



## JAN SZEWCZYK

Eighth day of the proceedings.

**Presiding Judge:** Next witness: Jan Szewczyk.

**Witness:** Jan Szewczyk, 27 years old, student at the Mining Academy; religion: Roman Catholic; no relation to the defendants.

**Presiding Judge:** I remind the witness that per Art. 107 of the Code of Criminal Procedure 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?

**Prosecutors and defense:** We do not require the witness to swear an oath.

**Presiding Judge:** What can the witness testify to regarding the defendants?

**Witness:** In 1940–41 defendant Josten was the commander of the execution platoon. The executions took place in an emptied gravel pit, in front of the kitchen, near the so-called old theater. In 1941, the first transport of Russians was brought to block 11. At the time I was on duty as a *Nachtwächter* [night watchman] at block 21 (the *Revier* [hospital]). I saw a group of Russians taken to block 11 in the night. After 10 minutes, two men came out of block 11: defendant Plagge, wearing a gas mask, and Palitzsch. There were many other officers too, but I could not recognize any of them because *Lagerältester* [camp elder] Bock interrupted my observation. In 1941 I was moved to the *Führerheim* [SS canteen] as a butler for the officers. As regards defendant Kollmer I would note that I was kicked by him, I have no data aside from that.

**Presiding Judge:** Can the witness testify to anything regarding the other defendants?

**Witness:** In 1942, after a search was conducted in block 24, half a cube of margarine I had brought over from the officers' kitchen at the *Führerheim* was discovered in my pallet. For that I was sentenced to five nights in the *Stehezelle* [standing cell]. We were locked in the dark cell at 7.00 p.m. The room was insufficient for the 47 people in it. We sweated



horribly until about twelve o'clock. We were thirsty and slowly blacking out. When the *kapo* standing near the door, who was also being punished, said it was 1.00 a.m., I started to lose consciousness. The next morning I woke up in the room of the block *Schreiber* [clerk], and two hours later went from there to my block. After this incident we were all returned to the camp, but, under orders from *Lagerführer* [camp leader] Aumeier we were locked up for two weeks while the case was being investigated. From what the SS men and the commandant of block 11 were saying I thought we were going to be shot. However, after two weeks we were released and upon that release defendant Aumeier said to us that if we said even a word about it in the camp, we would be shot. He sent me to the *Kiesgrube* [gravel pits], where I did a week, and after a week I was assigned to a penal company, where I did six months. During my time in the penal company, in March of 1942, defendant Gehring took over command of the penal block. One characteristic event stuck in my memory. A transport arrived from Silesia. One prisoner in it was part of the Baptist sect. He was marked in the camp with a lily-colored triangle. The faith of that sect did not allow them to fight or serve in the army. This one was a fanatic, as he would not even take off his cap before an SS man. During the evening roll call, after the command *Mützen ab* [hats off], one prisoner did not take off his cap. It was him. Defendant Gehring approached him and asked why he would not take off his cap. He said he does not remove his cap for bandits. [Gehring] dragged him in front of our column and when further commands of *Mützen auf* [hats on] and *Mützen ab* did not help, and when punching him in the face did not help, he administered half an hour of "sports" with beatings and kicks and simply killed the man that way. He was not dead yet on that day, but the next morning I saw his corpse in the *Waschraum* [washroom] – beaten, kicked, massacred beyond recognition.

I want to mention that the people working at the gassings were periodically liquidated – I worked at Birkenau block 7 at the time. It was a block where the sick stayed for a time before being taken to be gassed. We had eight Jews there. The *Sonderkommando* [special squad] was moved from block 2 and brought to Auschwitz, and the eight men from block 7 were to be taken to the *Leichenhalle* [morgue]. Defendant Plagge went with them, armed with a small-caliber rifle. After bringing them, he told us to go away, so I did not see the shooting itself, but I had to write down their numbers later, which meant they were shot. In 1942, defendant Plagge was with almost every single transport to be gassed coming out of block 7 weekly. I know this well because I received the lists of numbers of those who were to



be gassed, made by the *Schreibstube* [administrative office] and by the political department. They were typhus sufferers and other seriously or incurably sick people. As there were 2,500 people in the block and it was only meant to fit 500, it happened sometimes that defendant Plagge would run into the block and, if he saw too many people there, would shamelessly kick them out and throw them into a car.

In January of 1943, Colonel Karcz worked with us in block 7. Before the war he was the head of the Cavalry Department. He was a very urbane and polite man towards everybody, he helped everyone; he ended up in the penal company after being reported by a camp snoop. His only hope was to get into the *Revier* [hospital]. There were two hospital blocks: 12 and 7. There was no room in 12, and 7 was generally meant for those who were supposed to go to the gas. But sometimes some of those people could be saved. He was called by Aumeier for an interrogation in January of 1943. From what he told us, this regarded his pre-war activities. After two weeks he was called by Aumeier again and never came back. As we later learned from a paramedic at the Auschwitz main camp, he was shot.

I left Auschwitz in 1943, and that would be all.

**Prosecutor Pęchalski:** The witness has mentioned he was kicked by defendant Kollmer.

**Witness:** Defendant Kollmer was a habitual drunk and there were no days or evenings when you could have found him sober. One day I came to his apartment, which was an utter mess, and started cleaning near the lavatory. At that moment, in the morning, Kollmer got up and, on his way to the lavatory, kicked me.

**Prosecutor Pęchalski:** Would other *führers* arrive at the *Führerheim* inebriated as well?

**Witness:** Of course, but not as consistently as Kollmer.

**Prosecutor Brandys:** The witness has mentioned a cell where 46 prisoners had to stand. I would like to hear explained if the prisoners could sit there, was there any airflow?

**Witness:** It was an oubliette, there was a small chimney with a duct 5 square centimeters large. The cell was maybe 8 square meters. There was no way to sit.

**Prosecutor:** The witness has mentioned that more than 20 prisoners died. Can the witness state that with certainty?



**Witness:** In any case I know that there were corpses.

**Defense Attorney:** How long did the witness work as an orderly for Kollmer?

**Witness:** Until February of 1942.

**Defense Attorney:** Aside from this isolated case of kicking, would Kollmer kick the witness in other circumstances as well?

**Witness:** No.

**Defense Attorney:** What was the attitude of defendant Josten towards the witness?

**Witness:** There were no particular abuses or beatings.

**Defendant Josten:** I petition the High Tribunal to ask the witness a question. The witness has stated I conducted an execution, where was it?

**Witness:** I have already said it was in front of the kitchen in 1941 or 1942.

**Defendant Josten:** I agree, it was one of the executions I conducted under orders from the commandant.

**Witness:** Not one, but two.

**Defendant Josten:** The witness had been an orderly in my room before. How did I behave towards you?

**Witness:** I said nothing.

**Defendant Josten:** I know you said nothing and that is why I ask if I were bad towards you?

**Witness:** You could not have been, as we worked well and kept our guard up.

**Defendant Gehring:** Your Honor! Regarding the statements of the witness, I would like to submit the following. What the witness said about the prisoner who did not want to take his hat off is true. The prisoner in question was in the second-to-last row during the roll call. The *Blokälteste* [block elder] pointed out to me that one prisoner had a cap on his head. I ordered him summoned and asked: "Why did you not take off your cap, you can see everyone else



did?" He answered me that he would only take his hat off for Jehova, no-one else. I made it clear to him that he should take off his cap, as it may result in some difficulties for him otherwise. He stood by his decision and repeated what he had said. No-one there ever said the word "bandit". Can the witness tell me who was present for the roll call?

**Witness:** Nobody was there, as it was in the yard of block 11 and no SS men or even officers could enter.

**Defendant Gehring:** I say officer Schwarz had to have been there, as I called for him.

**Witness:** I did not see any officers.

**Defendant Gehring:** Your Honor! I claim officer Schwarz was there.

**Presiding Judge:** Any more statements from the defendant?

**Defendant Gehring:** I have nothing more to say.

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

**Prosecution:** No.

**Defense:** No.

**Presiding Judge:** Therefore the witness is excused.