



## ROMAN TAUL

Seventh day of the proceedings.

**Presiding Judge:** Next witness, please: Roman Taul.

*(Witness Roman Taul approaches the stand.)*

**Presiding Judge:** Please state your personal information.

**Witness:** Roman Taul, 30 years old, merchant, Roman Catholic, no relation to the defendants.

**Presiding Judge:** I advise the witness as per Art. 107 of the Code of Criminal Procedure that he is obliged to speak the truth. False testimony is punishable by incarceration for up to five years. Do the parties offer any motions regarding the manner of questioning?

**Prosecution:** No.

**Defense:** No.

**Presiding Judge:** Therefore the witness will testify without an oath. Please tell us what the witness can testify to in the case itself and as regards the defendants.

**Witness:** I arrived in the Auschwitz camp on 24 June [no year], beaten by the Bytom Gestapo, greeted by heavy machine guns in the block designated for quarantine and by then-*Blockführer* [block leader] Plagge. We were wearing only civilian clothes, even though it was winter. We were chased around in those clothes from 6.00 a.m. until noon and from one o'clock until 6.00 p.m. In those hours we had the so-called sport. The exercises included falling down and getting up, running, crawling, etc. There were never any breaks in the exercises. Plagge did not allow us to stand aside, so the prisoners would take care of their physiological needs while running or squatting. The barrack, where 1,200 people lived, only had space for six people in the toilet. Therefore it was impossible to relieve oneself. After the roll call people cleaned their clothes, but did not have the chance to wash themselves or even their hands before supper. As my body was black with bruises from Gestapo floggings, I asked Plagge to allow me to go to work. I wanted to work so that the "sports" would not kill



me. When a *kommando* was *antreten* [getting ready to leave], I ran with them to the lavatory and automatically became the lavatory cleaner at that first quarantine. Plagge would check on individual workers and, seeing a new one, he asked me what I was doing there. I told him it was he who gave me the job, and he believed me. The older people, who could not take part in the “sports”, were taken to the so-called baths. I saw firsthand how an old priest was brought there. *Lagerälteste* [camp elder] Leo and Plagge poured water on him, but it was not enough. So they had him lie down in a bath and then filled it with water. They abused him until he went completely blue and then put him by the wall. Due to the hot weather of those days, the heads of all the prisoners swelled so badly we could not recognize one another. Plagge then had the pleasure of punching us in the foreheads. I remember the moment when we arrived in the camp after the first quarantine. Plagge came with us.

The 300 or so prisoners in the camp had two wells, one of which was out of order. In the early morning, as soon as the gong sounded, Plagge ran to the block like mad and pushed everyone to wash as quickly as possible. It did not matter if it was freezing, or raining, or muddy. We went to wash ourselves barefoot, wearing just pants, without shirts, to the well. It was physically impossible for all the prisoners to wash themselves. In spite of the greatest haste prisoners would often go to the roll call with no time to drink coffee. Plagge would often come to check if our legs were clean. As I have already noted, it was impossible for each prisoner to wash his legs. Moreover, Plagge would intentionally pick muddy days, so that even if a prisoner managed to get to the well and wash his legs, he would get them dirty again on his way back. Then Plagge would beat him and yell: “You Polish swine, I’ll teach you orderliness!”

I remember how Plagge once approached me and asked where I came from. I told him that I was born in Bytom, that I was a refugee, that I lived in what used to be Silesia. Then I heard from him that I was a traitor and that he took a particular “liking” to me. I remember a moment when he was *Blockführer* of the penal company and took it out for “sports” in the yard of block 11. One of the men in the group was an older man, I later learned he was a professor at the university in Kraków. Plagge kicked him because of his infirmity and ordered him to lie down in the water flowing down from a pipe, threatening that if he as much as moved, he would kill him. It was springtime and water would freeze in the evenings. The man died in the water. I remember another moment. They brought in “Krankemann’s roller”. It was a cylinder of reinforced concrete, some 1.6 meters in diameter, with crosspieces. Some 20 people would fit on either side. The unfortunates were usually priests,



Polish intelligentsia and Jews. Plagge had a particular sentiment for the clergy, so whenever he would go on patrol with Krankemann, he carried a spare stick. If he met a priest, he would flog him without caring where he hit. If a prisoner did not move away in time and the roller came to him, he was crushed.

Plagge liked walking around the blocks when the *kommandos* were at work. He would then search through sleeping arrangements, eating utensils, and whenever he noticed a drop of water behind a mug handle he would file a report. Plagge was a specialist in reporting. The best-case scenario for their consequences was working in the afternoon on a Sunday, otherwise it was the post [hanging a prisoner by the arms from a post] or penal company. Plagge was the terror of the camp.

I remember that when the first runaway, Wiejowski, escaped, they ordered a standing punishment. We would stand at attention, with our hands on our necks, for 18 hours. We were not even allowed to go to the latrine. Plagge would go between the ranks, beat us and kick us. So much for Plagge.

Next I recognize defendant Müller. At first he was not very proficient at his work. I remember him going through the lager with an SS man and telling him he could punch so hard he would make the strongest man fall over. A prisoner was passing by at that moment. Müller called him, punched him in the face, but the prisoner was still upright. This infuriated Müller and he kept hitting him until he fell.

I remember Müller was at an execution in block 11. When the prisoners saw their colleagues going to the execution and bid them farewell, Müller filed reports on them.

When Müller was at the penal company, he was not too different from Plagge. The opinion during his tenure was that most of the unfortunates would not live for more than two or three weeks.

As I have noted, I worked at the *politische Abteilung* [political department], under Max Grabner. When I first arrived at the *politische Abteilung*, his deputy was *Oberscharführer* Giesgen. He asked me if I spoke German, if I could type, and what I was in the camp for. I told him I was the commandant of a boy scout group, that I defended mines against German sabotage. He answered: "Da bist du reif", meaning "We need people like you". At the time I did not know

what that meant. In the *politische Abteilung* I would write down the personal information of new arrivals, retype Lachmann's interrogation protocol several times; in Quakernack's *Standesamt* [registry office] I ran the *Verbrennungsbuch*, that is the book of the burned – I would go with *Oberscharführer* Hofer to check on dead bodies, comparing the death lists with the corpses in the crematorium. I wrote reports for the families, the RSHA [Reich Main Security Office], the Gestapo, the police of the place where a given prisoner had lived.

It was during my time with the *politische Abteilung* that I had the opportunity to listen to chats defendant Grabner had with Quakernack, recounting his experiences. He said he had been in the SS, that he was in the Gestapo and the NSDAP. To get ahead in the party, Grabner needed an *Ahnenpast*. This is a book, a document of ancestry proving racial purity. The defendant recalled that Michalik from Trzebnia wrote that book for him.

A lot of executions in our camp were conducted illegally. Illegal executions were performed on orders from local camp authorities and Grabner approved them every time. He was the master of life and death, he was what the Gestapo was outside of the camp, he had unlimited power. I remember that for every illegal execution, which resulted from things that happened outside, so as to break the spirits of the Poles by sending them news of the deaths of however many people from a given town, the Gestapo would contact Grabner and he would perform the executions. And then it was written in all reports in the registrar that the given prisoner had died of a heart condition, of *akuter Darmkatarrh* [acute gastroenteritis], *pneumonie*, *meningitis* etc. The protocols of execution deaths would come attached with a made up protocol of admission of the prisoner into the hospital ward. The protocol included the number, the name, date of birth, day and hour of admission into the ward, diagnosis and prescribed medication, which were entirely fictitious. Then the cause of death was written into the protocol and added to the file, so that some day they could get a document to prove their humaneness, to stress that they did right by the world and the thousands of people murdered. It was perfidious cynicism on behalf of our local authorities. If there was a regular execution, meaning one following from a sentencing, we filled out a form with a red border, where we entered the court sentence, the cause, and the execution squad, as well as the squad commander, the camp commandant, the camp leader, and the head of the political department. There were few cases of such "legal executions". To cover up their tracks, Grabner's employees, like Kirschner, Dylewski, Lachmann, Hofer came to the conclusion during their chats that sending back watches and clothes of the dead was

the surest way of informing the General Government what Auschwitz truly was. Therefore they stopped sending watches and *efekts*, that is, the clothes of the dead, to the GG. They did send them in cases of *Volks-* or *Reichsdeutsche*s [people of German background or ethnicity]. I remember a case where the family [of a victim] came from Gliwice to see the corpse. The dead man was put in a coffin made expressly for that purpose, he was dressed in a black suit and a collar, shaved, washed. Because he was a man worn out from camp life, a “Muslim”, Quakernack ordered Mietek from Kraków, who worked there, to put paper in his mouth to fill out his cheeks. I went to the crematorium, because it was there that the family was allowed to see the body. The wife looks and is not able to recognize her husband. The crematorium worker says “This is your husband”. The desperate woman screams: “You bandits, what have you done with my husband!” Grabner, who was there, threw the parents out of the block, threatening them by saying the same would happen to them. Quakernack took the wife of the killed man to a toilet and shot her there.

In the early days of the camp, all executions were performed by the execution platoon. Soldiers would ask prisoners what they were constantly being shot for. The prisoners would answer the truth: because they were Poles, because they were intelligentsia, or social and national activists. Soldiers would form all kinds of opinions about that. Grabner’s informers among the soldiers reported this, and thus Grabner, in agreement with Höß, issued an order saying that a prisoner cannot come closer than three meters to an SS man. Should the prisoner get any closer, the SS man was to shoot.

Subsequently, Grabner’s informers in the camp, commanded by Lachmann, reported that Poles would in various ways try to discuss the latest *Wehrmachtsbericht* [army news bulletin], that they walked around in groups, politicizing, creating a threat to the camp. In those cases, Grabner’s intelligence was the reason for mass executions.

There is more, Grabner came up with the idea of an anonymous informer box that was hung in block 15. All it took was for one snitch to write on a piece of paper that someone steals margarine, helps prisoners, writes letters, or is politically opinionated. That was all it took for the prisoner in question to be shot within days.

I witnessed Krankemann pour water on people in the block from a bucket the *Stubendienst* [room attendants] carried for him. It was January, the windows were open. Grabner watched



it all and laughed. When a man from the *Stubendienst* asked Grabner what was the average life expectancy, he answered: "A month, at most".

I remember how Zajączek from Bielsko, member of the underground, was unmasked. He denied everything. But there were some clues and Grabner told him it made no sense for him to keep denying, because they had evidence. Zajączek stubbornly kept saying he was never part of the organization. Then Grabner yelled: "Pick one: life or penal company". Zajączek picked the latter. He was shot in the block.

**Presiding Judge:** Can the witness offer any testimony regarding other defendants?

**Witness:** As for Aumeier, he would extend roll calls on rainy and cold days. One day when Dr. Gehring from the infirmary wanted to save prisoners, sending medication to the sick, Aumeier grabbed me, searched me, then knocked out one of my teeth.

When a larger number of weak people would amass in the infirmary, Aumeier got reports from the *Blockführers*, and then informed the doctor and the political department. What followed was an operation of gathering the sick and sending them to the gas. All business of a destructive nature was arranged by Aumeier and Grabner alike.

Finally I wanted to add a few words regarding defendant Liebehenschel. When the news spread that Höß was leaving Auschwitz, there was some contentment in the camp. Liebehenschel arrives and says that the prisoner is not there to be beaten, but to work. And the camp is not a place of death, but of isolation. This statement of Liebehenschel was passed on to the *Blockführers* and *kapos*. It was fiction, presented due to the defeat at Stalingrad and the need for new tactics inside the camp. Höß could not change the tactics any further and that is why Liebehenschel was appointed the new camp commandant. The block elders came to him to resign their functions, because – or so it was said – they could no longer maintain order if they were not allowed to beat prisoners. Liebehenschel said that it was so only in theory, in practice it was possible to do differently, as one saw fit. He was the same as Höß, he just pretended to be innocent.

**Presiding Judge:** Did the witness hear that conversation personally?

**Witness:** I heard those words from my colleague, who was one of those elders.



**Prosecutor Szewczyk:** The witness said that he issued fictitious admissions to the infirmary for the prisoners that were to be executed.

**Witness:** I testified that it was my function to provide the disease, meaning I input fictitious diseases into the protocol. If a prisoner was shot illegally, that is, based on the decision of internal authorities of the camp, a fictitious ailment was entered into his file.

**Prosecutor Szewczyk:** Were the necessary directions sent to the hospital ward to provide such a document?

**Witness:** Yes, indeed.

**Prosecutor Szewczyk:** When did that happen, was it after the prisoner had already died?

**Witness:** Yes, after the prisoners' deaths, it was performed by prisoners working according to a plan laid out by their superiors.

**Prosecutor Szewczyk:** Was it a list of people to be shot, or just a census of prisoners?

**Witness:** In our understanding it was a list of people to be shot.

**Prosecutor Szewczyk:** Is the witness aware what was the ratio of real reports in the file to the fake ones?

**Witness:** As for executions resulting from incarcerations based on court judgments, the number was no larger than 5,000 people. As for executions performed based on orders issued by camp authorities, I think that if I gave the number as 30,000, it would not be too small.

**Prosecutor Szewczyk:** That means 1 genuine report per 6 fictitious ones. Did the witness only work in the medical block?

**Witness:** Only in the political department, later on in the *Effektenkammer* [prisoner property warehouse]. I never worked in the medical block.

**Prosecutor Brandys:** Based on the testimony regarding false reports of prisoner deaths presented by witness Taul and witness Głowa, who testified on Saturday, I request that the fragment about the death of Marian Gieszczykiewicz be read out from volume 4, page 120.



The witness said that he was shot by Palitzsch and the statement lists a fictitious cause of death. Is the witness aware that Aumeier was in block 11, and did the witness see him?

**Witness:** Aumeier was present for every execution, he would always enter block 11 accompanied by Grabner and a doctor.

**Prosecutor Brandys:** Did the witness see what would happen in block 11?

**Witness:** I didn't see that and I do not know.

**Presiding Judge:** Please read the document from volume 4, page 120.

(Junior judge reads the document:) "Gieszczykiewicz Marian, b. 24 May 1889 in Kraków, residing there at Czarnowiejska Street 32, doctor, arrived in the camp on 11 June 1942. According to notice of death he died on 31 July 1942 at 3.35 p.m. The certificate of death and the statement of cause of death are signed by Entress and dated 1 August 1942.

(Interpreter reads on:) The camp doctor has stated as follows: On 17 June 1942 Gieszczykiewicz was admitted to the hospital due to *diare* [diarrhea] and in spite of intensive care his health did not improve. The statement says that the dysentery became more violent and the state [of the patient] turned cachectic. Despite treatment, he died after prolonged unconsciousness on 31 July 1942. The cause of death was cachexia following gastroenteritis."

**Presiding Judge:** Are there any more questions for the witness?

**Defense Attorney Kossek:** Can the witness state that defendant Liebehenschel punished the block elders for beating prisoners?

**Witness:** I cannot say that. I remember Grabner say to Lachmann to encourage Poles with German last names to sign the *Volksliste*. Lachmann would then blackmail people and demand signatures. I also remember a transport of people being prepared for Heimnitz [Chemnitz?] to be destroyed there. The people from that transport were told they were just being moved to another camp. Meanwhile we who were working in the archive were told constantly to add 50 deaths above the norm. We thus knew those people were being destroyed.





**Presiding Judge:** Are there any more questions for the witness?

**Prosecution:** No.

**Defense:** No.

**Witness:** Therefore I dismiss the witness.