

## CZESŁAW KLARNER

### Third day of the proceedings

**The Presiding Judge:** I call the expert witness Klarner.

**Personal details:** Czesław Klarner, 74 years old, engineer, Saska Kępa, 21 Lipska Street. No relationship to the parties.

The Minister has been called to testify as an expert witness regarding the destruction of Polish social organizations. Will the Minister please present to the Supreme National Tribunal his observations concerning this subject?

**Expert Witness Klarner:** Members of the Supreme National Tribunal, the ideological side of Hitlerite national socialism has already been exposed in a few insightful speeches of our scholars. I would like to speak of purely pragmatic matters: the attitude of the German wartime authorities toward Polish economic life. Taking into consideration the broadness of the topic, I will refer particularly to the organizations associated with this life, constituting its social mind. Thus, it will be a *pars pro toto*.

Although I do not feel entitled to describe the Hitlerite movement in theory, I beg to be allowed to mention the ideological side from the practical point of view. The attitude of the occupier toward the economic life and, therefore, toward its organizations is organically connected with the political regime that the occupier established on the Polish territory. It is difficult to separate ideology from its practical implementation without any harm to the case discussed.

Fully agreeing with the scholarly presentation of the theory of the Hitlerite movement given here, at the very beginning I would like to stress that Polish history instructs us clearly that the attitude of the German nation and state toward the Polish nation and Polish statehood has remained unchanged for a thousand years. And this is not only an undoubtedly characteristic feature of the relationship of the two neighboring nations, but also a dangerous one for us. After all, Polish history started one thousand years ago with a conflict with the Germans and, since then, had been going through many armed confrontations, finally ending with a war in 1939. Where should we look for the disastrous

coincidence of tragic circumstances which have led to perpetual armed conflicts? On the Polish side, such activity is rare. The initiative and the source of these conflicts is nearly always of German origin.

Before I name the source of this fatal relationship between the neighbors, I have to point out that, throughout history, the attitude of Germany toward Poland has only been one element of its general attitude toward the whole Slavic world that has ever been neighbor to the German state. Many Slavic nations and tribes have yielded to German violence; it was Poland that turned out to be an impassable barrier for the German *Drang nach Osten* [Drive to the East]. I will confirm this shortly while describing the German occupier's wartime attitude toward the economic life in Poland. And this defense of the borders and the land – millennial at the very least – in the name of the principle saying that “we shall not abandon the land of our ancestors” [verse from Konopnicka's poem “The Oath”], is, still today, a source of German hatred (for you cannot call it otherwise) of all that is Polish.

Historical fate has brought together in neighboring coexistence the Polish democratic regime, with its Slavic kinship organization, and the Norman Germanic culture system. These two ideologies have never found a proper ground for coexistence. And even if rare moments of peaceful coexistence and mutual understanding can be found, such a fact will be condemned in German history, whereas Polish history will treat it with appreciation. It can be stated without risk of an error that the ideology of the Hitlerite movement stems from the Norman Germanic culture, because in itself it has its roots deep in the psychic system of this very culture. And it is no coincidence that this ideology has not been adopted anywhere else.

Of course, if we uphold the validity of such a statement, we will need to guard the land “of our ancestors” even more carefully from the blinded enemy waiting at the border.

The evolution of civilization and culture is an extremely slow process. In accordance with what has been said from this stand, one can and should judge the attitude of the occupier's regime toward Polish life and its organization as ruthless and unprincipled, particularly from the point of view of ethical and Christian morality, which were not recognized by the philosophers of the Hitlerite movement and which constitute the canon of Polish life.

Before I proceed to an assessment of this attitude, I would like to stress the significant role that the economic organizations had been playing not only in economic life, but also

in political one in times of political enslavement during the partitions. I will mention two of those partitions, the Russian and the Prussian one, because [the Austrian Partition] was belated in its development.

The history of these organizations and their related work is unprecedented in other territories. They possess a great historic value and were an important instrument in the struggle of the oppressed nation with the partitioning power, keeping the woeful spirit of the nation alive by building its economy.

From the very beginning of the 19th century, the most eminent Polish patriots worked to build the economy. They tried to strengthen the weary national organism. I would like to stress their exceptional influence in the Prussian partition, where the policy toward the Polish element was always and invariably aimed at extermination.

From what I have said, it follows that the economic organizations in the Polish lands have a long history. They were created already in 1807, in the times of the Duchy of Warsaw, in the form of chambers of industry and commerce. The idea was brought along with French culture and the Napoleonic Code.

After the end of the short-lived duchy, they were dissolved by the new political regime, but in times of the Congress Kingdom they were replaced by numerous new and great institutions created by such statesmen as the priest Staszic and the Minister of the Treasury, Drucki-Lubecki. Let us mention here the Bank of Poland, on the foundations of which the Bank of Poland was created in reborn Poland, and the Land Loan Society, which has survived all the turbulence of Polish history.

Some of these organizations ceased to exist after the events of November [the November Rising, 1830-31], but, subsequently, new ones were born, only to be destroyed as a result of the January Rising [1863]. Based on, quite surprisingly, romantic literature marked by patriotism to the highest degree, Polish positivism influenced and exhorted Polish society to renew efforts in the economic sector. Under its influence and in new conditions, industry awakened, commerce revived and numerous economic organizations started to operate in the Russian Partition.

As we have said, a particularly fierce battle had been fought over the land 'of our ancestors' in the Prussian Partition. It was invigorated by Polish patriotism, an enormous sacrifice on the

part of society, and strenuous efforts, which, despite the German policy of extermination, gave the downtrodden Polish side a full victory.

The Prussian policy aimed at turning Polish lands into a supply base for German industry was utterly unsuccessful, and the enormous funding for colonization did not produce the expected result either. The Polish society from the Prussian Partition, as well as the one from the Russian Partition, has known the new traditions of the Poland reborn in the 18th century, and the productive work of the Duchy of Warsaw. Doctor Karol Marcinkowski, the creator of the concept called 'organic work', was an ideologist and pioneer of the tireless defense of the economy against oppression. So was, in later times, the priest Wawrzyniak, the creator of the cooperative movement. In the aftermath of the events of 1848 [the Great Poland Uprising], a self-regulating business association was created in the [Grand] Duchy [of Posen], but its majority was German. Thus, the burden of the battle over economic life fell on free Polish organizations, which were continually being established by the society of Poznań ['Posen' in German]. The Polish society won its battle again, and this contributed largely to the firmness of the Polish spirit. And it is from this, as I have said, that the hatred of the Germans toward the Polish life stems.

In these short words, I have tried to state the importance of the economic organizations in the Polish lands in order to demonstrate the efforts of the Polish nation and the consequence of these organizations as instruments for fueling social life in all the partitions. This is how they countered the destructive pursuit of the partitioners, who wanted to weaken the nation in every way possible. The nation's own economic organizations were key to maintaining the Polish life and prevented its coming to an end. This is why we observe a continuous battle over these organizations during the whole partition era. For 100 years, the partitioners had repeatedly been destroying them and the Polish nation had persistently been rebuilding them.

In 1918, Poland regained political independence and inherited from the partitioners a whole array of economic organizations existing in each territory. They were created in different political and socio-economic conditions, and thus needed a thorough reform in order to be adapted to the new needs of the Polish life and to form a new homogenous model functioning in the whole territory. In the last decade, a self-regulating business association was created following homogeneous rules in all three domains, namely the industry *sensu*

*largo*, agriculture and craft, on all three levels. All self-regulating associations and leading organizations cooperated to establish long-lasting or new organizations qualified to fulfill especially important state duties. I will mention them at least by name: the Treaty Council of Self-regulating Associations and Economic Organizations [Rada Traktatowa Samorządów i Organizacyj Gospodarczych], the Foreign Trade Council [Rada Handlu Zagranicznego], the Commission for Internal Trade [Komisja Handlu Wewnętrznego], aimed at examining the structure and the organization of trade. I would like to point out that the Treaty Council started to operate in the beginning of the last decade, and that thousands of people from the entire country were prepared to work within it.

The self-regulating business association brought to life such controlling bodies as the Society for Compensatory Trade [Towarzystwo Handlu Kompensacyjnego] and the Overseas Trade Company [Kompania Handlu Zamorskiego]. What is more, the Association of Chambers of Industry and Commerce [Związek Izb Przemysłowo-Handlowych] established the Standardization Inspectorate [Inspektorat Standaryzacyjny], a laboratory for the food industry, the Fiduciary Export Society [Powiernicze Towarzystwo Eksportowe], the Yearbook of Industry and Commerce in Poland [Rocznik Polskiego Przemysłu i Handlu], a publishing house, and economic information services. Moreover, the self-regulating business association ran an educational campaign, subsidized vocational schools, provided scholarships, financed apprenticeships, special offices etc. All self-regulating associations were involved in such activities in their own area and scope. It is difficult to present the whole range of efforts initiated by the self-regulating business associations and later completely destroyed by the occupier.

Also, I would like to stress the fact that our neighbor carefully estimated the high level of our economic organizations by maintaining bilateral economic relations with Poland, and had an opportunity to confirm its findings in June 1925, when a two-year customs war broke out between Poland and Germany. Poland emerged victorious from this conflict, became independent of the German market and finally, looking for its place within the international market, became during this very period an important international supplier of quality hard coal. In these times, Poland entered the international arena for the first time.

As the president of the Chamber of Industry and Commerce in Warsaw, I was removed from my position by the Governor of Warsaw as early as in mid-October 1939, without referring to

any existing regulations or to the Statute of the Chamber of Industry and Commerce. I was briefly informed that due to the reconstruction of the economy I was dismissed and so on. The destruction proceeded quickly.

After Poland was conquered in September 1939 by the German military forces, the occupier immediately started to carry out its total policy toward the Polish nation and state, to destroy the population, the country and its economy. With the German concept of "living space for Germans" as a starting point, the occupier quickly engaged in its destructive pursuit. The occupier tolerated, temporarily, only what could be used for Germany's profit and what would increase its strength. All major national production centers in cities and in the countryside were taken over by the German raiders. The Polish management was either removed or strictly controlled. This policy was based on the premise of taking as much as possible from the Polish nation and society and giving as little as possible in return, if that was even necessary.

This was also the source of the policy of low wages in industry. For a long time the prices on the market were rising, whereas the labor prices were kept at the pre-war level or even below. The Polish workshops were trying to implement a social policy of improving physical and mental welfare by means of benefits *in natura*, but it was treated as a crime and suppressed. The antisocial attitude of the occupation authorities led to high mortality rates caused by disease, hunger and exhaustion. It was, obviously, very convenient for the occupier.

In order to sketch the reprehensible attitude of the occupier toward Polish workshops, I will present one characteristic example. The occupier established an institution buying up scrap iron in the capital city. It was run by a German, called Binder, but it was known that a Government official, Miller, was his secret associate. His policy as a Warsaw official was a peculiar one. Empowered by his position, he visited Polish workshops and designated them, wholly or in part, as scrap, which was then taken by Binder and sold on the market. He continued like this for several years. The unsold objects were transported to Germany as scrap. Such were the methods through which the occupier disrupted Polish economic life, by destroying its material side and its organizational structure which had served as the basis for the development of the national production. This totalizing attitude of the occupier toward the Polish workshops, their social and vocational organizations, led to profound

changes which would have eliminated the Polish side as an independent agent of organized production, if the Germans had won the war.

Having lost the war, the enemy hindered and still hinders our efforts to rebuild. I will give an example that concerned me personally a few weeks ago. In 1929, I was the head of a huge industrial plant in Starachowice, state-owned in part, which had 12,000 employees. When forced to leave Poland, the occupier took away around 4,800 railroad cars full of machinery, intermediate products and raw materials. At present, when traces of the great numbers of objects taken have been located and the authorities endeavor to achieve the repatriation of the goods, the German side insolently declares that these are not Polish commodities, because there was no plant in Starachowice. I was then delegated *in gremio* to investigate the heart of the matter and officially go abroad. Therefore, even in the post-war period such an attitude persists.

The destruction brought about by Germany is even more acute when we consider that a great number of people were wiped out and, at the same time, we lost all of our achievements in the form of partial documentation, scientific laboratories, libraries, in brief all these sources serving as a basis for Polish innovation in terms of production. Our situation is further complicated by the workforce shortage. Minister Krassowska has been talking about the problem from this very stand. The occupier's malevolent policy hinders our rebuilding process even at present, because at all times we feel the lack of our achievements and heritage, destroyed by the occupant.

Apart from the self-regulating associations, Poland had a well-developed structure of free organizations. Some of them still have documents dating from the 15th and 16th century. These are merchant associations based in Warsaw, Cracow and Poznań. Thanks to the great expansion of free organizations, they were the brains behind the functioning of each profession before the war. A short decree on associations of 23 July 1940 in the General Government was the means of destroying, at one blow, the whole Polish apparatus of organizations. All associations within the territory of the General Government, operating under Polish law of 1932, were dissolved. What is more, the decree not only required the associations to be dissolved, but also called for a confiscation of all of their possessions in favor of the GG authorities, and specified that all rights of third parties to the dissolved associations and the rights of individuals to the [confiscated] possessions were expired.

With his signature, Frank ended the existence of a great many economic organizations, including central, national, regional and vocational ones in the scope of industry, agriculture and craft. It largely destroyed the work of many years and generations.

A list of economic organizations dating from 1927 or earlier and amended by the law of 10 March 1934 encompasses around 600 organizations operating in the main fields of national economy: banking, industry, communication, transport, freight forwarding, trade, etc.

The list was incomplete. The total number of statutes registered by the Ministry of Industry and Trade as a supervisory authority for industrial societies and associations amounted to 1,500 in 1937. Also, there are other institutions registering those statutes and institutions that operated under the law of the partitioners.

We may then say that the total number of associations definitely exceeded 2,000.

Let this huge number of economic organizations brought to extinction by the decree of 1940 be a measure of the losses and the injustices that the Polish life has endured and the difficulties the Polish nation still has to face in order to rebuild them from the cinders of war.

What lesson shall we draw from this depiction of the oppressed economic life under the occupation?

The war of 1939 – 1944 has ended. It would be a historical mistake to live on, reassured by the German defeat, and think no more of what has happened and of what we might think of as a bygone disaster and a past danger.

The total German policy, reinforced by scientific planning and organization, still is a danger for Poland, like a sword of Damocles, and won't be forsaken. If this danger persists and is still hanging over us like a Germanic sword, we have to, being responsible before history, do everything in our power to lessen it, if it cannot be completely eliminated. Above all, Poland is entitled to full compensation for material and non-material losses, so that the economic recovery of Germany might be slowed down and equal opportunities for Poland might be secured by enhancing the development of this mortally wounded country.

If the Supreme Tribunal would let me, I would like to describe the attitude of East Prussia toward Poland.



**The Presiding Judge:** Will it be in terms of social organizations?

**Expert Witness Klarner:** It is a general view of Polish life.

**The Presiding Judge:** Please do.

**Expert Witness Klarner:** The attitude of Poland toward the issue of the German partitioners denotes a peculiar inability to press ahead with its plans, even in moments of military and moral victories.

Political nearsightedness, idleness, reluctance to make any major efforts, inability to achieve and fulfill the declared aim: all these weaknesses characterized the attitude of pre-partition Poland toward the Teutonic Order, and then toward the disloyal vassal, who systematically and persistently reinforced its position in Ducal Prussia. There are such weaknesses in the very beginning of the Teutonic Order's conquest of Prussia, in the decision of duke Conrad of Mazovia, in the peaceful reign of Casimir the Great, in the failure of Ladislav Jagiello to take advantage of the Battle of Grunwald and in the slowness and failure to exploit the wars of Casimir Jagiellonian. Such weaknesses are an ineffaceable fault of Sigismund the Old. They are characteristic of the hesitant Sigismund Augustus and his inability to take advantage of the situation of his times. They are shockingly visible in the fatal ease with which in 1657 the elector of Brandenburg was rewarded for his treason against Poland with a liberation from fiefdom and homage according to the treaty of Wehlau [polish Welawa], which later created good conditions for Prussia to take part in the Partitions of the Republic of Poland. The persistent and carefully planned strategy of the Order and its later heirs throughout all this period was strikingly unlike the weak and nearsighted doings of Poland. As if conscious of the lasting importance of driving a wedge into vital Polish arteries for the conflict between the Slavic and the Germanic worlds, the struggle to remain in this bridgehead of colonization and conquest goes on with no force or energy spared, but above all it goes on with much artfulness, leading it to go from threats to humility, from battle to fiefdom, from treason to alliance all at the price of maintaining or extending the conquered or solicited possessions.

*Caveant consules.*

**The presiding Judge:** Are there any questions for the expert witness? There are no questions and, in that case, I thank you. I order a break until 16:00.