



## MARIAN PRZĄDA

Eighth day of the proceedings, 2 December 1947

**Presiding Judge:** Please call forth the witness Marian Prządą.

**Witness Marian Prządą, 28 years old, student at the Higher School of Social Sciences; religion: Roman Catholic; no relation to the defendants.**

**Presiding Judge:** I remind the witness of the obligation to speak the truth. False testimony is punishable by incarceration for up to five years. Any motions regarding the manner of questioning the witness?

**Prosecution:** We do not require the witness to swear an oath.

**Defense:** Nor do we.

**Presiding Judge:** Can the witness recognize any of the defendants?

**Witness:** Yes, indeed. Aumeier, Grabner, Muhsfeldt, Josten, Plagge, Brandl, Kirschner.

**Presiding Judge:** What can the witness say about each of them? I mean specific facts from his own experience or his insights.

**Witness:** One of the first people I met in the camp was Plagge. He got to me right away in the first days. On the day we arrived we were given uniforms and a cold bath in a trough. We were in the field between 9.00 a.m. and 6.00 p.m. At 5.00 p.m. a beating bench was set up between blocks 19 and 20. Fritzsich, his deputy Meier, Plagge, Palitzsch, and other *Blockführers* [block leaders] would be on the list of people delivering the beatings. I thought only a few prisoners would be punished for some crimes. But it turned out everyone was called out in turn. Every person in our group of 65 would come to be beaten and get a number of strikes depending on whether or not one could count. If one counted to 20, they would not get hit anymore, if they could not count that far, they were beaten further. I got 30, because I was too exhausted to count after the eighteenth strike.



On the next day the 10-day quarantine of "sport" began. Plagge was particularly cruel. On one day, during the quarantine, Plagge kicked and beat to death a Jew named Fischhab. On the second day – another Jew, whom he ordered to jump from the third floor: he died on the spot. The end result of the quarantine was that of the 65 people in the group only 50-odd were still alive. After the quarantine, as a medicine student, I was employed as a bricklayer building the kitchen. One day we did not notice Plagge walking behind the windows. He caught us red-handed eating potatoes we had received from a friend. He asked us what we preferred: an hour of the post [hanging a prisoner by the hands from a post] or 25 [strikes] each.

Of course I agreed to the flogging, since I knew what the post was. The post would often decide the life or death of a prisoner, and in the end you could suffer through the flogging. [Plagge] had a German *Vorarbeiter* [foreman] bring him a shovel handle and gave us 25 strikes each.

After the kitchen was complete, I was assigned to a *kommando* called *Rollwage*. It was a cart pulled by eight prisoners. We would carry all kinds of things: starting with the bodies of people shot in block 11, through corpses from the *Leichenhalle* [morgue] in the *Krankenbau* [hospital] and bones, to foodstuffs, and other things too. During that time, at executions, I had firsthand encounters with defendants Aumeier and Grabner. I must mention that during each execution I was called and stood at a distance no greater than 20 to 30 meters away from the firing squad, waiting for the corpses. The first one I saw was at the end of September or in early October of 1941 in the *Kiesgrube* [gravel pits]. It just so happened that the *Rollwage* was broken at the time, so we were told to carry away three corpses from the *Revier* [hospital]. In the meantime, when six people from the penal company were brought out of the bunker, one of them fainted and tripped. The doctor said he had died of a heart attack. He was put on the ground and the other five were shot. I was in the last group of four [workers] carrying out those bodies. I saw the moment when I put the man supposedly dead of cardiac arrest into a coffin and then another one next to him. Then that supposedly dead man raised up. At that moment Grabner came along with Fritzsche, who shot that man in the forehead, and since I was mere steps away from the coffin, the brain from the shattered skull stuck to my coat.

I was present for six executions. They took place in the *Kiesgrube* behind the so-called theater building. There was a hole there made for that specific purpose, with a wall behind it to catch the bullets. I know the silhouette of defendant Grabner very well. I saw him at every

execution, his eyes red with blood, a revolver in his hand, shooting the accused which the attendant doctor pointed out to him as being still alive in the temple or the forehead.

When a larger shipment of horses arrived, the camp management decided to disband the *Rollwages* and created the *Rollkommando* [transport detail] to use that manpower for other work. I was assigned to cart number 2 with a special assignment to the crematorium. My tasks included carting the dead, as well as transporting chlorine and gas from Auschwitz to Birkenau. My direct superior was *Unterscharführer* Baumgarten. While in the *Rollkommando*, I had direct contact with defendants Aumeier and Grabner. I remember a moment when I was called to carry a 300-kilogram barrel of chlorine to the Birkenau *Sonderkommando* [special squad]. It was in the spring of 1942, before the crematorium was there. I remember going with the cement and bricks to that *Sonderkommando*. It was a two-room country house, with a shed near it that was later rebuilt into a cloakroom. A gas chamber was to be installed in that house. The windows were bricked up, and doors were replaced with hermetically sealed ones, and openings were made in the side for dumping the gas. On my way there I met Aumeier on his little horse, Grabner, and Schwartz. I moved aside, but since it was during the spring thaw and the road was muddy, the horse [pulling my cart] fell into the ditch and got stuck there. For that I was hit with a whip by defendant Aumeier. When I arrived with that barrel of chlorine, not knowing the layout of the gas chambers in Birkenau, of which there were two, I arrived from the wrong side in such a way that I drove the cart behind a fence where 400 naked women were waiting. The *Blockführer* on duty there, waiting for the gas, yelled at me and threw me out, and he himself took the horse to drive the cart to the front of the chambers. The horse was young, three years old, it put its leg across the shaft and started doing incredible things, so that they could not handle it, so I, as the coachman, was called back, and I could see the faces of those 400 women waiting there to be gassed.

Furthermore, I recognize defendant Szczurek. When I was in the penal company and worked in *Deckenbaukommando* [roof construction], there was an accident in the women's lager, one which really stuck in my memory because it happened to a close relative of mine. It was a rainy October day, while women were being selected. A group of them, dragged out of the block, stood in front of the block for a moment and, taking advantage of the *Blockführer's* inattention, scattered. Defendant Szczurek ran after one of those unfortunate young women, and because the ground was slippery, he fell. Perhaps it was that that drove him into a fury, as he abused that young woman incredibly.

In late May or early June of 1942 – I cannot specify the day exactly – when I was in the penal company, prisoners with red spots were brought from the Auschwitz parent camp. Those prisoners were well aware of the fate meant for them and decided to risk it all: either we make a mass escape or they are going to shoot us all. They decided to go for the former. Working at the *Königsgrabe* ["Royal Ditch"], when the *kapo* would give the signal and the whistle would blow to mark the end of the working day, they were all to start running away. Unexpectedly, rain ruined their plans. It started to rain an hour before the end of the working day. The *kapo* blew the whistle for everyone to take shelter. The colleagues thought it was the signal to start the escape and the first ones, who were at the top, started to flee, not waiting for those below them. This caused confusion and the escape plan failed. As a consequence, the entire penal company was herded into the yard. Defendants Aumeier, Grabner, and Palitzsch arrived as well. We were sitting in *Kniebeugen* [squatting], and they picked out people not according to a special list, but on the spot, and the strongest ones as well. Some 20 prisoners were shot. After the execution we were given three pots of food that no-one touched because we were under so much mental stress nobody could eat, as everyone was aware that they might meet the same fate at any moment.

As for defendants Muhsfeldt and Kirschner, I remember them because after leaving the penal company I was employed at the SS canteen in Birkenau, since I spoke German well. Defendant Muhsfeldt would come there often alongside Georg Wosnitzka from Katowice and they would have vodka. They received a *Sonderzuteilung* [special rations] of 20 cigarettes and half a liter of vodka. I knew of every gassing that took place, as when I was walking past them, pretending I was not paying attention, I would eavesdrop on their conversations. At the time I talked with my bosses, Günther Kruszyński from Poznań and another man from Rybnik; they spoke Polish well, so I could speak with them honestly. For that reason I can give an exact number of those dead or gassed in December of 1942 – around 23,000 people.

Going back to defendant Aumeier.

**Presiding Judge:** Specific facts, please.

**Witness:** I would like to speak about the selections.

**Presiding Judge:** That matter has already been explained. Does the witness know anything else about defendant Brandl?



**Witness:** When I was in Birkenau, I was employed as a bricklayer and often saw her beat up female prisoners. This disheartened me, how a woman can abuse a woman – nobody was surprised by how the SS men abused us.

**Presiding Judge:** What did the defendant beat the prisoners with and where?

**Witness:** With a whip, usually to the head and the face.

**Prosecutor Pęchalski:** The witness mentioned Josten and Müller.

**Witness:** As for defendant Josten, he was the commander of the firing squad. I saw him from 20–30 meters away. I witnessed six such executions. As for defendant Müller, he was a *Blockführer* and one time, when my friend and I were passing by him, the friend did not notice Müller and bow his head before him. Müller hit him several times so that he fell down, then kicked him.

**Prosecutor:** The witness has mentioned carting gas around.

**Witness:** I took Zyklon[-B] to the Birkenau delousing room and to the SK [*Strafkompanie*, penal company], as the crematorium in Birkenau was not operational at the time.

**Prosecutor:** Where did the witness get the gas from?

**Witness:** From the main crematorium in Auschwitz.

**Prosecutor Brandys:** Is the witness aware that defendant Plagge shot two prisoners in the ear while running "sports"?

**Witness:** Defendant Plagge was very zealous. Whenever Mayer arrived, he would shoot next to the prisoners' ears and show off in that way.

**Prosecutor:** Is the witness aware of selections conducted by Plagge in block 7?

**Witness:** Defendant Plagge took part in the selections and shoved prisoners into the gas chambers.

**Prosecutor:** Does the witness know anything about Schröder?

**Witness:** I cannot recall him.



**Prosecutor:** The witness has testified during the investigation that [he] was a *Blockführer* in Birkenau.

**Witness:** Please show him to me.

(Schröder rises.)

**Witness:** I saw him at the gates, searching the prisoners' pockets. If a prisoner had any silly little thing, it was grounds for a beating.

**Prosecutor:** Defendant Schröder claimed he was not a *Blockführer*.

**Witness:** I insist he was a *Blockführer*.

**Presiding Judge:** Are there any questions?

**Defense Attorney Kruk:** The witness has testified that defendant Josten took part in the executions. When was that?

**Witness:** 1941, September, October, November. Until March of 1942.

**Defense Attorney:** Many times?

**Witness:** Three or four times.

**Presiding Judge:** The witness is excused.