



FRANCISZEK STRYJ

Twelfth day of trial, 6 December 1947.

President: Please call the next witness, Franciszek Stryj.

(Witness Franciszek Stryj appears.)

President: Please give your personal details.

Witness Franciszek Stryj, 35 years old, white collar worker, Roman Catholic, no relationship to the accused parties.

President: Pursuant to Article 107 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, I advise the witness of the obligation to speak the truth. Making false declarations is punishable by imprisonment of up to five years. Do the parties wish to make any representations concerning the procedure of interviewing the witness?

Prosecutors: No, we don't.

Defense attorneys: No, we don't.

President: Therefore, the witness will testify without an oath. I hereby ask the witness to tell us what you know about the case itself, especially as regards the defendants.

Witness: I recognize the following defendants in the dock: Breitwieser, Gehring, Möckel and Mandl, whom I knew in passing. In regards to the defendant Breitwieser, I met him during work in a warehouse, in which Schindler was the head and Breitwieser his deputy. It was generally known that he spoke Polish, but he never spoke with anyone. It was certain, however, that he roamed about the *kommando* in order to see something and later inform on someone. As a result, Schindler, the head, would summon the prisoner in question and give him a beating. Breitwieser often took part in searches. Since there were many small objects in the warehouse which the prisoners could take, whenever some item was discovered on someone, the prisoner was immediately punished. I cannot say for sure whether the defendant Breitwieser beat prisoners as I saw him only once punch a prisoner when he was angry.



I worked in *Augabeschreibe*, so I kept the books. I have to say that things were managed in such a way as to give the SS men the widest field of action possible so that they could benefit to the greatest degree. We proceeded in such a way that all belongings of the gassed Jews were brought to the warehouse where they were counted in order to determine their number. There were all sorts of things there as far as household appliances are concerned, from furniture to needles, threads, anything. After counting, the number of items was entered into books. It could be inferred that everything was in perfect order. However, one could use these things as one pleased. I was twice summoned to *Verwaltung* [administration], which was headed by Möckel. My task was to copy given inventory balances for the new quarter. I just had to copy the old data, and new entries were made only for goods arriving from outside the camp, that is ready-made products bought outside the camp.

When I wanted to know why this book was incomplete, I was told: "It's none of your business".

There were many things in the warehouse that ended up there purely by chance. These were valuable objects such as watches, bracelets, powder cases. They were not entered into books and any decision as to their fate was at the discretion of the head of the warehouse. I was once summoned to walk Breitwieser, who was leaving, to the station. He ordered me to carry two heavy suitcases up to the posts which we were forbidden to cross. Of course I don't know what was in the suitcases, but at any rate it provided food for thought as regards the fact that both the warehouse rulers and other SS men considerably profited from it. At one point, a major scandal surrounding the camp warehouses broke, and a special commission from Berlin arrived at the camp to investigate it. As a result of interrogations and searches, many SS men were incarcerated in a bunker, and even on the upper story of block 11. The rooms were remodeled especially for the purpose, and the SS men were placed in them for stealing things left by prisoners. Many SS men embroiled in the scandal were then imprisoned. The affair was so big that the authorities ordered that the barracks containing all documents be set on fire, and such was the end to this.

I know only some things about defendant Mandl. I know that we had tens of thousands of blankets, whereas in the camps for prisoners, especially women, people suffered many privations, with nothing to cover themselves with or to put on. Mandl, knowing that we



had clothes and blankets in abundance, didn't do anything to provide prisoners with these goods. Möckel is also – or maybe first and foremost – responsible for that, since as a manager he should have taken some steps so that the blankets would not go to waste lying in the warehouse but to be made use of by the prisoners.

Prosecutor Szewczyk: The witness has mentioned Möckel. Please tell me did the witness see Möckel at the ramp, with the Jewish transports?

Witness: I didn't, because I was forbidden to leave my *kommando*.

Prosecutor Szewczyk: In which *kommando* did the witness work?

Witness: *SS-Unterkunftskommando* [camp storerooms].

Prosecutor Szewczyk: When?

Witness: In the second half of 1943 and at the beginning of 1944.

Prosecutor Szewczyk: When did the witness arrive in Auschwitz?

Witness: In March 1941. At first I worked in other *kommandos*, where the work was harder.

Prosecutor Szewczyk: The witness didn't see Möckel at the ramp. How about *Effektenkammer* [warehouse] or *Entwesungskammer* [disinfection chamber]?

Witness: I didn't have access to these places.

Prosecutor Szewczyk: Does the witness know anything about Möckel's orders on transporting away the property from Jewish transports?

Witness: I don't know whether these orders were given by Möckel, but it is a fact that every single day Jewish belongings were sorted, loaded onto train cars and transported to the Reich.

Prosecutor Szewczyk: Was it one car?

Witness: Several cars per day. Once I saw three loaded cars.

Prosecutor Szewczyk: With clothes and shoes?

Witness: Yes, sorted out and arranged in ensembles.



Prosecutor Szewczyk: Does the witness know what was done with valuables, watches, etc.?

Witness: The prisoners had to hand their valuables over in an envelope. They were then stored by the administration.

Prosecutor Szewczyk: What about those from the ramp, that is, from the Jewish transports?

Witness: I don't know exactly; anyway, they were sorted and sent to the Reich.

Prosecutor Szewczyk: Does the witness know about this from the accounts of others only?

Witness: I talked to people who worked there.

Prosecutor Szewczyk: So the witness derives his knowledge from conversations with others?

Witness: That is correct.

Prosecutor Szewczyk: When did the witness meet Breitwieser?

Witness: In July 1943, when I was assigned to the *Unterkunftskammer* [camp storerooms].

Prosecutor Szewczyk: Did the witness see him during searches?

Witness: That is correct.

Prosecutor Szewczyk: What was his behavior during those?

Witness: The prisoners were put in groups of five, and each group was searched by assigned SS men. Schindler began searches at the front, and Breitwieser in the middle. Whenever he found something on someone, he reported it. Later the prisoner was punished.

Prosecutor Szewczyk: How did Breitwieser treat prisoners? Did he beat them?

Witness: No, he didn't beat them as a rule. I saw him punch some prisoner in the face only once.

Prosecutor Pęchalski: The witness has mentioned Gehring. What can the witness say about him?

Witness: I saw him once, during an action of mass executions, which was held toward the end of summer in 1943. I saw him from the building of the so-called theater, where



I had a friend. I heard a number of shots, and then I saw Gehring exit block 11, stop, notice something on his clothes, probably traces of blood, brush them down and return to the block, which he left for the second time with confident and calm steps. I recall Gehring in yet another situation: it was when Palitzsch was incarcerated in the bunker and then released to walk around freely; Gehring was assigned his adjutant then, his “guardian angel”.

Prosecutor Pęchalski: I don’t mean Gehring’s behavior toward SS men, but his behavior toward prisoners. Did the witness have the possibility to visit block 11?

Witness: I was there twice, but I am unable to say anything about his behavior towards prisoners.

Attorney Czerny: Does the witness state firmly that Breitwieser himself ordered the searches?

Witness: The searches were ordered by the boss.

Attorney Czerny: And Schindler took part in these searches?

Witness: Yes, he did, but the orders must have been given by the boss himself.

Attorney Czerny: Does the witness know of any cases when Breitwieser gave the prisoners soap and towels?

Witness: I know that he had a lot of sympathy and understanding for some prisoners and even spoke Polish with them; one might say that he was on friendly terms with them. So he couldn’t be called a complete degenerate, but as all SS men, he preferred to serve with defenseless prisoners than fight at the front.

Attorney Czerny: Does the witness know that only SS men could change towels, and not prisoners?

Witness: Yes, I do.

Defendant Gehring: Your Honor! I would like to ask the witness a few questions.

President: Please go on.

Defendant Gehring: I would like to ask the witness to tell me where I served in the summer of 1943.



Witness: I know of only one fact that I have already described. I saw the defendant leave block 11 after an execution. It might have been toward the end of July.

Defendant Gehring: I can answer the witness only in one way – it can be proved, as I testified during my interrogation – that I left the Auschwitz concentration camp in the middle or at the end of March 1943 and became a *Rapportführer* in Monowitz. Therefore I couldn't have been in Auschwitz in July 1943.

Witness: Now, having the defendant in plain view, I recall that the other Gehring was way more handsome, and hence I don't recognize the defendant as the man whom I saw leaving block 11. It must have been another Gehring.

Defendant Gehring: But the witness said that it was me.

Witness: Was there, by any chance, another Gehring?

Defendant Gehring: There was another one.

Witness: Then my accusations apply to that other Gehring, as I don't recognize the defendant as the man whom I had in mind.

Defendant Gehring: But you said, looking at me, "I recognize this Gehring".

Witness: I revoke that.

Defendant Gehring: You also said that I was Palitzsch's "guardian angel", that he was in my custody.

Witness: This also applies to that other Gehring whom I knew in Auschwitz.

President: Thank you. The witness may step down.