



CLAUDETTE BLOCH

The seventeenth day of trial, 12 December 1947

Presiding Judge: The next witness, Bloch. Will the witness please state her personal data?

Claudette Bloch, 37 years old, PhD in Sciences, researcher at the National Center of Scientific Research [*Centre national de la recherche scientifique*], non-religious, of Jewish descent.

Presiding Judge: I advise the witness to speak the truth, minding the consequences of making false declarations. Do the parties wish to submit any requests regarding the mode of hearing of the witness?

Prosecution and 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 in particular about the individual defendants who are present here?

Witness: I was brought to Auschwitz on 25 June 1942. When we arrived at the train station, we were received by armed men, dogs and women – if we could even call them that, because how could one think those screaming creatures, who were beating us and stealing our private belongings from the moment we arrived, had the right to be called women? As soon as we arrived, we were deprived of all material ties with our previous life. We were stripped naked, shaved and stunned. The Tribunal is already aware of what our life was like there and will understand why I cannot recognize the faces of all those beasts. However, two faces have stuck clearly in my memory: *Aufseherin* [overseer] Drechsel and *Aufseherin* Brandl.

I can still clearly see Brandl walking around with a leather whip in her hand, slamming the whip like a wagon-driver does to encourage his horse. On the first day of my stay in Auschwitz, a friend of mine warned me, running away while Brandl was approaching, "Don't stay here, she is a specialist in beating". Since I did not understand her, I stayed. Brandl came over and hit me in the legs and face. Afterwards, I often saw her beat other female prisoners in a similar fashion.



A few weeks after our arrival, like I explained at the Warsaw trial, I was transferred to Birkenau. As soon as I walked through the camp gate, I met Maria Mandl. A Polish woman transported from Ravensbrück already knew her and she told us, "If Mandl is the *Oberaufseherin* [senior overseer] it means they want this camp to be even worse than Auschwitz". I do not want to talk about the selections which I could observe, but I can confirm that Mandl was always present during all of them.

Mandl's cruel behavior was not only general and impersonal, but it was very often directed at individual prisoners. Mandl spread fear wherever she appeared. I know – and I saw it frequently – that she would stop her car in front of a working prisoner in order to beat her up, and then she would get back in the car and drive away.

In June 1943, since we worked in the laboratory, we were placed in a small camp, where the conditions were better than in Birkenau. There was no way Mandl could come to terms with that. Therefore, she would often carry out inspections, during which she forced us to stand for long hours, and beat every woman who got in her way. One day, she proved to be extremely cruel. It was when she decided that our dining room was not clean enough. While we were all standing at attention in a row, she burst into the room and started beating an elderly Polish woman, who was responsible for cleanliness. I will never forget the sight of that young blonde woman pushing and hitting that old proud lady in the face.

For the last two months of our stay in Rajsko, we were guarded by a blonde *Aufseherin* whose name I have forgotten, but who was often assisted by her friend, Orłowski. Orłowski served in Budy, but she often filled in for her friend. She made us stand at roll calls for long hours, without a break. There were about 400 female prisoners and a series of slaps fell in all directions.

I remember my friend Ksenia. One day, she was trying to warm up her soup on the camp stove. Orłowski threw her bowl out of the window and battered Ksenia. One day I "organized" some knickers, as a result of which I was sentenced to eight days in the bunker, from 21 to 29 May 1943.

At that time, the bunker was under the command of Aumeier. I was placed in an ordinary prison, namely in the dark cell. Every three days, I was given a liter of soup. On other days, they gave us a piece of bread and some dirty drink (herbal). By day, the female prisoners



squeezed in the bunker could talk with those who were inside their cell or in the adjacent cells, through a hole. In this way, we found out that there were three types of cells in the bunker: completely dark, standing, and ordinary. The prisoners sentenced to standing bunker had to stand in a cell so small that they were not able to sit or lie down, and were given only bread and water. Sometimes it lasted for 15 days.

Aumeier himself performed inspections in that prison. I remember his voice – hoarse, piercing through the prison walls, and screaming out orders. Those orders were general portents of executions that were to take place the following day.

My friends from the cell told me that two days before my arrival the prisoners were ordered to go to the bathhouse. While they were walking, they were shot from the back. Blood stains were still visible the following day. At that time, the executions took place by the wall of block 11.

In January 1945, I was transferred to Ravensbrück and from there to Malchow. Danz was our *Aufseherin* there. In our camp, selections were not possible anymore, but the cruelties of Danz could only be compared with the cruelty of Mandl. There was not enough work for everyone, and no food for anyone. We were very weak and our health was deteriorating day by day. We were hoping the sun would give us strength, but staying at the square in the presence of defendant Danz would not end well for anyone. Like her friend Mandl, she beat us with a stick whenever she could. She beat us every day during inspections in our block. Nobody knew what she was looking for in those blocks and why we were beaten. She often beat our block elder, starting with the nose, and ending with the stomach. While we were getting weak from hunger, food – and packages from the Swedish Red Cross in particular – that was intended for us was being brought to the camp in wagons. The prisoners would unload the packages and carry them to a shed where they were stored. However, we were never given that food, and even if we managed to grasp a bit of dried vegetables through a hole in the paper, we were instantly punished with a series of blows ordered by Danz.

Finally, half of the camp was transported to Leipzig. We were locked in a special block for two days and were given absolutely nothing to eat. There were roll calls and inspections. When we were standing in rows, waiting to leave the camp, defendant Danz walked among the rows in order to check if no one had anything with them. I had a blanket, so she hit me with a whip, which left a mark for a few days. It was the last blow I received as a prisoner.



Presiding Judge: Are there any questions for the witness?

Defendant Lächert: Your Honor! I would like to ask the witness a few questions. I believe that in May and June 1944 the witness stayed in Rajsko and was employed in the plant breeding unit commanded by *Sturmbannführer* Dr. Caesar. I would like to ask the witness if I ever took food or other things away from the prisoners during the two months I stayed in Rajsko. When a Polish woman escaped from Rajsko, I was transferred to Budy on disciplinary grounds, and two days afterwards the women's belongings in Rajsko were searched. The *kommando* was taken over by *Aufseherin* Bormann. If a prisoner was in need of a minor procedure, I personally escorted them to Auschwitz to a doctor. That is everything I wanted to say. Can the witness confirm that?

Witness: Indeed, I was in Rajsko in May 1944. I cannot recall any Polish woman escaping from Rajsko. I was never sick in Rajsko and I was never transferred from Auschwitz to Birkenau. I remember the defendant – her behavior towards the prisoners was very inconsistent. There were days when she was unusually tolerant, but the following day she would punish us severely without a clear reason.

Presiding Judge: Is that everything the witness wanted to testify?

Witness: Yes, Your Honor.