



KLARA WDOWIŃSKA

The seventeenth day of trial, 12 December 1947

Presiding Judge: The next witness: Klara Wdowińska.

Witness: Klara Wdowińska, 22 years old, student, Jewish.

Presiding Judge: I advise the witness to speak the truth. Making false declarations is punishable with a prison term of up to five years. Are there any requests regarding the mode of hearing of the witness?

Prosecution: We exempt [the witness from taking the oath].

Defense: We exempt [the witness from taking the oath].

Presiding Judge: The witness will testify without taking the oath. Will the witness please say what she knows about the case, and particularly in relation to the defendants? Can the witness provide any specific facts?

Witness: I stayed in concentration camps from 1943 to 1945. I recognize defendant Orłowski whom I know from Płaszów. She came to the Płaszów camp in 1944. I saw her for the first time at the roll call square, where she was beating everyone around her with a whip. Girls from Majdanek told me that she was one of those who contributed the most to the extermination of people in that camp. From my personal experience, I can describe the following event.

I was in the Płaszów camp with my sick, 70-year-old grandmother. Due to her illness, she was excused from work and lay in bed for the whole day. Orłowski came for an inspection and she saw that shoes had not been placed in neat rows. She pulled the old woman down from the bed, and battered her, saying, "Such an old woman and still in the camp. You should have been taken away with a transport a long time ago". In the evening, we had to take grandma to the hospital, where she was again excused from work for some time, because she could not move, and as a result of the beating she received from [SS woman] Orłowski, she came down with erysipelas.



On 20 October 1944, our transport was taken to Auschwitz. After a selection, we were transported to Birkenau – there, I met Brandl who was a guard. After the bathing, there was another selection (the first one was carried out in Auschwitz). Brandl was making sure that the prisoners did not have two pairs of underwear, and she beat them until they bled. The women were whining.

On 18 January 1945, during the evacuation, we walked almost 50 miles in one day. In the evening, when Orlowski arrived on horseback, we were not able to walk and our legs were swollen. The women who stopped were shot dead or beaten. For some time, Orlowski walked at the back and ruthlessly beat the prisoners. I remember that she battered a certain Hungarian woman who sat down to rest.

I also recognize Mandl, but unfortunately I cannot remember from which camp. I only know that she was known as one of the cruelest German women ever.

Presiding Judge: Was the witness ever hurt by defendants Mandl and Orlowski?

Witness: No, but my grandmother was, and I am speaking in her name.

Presiding Judge: What were the circumstances of her death?

Witness: There was a selection. We had to parade naked in front of a doctor and a few female guards. My grandmother was then selected to death. I saw the fire blazing from the crematorium chimneys when their bodies were being burnt.

Presiding Judge: Does the witness recognize anyone else?

Witness: I recognize defendant Danz from Płaszów. She came with Orlowski and her greatest enjoyment was beating people. She was the right hand of *Lagerführer* [camp leader] Grimm.

Presiding Judge: Thank you. Are there any questions?

Prosecutor Cyprian: I would like to ask the witness how old she was when she came to a camp for the first time.

Witness: It was in 1943, so I was less than 18 years old.

Prosecutor Cyprian: Was the witness alone or with her family?



Witness: I was there with my family. My mother and father are alive, but my grandparents are dead. I lost my uncle in that first, famous selection – he was killed in a gas chamber.

Prosecutor Cyprian: Did the witness stay in Auschwitz until the end?

Witness: I stayed there until 18 January 1945, when the Auschwitz camp was liquidated and we were sent on foot to Loslau – I do not know what its name is in Polish [Wodzisław Śląski]. The journey took us two days. Then, we were loaded onto train cars and transported to Ravensbrück for two days, without bread or a drop of water. There were so many of us in the cars that we could not sit down, but it was impossible to stand for two days, so we would kneel or squat. Of course, there were corpses, and the only way to get rid of them was to throw them out of the car.

Prosecutor Szewczyk: Did the witness have contact with Orlowski only in Płaszów?

Witness: I also met her on a road when we were being evacuated from Auschwitz, and on the way to Ravensbrück, when we were loaded into normal train cars headed to Neustadt-Glewe.

Prosecutor Szewczyk: I am only interested in Płaszów. Did the witness have contact with her for a longer period of time?

Witness: From the end of winter 1944 to the end of that year.

Prosecutor Szewczyk: So for about half a year?

Witness: Yes.

Prosecutor Szewczyk: Was Orlowski known there as a woman capable of killing?

Witness: No.

Prosecutor Szewczyk: And how did her cruelty manifest itself?

Witness: Orlowski really enjoyed beating people. When she got bored with beating with a whip, she got herself a carpet beater and would run around in the camp with that beater like a madwoman, and she would beat prisoners.

Defense Attorney Wolska-Walas: Could the witness please tell us for how long the old lady beaten by Orlowski was sick?



Witness: It is impossible to say how long she was sick, because sick people were released from the hospital as healthy. She spent two weeks there, and then a prisoner who was a doctor advised us to take her out of the hospital, because there were going to be selections.

Defense Attorney Wolska-Walas: I am asking for how long your grandmother was ill and felt sick after that accident?

Witness: After such an accident, everyone would feel sick. She suffered for many months, had headaches and felt pain in her arm. But at that time we could not admit to anyone that we were sick.

Defense Attorney Wolska-Walas: Will the witness please tell me when defendant Danz came to Płaszów with Orlowski? What season was it?

Witness: It was the end of winter / beginning of spring 1944.

Defense Attorney Wolska-Walas: Did they arrive together?

Witness: Yes, they did.

Defense Attorney Wolska-Walas: I have another question. The witness says that she met defendant Brandl or Danz – if I heard correctly – during a transport in 1945.

Witness: Orlowski.

Defense Attorney Wolska-Walas: What day was it?

Witness: It was during the Auschwitz camp evacuation, on the evening of 18 or 19 January.

Defense Attorney Wolska-Walas: Is the witness sure that it was Orlowski?

Witness: I am sure. Anyone would recognize Orlowski.

Presiding Judge: Does the defense have any more questions?

Defense Attorney Wolska-Walas: No, we do not have any questions.

Presiding Judge: The witness is excused.