



FRANCISZEK KAZIMIERSKI

Twelfth day of the hearing, 6 December 1947

Presiding Judge: Please summon the next witness, Franciszek Kazimierski.

Witness Franciszek Kazimierski, 39 years old, a teacher by profession, religion – Roman Catholic, relationship to the accused – none.

Presiding Judge: I would like to remind the witness of the obligation to speak the truth. The provision of false testimony is punishable by a term of imprisonment of up to five years. Are there any motions as to the procedure according to which the witness is to be interviewed?

Prosecutors: No.

Defense attorneys: No.

Presiding Judge: The witness shall therefore be interviewed without taking an oath. I would request the witness to testify what is known to him in the case. And in particular what specific information can he provide concerning the accused.

Witness: Before I commence, I must apologize to the Esteemed Tribunal that I will not talk as smoothly as I would like, for I am immensely moved whenever I remember what I went through in Auschwitz.

I was sent to Auschwitz in 1941 and there, under the watchful eyes of the *kapos* and SS men – our educators – experienced all the horrors of this camp. We arrived in Auschwitz in the night of 7 January 1941 and were greeted by the cries and shouts of the SS men, who proceeded to beat and kick us; they would even hit us with their rifle butts. We were then forced to run from the wagons to the camp proper. The next day, after donning striped prison garb, I was assigned to block 17, where the *Blockführer* [block commander] was one August. The first question he asked was who of us was an active-duty officer, a priest, or perhaps a teacher. Some of the prisoners, presumably thinking that they will be favored or receive better treatment, naively raised their arms. But the block commander approached each of them in turn and handed out a merciless beating. I remember the surnames of some of those who stepped forward, for example Father Zasada, Major Billik. The beating



technique was excruciatingly painful, for these people were punched repeatedly in the stomach, whereupon they collapsed, writhing in pain. They would have been thrashed unconscious if not for the fact that August was summoned to some other duties. First and foremost, the camp system was geared to exterminating the Polish intelligentsia.

I do not want to recount facts that are already known to the Esteemed Tribunal, and thus I shall limit myself to a description of what I myself witnessed in the camp. When we speak about Auschwitz, I recall a priest who, when I was still a schoolboy, told us about Hell, about the fire and the endless torment. Apart from the crematoria, Auschwitz also had the so-called *kommandos*, which we called the *kommandos* of death. One such detail was the *Bauhofkommando* [construction squad]. Its work consisted in unloading bricks from wagons and placing them in the courtyard. This labor caused a great many people, innocent as lambs, to suffer terrible destruction of their health. They would be beaten by the *kapos*, who in turn were forced to behave this way by the SS men. One of the *kapos* was an acquaintance of mine, Knopf, who was made a *Vorarbeiter* [foreman] because he knew German. The SS men forced them to bash the prisoners with sticks during work. The inmates, exhausted beyond belief, would carry the bricks from the wagons to the courtyard. So terribly were they beaten that a great many of the squad's personnel (which numbered two or three thousand men in all) had to be carried back to the camp. These people died off shortly. The *kapos* made use of their deaths by appropriating the excess bread, which – having satiated their own hunger – they gave to their favorites, while the majority of the camp population suffered acute hunger.

I remember other incidents that occurred during the erection of the camp in Birkenau. One Sunday in November, while a strong rain was falling, some of the prisoners – a few thousand – were assigned to work on the construction of the camp in Birkenau. They did not eat breakfast, for we were usually not given any. 250 grams of bread and one half liter of watery soup – that was all the food that an inmate would receive for the whole day. When they were sent to work on the construction of this camp, they worked there throughout the day. And when they returned, many of my colleagues just staggered along, unable to reach the camp on their own two feet. Shortly thereafter, they were sent to the hospital and died there. Obviously, under these conditions I made every attempt to get out of the camp as quickly as possible, or at least get myself assigned to a different *kommando*, in which I would stand a better chance of survival. In any case, while in the camp I did not expect and indeed never



had any hope of surviving this ordeal. Fritzsich would always say that we had one way of leaving the camp – through the chimney. None of us would ever be allowed to leave through the gate.

I started working in the *Landwirtschaft* [farm], for I know how to work on the land and this was consistent with my avocation; later I managed to get myself posted to the *kommando* which labored in Budy, an estate located five kilometers from Auschwitz. It was created following the eviction of its rightful owners. This estate required strong men – farmers – and thus the Germans took us, Poles, as having the greatest experience of agriculture. When, however, they came to the conclusion that our presence there was becoming dangerous due to [possible contacts with] the civilian population, we were withdrawn and replaced with Yugoslavs. But they were unable to cope with the working conditions, and so were dismissed. Finally we were returned there, together with a group of French, Belgian, Dutch and Polish Jews. The Polish Jews managed, but the French and the Dutch, having no inkling of farmsteads or how to take care of horses, struggled, and were therefore regularly tormented and beaten.

As regards Budy, I recognize a few of the accused present in the courtroom with whom I had direct contact there. Among them is the former *Unterscharführer* Ludwig. One time in 1943 I was harrowing the soil near the road from Brzeszcze to Auschwitz. Ludwig was working nearby with a squad of women. When I failed to harrow a strip of some 10 cm, through which the harrow did not pass, the accused Ludwig hit me across the back with a stick.

Apart from this, I also encountered the two Bülows, who were functionaries in Budy.

Presiding Judge: Please take a good look and see if he is the one.

Witness: Yes, it is him, but there was also another. As regards this Bülow, I am unable to testify that he beat and tormented us prisoners, but he was a zealous SS man and hounded us to work; he did not allow you to stand still even for a second, or grab a moment's rest.

During my stay in Budy, I witnessed a certain event – a shooting. This does not concern the former functionaries present here, but the accused Grabner, who was the head of the political division. Namely, in February 1943 or in 1942, but rather in 1943, a forest squad – a so-called *Waldkommando* – worked with us in Budy. This detail would be sent to the nearby forest to fell trees. They were accompanied by a few functionaries, whose task



was to guard them. I would like to stress that this was in February. When we had returned from work and gone through roll-call, we were summoned and encouraged to report as volunteers for a certain job. No one wanted to step forward, and so the *Kommandoführer* [squad leader] of Budy selected a dozen or so of us and ordered us onto a cart which took us to the forest. Along the way we overheard the functionaries talking between themselves, and they said that a shooting had taken place in the forest. When we reached the forest behind Budy, each of the functionaries took two prisoners and we went searching for the bodies of prisoners from the *Waldkommando*, which were scattered in the forest. Our eyes saw a very sad sight, for these people had had their skulls smashed. Whenever a body was found, it would be dragged back to the cart, and afterwards the whole load would be taken back to the camp. I was interested in determining how the killing had come about. The next day we learned that a squad of women had been working close by, and the functionaries of the *Waldkommando* got a fire going and started playing around with the forewomen from the female squad. Seeing that the functionaries were not on duty, two Gypsies from the *Waldkommando* took their chance and fled. But when the functionaries found out that the two had escaped, they ordered the remaining prisoners – amongst whom there were 18 Jews and a few Russians – to form a line, whereupon each of the Germans aimed his weapon at one or two of the inmates and killed them. Only two men were spared – a German *Vorarbeiter*, and a Polish wagon driver. All the others were shot dead and carted off to Budy, and thereafter transported to the camp crematorium. The next day the then *kapo* of the *Waldkommando* was summoned to the *Politische Abteilung* [political department]; when he returned, he was most pleased and said that he had even got a reward of one hundred marks. The same amount of prize money was to have been received by the SS functionaries who performed the execution, faking the purported escape of their hapless victims.

I read in the newspapers that the accused are trying to exculpate themselves by saying that the whole incident was the fault of their superiors or, alternatively, their subordinates. At this point I would like to stress that there were some good people amongst the SS men, but when under the gaze of their superiors they too would become cruel. Our *Kommandoführer* in Budy, who in his relations with others was not the worst of the lot, once beat a prisoner – a certain Kowalski, the director of an agricultural school – unconscious (the man is now deceased), because the cart that he was driving rolled over. Normally, such an incident would have been passed over, but then – since *Untersturmführer* Thomson was present – this by and large decent man became pitiless and behaved as he did.



I could give numerous other examples when these people turned harsh in the presence of their superiors. That would be all of my testimony.

Presiding Judge: Are there any questions?

Prosecutor: No.

Defense attorney: No.

The accused Ludwig: I would request the Esteemed Tribunal to allow me to ask what work I performed in the women's *kommando*, and where?

Witness: The *kommando* worked in the field, while during the incident that I have just mentioned it was occupied with breaking up clumps of earth in Budy.

The accused Ludwig: I can reply by saying that I myself was never in Budy, I never served there, and had nothing to do with the women's *kommando*.

Witness: I am clear-headed and in command of my senses, and I think that my memory serves me correctly, so I know what I said – I recognize *Unterscharführer* Ludwig as the *Stallmeister* [head groom]. From 1941, he was in charge of a female *kommando* in Budy, but at the time he did not live in Budy, and so – maybe – he misunderstood my statement, as he resided somewhere else, and worked with the women's *kommando* along the Brzeszcze – Auschwitz road.

Presiding Judge: The witness may step down.