

Institute of National Remembrance

<https://ipn.gov.pl/en/news/71,Response-by-the-State-of-Israel-to-the-application-for-the-extradition-of-Salomo.html>

10.04.2024, 03:16

21.07.2005

Response by the State of Israel to the application for the extradition of Salomon Morel and a report by Dr. Adam Dziurok and Prosecutor Andrzej Majcher on the subject of Salomon Morel and the history and operation of the camp at Świętochłowice-Zgoda.



Adam Dziurok, District Bureau of National Education, Institute of National Remembrance ["IPN"] Katowice; Stefan Cardinal Wyszyński University, Warsaw.

Andrzej Majcher, prosecutor at the Regional Commission for the Investigation of Crimes against the Polish Nation, IPN Katowice.

Salomon Morel and the camp at Świętochłowice-Zgoda

Salomon^[1] Morel was born on 15 November 1919 in Garbów (powiat of Puławy). Until 1934 he lived in his home village, where his father owned a bakery. Later, until 1939, he worked in a clothing firm in Łódź. When war broke out he returned to Garbów. Morel began his adventures with communism in November 1942, when he and his brother joined the partisans. In a resume written in 1947, he recalls that upon orders from the Polish Workers Party [PPR] cell, his unit destroyed dairies and burned local government offices^[2]. In the partisan units of the People's Army, Morel fought under the command of Capt. Chil, who said that Morel took part in all his unit's "operations and engagements" and "performed his tasks very well"^[3]. Because they were in the forest at the time, Salomon and his brother Icek escaped the fate of other members of their family – in December 1942, the navy-blue police arrested and then shot their mother, father and brother. For a while, Morel and his brother hid at the house of a neighbour - Józef Tkaczyk^[4].

Following the occupation of the Lublin region by the Red Army in the summer of 1944, Morel and a group of Jewish partisans lived at Ogrodowa St. in Lublin. Soon (probably as of 1 August), all of them found work in the militia or Office of Public Security [UB]. Morel was hired as a guard in the infamous prison inside Lublin Castle, where members of the Home Army [AK] were tortured, among others. He was formally appointed a guard only on 9 November 1944. Chances of a rapid career for

him seemed hopeless when a report, dated 30 November 1944, was produced by Lieutenant-Colonel Antoni Stolarz, commandant of the investigative prison in Lublin. In this report, Stolarz suggested the dismissal - as a "harmful element in the prison administration"- of six guards, including Morel, "because they do not perform their duties conscientiously, do not attempt to comply with prison regulations and behave arrogantly, whereby they sow rumours about me, as a result of which they make my work difficult and undermine my authority". A decision was quickly reached by the Department of Prisons and Camps. Contrary to what one might expect, the insubordinate guards were not dismissed. Instead, they strengthened the ranks of guards in other prisons - Sergeant Salomon Morel was referred to the prison in Tarnobrzeg. On 18 December 1944, Walenty Warchoń, commandant of the Tarnobrzeg Prison, wrote that Morel had reported for duty in that prison[5]. Less than 2 months later, on 15 February 1945, Morel and an operational group from the Ministry of Public Security [MBP] left for Upper Silesia. There, he was almost immediately placed in charge of the camp at Świętochłowice. Morel assumed such an important position despite the negative opinion about him as a "harmful element in the prison administration" (he was then 26 years old), though he himself claimed that he was not prepared for this work - having received no training "either in schools or on courses"[6].

"Eintrachthütte"

Located in the industrial part of Upper Silesia, Świętochłowice belonged to Poland before the war. The Zgoda ["Harmony"] plant in the town was engaged in the manufacture of machinery for the mining and steel industries. When the German armed forces entered Świętochłowice, the plant was adapted to the manufacture of anti-aircraft cannon, and in this way the Zgoda plant (Eintrachthütte) became a munitions factory. To ensure adequate manpower, forced labour was introduced to the plant in 1942, and 180 Jews were assigned to the plant. This did not fully satisfy needs, therefore in May 1943 it was decided to employ inmates of the Auschwitz concentration camp in the Eintrachthütte. The average rate of mortality in the camp was several dozen prisoners per week. The evacuation of the prisoners took place in two stages: in December 1944 and on 23 January 1945. There were still over 1,200 prisoners in the camp prior to the final evacuation[7].

The beginnings of the Zgoda camp

After the prisoners had been evacuated, the sub-camp belonging to the Auschwitz concentration camp was empty only for a few weeks. Its well-preserved infrastructure (fencing, watch towers, barracks for prisoners, accommodation for personnel) and its convenient location were quickly exploited by the communist authorities. Because of its localisation in a densely populated industrial zone only a dozen or so kilometres from the centre of Katowice, it was easy to transport prisoners to the camp. Prisoners from Katowice and surrounding area were marched to the camp on foot. Some were taken there by streetcar, and those from outlying parts of Silesia, such as Bielsko or Nysa, were taken by train. The prisoners held in the camp could be used as labour in the numerous industrial plants in the area. The fact that Świętochłowice was the seat of the UB administration for the powiat of Katowice was certainly not without significance. This was located near the Market Hall, to which several hundred detainees were sent at the end of February 1945 before being accommodated in the Zgoda camp. Already in the Market Hall, the prisoners were tortured by the UB officials. Before the prisoners were relocated to the camp, the place was tidied up and disinfected. Some detainees awaited the completion of this work in the neighbouring sub-camp close to the Polska mine[8].

At the beginning of its period of operations, the camp was probably governed by two men: Aleksy Krut and Salomon Morel. Aleksy Krut, a 20 year-old UB officer who came to Upper Silesia with the operational group in February 1945, wrote in his resume in 1947 that he was commandant of the

Labour Camp at Świętochłowice between March and May 1945[9]. Salomon Morel, who became commandant of this Labour Camp on 15 March 1945, also claims that originally, he was meant to govern the camp together with Aleksy Krut. But it is certain that Salomon Morel was sole commandant as of the middle of June 1945[10].

The camp inmates

The basis for placing persons inside the camp was provided by several legal instruments, but according to the records of the Special Prosecutor's Office of the Criminal Court in Katowice, the firm majority of the internees at the Świętochłowice camp were placed there under the terms of the decree of the Polish National Liberation Committee [PKWN] of 4 November 1944 "on security measures vis-a-vis traitors to the Nation"[11]. Formally speaking, the terms of this decree did not apply to the territory of Upper Silesia because they concerned Volksdeutsche from the General Government. Although the decree did contain a clause whereby its applicability could be extended "to other areas of the Polish State", this was never done. The extension of this decree to Upper Silesia meant that the inhabitants of this area contained in the Volksliste were treated in the same way as Volksdeutsche from the General Government. The remaining prisoners were interned in the camp on the basis of the "August" decree of 31 August 1944 on "Fascist-Nazi criminals and traitors to the Polish Nation" and the law of 6 May 1945 on the exclusion of hostile elements from Polish society. According to this law, persons included in Group II of the Volksliste were treated as Germans and traitors and had to apply for rehabilitation. Until their civil rights were restored, their property was to be recorded and confiscated and they themselves were to be placed in detention centres (camps). The August decree applied mainly to war criminals, collaborators and members of the Nazi movement.

Many Upper Silesians with German citizenship who lived inside the Third Reich before the war were also sent to the labour camps. As early as 9 February 1945, the voivode of Silesia decreed that all Germans and Volksdeutsche from groups I and II had to register for work[12]. The security authorities detained Germans under various pretexts and referred them to compulsory work.

However, questions regarding the Volksliste and the internment of German nationals do not explain everything, for people were sent to the camp on the basis of rather vague criteria, and one of the reasons for doing so was certainly material gain, in other words a desire to seize an internee's property. Many people were imprisoned in the camp only because they had no identity documents with them[13]. However, an effort was made to convince the inhabitants of Silesia that only Germans and hated Nazi activists were being placed in the camp. When, in early March 1945, persons detained in Katowice were formed into columns and marched to Świętochłowice, each column was headed by someone bearing a Nazi flag[14].

When one examines the lists of prisoners who died at the Świętochłowice camp, one might conclude that most of them were in Group II of the Volksliste (chiefly inhabitants of Katowice, Bielsko, Chorzów and Świętochłowice). A smaller group comprised citizens of the Third Reich (Reichsdeutsche) – mainly from Bytom and Gliwice. Among those who died in the camp were at least 139 people from Group III of the Volksliste, which means that many more such people were interned there. Thirty nine people

who died in the camp were not on the Volsklister at all. The firm majority of the internees were inhabitants of Upper Silesia and the Opole area, but there were also inhabitants of, for example, Lwów, Drohobycz, Tomaszów, Poznań and Nowy Sącz; a small number of people from the Dąbrowa Basin (10 of them died in the camp), Germans from deep inside the Reich, and at least 38 citizens of other countries (19 Austrian citizens, one Belgian, seven Romanians, seven Czechs, two Yugoslavs and two Frenchmen). This has been determined on the basis of lists of persons of various nationalities interned in the camps and prisons[15]. However, the lists are incomplete. They do not include, among others, Wanda Lagler – a U.S. citizen; Franciszek Godes, a Lithuanian; and a Swiss woman mentioned by Dorota Boreczek in her testimony[16]. They also do not include the best known foreigner inside the Świętochłowice camp – the Dutchman Eric van Calsteren. During his interrogation at the militia headquarters in Gliwice, van Calsteren tried to explain that he was born in the Hague and was a Dutch citizen. In reply, he heard: “You have blue eyes and fair hair, you are one hundred percent German, because the Dutch all have dark hair and speak French”. Shortly afterwards, he was transferred to the Zgoda camp in Świętochłowice[17]. Therefore, the internees in Zgoda consisted of a total of 13 nationalities (including Ukrainians, recorded in other prisoner lists). The Austrian citizens inside the Świętochłowice labour camp were mainly prisoners of war, but they also included an Austrian woman who had come to visit her husband working in Poland. Several other foreigners (a resident of Vienna, a Czech and a Yugoslav) ended up in the camp because they had no identity documents. Some foreigners were apprehended by the Soviet forces and handed over to the Polish investigative authorities or sent directly to Zgoda.

Other preserved documents of the Ministry of Public Security contain lists of internees divided into the following categories: Poles, Jews, Ukrainians, Germans, Volksdeutsche, German collaborators, and others. The Poles included primarily members of independence organisations: the Home Army and the National Armed Forces. According to the statistics, there were only a few such people in the Świętochłowice camp. Several Ukrainians were imprisoned there, and many Germans (the most numerous group in August 1945, when there were 1,733 of them in the camp, 1/3 of the total number of prisoners). All Upper Silesians living on the territory of the Reich were also included among the Germans. During the camp's early days, prisoners of war were also accommodated there (there were 25 of them in April), as well as persons held under Soviet authority[18]. The firm majority of the inmates of Zgoda were above the age of 40. Several hundred were above the age of 60[19]. There were also children; the official statistics indicate that several children aged up to 13 were held in Zgoda[20]. The children were brought to the camp with their mothers, who did not want to leave them without care. The camp authorities agreed to the presence of children in the camp, though they must have realised the conditions under which the children were going to live and the dangers in store for them. For instance, the son of a woman from Świętochłowice died in the camp. He was probably born in the camp and on the date of his death – 9 September 1945 – was 4 weeks old[21]. In June 1945 there were as many as 716 women in the camp, almost 17% of all the detainees. In July, a group of women was transferred to Libiąż – a branch of the Jaworzno Central Labour Camp. In September, the number of women in the camp fell to over 300[22]. The women lived in a separate barrack and were also put to work beyond the camp premises.

The camp authorities estimated that the camp can accommodate 1,400-1,500 people. Already at the end of March 1945 there were 1,062 in the Świętochłowice camp. It quickly became full. Morel

said that initially, as much as 300-500 new prisoners were accepted per day[23]. In May, the camp statistics revealed that there were already over 2,000 prisoners. The camp was overcrowded almost from the very beginning. Morel himself admitted that in July 1945 there were 1,000-1,200 prisoners more than the number which the camp had been planned to accommodate[24]. As shown in the following table, the number of prisoners was highest in the summer months of 1945. Later, the number of prisoners fell considerably as a result of typhus.

Table 1. Number of prisoners at the Labour Camp in Świętochłowice

Number as at	Categories of prisoners			Total
	Volksdeutsche	Germans	Others	
31 III 1945	-	-	1062	1062
1 V 1945	1879	328	6	2213
1 VI 1945	3015	695	49	3759
1 VII 1945	3584	1346	68	4996
1 VIII 1945	3249	1733	66	5048
1 IX 1945	2652	1211	66	3929

Source: AAN, MBP, call no. 13/1, pp. 3, 22, 178, 261, 360; call no. 13/3, p. 30; see also: „Obóz Pracy w Świętochłowicach w 1945 roku..., Raporty statystyczne o zaludnieniu obozu”[the Labour Camp at Świętochłowice in 1945....Statistical reports on the camp population], pp. 37-39, 41-44, 46-47, 51-52.

Although the Świętochłowice camp bore the official title of a labour camp, it also fulfilled the function of a penal camp. The prisoners of barrack 7 worked neither inside nor outside the camp, therefore for them it was a penal camp, though of course none of them had been sentenced by a court verdict. Many people from the Świętochłowice camp were sent to work in neighbouring coalmines and steelworks where there were camps. Prisoners also worked at the Zgoda steelworks opposite the camp, where they dismantled machines and loaded them onto carriages[25]. Some of the female inmates were employed as cleaners in the Polska mine[26]. There were cases where inmates were taken away for work under the supervision of the Soviet forces near Nowy Bytom or for loading carriages at Katowice-Ligota station[27]. In the camp there were several workshops (including carpentry, sewing, tailoring and metalworking), where inmates were also employed[28]. Prisoners were marched in columns to work in the industrial plants near the camp, and after work they returned to the camp. Those employed in very distant steelworks and coal mines were accommodated at the sub-camps there. The living conditions at the camps attached to the mines were somewhat better than in Zgoda. It should be added that at least several prisoners (four at the moment of the camp's liquidation) were "farmed out" to work at the Voivodship Civil Militia Headquarters in Katowice[29]. The prisoners received no wages for their work. At the moment of the camp's liquidation, the Employment Section had accumulated over 118,000 zlotys[30].

Epidemics and mortality

Hunger reigned in the camp from the very beginning. Some groups of prisoners received nothing to eat at all for several days, and the normal daily ration was a slice of bread and watery soup. Prisoners' descriptions of the ingredients of the soup vary - nettles, hair, sometimes a piece of cabbage, maize or carrot - but all agree that basically, it was just hot water without any fat. All the witnesses talk of the hunger that reigned in the camp; some recall eating grass or scraps of food that they found. The prisoners had no plates or cutlery - they only had old, rusted tin cans, and sometimes

one can had to be shared between many prisoners. They were given no soap or other cleaning agents, in the shower block there was only cold water[31].

The tragic sanitary conditions and low food rations led to a widespread epidemic of dysentery, typhus and typhoid. Realising the danger, the doctors vaccinated the camp staff against typhus.[32] But they did not bother about the prisoners – there was no delousing, no isolation of the sick. Franz Brachmann recalls that the camp administration was indifferent to the deaths of inmates, and only when almost every single prisoner in barrack 7 (accommodating chiefly members of Nazi organisations) was ill were they provided with medicinal charcoal[33]. The guards did not enter the barrack through fear of infection. The epidemic spread to the whole camp and was of such intensity that barracks 4, 6 and 7 were soon completely empty[34]. The lightning spread of the epidemic was encouraged by the fact that the prisoners were jam-packed inside the barracks and in a weakened state. Mass deaths occurred. The death records indicate that the epidemic began to reap a rich harvest as of 26 July 1945, when for the first time, the number of deaths in a single day exceeded 15. Over the next 7 weeks, until 8 September, between 8 and 34 deaths of prisoners were recorded daily. In August alone, 632 prisoners died in Zgoda. The final days of July and first days of August saw the greatest number of victims: 28 July – 27 deaths, 29 July – 24, 30 July – 28, 31 July – 34, 1 August – 35, 2 August – 38, 3 August – 38 and 4 August – 35. Altogether, a total of 259 deaths of prisoners was recorded during these eight most tragic days[35]. In the middle of July, a typhus epidemic broke out which caused the gradual depopulation of the camp. The final days of July and first days of August saw the greatest number of victims; altogether, a total of 259 deaths of prisoners was recorded during these eight most tragic days[36]. Morel did not inform his superiors of the epidemic. During meeting between 10-13 August 1945, the director of the Department of Prisons and Camps of the MBP expressed his misgivings about the fact that he learned that “there are 716 sick prisoners in Świętochłowice, and even the newspapers are reporting it”[37]. However, Morel did inform the prosecutor’s office. On 9 August 1945, Mieczysław Dobromęski, Prosecutor at the Special Criminal Court in Katowice, notified the voivode that as a result of a report from the commandant of Świętochłowice camp about a typhus fever epidemic, he had ordered that no more prisoners be taken into Zgoda [38]. However, this did not stop the epidemic. In the autumn of 1945, 1,419 prisoners were sick[39]. It should also be noted that the camp personnel did not report every single death. Thirty-nine mass graves, containing over 357 people, are said to be noted in the death records of the Evangelical Parish Office. However, this entry is accompanied by the annotation: “The number of buried civilian internees is greater”[40]. The official dearth tolls is 1,855, because “that is the number of the files of dead prisoners, including their death certificates,” that Morel conveyed to Jaworzno following the liquidation of the Labour Camp at Świętochłowice[41]. The deaths of 1,581 prisoners were recorded in the Registry Office in Świętochłowice on the basis of written reports by the camp management – most of them were signed personally by Salomon Morel[42]. The earlier deaths in the Market Hall and Świętochłowice hospital, and of those buried without their deaths being notified, remain unqualified.

Responsibility for such a terrible death toll of the epidemic was shouldered upon the camp commandant, who had failed to ensure that prisoners had basic sanitary conditions. Lieutenant-Colonel Teodor Duda, director of the Department of Prisons and Camps, punished Morel with a three-day house arrest and a deduction of 50% of his pay for allowing the spread of the typhus epidemic and for failing to notify his superiors in good time, as well as for other distortions in running the camp[43]. Morel claimed that he was not responsible for the spread of the typhus epidemic. He explained that the camp held 1,000-1,200 more prisoners than its capacity allowed. He said that prior

to the epidemic, out of the 2,500 prisoners in the camp, the camp doctor had not even found 50 people who were fit for work; the remainder were old people and invalids, which was supposed to explain such a rich harvest of the typhus[44]. But these explanations do not match the data on older people in the camp which Morel conveyed to the MBP. According to this data, on 1 July, out of a total of 4,996 prisoners, there were only 397 people above the age of 60[45]. In assessing the conduct of Salomon Morel, who said in his correspondence from Israel that he had no possibility of effectively stopping the typhus epidemic, an important role is played by the testimony of Józef C., one of the interrogated guards who worked at the camp in Świętochłowice. He describes a situation where in the absence of Salomon Morel, an officer acting as his replacement ordered that about 10 sick prisoners be taken to the hospital in Świętochłowice. They all had typhus, and this was before the outbreak of the epidemic. But when two carts carrying the sick prisoners were leaving the camp (escorted by Józef C., among others), Salomon Morel appeared in his car and ordered the prisoners to be returned to the camp[46]. The intentions that guided Salomon Morel's behaviour are illustrated by quotations provided by various witnesses of remarks made by Morel, mainly when receiving fresh groups of prisoners. The witnesses report the following threats: "you're going to perish here", "Auschwitz was nothing (...)," "what the Germans failed to do in 5 years, I will do in 5 months" and so on. The guards announced their intentions in a similar way, saying that "there'll still be room" on the bunks in which prisoners slept three to a bunk[47].

Commandant Morel did not obey the directives of the MBP regarding sanitary conditions. In November 1945, Stanisław Pizło, deputy director of the Department of Prisons and Camps, said in memorandum no. 107 that in some camps and prisons, the inmates are not deloused, there are no transitory cells, there are no cells in which to isolate patients in the case of infectious diseases, such cases are deliberately kept secret, etc. He added that some commandants of prisons and camps had already been punished for these offences[48]. One can certainly refer this to the situation in the Zgoda camp, where all these offences were committed.

Only after the typhus epidemic had been overcome and living conditions had improved were prisoners allowed to send information to their families telling them where they were. The camp commandant himself did not even notify the prosecutor of the fate of prisoners inside the camp[49]. According to the regulations, prisoners were supposed to be sent to a camp on the basis of a sentence of detention, and following decision on their arrest they were supposed to be confined to prison. This procedure, too, was not observed in camp in Świętochłowice, for one of the prosecutors reminded Commandant Morel of the need to refer to prison anyone covered in an arrest warrant[50].

Prisoners recalled that food parcels sent in by their families were confiscated by the guards. There were cases where the relatives of dead prisoners brought food parcels without knowing that the prisoners were already dead. The guards received the parcels, without telling the relatives that the addressee was dead[51]. For instance, prisoners were not given their rations of sugar, and yet it was recorded in the documentation that they had received this ration. No record was made of the personal belongings taken from the prisoners, as a result of which the belongings became the booty of the camp personnel. For these offences, Karol Zaks was dismissed from his post as head of the economic department in the Świętochłowice camp[52].

The torture of prisoners

Death in the camp was caused not just by the typhus epidemic, the malnutrition of prisoners and the tragic sanitary conditions. Prisoners also died as a result of wilful mistreatment by the camp personnel.

From the very beginning, the most varied methods of torment were applied to prisoners

(extensive evidence of this has been gathered during investigations). Groups of prisoners brought to the camp were made to stand in the camp square for many hours, without food or drink, and sometimes in bad weather. Some prisoners spent at least a dozen or so hours in this state, and some as much as 72 hours.

The beating of prisoners was a daily occurrence. The ritual of the organised tormenting of prisoners took place virtually every night, especially in barrack no. 7, known as the Deutsches Haus or the "brown barrack," where mostly men accused of membership of the Nazi party and Hitler Youth were accommodated.

On many occasions, Salomon Morel beat prisoners personally, using his bare hands or implements such as a pistol butt, truncheon or stool. Other camp officials also beat prisoners in his presence.

One particularly cruel way of tormenting prisoners was to make them stand in two rows facing each other and beat each other. If someone did not want to beat his fellow prisoner or did so too weakly, he was himself beaten by the camp personnel. Prisoners succumbed to this and beat each other. In several documented cases, fathers and sons were forced to beat each other. Turnkeys, so-called "capos," were also compelled to take part in beatings. Some of them refused to do so and were themselves beaten if they beat other prisoners too weakly, but others became just as cruel as the regular camp personnel.

Prisoners were debased and terrorised. For instance, they were forced to sing Nazi songs, which Salomon Morel himself ordered. To avoid an extra beating, the witness Gerhard Gruschka had to learn the words of a Nazi song in a Polish camp.

A particularly drastic form of torture was making prisoners lie on top of each other in layers, resulting in a so-called pyramid consisting of over a dozen men. According to various descriptions, one layer was formed of three or four men, and the men in the next higher layer lay perpendicular to those below. In this way, a pyramid was created as tall as an adult male. All the prisoners were beaten continuously, and those in the bottom layers suffered extensive internal injuries, resulting in the deaths of many of them.

Many prisoners were also forced to lie on the ground and were trodden upon. This, too, caused internal injuries and, in some cases, death.

Furthermore, prisoners were placed in a cell for several hours and made to stand in water that reached up to their chests. Some of them drowned. Some witnesses directly indicate Salomon Morel as the one who issued such order[53].

Some prisoners attempted to escape – according to the documentation, 69 of them succeeded[54]. The Dutchman Eric van Calsteren, housed in the "brown barrack," hit upon the idea of hiding in the toilet at midnight and leaving with other prisoners in the morning to go to work outside the camp. When he reached the Zgoda steelworks, he managed to escape in the general confusion[55]. A group of prisoners who tried to dig a tunnel in from of the kitchen barracks were not so lucky. The prisoners were supposed to remove the excavated soil in their trouser pockets, but their plan was betrayed[56]. Attempted escapes are also evidenced by the death certificates of two prisoners, bearing the annotation that they were shot while trying to escape[57].

The extreme camp conditions, hunger and torture resulted in the psychological collapse of prisoners held in Zgoda. On many occasions, prisoners recalled cases of other prisoners throwing

themselves against the high-tension fence (Morel wrote in November 1992: "there was not a single case of a prisoner throwing himself against the fence, There was absolutely no reason to do so, because the people there felt good and had no illnesses, and the barracks were open and they could stroll around the square"[58]). At least two persons hanged themselves (a resident of Świerklany in group III of the Volksliste and a father of three children from Rydułtowy)[59].

Liquidation of the camp

The release of prisoners from the Świętochłowice camp should be associated with by Minister Stanisław Radkiewicz's order of 15 September 1945 regarding the settlement of the question of persons detained without a prosecutor's indictment. As we know, virtually all the prisoners in Zgoda were placed there without a prosecutor's indictment[60]. A tragic message is imparted by lists of documents of prisoners who died and of prisoners who were released, these lists having been prepared at the moment of the camp's liquidation. According to these lists, 1,341 persons were released from the camp (there was documentary evidence of this in the form of release orders), and 1,855 died[61]. On the threshold of October and November 1945, a three-man board headed by Prosecutor Jerzy Rybakiewicz visited the Świętochłowice camp. Having perused the prisoner files and interviewed the prisoners, they released almost all of them. However, this was not to apply to those who were suspected of collaborating with the Germans or were proved to have done so. As shown by the case of Gerhard Gruschka, a teenager at the time, in order to remain imprisoned, it was enough to demonstrate one's attachment to Germany. Asked whether he knew that he would be released to the Polish town of Gliwice and whether he wanted to receive Polish citizenship, Gruschka replied that he comes from Gliwice, "and Gliwice is, after all, a German town"[62]. He was not released until he had signed an undertaking that he would not discuss what had happened in the camp with anyone, or else he would receive a prison sentence of up to 15 years. All the formalities regarding the closure of the Labour Camp at Świętochłowice were completed on 20 November 1945. On 23 November 1945, Henryk Studencki, head of the Department of Prisons and Camps at the Voivodship Office of Public Security in Katowice, was able to inform the Head of Department that according to orders, the Labour Camp at Świętochłowice had been liquidated and taken over by the Central Labour Camp in Jaworzno[63]. Those prisoners who had not been released by the prosecutor were moved to the Central Labour Camp in Jaworzno (301 persons). Four prisoners remained in the steelworks hospital in Świętochłowice[64].

One should note that out of the several thousands of prisoners, only a handful were subsequently brought to justice – documents were found indicating that several former prisoners at Świętochłowice were convicted of crimes connected with the German occupation. One of them, a resident of Bielsko from group II on the Volksliste, received four years in prison for belonging to the National Socialist Corps of Motor Vehicle Drivers [NSKK] and for tormenting the Polish population during the war[65]. Naturally the prisoners included former members of the Nazi party, e.g. several dozen from Prudnik and Głubczyce (several of whom bore the rank of Ortsgruppenleiter)[66].

On the basis of the preserved reports on the population of the Świętochłowice camp, it can be established that during the camp's almost nine months of operation, at least 5,764 prisoners were

accommodated in it. One third of them did not survive.

Investigations and charges

Investigations into the functioning of the Zgoda camp at Świętochłowice in 1945 were initiated by a letter dated 11 December 1989 to the Minister of Justice from Erno Kołodziejczyk about the death of his father Paweł Benczek in Świętochłowice. Action in this matter was undertaken by the Regional Commission for the Investigation of Nazi Atrocities in Katowice, which interviewed a series of witnesses. Salomon Morel was one of those interviewed in this connection in 1991. According to the regulations governing the competencies of individual bodies of authority at the time, in 1995 the matter was handed over to the Voivodship Prosecutor's Office in Katowice, with a request that charges be formulated against Morel. The Voivodship Prosecutor's Office in Katowice prepared an indictment containing 9 charges against Salomon Morel, and then, in March 1998, the Polish Ministry of Justice submitted to the authorities of Israel a first application for Morel's extradition. It was rejected because under Israeli law, the crimes of which Morel was accused had lapsed under the statute of limitations.

On 27 July 2001, the Regional Commission for the Investigation of Nazi Atrocities in Katowice took over the investigation, interviewing successive witnesses and – thanks to the cooperation of historians from the IPN Bureau of Public Education in Katowice – obtaining access to many hitherto unknown documents on the subject of the camp's functioning.

On the basis of the evidence thus gathered, the charges against Salomon Morel were extended and the legal qualification of his deeds was changed to Communist crimes against the population. This stance was shared by the Regional Court in Katowice which, on 19 December 2003, issued a warrant for the temporary arrest of Salomon Morel on the basis of the modified charges.

The main charge against Salomon Morel is that, as commandant of the Zgoda camp at Świętochłowice, he created for the prisoners in this camp, out of ethnic and political considerations, conditions that jeopardised their lives, and in particular he:

- starved the prisoners by introducing glaringly low food rations;
- he deprived the prisoners of elementary health care and hygienic-sanitary conditions, allowing the emergence and spread of pediculosis, dysentery, typhus and typhoid;
- he personally applied, and permitted the officials under his authority to apply, various forms of torture to prisoners, involving:
 - beating them all over their bodies, including on the head and hands; kicking and beating them with the aid of various objects: sticks, wooden stool legs, rubber truncheons, tubes sheathed in rubber, metal rods and wooden stools, which in many cases caused extensive injuries and, on many occasions, death;
 - Placing prisoners in cells for several hours with water reaching up to their chests, which, in some cases caused death by drowning;
 - Making prisoners lie on top of each other in layers, resulting in a so-called pyramid consisting of over a dozen men, which caused extensive internal injuries to the men in the lower layers and, consequently, death;
 - Making prisoners lie on the ground and treading upon them, which caused extensive injuries and, in some cases, death;

The second charge involves various forms of physical and mental torment of prisoners, including:

- beating,
- forcing them to lick coal dust off the floor,
- forcing them to beat each other – this includes two documented cases of fathers and sons being forced to beat each other;
- forcing them to stand in the camp square without food and drink for many hours, sometimes in adverse weather conditions;
- forcing them to sing Nazi songs and giving them additional beatings if they did not know the words.

The charges against Morel have been based primarily on the evidence of over 100 witnesses, including 58 former inmates of the Zgoda camp at Świętochłowice.

Further information on the functioning of the Świętochłowice camp can be found in::

Obóz Pracy w Świętochłowicach w 1945. Dokumenty, zeznania, relacje, listy [Labour Camp in Świętochłowice in 1945. Documents, testimonies, reports, letters] selected and edited by and with an introduction by Adam Dziurok, Warsaw 2002, p. 248, series: IPN Documents, vol 7.

Obozowe dzieje Świętochłowic Eintrachthütte - Zgoda [History of the Świętochłowice Eintrachthütte-Zgoda camp], ed. Adam Dziurok, Katowice-Świętochłowice 2002, pp. 160, series: IPN Conferences, vol. 5 (contains a list of victims – also on the IPN website at ipn.gov.pl).

[1] According to the testimonies of his neighbours before the war, Salomon was called Szlam, Testimonies of file of investigation conducted by the Institute of National Remembrance, Katowice Branch – hereinafter “IPN Ka”, Case files into the atrocity perpetrated at the labour camp in Świętochłowice-Zgoda, call no. S 61/01/ZK, pp. 2316, 2325.

[2] Personnel files of Salomon Morel, resume of 21 IV 1947 r. (photocopy at the IPN Ka, Case files., pages 2156-2157).

[3] His former commander, Mieczysław Moczar, issued him with a certificate stating that “he served in partisan units on the territories of the People’s Army in Lublin and took active part in the battle against the Germans”, ibidem, pages 2172-2173.

[4] Tkaczyk hid them in his pig sty and stable, and his mother fed them. Tkaczyk said that a policeman lived in his house, and it was he who murdered Morel’s family. For hiding Salomon and Icek Moel, Tkaczyk was awarded the Righteous Among the Nations, IPN Ka, Case files..., Testimony of Józef Tkaczyk, pp. 2325-2327.

[5] Central Archives of Modern Records [AAN), MBP, Department of Prisons [DW], call no. 7/24.

[6] Letter from Salomon Morel to the Regional Commission for the Investigation of Crimes against the Polish People in Katowice dated 7 XI 1992, IPN Ka, Case files..., pp 78-81, see also Obóz Pracy w

Świętochłowicach w 1945 roku. Dokumenty, zeznania, relacje, listy [Labour Camp in Świętochłowice in 1945. Documents, testimonies, reports, letters], selected and edited by and with an introduction by A. Dziurok, Warsaw 2002, pp. 89-92.

[7] F. Piper, Podobóz „Eintrachthütte”[Eintrachthütte sub-camp], Zeszyty Oświęcimskie [Auschwitz Journals] no. 17 (1975), p. 91-153.

[8] In the text, excerpts have been used from A. Dziurok's article: Więźniowie obozu w Świętochłowicach-Zgodzie w 1945 r., [Prisoners of the camp at Świętochłowice-Zgoda]in: Obozowe dzieje Świętochłowic. Eintrachthütte- Zgoda [camp history of Świętochłowice, Eintrachthütte- Zgoda], ed. A. Dziurok, Katowice-Świętochłowice 2002, p. 69-77.

[9] Aleksy Krut, born 17 VI 1925 to an Orthodox family in Ostrów, powiat of Chełm. In 1943 he joined the “Fighting Units” of the Polish Workers’ Party [PPR]. In 1944 he joined the Powiat Office of Public Security [PUBP] in Chełm, and in January 1945 he went to the MBP Officers’ School in Lublin. Among other things, he served as prison commandant in Kluczbork (1946), Sosnowiec-Radocha (1947), Koronów (1947-1949). He died in 196; Remand centre in Bydgoszcz, Personnel files of Aleksy Krut.

[10] The Świętochłowice camp was governed by people who were ignorant of the nationality problem in Upper Silesia. This is illustrated by Morel's surprise at being told that in the camp there was the father of an officer who used to fight in the German army, but deserted during the Battle of Lenino and became a soldier in the Polish Army. Morel arranged his release – he was in Group II on the Volksliste. He confessed that this case gave him a lot of food for thought because he did not know about „population relationships in Silesia.” He also showed that with the passage of time, he became more experienced in life, and contacts with the local population and with footballers from the Ruch Chorzów club were allegedly of great value to him, see” Letter from Salomon Moreldated 7 XI 1992.

[11] Article 1 of this decree stated that “A Polish citizen who, during the German occupation, declared his allegiance to German nationality on the territory of the so-called General Government and voivodship of Białystok (...),shall be subject to (...) detention for an unspecified period in a detention centre (camp) and compulsory work”, Dz.U [Official Journal] no. 11/44, item 54.

[12] Gazeta Urzędowa Województwa Śląskiego [Official Journal of Silesia Voivodship] 1945, no. 1, item 11.

[13] For example, in Syrynia, several people were arrested on the basis of a list drawn up by the wójt of a neighbouring town. Over a dozen people on the Volksliste were detained and sent to the Zgoda camp, but it is not known according to what criteria. They were all permanently resident in Syrynia, worked on the land and in the mines, and did not interfere in politics. None of them had been in the Wehrmacht. Historia do wyjaśnienia,[A story to be clarified] Nowiny [News] no. 26/1995, p. 7.

[14] IPN Ka, Akta śledztwa..., Zeznanie Józefa Wiesiołka, page 57-59; see also Obóz Pracy w Świętochłowicach w 1945 roku..., p. 111-112.

[15] AAN, MBP, DW, call no. 3/200; see also Obóz Pracy w Świętochłowicach w 1945 roku..., p. 224-230.

[16] IPN Ka, Case files..., Testimony of Dorota Boreczek, pp. 718-724; see also Obóz Pracy w

Świętochłowicach w 1945 roku..., p. 139.

[17] IPN Katowice, Case files..., page 1698.

[18] Obóz Pracy w Świętochłowicach w 1945 roku..., p. 37.

[19] AAN, MBP, DW, Inspection Department, Statistical reports on older persons and children aged 13 to 60 - 1945, 2/155, part I, pp. 68, 179; part II, pp. 4, 102.

[20] In May there was one child there, and in August two children aged up to 18 months, AAN, MBP, DW, Inspection Department, Statistical reports on older persons and children aged up to 13 and 60 - 1945, 2/155, part I, p. 68, part II, p. 102; this is certainly not a complete record. One female prisoner recalls that in her barrack she saw two or three women with children aged 6-7 years, Report of Melania Uherek, Obóz Pracy w Świętochłowicach w 1945 roku..., p. 176; this was despite the fact that as early as 14 April 1945, Major Teodor Duda, Director of the Department of Prisons and Camps, had already prohibited children aged up to 13 from being taken into camps and prisons. He had instructed the commandants of prisons and camps that children staying with their parents in prisons and camps are subject to the care of the local People's Councils, AAN, MBP, DW, Inspection Department, Statistical reports on old people and children aged up to 13 and 60 - 1945, 2/155, part I, p. 53.

[21] IPN Ka, Case files.. Complete extracts of the death records of prisoners in the Labour Camp at Świętochłowice.

[22] See: Statistical reports on the camp population, Obóz Pracy w Świętochłowicach w 1945 roku..., pp. 42, 52.

[23] AAN, MBP, DW, call no. 4/162, page 107-108, Response by the Head of the Labour Camp in Świętochłowice of 15 IX 1945 to the MBP Department of Prisons and Camps; see also Obóz Pracy w Świętochłowicach w 1945 roku..., pp. 55-56.

[24] Obóz Pracy w Świętochłowicach w 1945 roku..., p. 55.

[25] Ibidem, p. 147.

[26] Ibidem, Report by Melania Uherek, p. 176.

[27] Ibidem, Testimony of Józef Wiesiołek, p. 112.

[28] Ibidem, p. 62; Morel says that there were also car workshops on the territory of the camp, and a considerable group of prisoners was allegedly employed in the administration and in offices, ibidem, p. 89.

[29] Ibidem, p. 77.

[30] Ibidem, p. 76..

[31] See IPN Ka, Case files... .

[32] G. Gruschka, Zgoda-miejsce zgrozy. Obóz koncentracyjny w Świętochłowicach [Zgoda, a place of doom. The concentration camp at Świętochłowice], Gliwice 1998, p. 51.

[33] F. Brachmann, Powrót na Śląsk [Return to Silesia], „Karta” [Charter] 1998, no. 26, p. 33.

[34] Those who survived the epidemic were transferred to blocks 1 and 2, whereas women and children were placed in block 3, G. Gruschka, Zgoda-miejsce zgrozy..., pp. 51, 53.

[35] The statistics were prepared on the basis of extracts from death records, IPN Ka, Case files..., Complete extracts of the death records of prisoners in the Labour Camp at Świętochłowice.

[36] Ibidem

[37] AAN, MBP, DW, call no. 3/2, page 1; see also Obóz Pracy w Świętochłowicach w 1945 roku..., p. 48.

[38] State Archives in Katowice, Office of the Voivodship of Silesia, General Department, call no. 271, p. 58.

[39] H. Dominiczak, Organy bezpieczeństwa PRL 1944-1990. Rozwój i działalność w świetle dokumentów MSW, [Security services of the Polish People's Republic in 1944-1990. Development and operations in the light of Interior Ministry documents], Warsaw 1997, p. 72.

[40] This information is reported by Jakub Ciećkiewicz in a report entitled Niemcy i Polacy [The Germans and the Poles] (typescript with the IPN Ka, Case files ..., appendix to the files). The priest who provided this information is no longer in Świętochłowice, and the present priest is unable to confirm the existence of these records.

[41] AAN, MBP, DW, call no. 2/137, page 11; see also Obóz Pracy w Świętochłowicach w 1945 roku..., p. 78.

[42] IPN Ka, Case files..., Complete extracts of the death records of prisoners in the Labour Camp at Świętochłowice.

[43] AAN. MBP, DW, call no. 4/162, p. 139, see also Obóz Pracy w Świętochłowicach w 1945 roku..., p. 49.

[44] AAN, MBP, DW, call no. 4/162, p. 107-108, Response by the Head of the Labour Camp in Świętochłowice of 15 IX 1945 to the MBP Department of Prisons and Camps; see also Obóz Pracy w Świętochłowicach w 1945 roku..., p. 55-56.

[45] AAN, MBP, DW, Inspection Department, Statistical reports on older persons and children aged up to 13 and 60 - 1945, 2/155, part I, p. 179.

[46] IPN Ka, Case files..., Testimony of Józef C., pp. 916-918.

[47] IPN Ka, Case files... .

[48] Memorandum no.107 of 27 XI 1945, copy with the IPN Ka, Case files..., p. 486.

[49] This is illustrated by the example of one prisoner, accused of membership of the SA, who died in the Świętochłowice camp on 2 August 1945 during the typhus epidemic. No one notified the relevant authorities of his death. Unaware of this, the prosecutor prepared an indictment against the prisoner four months after his death, and sent it to the camp. In March 1946, the prosecutor received the reply that the prisoner cannot appear for trial because he has been dead since August 1945, Obóz Pracy w Świętochłowicach w 1945 roku..., p. 24.

[50] A. Dziurok, Śląskie rozrachunki. Władze komunistyczne a byli członkowie organizacji nazistowskich na Górnym Śląsku w latach 1945-1956, [Silesian settlement of scores. The Communist authorities and former members of Nazi organisations in Upper Silesia in 1945-1956], Warsaw 2000, p. 139.

[51] Obóz Pracy w Świętochłowicach w 1945 roku..., p. 149.

[52] AAN, MBP, DW, call no. 4/162, pp. 107-108, 138; zob. także Obóz Pracy w Świętochłowicach w 1945 roku..., p. 50, 55.

[53] The above cases and methods of tormenting prisoners inside the Świętochłowice camp have been described in greater detail in the application for the temporary arrest and extradition of Salomon Morel, IPN Ka, Case files... pp 2331-2341.

[54] Obóz Pracy w Świętochłowicach w 1945 roku..., p. 78.

[55] IPN Ka, Case files..., p. 735.

[56] Obóz Pracy w Świętochłowicach w 1945 roku..., pp. 53-54.

[57] In the case of Jerzy John of Chorzów, the death certificate stated that the cause of death was typhus, whereas the death report signed by Morel stated that the cause of death was "shooting".

[58] Letter from Salomon Morel to the Regional Commission for the Investigation of Crimes against the Polish People in Katowice dated 7 XI 1992, IPN Ka, Case files..., pp. 78-81, see also Obóz Pracy w Świętochłowicach w 1945 roku..., p. 89.

[59] Obóz Pracy w Świętochłowicach w 1945 roku..., p. 28.

[60] Order dated 15 IX 1945. copy with the IPN Ka, Case files..., p. 484.

[61] Obóz Pracy w Świętochłowicach w 1945 roku..., p. 78.

[62] Ibidem, p. 145.

[63] AAN, MBP, DW, Inspection Department, Additional appendices to the protocol of handover of the Labour Camp at Świętochłowice (in liquidation), call no. 2/138, p. 1.

[64] Obóz Pracy w Świętochłowicach w 1945 roku.. ,p. 61-75, 79.

[65] AIPN Wa, Regional Court in Cieszyn, call no. 131, pp. 67, 31, 58.

[66] Many of them died in camp, such as Paweł Schmidt – one of the Nazi party Ortsgruppenleiter in Bielsko, APKat, Polish Western Union Silesian District, Lists of war criminals, p. 52; in the early 1980's, Jerzy Ziętek allegedly said in an interview with Henryk Piecuch: "In Świętochłowice there were few Gestapo men and many Silesians. That is the whole tragedy. The conditions were terrible. During the space of several months, almost 2,000 persons died or were murdered there", H. Piecuch, Akcje specjalne: od Bieruta do Ochaba [Special operations: from Bierut to Ochab], Warsaw 1996, pp. 27-28.
July 21, 2005

Opcje strony

- [Print this page](#)
- [Generate PDF of this page](#)
- [Notify about this page](#)

- Share this article

[Share on Facebook](#)

[Share on Twitter](#)