



ICCHOK FURMAŃSKI

The seventeenth day of trial, 11 December 1947

Presiding Judge: The next witness, Furmański.

Witness Jacek Furmański, 44 years old, agricultural engineer, non-religious, no relationship to the defendants, resident in Paris.

Presiding Judge: Are there any requests regarding the mode of hearing of the witness?

Prosecutor Kurowski: No.

Defense Attorney Minasowicz: No.

Presiding Judge: The witness will testify without taking the oath. I advise the witness to speak the truth. Will the witness please present specific facts in relation to the defendants, particularly those whom the witness can recognize, and data related to their activities in Auschwitz? Please take a look at the defendants.

Witness: I recognize Aumeier. I came to the Birkenau camp in June 1942 and I stayed there for 28 months, so I was able to become familiar with everything what happened there. I worked in the camp's office and for some time also in the admission *kommando*. It is understandable that during the 28 months I went through all camp *kommandos*.

When I was brought to the camp in 1942, I met Aumeier and Plagge, who was the *Rapportführer* [report leader] at that time. When we arrived, Aumeier gave a speech to weaken the spirit of the prisoners. I have to add that my transport, that is the third transport from France, 49,000 people, was the last transport that entered the camp in its entirety. There were a thousand of us, men whose average age was 27. I was 38 then and I was one of the oldest men. After three weeks, 70 percent of us were exterminated. Only ten prisoners survived and returned to France. Others died within two years and they endured so long only because they were employed in *kommandos*. I was a *kommando* clerk and one of my friends, who also returned, worked in the clothing *kommando*.



Aumeier employed all possible methods to demoralize the prisoners. When we arrived, we did not know where we were, because we got off the ramp. Aumeier asked us, "Where are you?" but nobody answered. Then, Aumeier said, "You are in Auschwitz, in an extermination camp. No one will leave here, even a dog". When he finished his speech, a few *kapos* came to give us a lesson that is to say to beat us and take away everything we had.

Now I would like to talk about selections and Aumeier's role in those operations. I have said that my transport was the last transport from France that entered the camp. Afterwards, all transports from France – two or three – were subjected to selections, and sometimes only one person was placed in the camp, but on average 100–150 men. As a proof of Aumeier's active involvement, even if he was not present in Birkenau, I will describe the following event.

At the end of summer, I worked in the admission *kommando*. Hofer from the Rhineland was the *Kommandoführer* [work detail leader]. When he entered the *Blockführerstube* [guardhouse], Hofer was told that a transport of 1,500 people from France had arrived. He made a phone call in our presence and I heard that he was talking to Aumeier. Aumeier ordered him to let 51 people – men – into the camp. Then, although I had been in the camp for three months, I understood for the first time what a selection was. Aumeier was fully responsible.

I would like to add that in camp A in Birkenau, Plagge and Aumeier did everything they could to exterminate people as quickly as possible. These are the facts concerning Plagge. He was a *Blockführer* [block leader] and in summer 1942 he called the block elder over after every roll call, at about 8.00 p.m. We knew that the block leader and murderers whom he had at his disposal would kill various people at night. I – who stands here before you alive – have survived only by coincidence. There were six people sleeping on one bunk bed at night. My colleagues' legs were outside the bed. I was sick, so I tucked my legs up. That night all my colleagues got out of the bed and were escorted out of the block. In this way, almost every night a few of the 1,800 people who were in block 15 were killed. At the same time, we were not safe at all during the roll calls. Prisoners who were not lined up correctly were often killed by *Blockführers* or *Lagerältestes* [camp elders].

Every morning, prisoners set off to work in special *kommandos*. For example, Plagge was in charge of a special *kommando*. We were guarded by *kapos*, and especially by one of the worst, *kapo* no. 8. This *kapo* would always bring 10–15 dead men to the camp and he would always



say that the cause of their death was an escape attempt. In this way, hundreds of people died as a result of the murders committed in *kommandos* in the blocks and due to the lack of food.

When it comes to the lack of food, I would like say that during the 28 months I spent in the camp, we would have been served better food if defendant Plagge and all other *Rapportführers* had not stolen it. Together with *Blockführers*, they feasted, drinking vodka and eating tasty food that they had stolen from the supplies intended for the prisoners. In this way, they killed even those who were lucky enough to return to the camp after work.

I would also like to recall one event and demand Plagge and Aumeier to explain how it was possible that when we came to the *Schreibstube* [administrative office], we heard them saying that they needed 500 people from block 7 to be sent to the gas chambers on a given day. If there were not enough of prisoners, roundups were organized in the camp so that *Blockführers* could capture weaker prisoners by themselves or with the help of other prisoners who marked the number of a captured prisoner. In this way, they helped them to gather the required number of prisoners destined for the gas chambers. I can even say that also healthy prisoners, who had the bad luck of working in block 7, were selected to supplement that number.

I can also provide some numerical data, because I worked in the camp's office in Birkenau in camp A. In August, there were 13,000 of us, but as a result of selections and organized killing in the blocks and at work, only 1,800 people were left in October.

Now, I would like to remind defendant Plagge about something that he should always remember. The first *Sonderkommando* [special squad], 50 percent of which were Frenchmen, was exterminated in December 1942 in the following manner. [Prisoners from the *Sonderkommando*] showed up for work at the square, just as they did every day. We saw trucks drive up to the square and the *Sonderkommando* got in. Later on we found out that those prisoners had been annihilated. Only seven or eight people were left in the block then – they performed internal functions and were the so-called *Stubendiensts* [room orderlies]. I was in the camp at that time and I saw defendant Plagge drag them out of the block and escort them far away, to block 27, where he shot them with his own gun.

I am curious whether defendant Grabner recognizes me. It is not thanks to him that I am here. In September 1942, when he went for inspection to the camp, he passed by me with



a *Lagerälteste*. I did not have time to take off the hat, as he liked it. He called me over and said that it would never happen again: "You don't know what I will do to you". I said nothing, so he continued that I had better throw myself against the electrified barbed wire. Grabner told the *Lagerälteste* to write down my number and said that the following day that prisoner had no right to exist. He did not receive my number only thanks to certain fortunate circumstances, which I will not describe here.

And now for Buntrock. I know Buntrock from the Gypsy camp. I will not talk about what he did when he served in the Czech camp, because I believe that my Czech colleagues have already talked about it.

In June, July, August, and September 1944, Buntrock was the *Rapportführer* of the Gypsy camp. At that time, the camp received transports from Hungary, Poland, and other countries. I saw Buntrock carry out a selection of Hungarian children – small boys aged 14–15, not in the presence of a camp doctor, although it was required by the camp regulations. He performed the selections by himself and sent them to gas chambers.

I would like to add one more thing. Buntrock was in dispute with someone, I do not know with whom, but it was someone from the German personnel. I was present when 200 children – I think that the majority of them came from Łódź and Theresienstadt – were gathered and sent to the gas chamber by Buntrock. However, 50 children were taken out of the chamber by someone, but I do not know who it was. Those 50 children, miraculously saved from the gas chamber, were sent there again two days later by Buntrock.

Presiding Judge: Does the witness recognize any other defendant?

Witness: I recognize Bogusch.

Presiding Judge: What can the witness say about him?

Witness: If I remember correctly, Bogusch was one of those who handled the so-called *Strafkompanie*, that is the penal company. People could survive there about 48–72 hours, except for the groups whose task was to murder people. Bogusch was the leader of those penal companies.

Presiding Judge: Would the witness like to testify to anything else?



Witness: I have told the Court about those whom I recognized, but since I spent 28 months in the camp, I saw the death of 160,000 French people. A quarter of them were French Jews who died in Auschwitz. I could say many things about the selections that were carried out.

Every time Plagge came to the camp and said that they had to make room, we knew they would start murdering us. On 18 January, there was a selection in the men's camp D and 80 percent of all Jews from the camp were selected. Only those who worked in *kommandos* and whose commandants refused to let them go were left.

Presiding Judge: Is that all?

Witness: More or less.

Presiding Judge: Thank you. Are there any questions?

Defense Attorney Minasowicz: Does the witness remember when Bogusch served in the SK [penal company]?

Witness: I think it was in 1943. Fortunately, I did not work in the SK and I had no direct contact with him.

Defense Attorney: The witness said that Bogusch handled the SK. Would the witness please clarify what that handling consisted of?

Witness: The SK unit was a fast extermination *kommando*. There was a team who specialized in killing and every person that was assigned to the SK knew they would never leave it, and 99 percent of them indeed never left the SK. I remember that in January 1944, 1,200 Poles were brought from Zamość. They were assigned to the SK, because they were to be punished for being Polish. They were forced to work in the SK and I saw them every day carry three or four corpses on wheelbarrows. The number sometimes amounted to 50–60 deaths. As far as block 13 is concerned, it was a purely Jewish block and when the camp authorities wanted to make some room, they would send those people to the SK. I myself saw in the *Schreibstube* that people from block 13 were transferred to the SK.

Defense Attorney: What was Bogusch's part in that?

Witness: Every SS man who was head of an SK *kommando* had been appointed to kill and encourage the team of murderers to annihilate as many people as possible. I have



just remembered that all officers in the SK carried thick sticks and a blow in the neck was enough to kill a man. I heard SS men boast to each other, "I do not need two strikes to kill a man. I kill them with one strike". This was the spot (the witness points at the neck) where they would hit prisoners, killing them like rabbits.

Presiding Judge: Are there any more questions? (Defendant Plagge comes forward.) Does the defendant have a question for the witness or does he want to make a statement?

Defendant Plagge: I would like to ask the witness a question.

Presiding Judge: Please, go ahead.

Defendant: Can the witness tell me who was the real *Rapportführer* of the Birkenau camp?

Presiding Judge: Please, answer briefly. Does the witness remember or not?

Witness: I do not remember the names of all *Rapportführers*, but I remember some of them.

Defendant: A while ago you said that I was the *Rapportführer*.

Witness: In 1942, when I came to Auschwitz, Plagge was the *Rapportführer*.

Defendant: What year did the witness arrive?

Presiding Judge: The witness has already said that when he arrived at Auschwitz in 1942, the defendant was the *Rapportführer*.

Defendant: Did the witness ever see me stealing food from a prisoner?

Witness: It would be too convenient if I had seen it. When I came back from work, food rations had been very much reduced. In the evening, when we were lying in the bunks, we heard *Blockführers* enter the senior block elder's room and eat sausages and stolen margarine. They exchanged bread, that is to say the senior block elder exchanged bread he had stolen from us for different valuable items. Civilian workers brought, among others, vodka and even chocolate to the camp. However, it was impossible for me to directly see how he did it.

Presiding Judge: Does the defendant have any more questions?

Defendant: Did the witness see if I had a rifle with me when I escorted the *Sonderkommando* from one block to another?



Witness: He did not have a rifle, but he did have a revolver.

Defendant: Did the witness see that it was me who shot those eight people?

Witness: He escorted them to block 27 by himself and after an hour we saw corpses. They were taken to the morgue situated behind that block.

Presiding Judge: Are there any questions?

Prosecutor Kurowski: I would like to ask the witness – because he said that when prisoners arrived, Aumeier gave them a short speech, "You are in an extermination camp" – if the witness knows the German word *Vernichtungslager* [extermination camp].

Witness: I cannot say exactly. I did not understand them that well, but I knew a political prisoner from Germany, a Jew, who told me that there were several camps in Germany, and Aumeier used the word *Vernichtungslager*. We asked them what it meant and they told us that there were such camps in Germany, in Buchenwald and other places, and that the camp in Auschwitz was a *Vernichtungslager*.

Prosecutor: Thank you.

Defendant Bogusch: Your Honor, I would like to ask the witness when I was the head of the SK.

Witness: If I remember correctly, it was in 1943. I saw him perform that beautiful work at that time.

Defendant: In 1943 and 1944, the SK did not exist.

Witness: It is not true. The SK did exist and I will tell you in which block: in block 3 in camp A, and in block 11 in camp F. When we were transferred from A to F, camp A was transformed into a women's camp.

Presiding Judge: Are there any questions for the witness?

Defendant Buntrock: The witness claims that I looked for children and selected them for the gas chambers. When was that?

Witness: It was in June, July, August, and September. It was at the time when transports from Hungary arrived, and ten days later 70,000 Jews were brought from Łódź. At the same time,



Theresienstadt was emptied. It was when the Gypsies came to the camp, and Buntrock was their *Blockführer*. Thousands of people lay on the ground and were sent to the gas chambers every day to make room for the newcomers. And at that time, selections were carried out by Buntrock, because the doctor was present only sometimes.

Presiding Judge: Does the defendant have any more questions?

Defendant: Yes. The witness said that people lay on the ground in the camp. Does the witness know that people from the Gypsy camp were later on sent to work in the Reich?

Witness: But at the same time people who were no longer able to work were sent to the gas chambers. We will never understand, as I have said already, why children aged 14, 15 and 16 were brought to the camp. After four to six weeks in the camp, they started looking like skeletons, and then Buntrock would send them to the gas chambers.

Presiding Judge: Does defendant Buntrock have any questions?

Defendant: As far as the witness' statement – that I pulled out or hanged people destined for the gas chambers – is concerned, I believe it does not reflect the reality.

Witness: I believe that what he says is not important, because it is not true. I saw him and I am not saying those things out of hatred, but because it is the truth.

Presiding Judge: Does defendant Buntrock have any more questions?

Defendant: No, thank you.

Presiding Judge: The witness is excused. I order a few minutes' break.