DEATH CAMP AT OSWIECIM

Accomodation.

Detainees were quartered in uniform barracks modelled on the military barracks dating from the Polish pre-war camp on the site of which the concentration camp is situated.

At first only four of the twenty constructed barracks were two storey buildings, namely, barracks No.3, 9, 13, and 20. /Refer to Map No.1./ In the winter of 1940/41 the Germans began to add second storeys to all the other buildings and in March, 1943, all twenty five barracks had a 1st. floor. The barrack or "block" stands approximately 60m x 10m. at an angle of 90° to the river Sola. The ground floor is divided into two by a corridor running the length of the building there being 3-5 Stuben to each side of the corridor. In the centre is the staircase shaft and W.C's. The 1st. floor is divided into two large halls and one separate room for the Blockalteste. Each hall is divided by imaginary lines into groups of 12 beds, each group constituting a Stube.

In the summer of 1941 the first beds were installed in Oświęcim. Hitherto the men slept on mattresses on the floor. Each man had two rugs. The beds consisted of three tiers of bunks. Occasionally the beds are grouped together when accomodation is short and several men have to lie side by side across the joined beds. In the daytime sheets are spread over the beds but they are folded at night and never used. The ground floor Stuben are each partitioned off by walls and have one exit into the corridor. The average complement of one Stube is 60 - 80 men.

D e a t h s .

Executions: Many of these were carried out either outside the camp to the right of the entrance on the site of the wash house under construction or else near the S.S. canteen. For instance, around the summer 1941, 400 men from the Lubelskie area were shot as a reprisal for the derailment by partisans of a train in their home district.

Strafkompanie S.K./. Jews were automatically sent here and usually succumbed after three months or so. Men in the S.K. worked in desparate kommando outside the camp on the regulation of the river Sola, having to stand in water which was ice cold, in winter.

On the turn of 1941/42 over 1.000 Soviet P.o.W's. and a large number of ailing men from the hospital /Krankenbau/ were gassed in the S.K.Bunker and their bodies covertly carted away by night, probably to the crematorium. According to informant this was the only occasion on which the Bunker was used for gassing.

Gas Chambers. These were called "Brzezinka" and were situated some 500 yards on the other side of Birkenau.

Autumn 1941. The first transport went to the gas chambers consisting of weak and ailing men. This was just a trial.

From 1942 onwards transports of 500 or 600 men went to the gas chambers, both from Oświęcim and from Birkenau regularly once per week and sometimes twice per week. The victims were usually taken from the Krankenbau or Schonungsblock where they were kept in isolation since they were too weak to work.

Besides the regular inmates of Oświęcim, huge transports of Poles, Czechs and even Germans but mainly Jews, arrived from the outside

world and went direct to the gas chamber.

Informant remembers the arrival of transports of old men, women and children, these being Poles unfit for heavy labour who had been expropriated and intended for deportation, mainly from the Lubelskie district.

It was apparently estimated in the spring of 1943 that the total number of victims who met their death in the gas chambers amounted to 800.000.

Oświęcim crematorium.

This is on the site of the powder magazine of the old Polish military camp. The chimney was constructed in December 1940/ January 194., being visible from the camp as it rises to a height of 15 - 20 metres. The crematorium is underground and just outside the camp to the left of the entrance.

In the autumn of 1941 informant recollects witnessing the arrival of two transports of Soviet P.o.Ws. amounting to about 1.00 men who were marched naked from the trucks halted outside the camp, direct to the crematorium where they were gassed.

In 1942/43 a number of Jews who had been quartered at Birkenau whilst working in the Sonderkommande manning the Brzezinka gas chambers, were brought to the Oświęcim crematorium and there gassed.

Krankenbau The Lageralteste attached here was named Bock. There was one SS. doctor whilst his subordinates known as Pfleger dressed in white uniforms were all detainees, some of them, German. They occasionally nursed sick men back to health but were often ordered to

kill their patients by giving them injections - a so called "Spritze".

Camp defences.

1. The first deterrent from the inside of Oświęcim camp was a wire running around the camp supported by sticks 10 cms. hight On top of each was a tablet with a skull and "Halt" inscribed upon it. Detainees were not supposed to venture beyond this line.

2. 3 metres further was the first barbed wire obstacle constructed in the autumn 1940. 3 metre concrete posts inclined inwards at the top were set 4 metres apart supporting numerous strands of barbed wire /4-6" apart/ attached with porcelain insulators. The barbed wire was electrically charged a t night only from evening until the morning rol call.

There were frequent cases of detainees dashing themselves agains the electric wire and informant claims that he saw many such cases. The Germans made no effort to check these siusides. The electric current was probably controlled from the Blockfuhrer's Stube.

3. 21/2 metres beyond was a second barbed wire obstacle identical with the first and also electrically charged. It was constructed in the spring or summer of 1941.

4. The side of the camp parallel to the river Sola and the adjacent side, to the righr, were further guarded by a concrete wall 4 metres by 5 metres constructed in 1941. On the former side of the camp the wall was at a distance of 15 metres from the second electric wire and on the latter side, at a distance of some 2 metres.

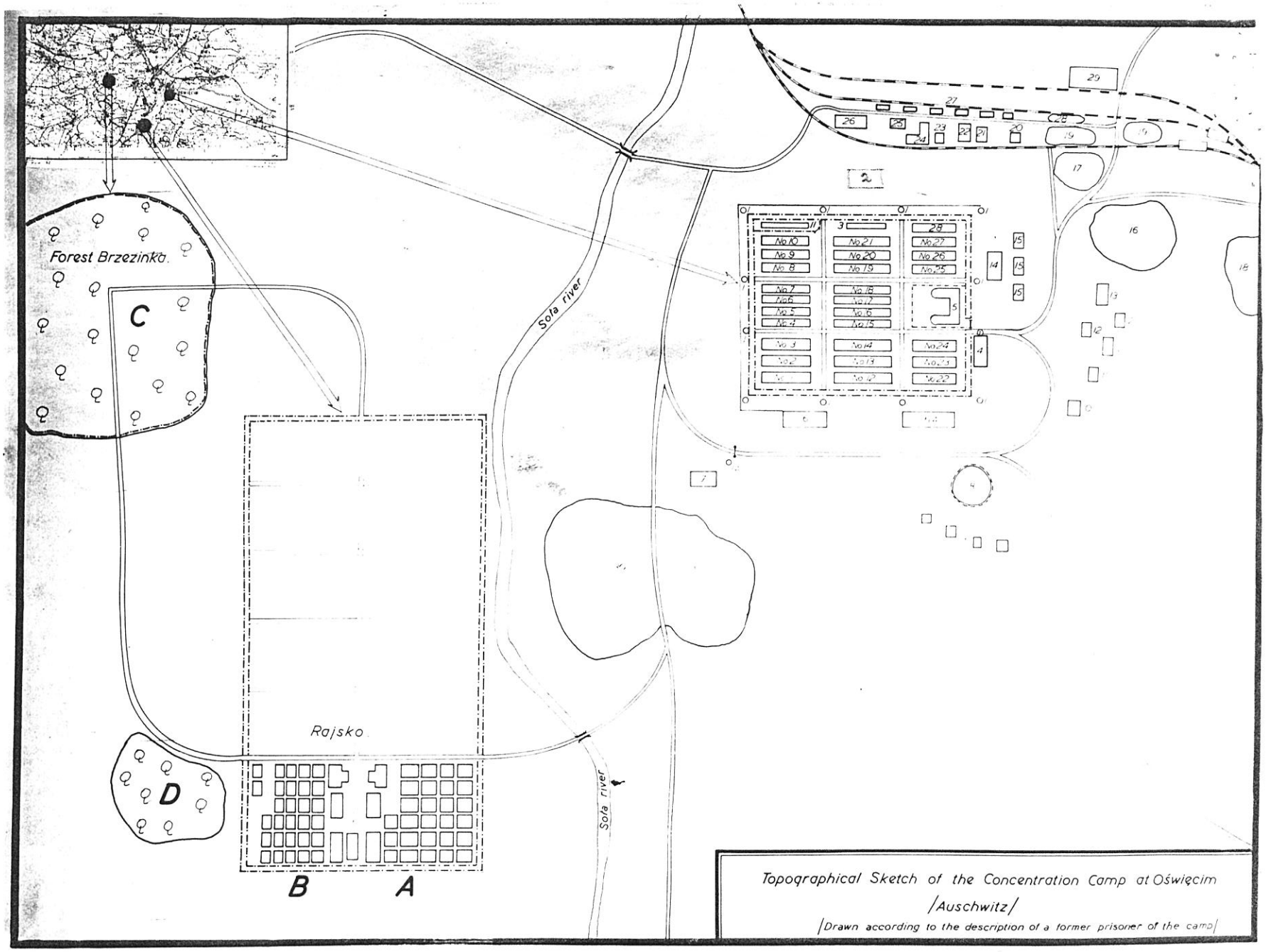
Twelve turrets were stationed in commanding positions outside the second electric wire but within the concrete walls. For location refer to the second map.

Each turret consisted of a platform raised some 5 metres aloft on four poles. Access was gained by a ladder, originally there was a hut on each platform but around 1941/42 these were dismantled leaving only boarding up to the waist so that the sentinells should not fall asleep. The towers were manned only at night time, there being one S.S. guard on duty normally w two during roll call on each turrett. The guard was issued with a rifle and sub-machine gun. The guards reported to the Blockfuhrerstube where beds were provided for them. Each guard had a powerful searchlight which he could switch on at will.

Lighting. On every third of fourth post on the outer electric wire was fixed a lantern which lit the approached to the wire all through the night.

Camp Entrance. Over the single camp entrance was the placard proclaiming "Arbeitmachtfrei". Besides the above precautions there was a so-called Postenkette or chain of turrets manned by S.S. guards which encircle a considerable area outside the camp itself including the Industrehof, the H.WL., D.A.W. etc. This was intended for the supervision of labour gangs in the day time.

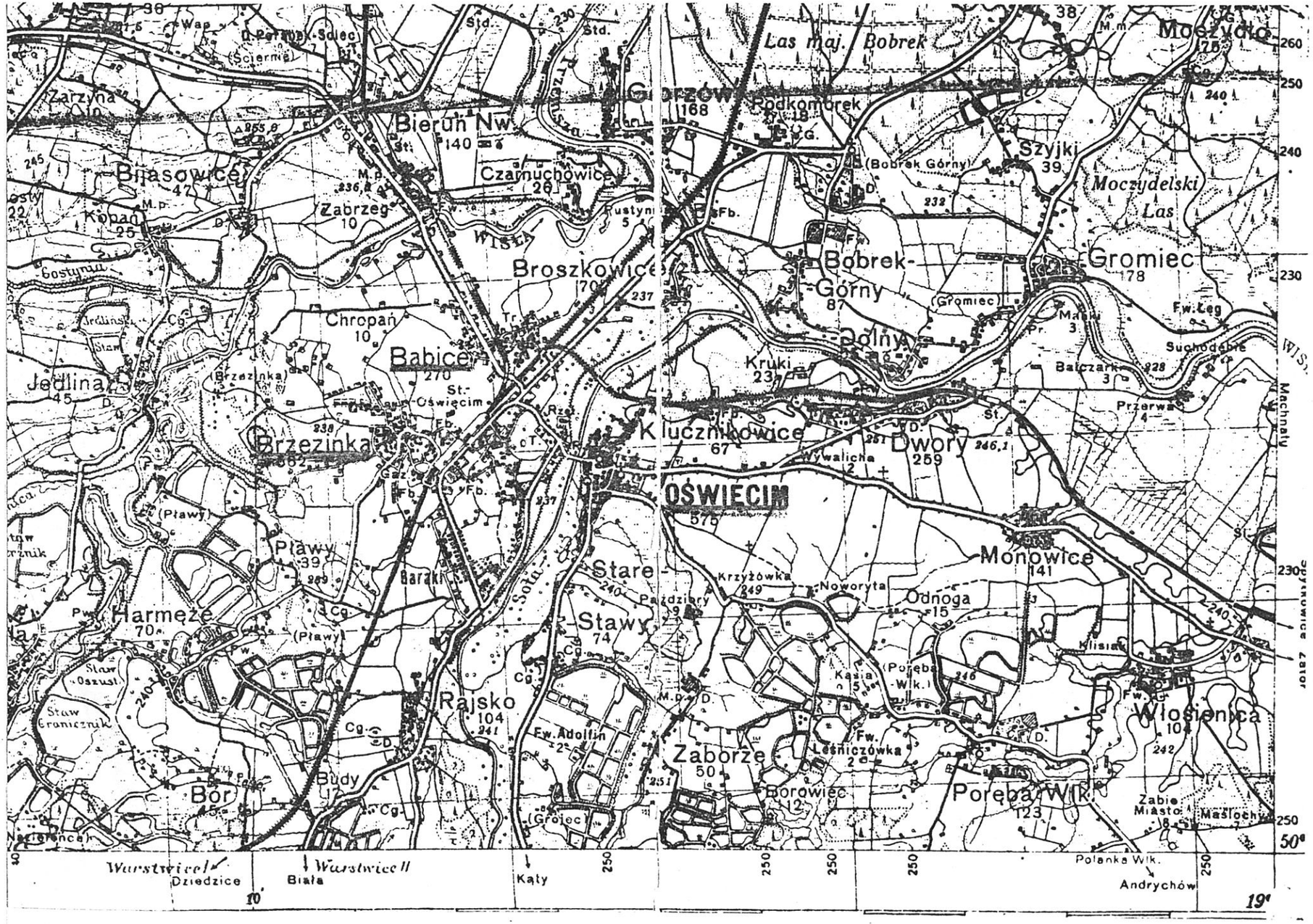
An area of 30.000 hectares around the camp was cleared of all forms of civilian life, local dwellers being expropriated and deported. This expropriation was carried out in two stages, the first in 1940 and the second in 1941. No civilians were allowed to work inside Oświęcim camp although there were cases in Birkenau.



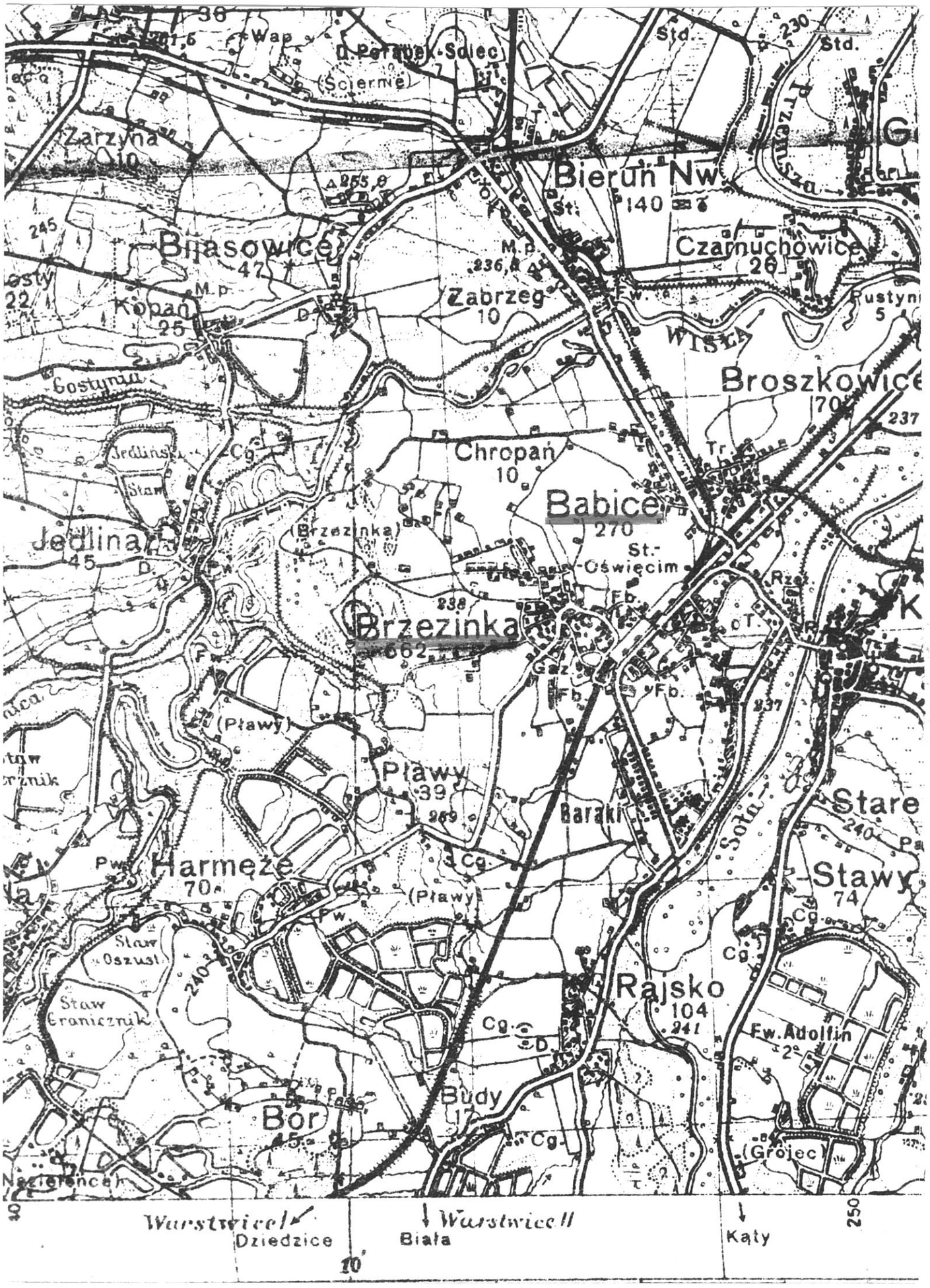
Topographical Sketch of the Concentration Camp at Oświęcim

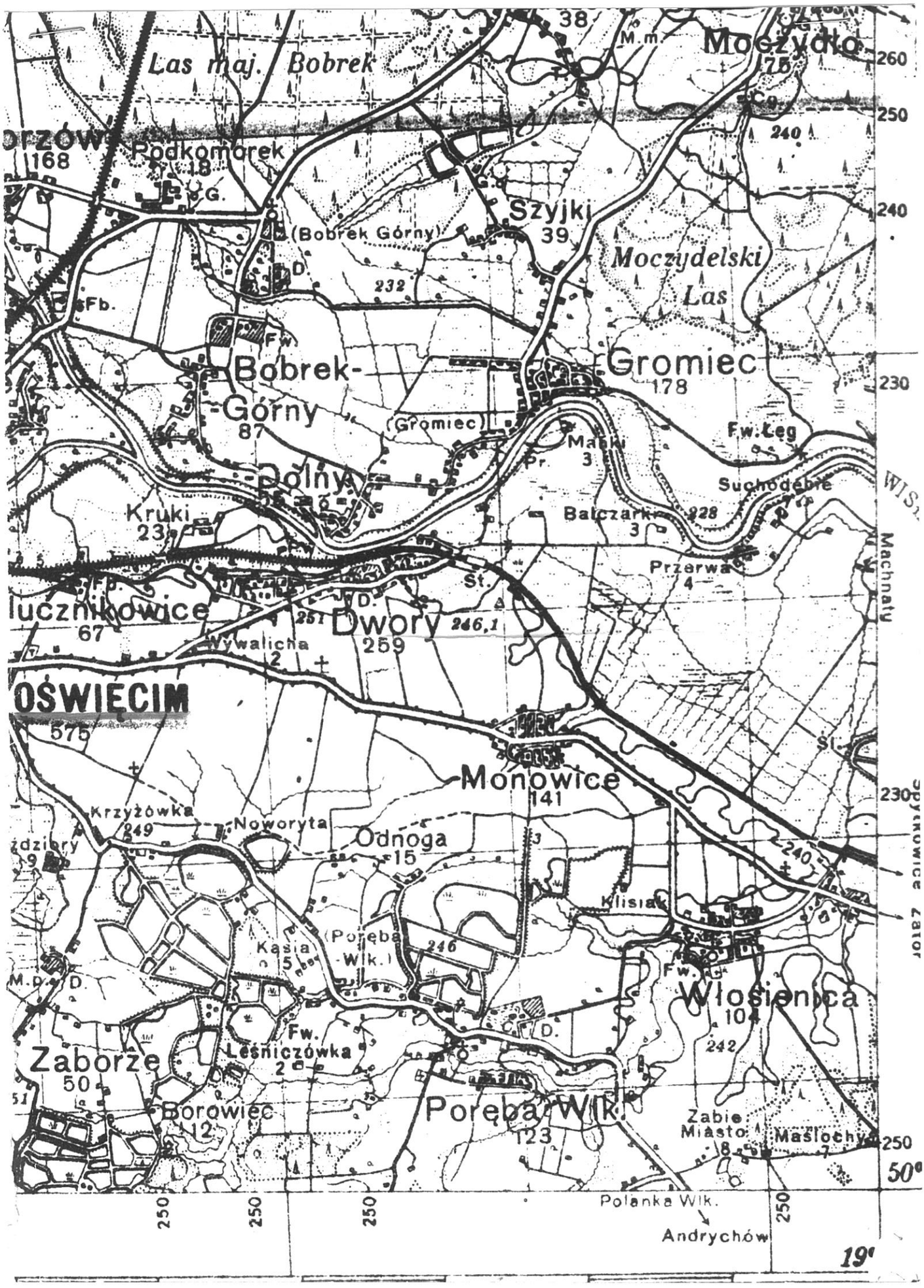
/Auschwitz/

/Drawn according to the description of a former prisoner of the camp/



Las maj. Bobrek
Moczydło
Bieruń Nw.
Bijasowice
Czarnuchowice
Zabrzeg
Kopań
Broszkowice
Chropań
Babice
Jedlina
Brzezinka
Pławy
Harmęże
Rajsko
Bór
Budy
Stare Stawy
Klucznikowice
OŚWIĘCIM
Dwory
Monowice
Odnoga
Zaborze
Borowiec
Poręba Wlk.
Włosienica
Gromiec
Bobrek-Górny
Dolny
Szyjki
Moczydelski Las
Kruki
Krzyżówka
Noworyta
Kasia
Leśniczówka
Fw. Adolfin
Fw. Łęg
Suchodębie
Przerwa
Machnaty
Warstwice I
Warstwice II
Dziedzice
Biała
Kąty
Polanka Wlk.
Andrychów


Zarzyna
10
Bierun Nw
140
Bijasowice
47
Czarnuchowice
26
Kopań
25
Zabrzeg
10
WISŁA
Broszkowice
70
Chropań
10
Babice
270
Jedlina
45
Brzezinka
662
Pławy
39
Baraki
Stare
Stawy
74
Harmęże
70
Rajsko
104
Fw. Adolfin
Budy
12
Bór
45
(Grojec)
Warstwice I
Dziedzice
Warstwice II
Biała
Kąty
10



Las maj. Bobrek
Moczydło
Podkomorek
Szyjki
(Bobrek Górny)
Moczydelski Las
Bobrek-Górny
Gromiec
(Gromiec)
Dolny
Kruki
Balczarki
Przerwa
Dwory
Wywalicha
OŚWIĘCIM
Monowice
Krzyżówka
Noworyta
Odnoga
Klisiak
Kasia
(Poręba Wlk.)
Włosienica
Zaborze
Leśniczówka
Borowiec
Poręba Wlk.
Zabie Miasto
Maślochy
Polanka Wlk.
Andrychów
Machnaty
Spytkowice