



JULIAN CHROŚCICKI

The fifth day of the trial

Presiding judge: – Please escort the witnesses out, and let Reverend Chrościcki stay in the courtroom.

Julian Chrościcki, 54 years old, Catholic priest, resident in Włochy near Warsaw, no relationship to the parties.

Please, tell the Tribunal everything you know about the case.

Prosecutor Sawicki: – May I ask if Mr. Chmurski represents all defense attorneys in the case?

Presiding judge: – Do you represent all defense attorneys in the case?

Attorney Chmurski: – Yes, I do.

Presiding judge: – (to the witness) Please, speak slowly and loudly into the microphone.

Witness: – Having suffered from typhus in the camp, I have experienced great memory loss, so I would like to ask you to kindly read my first testimony.

Presiding judge: – (to the prosecutors) This is a prosecution witness, so perhaps the prosecutors would like to ask him questions?

Prosecutor Sawicki: – Father, could you please tell us something about the persecution of priests, of course, based on what you have heard?

Witness: – On 18 September 1943, I was arrested in Włochy and taken to the Pawiak prison. Soon afterwards, another priest was arrested, the late Roman Gutowski. I also met other priests among the prisoners. Two of us, Reverend [Roman] Archutowski and I, were

persecuted the most in that period. Due to the fact that we wore cassocks as prisoners, they tormented us and made us perform special punitive exercises. For example, some of us were told to do frog jumps, others to move along a long prison corridor on elbows and knees. In the meantime, dogs were set on them and the prisoners were beaten with the leash for training dogs. On 7 October at 3.30 p.m., the Germans began to abuse the inmates from my cell, which resulted in blood from our wounds being spilled in the corridor, and a dog was biting our wrists and ankles. Unfortunately, I was injured the most, and because of this I will suffer from disabilities caused by their tortures, that is, permanently swollen legs, for the rest of my life. A colleague of mine, who was older than I, was severely beaten. I wiped blood off the battered man's wounds with my own hands and comforted him.

This lasted from 7 October to 17 January 1943, when I was transported to Majdanek. This colleague and other priests were severely wounded or sick, which was caused by the harsh prison conditions: elderly or sick priests would lie on concrete day and night, malnourished, with no help. Doctors-prisoners did their best to save their fellow prisoners, but despite their determination and sacrifice, their help was not enough. Therefore, it is not surprising that they developed various diseases and suffered from hunger so extreme – which is, perhaps, incomprehensible nowadays – that it caused bloating, so acute – the so-called avitaminosis – that it eventually caused death. I had the opportunity to provide great religious comfort to my companions who were dying of avitaminosis in the hospital. Prisoners with tuberculosis, with whom I also stayed, were usually executed, mostly in public. I don't know if the Supreme Tribunal remembers the moment when thirteen and fifty men were hanged in Warsaw, but those were mostly my companions who were kept with me in the Pawiak prison, in the so-called hospital – an infirmary. There were, however, some external signs suggesting that the Germans were concerned to a certain degree. They were especially wary of hygiene, but we all had the impression that they only wanted to prevent the guards from getting sick, so the Germans' efforts were motivated by a concern for themselves, and not for the prisoners. If I am allowed to share my impressions and memories concerning Majdanek, that was a place which inspired fear already when seen from a distance. The most horrible hygienic conditions in there caused typhus and diarrhea.

Prosecutor Sawicki: – Since the Majdanek case is excluded from this trial, could this testimony be interrupted?



Presiding judge: – I don't want to talk about Majdanek right now. I would like to ask if any charges were brought against the arrested priests in the Pawiak prison. What were you accused of when you were interrogated?

Witness: – We were usually accused of belonging to a military organization, which was not true.

Presiding judge: – How many times were you interrogated in the Pawiak prison?

Witness: – In the Pawiak prison, I was interrogated only once, because after dogs had been set on me, I became seriously ill. I just lay for eight weeks and they were not able to interrogate me because I had a high temperature.

Presiding judge: – What were you accused of?

Witness: – I was accused of belonging to an unspecified organization. Then, I realized that they generally made such accusations to justify the arrest. Secondly, I was accused of allegedly distributing underground newspapers in my parish house. Thirdly, I was called an enemy of the German nation, but no clarification or justification was ever provided.

Presiding judge: – Were you a parish priest?

Witness: – I was a parish priest and I worked as the vice-president of the Social Welfare Committee of the Warsaw District.

Presiding judge: – Are you familiar with the orders issued by the occupation authorities against the Church?

Witness: – Yes, of course, but I only remember some of them. We were strictly forbidden to ring the bells to call parishioners to mass. We were also not allowed to organize processions, but the regulation regarding the ban was so ambiguous that it was impossible to understand if we could organize any processions inside churches. Another thing I remember is that we were forbidden to sing songs, especially those that sounded similar to the song "Boże, coś Polskę..." For example, there is a religious song called "Serdeczna Matko," whose first two choruses sound like "Boże, coś Polskę..." As soon as a priest started singing it, he was immediately arrested.

Presiding judge: – Did the occupation authorities introduce any restrictions regarding Catholic funerals?



Witness: – As far as I know, funerals were absolutely prohibited in the city, in Warsaw, while in smaller towns and rural areas, including those near the capital, such as Włochy, I received various threats, but I still did funerals.

Presiding judge: – Did the occupation authorities introduce any restrictions regarding baptisms?

Witness: – As for baptisms, there were far reaching restrictions because priests were at risk of being immediately arrested if they dared to baptize a child from an Evangelical family.

Presiding judge: – And what about children from Jewish families?

Witness: – Oh, that put them even more at risk.

Presiding judge: – Was there a formal prohibition against baptizing Jews?

Witness: – No, at least I don't remember such a prohibition, but in practice priests who dared to baptize Jewish children received threats.

Presiding judge: – Could you tell us what repressive measures were actually applied towards priests who baptized such children?

Witness: – I cannot recall his name, but I remember a priest who was arrested on charges of baptizing adult Jews.

Prosecutor Sawicki: – Apart from the interrogation and being attacked by dogs, were you tried by a court?

Witness: – No, there was no trial after that, only an interrogation, and I realized that afterwards they decided to send me to Auschwitz. I ended up in Majdanek by mistake. On 17 January, when the Gestapo was carrying out operations in Warsaw, some transports were sent to the East Train Station, and others to the West Train Station. By mistake, the truck I was in went to the East Train Station, thanks to which I ended up not in Auschwitz, but in Majdanek.

Prosecutor Sawicki: – In short, there was no trial.

Prosecutor Siewierski: – When did you return to the parish?

Witness: – I returned there on the day before the uprising, but I was released earlier. From Majdanek, I was transported to the Lublin Castle, where I spent a year and four months. Thanks to the efforts of Count Maurycy Potocki, with whom I worked in the Central Welfare Council, and who felt obligated to rescue me, I was released. But it happened only thanks to the head of the prison. I was released under the condition that I would not leave Lublin and that the Warsaw Gestapo would not find out about it, and the head of the prison, named Domnick, assumed such a responsibility. I had the impression that he was not German, but a man of Polish descent. He spoke a Polish dialect, “weźta, posłuchajta, dajta,” so it seemed to me he was a Masurian.

Prosecutor Siewierski: – During the Warsaw Uprising, you took care of people leaving Warsaw in your parish house in Włochy. Could you tell us in what conditions the Germans allowed people to leave Warsaw in that period?

Witness: – Probably about 20,000 people passed through the Catholic House in Włochy, where we helped the survivors along with Caritas. The train station was another facility where Caritas provided help. There were people with burned ears, hands, burned faces, hungry, and deprived of everything. Sometimes, people leaving Warsaw were even robbed of small bundles in which they had packed their remaining possessions; this was usually done by the Vlasov army.

Thanks to Caritas, we provided clothes – shirts and other garments – to about 3 thousand people. We did not provide them with full sets of clothes, but rather individual garments.

Right now, I cannot recall how many tons of bread, fruit, vegetables, and tomatoes we gave to those poor people. A lot of sick people stayed with us and we set up an infirmary and a hospital for them, where we could help them thanks to the dedicated work of local doctors and young people.

Prosecutor Siewierski: – Were those sick and wounded, with burned hands and faces, rushed directly to you, without receiving any medical assistance from the Germans?

Witness: – As for those whom I saw, I must say that the Germans herded them with no mercy, without providing them with any assistance. Those who dared to approach those poor people, to hand them anything, were beaten with rifle butts.

Defendant Fischer: – I would like to ask for permission to ask a few questions. Could the witness say what authorities issued orders directed against the Church?



Witness: – As far as I remember, they were rather issued by the central authorities.

Presiding judge: – How did parish priests receive the orders?

Witness: – Through the curia. The curia made full copies of the orders on a typewriter and sent them *in extenso* to parish priests.

Defendant Fischer: – Did the German authorities allow Caritas to help the runaways or did they prevent them from doing so?

Witness: – We struggled for a few weeks, through various units, to get permission from the commander in Włochy to gain access to the station and help the refugees. It took me three weeks to achieve it.

Defendant Fischer: – Does the witness know that the Polish Red Cross and the Central Welfare Council took care of refugees from Warsaw?

Witness: – I cannot say anything about this because I was in Włochy at that time, so I couldn't have known what was going on in Warsaw.

Defendant Fischer: – Does the witness know that in the rubber factory between Pruszków and Włochy, a hospital for refugees was set up?

Witness: – Yes, I know that, but that hospital had the worst reputation due to the lack of assistance.

Defendant Fischer: – Do you know that, apart from that hospital near Warsaw, there were over thirty other hospitals?

Witness: – I know of about twenty-four hospitals in Milanówek and the immediate areas.

Presiding judge: – Do you know who set up those hospitals?

Witness: – Based on what I think and the information I have, it was rather through private initiative. For example, the Daughters of Charity strove to organize and launch their facilities as soon as possible.

Presiding judge: – Do you know if the German authorities provided any medicines or food?

Witness: – I don't know that.