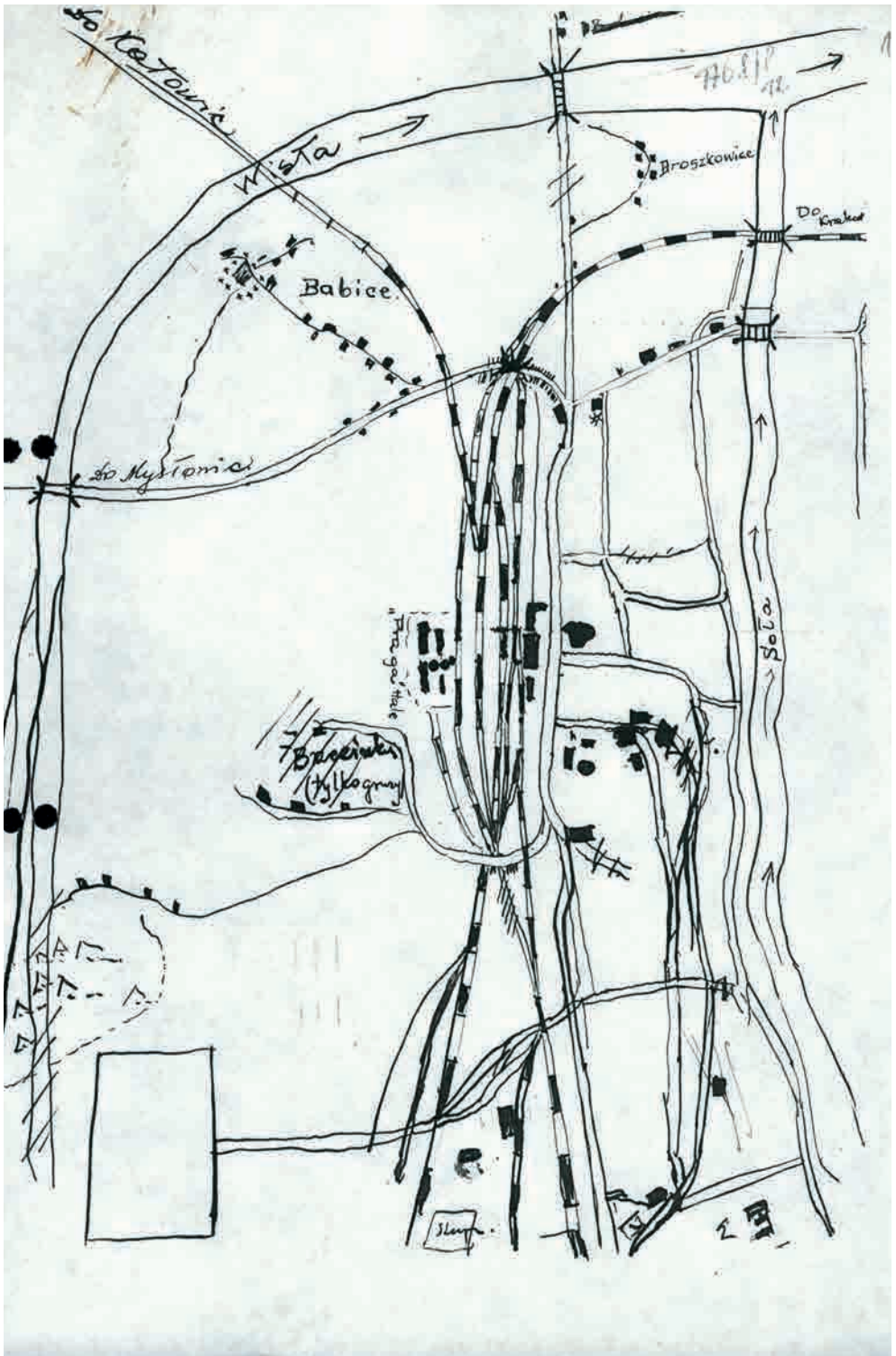
Wiceprokurator .. [signature] ..  
 Naczelnik Więzienia .. [signature] ..  
 Duchowny .. [signature] ..  
 Lekarz .. [signature] ..  
 Dowódca plut. egzek. .. [signature] ..



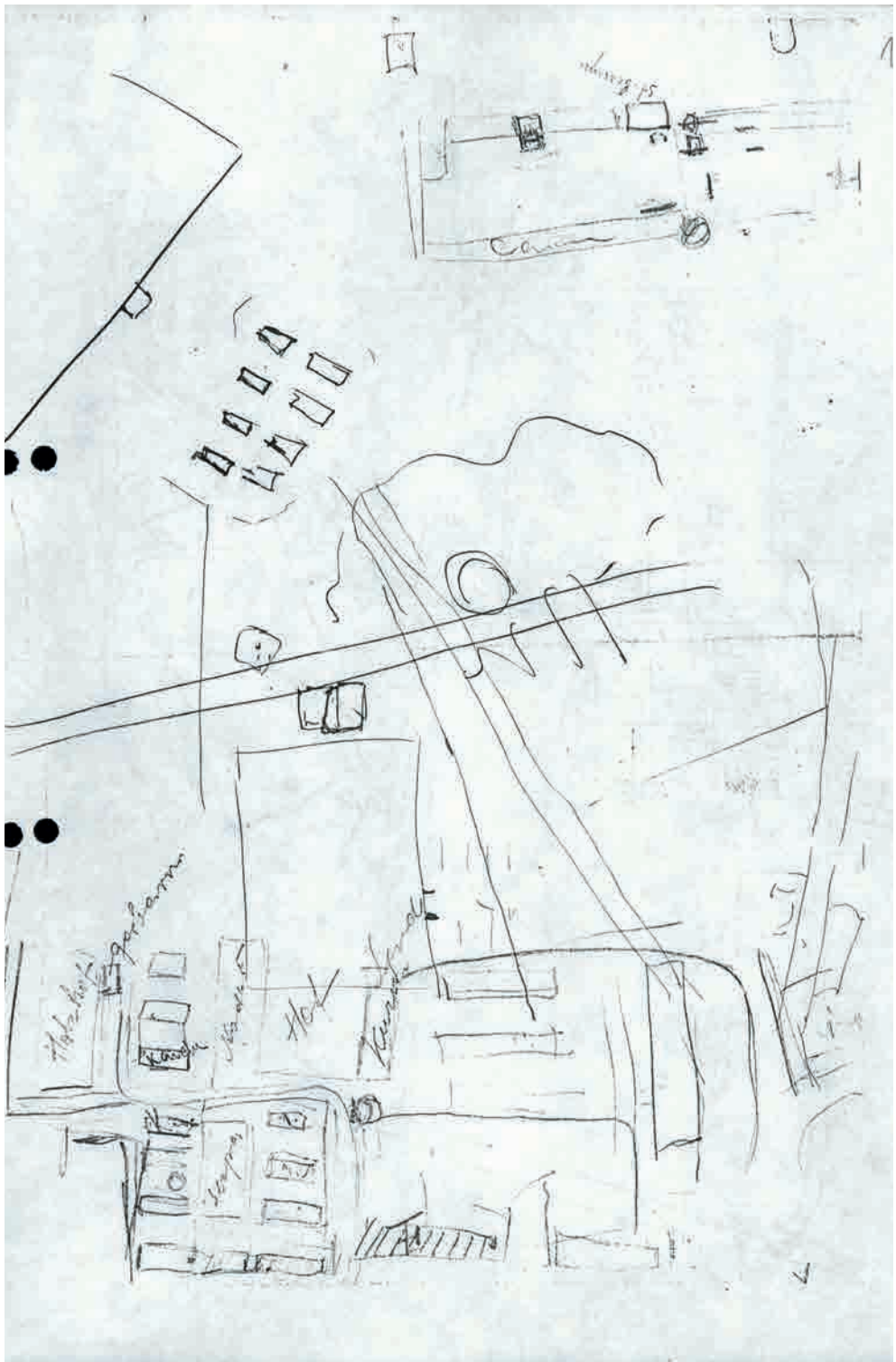
A protocol of execution of Witold Pilecki, dated 25 May 1948

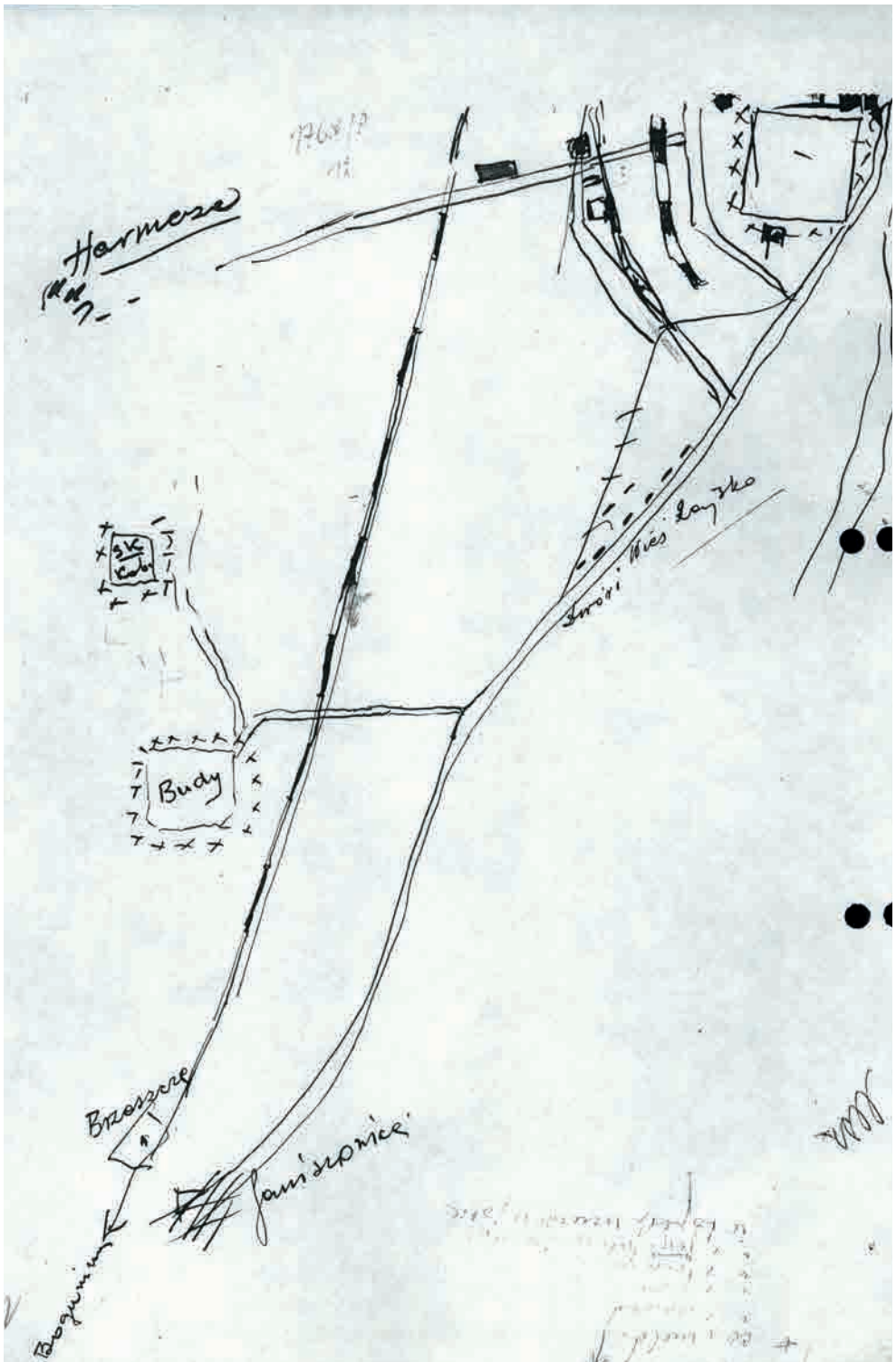
Auschwitz maps drawn by Witold Pilecki













## Witold PILECKI (1901–1948)

On 19 September 1940, with the approval of his superiors, Pilecki took on a false identity of Tomasz Serafiński, walking into a street roundup (łapanka) at Aleje Wojska Polskiego in Warsaw with the aim of entering the Auschwitz concentration camp. He ended up in the second Warsaw transport, which arrived in Auschwitz on the night of 21 September 1940, he was registered as inmate number 4859. In Auschwitz, Pilecki organised an underground Union of Military Organisation (Związek Organizacji Wojskowej, also known as Związek Organizacji Wojskowych).



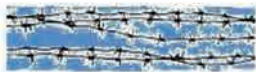
The organisation provided support to fellow inmates, obtained and distributed rations and clothing, passed on information about Auschwitz to the outside world, distributed news to the inmates, preparing the forces to be ready for an uprising when the time came.

As Michael Schudrich, Chief Rabbi of Poland said:

“Pilecki was an example of inexplicable goodness at time of inexplicable evil. There is ever-growing awareness of Poles helping Jews in the Holocaust, and how they paid with their lives, like Pilecki. We must honor these examples and follow them today in the parts of the world where there are horrors again.”

“When God created the human being, God had in mind that we should all be like Captain Witold Pilecki, of blessed memory. May the life of Witold Pilecki inspire us all to do one more good deed, of any kind, each and every day of our lives.”

*“A shining example of heroism that transcends religion, race and time.”*



**PILECKI PROJECT  
COMMITTEE**



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