

ALEKSANDER GÓRECKI

Eleventh day of the hearing, 22 March 1947.

The witness stated the following with regard to himself: Aleksander Górecki, 46 years old, cooperative member, married, Roman Catholic, no relationship to the parties.

Presiding judge: What are the parties' motions regarding the procedure of questioning the witness?

Prosecutor Cyprian: We relieve [the witness] of the oath.

Defense Attorney Umbreit: We relieve [the witness of the oath].

Presiding judge: In agreement with the parties, the Tribunal resolved to hear the witness without an oath.

The witness was called [in connection with] the prosecution's thesis concerning in particular phenol injections and sterilization. [Was] the witness present during these operations?

Witness: Yes.

Presiding judge: Can the witness describe the details?

Witness: I worked in the camp hospital. Initially I was there as a patient. [It could seem that] the hospital was an escape from the heavy camp conditions for the prisoner, but this was just one more link in the chain of prisoner extermination. Systematic selections were carried out not only in the hospital but in the whole camp, and grouped some of the camp's prisoners from the wards. We, the stronger ones, had to move the ill to block 20 and carry them to a room where the needling was done. Usually we were forbidden from entering the *Arztzimmer*, where the needling took place. It was usually done by Klehr. Once, after the sick were brought, we heard shouting and Klehr jumped out of the room and told us to enter. One of our colleagues was lying naked, dead, and a second one was defending himself. Klehr was drunk, he didn't hit the heart with the needle and the patient was defending himself, shouting to get them out. Another SS-man burst in, hit the poor guy with iron and finished him off.

In the evening, we would take out all the corpses and put them in a car that arrived after roll call, and the bodies were taken away to the crematory. 11- and 12-year-old Polish boys were also taken to get needled.

I would like to say a few words about the liquidation of typhoid in the hospital. The camp was plagued with lice, typhoid was spreading and my colleagues were dropping like flies. In most cases the prisoners, who saw what was going on in the hospital, were afraid to go there, they lay sick in the blocks and died there. While thinking on how to organize ourselves, an idea came up that the lice from the patients ill with typhoid could be planted on SS men, and whenever an SS man went, we dropped lice infected with typhoid out of a test-tube. When the typhoid started to spread among the SS men, when one of the German doctors died, when the wife of the camp's executioner Palitzsch died, the commandant issued an order to delouse the camp. Systematic work on delousing began. There were around 2000 people ill with typhoid at the hospital blocks. On the eve of the purge of this section, we learned that the register with all the sick and medical assistants, *Pflegers*, had been moved to the *Schreibstube*. The list was approved by Höß and only a few exceptions, marked with red crosses, were not allowed to be gassed, because they were apparently still needed for testimony or other purposes. A great number of cars arrived the next day, the camp doctors Entress and Klehr came and the evacuation of all those sick with typhoid began. There were many convalescents among them who could work, and they were employed to assist the patients as the staff couldn't handle it. They too were in danger of being executed in the gas chamber. We tried to save these people, but Entress didn't want to agree, saying he had a list approved by the camp's commandant and no changes could be made to it. All the patients walked naked or in one shirt, and clothes could have saved them. Our colleagues from the clothing warehouse sent us about 20 sets of clothes and we used them to dress the sick and led them through the side door. It was more difficult with the people who were unconscious. We tried to put them in the basement or in the attic, where they could make it through the day. When I went to the upper level of block 20, I saw a terrible sight. The rest of the patients were crawling on the ground; some were dying, hanging off their beds. I saw a Warsaw writer among them, Stefan Godlewski. He knew he was going to be released from the camp. When he saw me, he asked for rescue. He had been sent to the camp because some conspiracy activist had run into his apartment while escaping, burst out onto the balcony, jumped out onto a tree and fled. But Godlewski was sent to Auschwitz by the Gestapo.

The family was making efforts, however, and he was to be released. But people who were extremely exhausted, beaten or ill wouldn't be released - they'd be put in quarantine until they got better. Stefan Godlewski fell ill with typhoid. He was moved to the typhoid block. He was emaciated, he couldn't walk, he just crawled, begging to do anything to save him from the gas chamber. I turned to Dr. Entress, a graduate of Poznań University, a man brought up on Polish bread, who was doing quite well in Poland, to ask for help. Entress replied that he had to follow the list and told me to mind my own business.

Czechoslovak minister Dr Bukovský died there. He was put in the gas chamber.

Sterilization. I kept working in the operating room. It was done in the following way. We were notified that 30-40 operations would take place on a given day. People aged 18-25 were selected, brought in, and locked in a separate room. It was closely guarded, blankets were hung in the windows. First, sperm was collected from patients by massaging. At the same time, an assistant from the University of Königsberg proposed resorting to masturbation to shorten the waiting time. After a couple days in the room, [the ill] would go to the operating room. Dr. Entress was always [there], people from Political Department were [there]. These things were carried out in mass numbers, quickly, on two operating tables. Then the ill were moved to a separate room and in the evening, when the general anesthesia stopped working, all Hell broke loose - shouting, crying, cursing at one's own fate, begging to be finished off.

Sterilization of women was carried out, too. Usually Greek females, girls aged 18-22. The places that were to be operated were covered in blisters, because outside our block [the women] were exposed to radiation machines that burned the skin. The sterilization was done in the following way: one woman's abdomen was cut open, another one was being given anesthesia injections, while the third one waited in line. The work was well-organized. The women wept, lamented, cried out their mothers' names. The German doctor who was present during the operations would get nervous about it and slapped the patients while their abdomen was cut open to force them to stop shouting and crying.

The block elder at block 3 was Stössel, a member of an underground organization. He was arrested and thrown into the bunker after somebody informed on him. *Lagerältester* Bock, a criminal, an honorary prisoner - due to walking around without a number - and a pervert, had a great influence over Höß. We started to make efforts to use his connections to have Stössel removed. He promised he would let him go. On the next day, Bock came and said

that Höß had come at night, along with a group of drunken SS officers, and arranged for a transfer of prisoners. They opened the door and told them to come out. [The prisoners] were afraid. One of the SS men said they were cowards. Stössel came out and was shot right at that moment. Whoever managed to hide behind the door, survived.

Now I would like to talk about the time when the camp was bombarded. Not only did my fellow prisoners save our colleagues, but also drew SS men from under the debris. When the prisoners were moved to the operating room, the doctor ordered all of them to be eliminated, and commanded us to rescue the SS men above all, even though there was a field hospital intended specifically for SS just outside Auschwitz camp. But they would be brought to the prison hospital instead, and there were orders to save the SS men first while our own were dying.

Regarding the matter of the letter written by Palitzsch, the camp's main executioner, in the bunker. Palitzsch shot thousands of our people with his own hands. After an execution, he was able to go to an orchestra rehearsal where he asked them to play beautiful music for him which he listened to for hours. But then Palitzsch fell out of favor. After his wife's death, he was removed from the men's camp and went to Birkenau, and there he fell into disgrace and was locked in the bunker for having relationships with Jewish women – he wanted to free one of them and aryanize her. He spent a good few weeks there. [While there], he wrote a letter to one of the underground members, Świerczyna, who showed me the letter and read it. Palitzsch beat his breast, apologized to the Poles and said: "God help me leave this bunker, so that I can pay back Höß, because it was he who forced me to do all these things and often, despite his own rulings, demanded more and more victims." Next, Palitzsch asked prisoners for bread, requested support so that he could survive the stay in the bunker. I'm not sure what happened to him. It seems he was released along with other thieves from the camp and went on to fight against the partisans. It was the first source of satisfaction to us, that the hangman Palitzsch, Höß's right hand, beat his breast, apologized to the Poles and vowed revenge on Höß.

Presiding judge: The witness mentioned the ones who were injected phenol. How was it done?

Witness: There were two chairs, to make it faster; the patients sat with their backs to each other. Using a syringe, size ten or twenty, phenol was drawn and half a syringe went into

one person's heart, and half into the other's. Often, when we were loading corpses in the evening, it turned out some of them were still alive – the needle didn't hit the heart precisely. There was a kind of an iron bar there where they finished off the ones that were alive.

Presiding judge: Was phenol given only to the sick?

Witness: No. They brought boys who were in good health.

Presiding judge: What was the reason?

Witness: Reason unknown. I saw with my own eyes how SDG [*Sanitätsdienstgrade*] Niedźwiecki, a Polish renegade and an SS man, brought in a Polish prisoner from the camp and abused him in his room, which went on for a while. In the silence of the evening after the roll call, a piercing scream echoed through the whole hospital building. Sometime around 10.00 a.m., SDG Niedźwiecki came into the ward, telling somebody to hand him a syringe from the operating room. Nobody was still asleep, but we pretended we were. I was lying in the bed in the middle. He took the blanket off me and told me to get up. I opened the door to the operating room, he took a syringe, the phenol was in a cupboard. He told me to assist him, I saw a prisoner terribly beaten up, massacred. He gave him the injection.

Presiding judge: Would the parties like to ask any questions to the witness?

Prosecutor Cyprian: I have a question. Has the witness ever seen mass phenol injections done to young boys?

Witness: I have. The biggest number was around 40 boys.

Prosecutor Cyprian: What age?

Witness: 12-14 years old.

Prosecutor Cyprian: Does the witness know where they were from?

Witness: Supposedly from the Zamość area. The whole scene was so shocking that the prisoners who assisted, especially the ones who had just started to give injections to young boys, [unlike] those who had had some experience, literally went mad. One of them suffered from some kind of nervous breakdown, he jumped out and then he was lying down for five days, you couldn't approach his bed. I remember that accident.

Prosecutor Cyprian: So there were around 40 boys from Lublin district aged 12-14. They were all together?

Witness: Yes.

Defense Attorney Ostaszewski: I have a question for the witness. The witness has said that Höß carried out a massacre at some point. But the witness didn't directly see this?

Witness: I didn't, but I heard it from accounts of witnesses who were present, witnesses who collected the bodies, and witnesses who escaped the massacre.

Defense Attorney Ostaszewski: Who were the ones who escaped?

Witness: It's hard for me to recall their names.

Defense Attorney Ostaszewski: The witness has mentioned an expiatory letter by Palitzsch sent from the bunker. Couldn't this fact be interpreted the other way round, not as the first expiation, as the witness described it? Maybe it was a need to get help, that could be given only by the organization?

Witness: If somebody turns to God, asks God to help him survive the bunker, and help take revenge on those who had forced him to do these things, it clearly seems to be an expiation.

Defense Attorney Ostaszewski: But the witness stated that according to his knowledge, Palitzsch came out of the camp and was sent to fight the partisans?

Witness: This was the only possible way for him.

Defense Attorney Ostaszewski: So the expiation eventually meant going the same way?

Witness: It's hard to say for me whether he left the camp or escaped it. Nevertheless, he had asked God to leave, and later, when he was in the army, he could desert the unit any time.

Defense Attorney Ostaszewski: Was the witness present when Palitzsch was being given any kind of orders?

Witness: No, I wasn't.

Presiding judge: The witness is released.