

BLOŃSKA, Antonina
Polish Witnesses to the Holocaust Project
Polish
RG-50.488*0227

Box 1, Tape 1

In this interview, Antonina Blońska, a Polish survivor of the Holocaust, recounts how she managed to remain alive during the time she was a prisoner at Auschwitz-Birkenau as well as after she was transferred to another camp. She focuses on the treatment of prisoners and comments on the availability of food and water as well as on the sanitary and medical conditions of the camp. Ms. Blońska was a witness to a number of executions and to the killing process used in the crematoria.

In addition, she comments on several of the military personnel in the camp and also recounts the fates of some of her friends and acquaintances who were also taken to the camp. Eventually she was transferred to work in a factory in Germany, which she also recounts. Ms. Blońska then focuses on the time of the Soviet occupation in the immediate days following the end of the war.

[01:] 00:30:00 – [01:] 07:49:59

She discusses how she ended up in Auschwitz-Birkenau and the conditions in the camp; describes herself and about 1,000 others being rounded up and taken to the camp; recalls an orchestra playing often; comments on the segregation that had taken place upon arrival; describes the marking of individuals; comments on the terrible sanitary conditions in the barracks; comments on being told that the smokestacks were those of a factory; comments on the extremely poor food conditions; describes having to write a letter to her family about how well her work in the factory was going, and being allowed to receive a 250g package in return; comments on some people being drowned in water-filled barrels; describes the harsh winter conditions; discusses diseases in the camp.

[01:] 07:50:00 – [01:] 15:49:59

She discusses her activities in the camp, its structure, layout and certain procedures; describes the military drill procedure of work in the camp; comments on a song they had to sing; reminisces as to how they wished for the planes flying above to bombard the camp, that being better than ending up in the smokestacks; describes the two smokestacks and a third being built; describes the ramp and the freight cars pulling up to it with people being led out of them to the crematoria; comments on the horrible smell; remembers being seriously injured by an officer named **Tauber**; comments on the loss of perception of time in the camp; describes being selected for a phenol injection to the heart, but being saved by a nurse named **Ewa**; recalls being one of the only people in the barrack to have

survived until the next morning; comments on the sanitary facilities and an incident in one of them which she also barely survived; comments on having much luck during selections; describes how prisoners were the ones to carry dead prisoners to the crematoria.

[01:] 15:50:00 – [01:] 26:09:59

She discusses her work in the 19th prisoner group; describes the leader of her group and his daughter; recalls the leader's treatment of the group, and of her in particular; comments on those unable to work being killed immediately; describes being taken to the separate "Revier" camp; comments on thousands of gypsies being killed and the bones being thrown out onto the field; describes the burning procedure; describes working in the crematorium carrying the suitcases and other things left behind by prisoners; recalls seeing cans of Zyklon B; describes the look and layout of the crematorium; describes regularly seeing groups of people being burned alive with gasoline.

[01:] 26:10:00 – [01:] 38:59:59

She discusses the weekly selection procedure for prisoners to be killed; recalls a baby being born in the camp and it being drowned by doctors Mengele and Boger; remembers sick people being injected with phenol instead of medication; remembers being selected for the crematorium six times; describes her and a friend named **Jola**, and how they successfully escaped selection procedures; recalls some American soldiers entering the camp one day in 1944 and her friend **Jola** calling out to them as to what really was going on; says the "**Revier**" barrack was dissolved following this incident.

[01:] 39:00:00 – [01:] 49:59:59

She discusses the slight improvement of conditions in 1944 and the gradual reduction of killing being done; describes her work; describes random prisoners being shot and hanged; recalls having leg wounds experimented on by Mengele; describes further transports of people coming to the camp and being killed trying to escape upon arrival.

[01:] 50:00:00 – [02:] 02:39:59

She describes a Serbian friend and her unsuccessful escape attempt; describes the rat-infested barracks; recalls Mengele, **Tauber**, and Hess announcing possible transports to Germany for work and her and **Jola** applying for this; remembers them being transported to a factory producing parachutes; describes some people suspected of sabotage being beaten and killed.

[02:] 02:40:00 – [02:] 06:38:00

She describes herself and other factory workers being taken on a death march as the war was drawing to a close; recalls a German imitation of an American Red Cross station

where prisoners were killed; discusses surviving the long, three-week trek without provisions.

Box 1, Tape 2

[03:] 00:39:00 – [03:] 07:59:59

She continues where the previous tape left off; describes aerial battles overhead and body parts of pilots falling down among them; recalls food conditions back in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

[03:] 08:00:00 – [03:] 23:24:59

She describes in more detail how she ended up in the concentration camp; describes the initial procedures upon arrival; recalls the bathing and shaving of prisoners; describes the numbering procedure; *[shows the number tattooed on her forearm]*; *[shows a profile photo taken of her]*; discusses the organization and work of the groups in the camp; describes the discipline enforced on the group; recalls thinking about possible escape plans during work in the fields; describes some types of punishment used on prisoners.

[03:] 23:25:00 – [03:] 29:49:59

She describes the selection procedure used for those to be killed; recalls various hangings in the camp; remembers people being buried alive.

[03:] 29:50:00 – [03:] 48:09:59

She describes the end of the war and her return home; recalls the men of her group being drowned; describes how things did not get better under Soviet custody due to rape and murder; describes having to constantly hide from Soviet soldiers during her return; recalls many acquaintances being raped and killed along the way home; describes how her friend was reunited with her fiancée, who were both in Auschwitz-Birkenau; recalls her return to her hometown and family, who thought she had died; describes again the many indiscriminate murders by Soviet soldiers that she witnessed; states being scared more of the Soviets than of the Germans.

[03:] 48:10:00 – [03:] 53:29:59

She recalls again the leader of her command, whom she was very fond of; describes him and his family, as well as his interest in keeping her alive and helping her; describes how he secretly procured medicine for her when she was sick; recalls her being given work cleaning at his house two times; describes trying to find him ten years ago (mentions his name was most likely Adolf **Rudolf**); expresses how grateful she was to him for the way he tried to keep his group alive.

[03:] 53:30:00 – [03:] 56:19:59

She discusses some of the stranger things to have happened at the camp; describes how a German soldier who let his group rest for finishing early became a prisoner himself at the camp; recalls meeting a family of German Jehovah's Witnesses in the camp; elaborates on the transports arriving to the camp; describes the prisoners working the gas chambers.

[03:] 56:20:00 – [04:] 06:32:00

She describes her impression of Mengele and Boger; recalls the crematoria barely being able to cope with all the transports; recalls sometimes hearing people burned alive; describes the confiscation of valuable personal materials from prisoners.

Box 1, Tape 3

[05:] 00:32:00 – [05:] 08:54:59

She describes the treatment of prisoners; recalls the extreme lack of water; comments again on the leader of her group; comments on how many of the things done in the camp were done purely out of cruelty.

[05:] 08:55:00 – [05:] 22:05:59

She describes the slightly better conditions in the camp to which she was transferred eight months after coming to Auschwitz-Birkenau; remembers being assigned a new identification number; recalls that there were almost no Jews in the camps in Germany, but mostly Ukrainians, Russians, Italians, Czechs, Greeks, Serbians, and Africans; recalls stealing food in the factory; describes the bunkers during bomb alarms; remembers being shown one-person bunkers; recalls meeting two acquaintances from her town in the camp and describes their fates; remembers two twins and how twins in particular were experimented on; describes how dangerous it was after the war, even at home, due to the Soviet forces.

[05:] 22:06:00 – [05:] 31:14:59

She describes a transport of dwarfs being brought to the camp; remembers a transport of Africans; recalls all twins being taken away for experiments; describes the selection of women for a soldier's brothel in the camp; describes the actions of some prison wardens; remembers a failed escape attempt; comments on the inefficiency of the cremation system and how it resulted in her and others not being killed upon arrival.

[05:] 31:15:00 – [05:] 36:36:00

She discusses the loss of identity in the camps and the numbering of individuals; describes groups being left out without clothing in the winter to freeze to death; relates how she was constantly sick and emaciated; comments on the present-day situation; says the twins she knew were Polish; describes in more detail how transports were handled; relates again how people were burned alive; describes her visits to the camp after it became a museum and her search for documents about herself from the time she was there.