



## LUDWIK BANACH

Tenth day of the hearing, 6 December 1947

After the break

**Chief judge:** the witness Ludwik Banach.

**The witness Ludwik Banach, aged 30, naval engineer, [religious affiliation] Roman Catholic, relationship to the accused:** none.

**Chief judge:** I remind the witness of the duty to tell the truth. Giving false testimony is punishable by imprisonment of up to five years. Are there any requests regarding how the witness is to be interviewed?

**Prosecutors:** We move to release the witness from oath.

**Defence:** Agreed.

**Chief judge:** Therefore the witness will be heard without oath.

Maybe the witness can present to the Tribunal what he knows about the case, and in particular with regard to the accused. Do you recognize any of them?

**The witness:** I arrived at the Auschwitz concentration camp in 1941 and was immediately assigned to the punitive unit in block 11, where I had the opportunity to familiarize myself with the crimes of the Germans seated here, among them Grabner, Aumeier, Gehring, Plagge, and Müller.

The first gassing took place on 5 September 1941 on Russian officers from another camp. Among them, 120 political prisoners from the Auschwitz camp were killed. The idea of using gas, in my opinion, came from Grabner with the help of other SS men like Palitzsch and the former *Lagerführer* [camp commandant] Fritzscher. After the gassing of this transport I was taken to clean out the block, where I saw Grabner. He was an excellent specialist in coming up with various types of torture for political prisoners, hanging them on a post, starving them in the bunker, forcing them to stand for hours as a punishment, and using a range of other methods of torture already known to the Supreme National Tribunal.



As far as Aumeier is concerned, I can state that he was involved in the executions by shooting, conducting the executions of prisoners and civilians who worked in the camp but lived outside. He also shot prisoners of war in Auschwitz. During one such execution, one of the Russian captives said, "Long live Stalin", at which point Aumeier grabbed a shovel and began to beat him until he was unconscious. When he fell to the ground, Aumeier and Palitzsch kicked him and then ordered him to be soaked with cold water to bring him back to consciousness, after which they shot him. Besides, when the *kommandos* were setting out for work, Aumeier threw himself at the prisoners for the slightest misdemeanor, kicking and beating them. He did the same thing during the inspections when the prisoners came back to the camp and had pieces of bread on them.

Gehring shot the prisoners. In my presence, he personally shot about a thousand people. This is an approximate number. He carried out these shootings himself, as well as in the presence of other camp authorities. He was not particularly devious, he did what he was told.

Plagge took a very active part in shooting the prisoners. He substituted for Gehring during his absence or illness and was particularly cruel to the prisoners. During major executions, I saw how Müller and Plagge took turns in shooting the prisoners.

That would be all the most important things.

**Chief judge:** Are there any questions?

**Prosecutor Pęchalcki:** The witness testified that he saw Müller during the executions. What was his role there?

**The witness:** I saw that he was present at the executions, and during the larger executions he took it in turns with Plagge so that one of them shot and then the second would shoot.

**Prosecutor Pęchalcki:** It means that when there was a larger group, one fired and then the other?

**The witness:** Yes.

**Prosecutor Pęchalcki:** Does the witness recall the execution in 1942 of 12 women and 44 men?



**The witness:** In the evening, at about seven, they were brought in from Mysłowice. They were Poles, *Volksdeutsche*s, suspected of spying. This was a show execution, which Palitzsch attended. This was supposed to show people what might happen to them.

**Prosecutor Pęchalski:** Was it a mass execution?

**The witness:** Yes. We were ordered to set up some poles around the area. On arrival, some of them were hanged on the poles while others were shot. In other words, 12 men were hanged, and six men and six women were shot.

**Prosecutor Pęchalski:** Were they shot on the poles?

**The witness:** No. Those on the poles were hanged and the rest were shot.

**Prosecutor Pęchalski:** What was Gehring's involvement in these executions?

**The witness:** Gehring hanged these people with his own hands. I would also like to say that Gehring also shot an American citizen. I had the chance to see her documents, which indicated that she had come in from Munich. I talked to her; she was accused of spying. This woman was also shot by Gehring.

**Defense attorney Kruh:** Was the witness present at these executions?

**The witness:** Yes, I was the so-called *Stubendienst* [room orderly] in block 11 and so I was able to watch all the executions.

**Defense:** From where?

**The witness:** From my room where I was stationed, and then occasionally I covered over the blood after executions at the "death wall".

**Defense:** But after the executions?

**The witness:** During the execution.

**Defense:** The witness mentioned that Gehring often seemed depressed. Was this because of these executions?

**The witness:** I can't say.



**Defense:** Because the witness connected these two things.

**The witness:** I can't say that, but another time he was cheerful, and after major executions he was depressed and for a few days he rarely showed up at the block.

**Chief judge:** Are there any questions?

**Defendant Grabner:** Please allow the witness to be questioned regarding his claim that I came up with the idea of gassing 25 Russian prisoners of war.

**The witness:** There weren't 25 captives, but more like 800.

**Defendant Grabner:** It involved Russian prisoners of war and also 20 political prisoners.

**The witness:** 120 Auschwitz prisoners.

**Defendant Grabner:** My request was intended for the witness to say how he knew that it was my idea.

**The witness:** I make such a claim because Grabner had previously arrived at the block and ordered the bunker to be emptied because there was going to be an attempt to gas these people, simple as that. I, as I understand German, overheard their various secrets.

**Defendant Grabner:** I would like to declare that I have never issued an order in block 11. I didn't have the authority to do so, and as proof of this, please ask those who are here and who served in block 11. If there was any gassing in block 11, I was never present there.

**Chief judge:** Maybe the defendant will say then whose idea was the gassing?

**Defendant Grabner:** I only learned about the gassing of the Russian prisoners of war later. That was Dr. Schweiler's idea.