

Transcript of the *Shoah* Interviews near Chelmno at Grabow
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CLAUDE LANZMANN – THE HOLOCAUST - shoot in Poland: CHELMNO

Bobine Image

Bobine Sound

Bobine No. 98

CHE 1, CHE 2, CH 3

Images with the Grabow mill, without interview.

Bobine No. 80

CH 1, CHE 2, CHE 3

CHE 4

L. -Barbara asks the man if he is from Grabow.

Cut, camera, action:

CHE 5 C.F.

Note that L. signifies Lanzmann's interjections.

M.B. Polish interviewee's words translated by Barbara.

B. signifies Barbara's personal interjections.

CHE 4

CHE 5 C.F.

M.B. -No.

L. -Where is he from?

M.B. -From Tobela (?, ?).

L. -Is that far from here?

M.B. -Response inaudible.

L. -Explain to him that we are making a film on World War II.

M.B. -Oh, oh!

L. -Was he there during the war?

M.B. -Yes, he was there.

L. -Tell him that we will continue when he comes back.

Cut scene. (Che 5).

Action!

L. -Ask him to whom this mill belongs: is this a mill here?

M.B. -It belongs to the State.

L. -The State...and before the war, it existed?

M.B. -Yes, it was here.

L. -To whom did it belong?

M.B. -His name was Le...Ledjorne (??), the owner.

L. -Ledjorne... what has become of him?

M.B. -He is dead.

L. -He is dead... ask them if they know what Chelmno is.

M.B. -Yes, of course, they know.

L. -What is it...what is it? They say...they say that they know!

M.B. -Ah, yes...during the war it was in Germany, so he wasn't there.

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L. -Oh, he wasn't there?

B. -Yes.

- L. -And him, there?
 M.B. -This man is familiar with the camp of Chelmno, but of course, we could not go in. But when you passed by, you saw how they were transporting the Jews.
 L. -Ask him if there were Jews in Grabow.
 M.B. -Well, you can say that the Jews of Grabow were transported to the Chelmno camp.
 L. -Must reload!

Bobine No. 99

Bobine No. 81

-a silent image

CHE 6

- L. -Barbara, ask the gentleman if there were...if there were many Jews in Grabow.
 M.B. -There truly were many.
 L. -Truly many... it was...it was the majority of the population.
 M.B. -Yes, certainly, it was the majority.
 L. -So, how did that happen for them? Does he remember?
 M.B. -Yes: they were transported in carts...uh...by...by horse.
 L. -The same...the same as these ones here?
 M.B. -Now...these carts have tires and the other ones had...uh...parts...wheels made of...
 L. -Of wood.
 M.B. -No, not of wood, of metal.
 L. -But it was the same type of cart?
 M.B. -Yes, yes.
 L. -And so, they were transported where?
 M.B. -To Chelmno.
 L. -And he remembers the day...that is...it was early in the morning, or at night? How did that happen?
 M.B. -No, it was daytime.
 L. -The daytime?
 M.B. -Yes.
 L. -And there was a ghetto in Grabow?
 M.B. -Yes, there was one.
 L. -And it was where, the Grabow ghetto?
 M.B. -On that side.
 L. -Yes...
 M.B. -So...in each village...or little town, there were two or three roads, which were... uh...blocked and the Jews were overseen, they couldn't leave that neighborhood.
- 3-
- L. -And did they, the Poles, know that the Jews were going to be killed at Chelmno?
 M.B. -Yes, they knew it... but the Jews themselves knew it, too.
 L. -The Jews knew it too... and did they try to...try to do something to oppose it, the Jews, to revolt, to escape, to...?

M.B. -(some words covered-up)... the youths were trying to save themselves, but shortly thereafter the Germans found them, and one can say that they were still killed with more...

L. -brutality.

M.B. -Brutality, yes. And...

L. -And so...the elderly, the women and children, all of them, they all got into the carts?

M.B. -Yes...yes, first they were...uh...held in the Polish church, here, in Grabow, and then they were transported to Chelmno.

L. -Oh! They were held in the church, here, yes...is the priest at that time...is he still alive?

M.B. -No, he is dead.

L. -And why were they held in the church?

M.B. -Simply because the store was at the church.

L. -Ah, yes!

M.B. -Yes, after the extermination of the Jews, moreover during the occupation, they made a store there, in all of the churches.

L. -In churches, or in synagogues?

M.B. -No, they were churches.

L. -At church...

M.B. -It was the Polish church.

L. -It is the same church as today?

M.B. -Yes, it's the same.
Yes, so here, there was a wheat store, because in the other churches, in Dombie (??) and for example in...they made the deposit for clothes left by...by the Jews...The Jews, they were burned, naked.

L. -Oh! They were...they were...they were burned naked, is it?

M.B. -Yes...yes.

L. -And does he remember the Rabbi, here?

M.B. -Yes, there was one.

L. -Yes...does he remember his name?

M.B. -No.

L. -And did this mill belong to a Jew?

M.B. -Well during the... the war, this mill was owned by a German woman, but who was married to a Pole.

L. -Oh, okay...

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M.B. -Yes, before the war, it was owned by Germans.

L. -And what did they do as occupations, the Jews, here, in Grabow?

M.B. -Most often, they worked in...in...

L. -sales.

M.B. -leather-goods... I think that's it...they had, uh...

L. -What? They made boots? Bags?

M.B. -No, no, no, no, no...it's when you have a... a hide...uh...of an animal...and then, I don't know what they do for...uh...

L. -It's a tanner! ...they tanned.

M.B. -There we go, yes, that's it...they were normally tanners.

L. -Okay...but they were all tanners? In the end, that's pretty astonishing, isn't it?

M.B. -There were also some tailors, some shopkeepers, too ...but normally they were tanners.

L. -Were there some very religious Jews, with beards, with...

M.B. -Yes, there were beards and then some...some things...some...

L. -Yes.

M.B. -They were not attractive in any way.

L. -They weren't attractive? Yes?

M.B. -Yes, and worse, they stunk.

L. -They smelled?

M.B. -Yes.

L. -Why did they smell?

M.B. -Yes, because...it was of...of tanners, so that makes the skin smell, you see?

L. -Oh! It's that! ...And were they happy there weren't more Jews here, or sad?

M.B. -Well that, that didn't worry them, not in any way, but as you know, all the industry in Poland before the war was in the h...between the hands of the Jews and the Germans.

L. -Oh, yes! So, it is better that there weren't more of them?

M.B. -That's difficult to say, one can't say that.

L. -Yes...

M.B. -So...if they had left for Israel alone, of their own accord, maybe they would have been happy...but since they were killed, it is very unpleasant.

L. -Yes, of course...but were they found to be nice altogether, or not really?

M.B. -He says that for the Poles, they weren't very...uh...

L. -not very nice

M.B. -...very, very nice, and above all they were dishonest, he says.

L. -They were dishonest, yes...But life was more cheerful in Grabow, when there were Jews, than now?

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M.B. -We can't speak of it.

L. -He doesn't know...Why did he say that they were dishonest?

M.B. -Yes...they exploited the Poles. That's what they lived on.

L. -How did they exploit them?

M.B. -They imposed their prices.

L. -They imposed their prices...

B. -Yes.

L. -Yes, but what does he think of the fact that they were...that they were gassed in the trucks?

M.B. -There, he says that he is not at all happy about that.

L. -He is not happy about it.

B. -Yes.

L. -Does that smell, did he smell the odor up to here? This is rough to hear.

L. -Alright, it's bad... okay let's cut, cut.

Bobine No. 100

Cross sections, near the mill in Grabow: men, faces, hair, carts.

Bobine No. 101

CHE 7 CF

Drunkard who is smoking among some Poles.

-Silent images of Polish spectators' faces.

Bobine No. 82

CHE 7

CHE 8

Interview of an old woman in front of her house.

L. -Barbara, ask the woman...if she remembers the Jews from Grabow?

Ma.B. -Yes, there were.

L. -Were there many?

Ma.B. -Yes, there were many Jews who lived here.

L. -Wait, there's a bit of noise here, we can't speak...there's noise, there's a tractor passing...one second...tell the woman to come here, too.

[Mr.... Mrs...] (laughter).

Were there some who lived around...around these houses?

Ma.B. -Yes, there were.

L. -Were there any in this house?

Ma.B. -No;

L. -No, there weren't any...but she knew a lot of them?

Ma.B. -Yes, she knew many.

L. -And what does she think of what happened to them?

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Ma.B. -She doesn't know.

L. -She doesn't know what happened to them?

The drunkard is coming...

L. -Wait, wait...Let me speak a little, old boy, please! Get up! But at the end, I want to speak to this woman at the end...what can I do?

And look, you're scaring him now.

What is he saying to me...what is he saying to me?

B. -He's speaking French to you...so I don't understand the French that he is speaking.

L. -Go! Ma'am! Hold on, I'm going to call the woman.

Sir and Ma'am! Barbara, ask the woman and the man to come here.

Wait, I'm going to look for him...come over there with me...come...

Ask the man if he is from Grabow...

Give us peace, my friend! Set yourself right there...come, set yourself there... come!

The drunken Pole: Who are you? Both...thanks...(laughs).

L. -Ask the man if he is from Grabow... Tell me, was he born there? Tell me, ask him!

M.B. -He wasn't born...here.

L. -Alright...so, was he living in Grabow during the war?
M.B. -Even during the war, he lived here...for more than 45 years!
L. -And does he remember the Jews from Grabow?
M.B. -Yes
L. -Were there many of them?
M.B. -Maybe three or four thousand.
L. -How many are living in Grabow, how many were there living in Grabow?
M.B. -There were more Jews in any case than there were Poles.
L. -Than Poles...the majority of...the majority of the inhabitants of Grabow were Jews.
M.B. -Yes, yes.
L. -And what did they do as occupations, the Jews?
M.B. -Some were tanners, some merchants...some tailors...yes, they also conducted business: they sold eggs, chicken, butter.
L. -And does he remember the deportation of the Jews from Grabow?
M.B. -Well, at that time then, he worked at the mill.
L. -Yes; in front?
M.B. -Yes, in front...and they saw everything.
L. -So, what did he see? Can he recount what he saw?
M.B. -One saw how they are trans...were transported to Chelmno.
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L. -So, how were they transported?
M.B. -So, they were put in trucks, packed like herring...
First, they would take the elderly, then the youth...and aft...and at the end, the children, from 13 years old maybe?
L. -And what did the man think of that? Was it a saddening sight?
M.B. -Yes, it was. It was very sad to watch.... You wouldn't know how to see it with a cheerful eye!
L. -Yes.
M.B. -Yes, he knew full well what they were waiting for...but I didn't understand if it is he who knew, or them.
L. -But did they know what...what awaited the Jews?
B. -Them, did they know?
L. -Yes, whether they knew.
M.B. -Yes, of course they knew it...because it's...because it was stated clearly that they were headed toward Chelmno, that they were being transported.
L. -And they knew how they were being killed in Chelmno?
M.B. -That he doesn't know; there, he heard tell that they were being killed by electric shock.
L. -Electric shock!
B. -Yes.
L. -But nevertheless here...Grabow, it's about...20 kilometers from Chelmno, right? This event should be a very well known historical account! He still doesn't know to this day how they were killed?
M.B. -No, no.
L. -And why? Wasn't he curious to know that?

M.B. -Then, you couldn't interest yourself in that.
 L. -Why?
 M.B. -Because the...the guards didn't allow it.
 L. -Yes, but basically everyone knew that the Jews were being killed, in trucks by gas! That they were being gassed in trucks in Chelmno! Did he not know that?
 M.B. -Yes; he says that they weren't being killed in...in trucks, that they were killed on sight...they.. uh ...were lead into bathrooms, then were being killed .. only afterward, were the bodies being transported.
 L. -In the bathrooms! And also, it mixes all! And nevertheless it's so close! Does... does he miss the Jews?
 M.B. -Yes, he misses them, because there were some very beautiful Jewish women, so when we...were young, it was...it was good.
 L. -There were beautiful women?
 M.B. -Yes, there were some... some really, really good women.
 L. -And they were more beautiful than the Polish women?
 M.B. -Maybe yes, maybe no, that depends.

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L. -That's the only reason for which he misses them?
 M.B. -One misses each man! It wasn't a pleasure, was it?
 L. -It wasn't a pleasure...
 M.B. -Because... why? Why?
 L. -Oh! He's asking why! Wait, wait...

CHE 10

CH 10

Interview with old peasants in front of the house.

L. -Barbara, ask the gentlemen: "was there a ghetto in Grabow?"
 M.B. -No.
 L. -And him, what did he say? Was there one or not?
 M.B. -No.
 L. -There was no ghetto in Grabow?
 M.B. -They would have meetings of Jews -they say -all simply, both of them. And in Chelmno, they were burning Poles and Jews, and there by Dombie (??)... It was Chelmno... in the forest...And there, there's a monument now.
 L. -Yes, yes, that we know! And does he remember the deportation of the Jew from Grabow?
 M.B. -Yes...yes, sir, he says...yes.
 L. -Can he describe that... how that happened?
 M.B. -So the Jews and the Poles, they were locked in the Catholic church in Grabow, and then transported to Chelmno.
 L. -But wait... I don't understand... (A car passes and masks the sound.) Cut!
 Silent take on the second peasant's face.
 Interview with this peasant.

CHE 11

CHE 11

L. -I understand... he took it off, I understand that he had taken off his coat. So, tell me...

B. -Yes, okay?

L. -Ask him, the Jews from Grabow, were they rich or poor?

M.B. -That depends...
Uh... theoretically... there were more rich than poor.

L. -More rich than poor.

M.B. -Yes.

L. -And did they have good relationships with them?

M.B. -Here, in Grabow, yes, they were good...

L. -Here they were good...

M.B. -Even very good.
...They were completely welcomed, so no one did them

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harm.

L. -There were many religious Jews? Ask him.

M.B. -Yes, there were many. There were very few...very few among the youth, but among the elderly, there were many.

L. -Does he remember the Rabbi here?

M.B. -Yes, there was a Rabbi here. He doesn't remember his name.

L. -And the Rabbi, what has become of him?

M.B. -Well... first of all, he was deported the ... the first.

L. -Oh, the rabbi!

M.B. -The rabbi was the first, yes, and next when they came back to look for the other Jews, it seemed as though they took...they took him once again, and that they locked all the Jews in the church.

L. -Yes... here, in the church?

M.B. -Yes... afterwards they... they were transported to the church further away...

L. -But wasn't it too tight for them to lock the Jews in the churches?

M.B. -Yes, so the Poles said that it would be better to put them in the synagogue.

L. -Yes, they weren't happy that they were being put in churches!

M.B. -Of course they weren't happy, because they knew that today, today it would be the tower of the Poles, tomorrow, it will be our tower!

L. -Oh, yes, for sure!

M.B. -There was... there was nothing to be happy about; we were watching it all, we were seeing it, and we couldn't do anything.

L. -But tell me... how did Grabow look, after the departure of the Jews, since they were the majority of the population, it must have been a dead town, completely empty!

M.B. -Of...of course, uh! Yes, that is to say, afterwards... uh, the gentleman says that they were transported to the protectorate, that is to say, the region of Lublin... there were Ukrainians, there were [Bessarabiens], there were...

L. -Oh! They died here, they weren't transported to Lublin! Okay, it doesn't matter, it doesn't matter... Hold on, ask the gentleman there! You, Sir, come here!

B. -With the glasses?

- L. -Yes, the gentleman with an intellectual air and who is very young. Ask him, was he born in Grabow?
- M.B. -Yes.
- L. -Yes... and so, how old is he?
- M.B. -26.
- L. -26... What does he do occupationally?
- M.B. -He is a craftsman.

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- L. -Craftsman...that is to say?
- M.B. -He is a painter.
- L. -Did he...he never knew Jews, did he?
- M.B. -No, no... he was born ... after the war.
- L. -And he heard discussion about Jews, by his parents, for example.
Cut!

Bobine No. 103

CHE 12, 13, 14, 15

Shot of the statue of the virgin, in Grabow.

Bobine No. 84

CH 12, 13, 14, 15

CH 16

- Old woman on her doorstep.
-Silent shot of old women at the window of a house.

Bobine No. 85

Grabow atmosphere.

Bobine No. 104

CH 17: Silent shots, roads and sidewalks in Grabow.

CH 18: Silent shots, Grabow house; in front a woman and child.

CHE 19

Interview of the woman.

F.B. will note the translation or interpretation of this woman's speech by Barbara.

- L. -Barbara, tell the lady that she lives in a very beautiful house! Ask her if she likes her house.
- F.B. -Yes, but these children live in much better houses.
- L. -In modern houses!
- F.B. -Uh, they have all completed higher education.
- L. -Oh, wonderful! That's great! That's progress, that is!
- F.B. -Yes, it's her children who are the most educated in all the village.
- L. -Bravo, Ma'am! That's great! Long live education! But tell me, this house is very, very old, right?
- F.B. -Yes, it's a house where Jews lived before.
- L. -Ah! Jews lived here before... yes... Did they know them?
- F.B. -Yes.
- L. -Yes?
- F.B. -Them, they were expelled, and they lived in the region of Krakow, for 5 years.
- L. -Yes, and where are they now?

CHE 19

F.B. -Who?
L. -Those Jews?
F.B. -They were deported to Chelmno.
... Yes, but the lady was not born here, she was... she was born in Kodawa (??)

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about 30 kilometers from here.
L. -Yes, yes; they were deported to Chelmno about 20 kilometers from here and they were gassed there.
And the lady, she has lived here since when?
F.B. -Since the end of the war, for about 28-30 years.
L. -28 years! The Jews from here were deported when? They were killed in Chelmno when? It was in 1942, right?
F.B. -A little later. But they were somewhere else, so... uh... she was about 24 or 25.
L. -And ask her... all the houses of the place were Jewish, right?
F.B. -With regards to the wooden houses?
B. -Yes.
L. -The wooden houses... it was a true little Stettel Grabow! Does she know the word Stettel?
F.B. -No.
L. -She doesn't know it! ...How old is the lady?
F.B. -62.
L. -62... and she was here during the time that the Jews were being deported?
F.B. -No, she was in the region of Krakow, like she said.
L. -Oh, it's the lady who was in the Krakow region!
B. -Yes, yes, that's what she's repeating right now.
L. -So... she... she didn't see it?
F.B. -No; she says she was 27 years old when it happened.
L. -And she would prefer to live in another house?
F.B. -She is used to it.
L. -She is used to it... and she said a little while ago that she knew the Jews who lived in this house?
F.B. -Not very well... she knew them, but not very well.
L. -But how could she have known them, if she wasn't there... that's what I don't understand very well!
F.B. -Uh... no, before the war, she heard them spoken of.
L. -What were their names?
F.B. -No, she doesn't know.
L. -And what did they do occupationally?
Another gentleman intervenes:
M.B. -Penkel, they were called.
L. -Ah! And what did they do occupationally?
M.B. -They had a butcher shop.
L. -They had a butcher shop... Why is that woman laughing?

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F.B. & M.B. -No, it was a butcher... he says... She is laughing because he told her it was a butcher shop where one could buy... uh... at really low prices... he says: no, no, no, it was a really good butcher shop; they sold beef.

L. -Beef?

B. -Yes.

L. -And does she know how they were killed in Chelmno?

F.B. -No.

L. -She doesn't know?

F.B. -She wasn't...

L. -Yes... but, she heard it spoken of, or not?

F.B. -Okay, she thanks you for this information.

Okay, cut!

Bobine No. 105

CH 21

Interview of a couple on a doorstep in Grabow.

Bobine No. 86

CHE 21

We will note H.B. when Barbara translates or interprets the man's responses. We will note F.B. when Barbara translates or interprets the woman's responses.

L. -Okay, tell the gentleman and the lady that they live in a very beautiful house.
(Laughs.)

L. -Do they agree with that, do they find it beautiful, this house?

F.B. -Yes, yes.

L. -Tell me... what is the decoration of the doors of this house? What does it mean?

H.B. -Before, they made sculptures like that.

L. -They are the ones who decorated it like that?

F.B. -No, no, no, that's still from the Jews.

L. -They were from the Jews...

H.B. -This door, it's at least 100 years old.

L. -It's at least 100 years old... Was this a Jewish house?

F.B. -Yes, in all the houses there...

L. -All the houses in the square were Jewish houses?

H.B. -Yes, all the houses in front, in this square, were inhabited by Jews.

L. -Yes; and the Poles lived where?

F.B. -In the waterways, there, where there were restrooms.

L. -Ah! Behind, there where there were restrooms.

F.B. -And here, before there was a store, a boutique...

L. -What of?

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F.B. -There were groceries.

L. -Owned by Jews?

B. -Yes.

L. -And so, if I understand correctly, the Jews lived in front of the building facades, and the Poles lived on the block with the restrooms.

F.B. -Yes...

L. -And tell me... both of them, they've been living there since when?

B. -15 years, for 15 years they've been there.

L. -And before that, they lived where?

H.B. -They lived precisely one block from the other side of the square.

L. -They became rich then... right?

F.B. -Yes.

L. -And how did they become rich?

H.B. -They worked.

F.B. -Well, beforehand, the family who lived with them were named Woyteski; but I think that it was after the war...

L. -And the Woyteskis, when did they move-in to this house?

H.B. -They began living here close to a year after the war.

L. -But they were from Grabow, both of them?

F.B. -Yes.

L. -How old are they? The gentleman is how old?

B. -70.

L. -70! He seems so young and healthy (laughs). Tell me, do they remember the Jews from Grabow?

F.B. -Yes. When they were deported, too.

L. -They remember the deportation of the Jews from Grabow?

H.B. -The gentleman says that he speaks Jewish well.

L. -He speaks Jewish?

H.B. -Yes.

L. -Well, tell him to speak a little bit of Jewish to this fellow!

H.B. -He says that when he was little, he associated with them too, he played with the Jews, and so he spoke Jewish!

B. -What sentence, what do you want, for what...?

L. -I don't know... that he say I'm nice, for example; ...

L. -It doesn't matter... ask him another question! Does he know what a Stettel is?

H.B. -There, it's a translation... no.

L. -He doesn't know what a Stettel is...? Well he doesn't speak Jewish very well.

H.B. -He says that it's not a Jewish word of any kind;

L. -Ha, ha! And can he recount the deportation of the Jews from Grabow?

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H.B. -Yes, the gentleman saw that... So here it is: the gentleman, at the time was buying eggs and poultry for the Germans; therefore he had clearance and could circulate more freely than the others, so he could see everything.

L. -Auschwitz...

H.B. -Yes.

L. -And then?

H.B. -Well, first of all they were assembling there where the restaurant is now or possibly in this square, and they were being transported in exchange for gold. So there, there was an elder among the Jews who was putting together... was collecting this gold, and then when there was more gold, when the Jews had more

gold, well this elder was giving this gold to the police; when there was more gold, they were put in the Catholic church.

L. -But how? They were assembled in the square there?

H.B. -Yes. And there, too, where there is now a restaurant. At... at the end, they were being put in the church.

L. -And then? Was there a large amount of gold? Was there a lot?

H.B. -Yes, the Jews had gold, they also have really beautiful chandeliers.

L. -Yes.

H.B. -Well, see... here, there almost no rich Jews, because... they... firstly... they... they came here from all the small towns, from the villages of the region?

L. -That is to say, they formed a ghetto here in Grabow?

H.B. -No, there wasn't a ghetto. Well, see... when the Jews would come here, they had to be counted to see whether they all arrived safely at that square, and whether...

L. -Ah, yes! Whether they were all accounted for, is that it?

H.B. -And then, they would be transported to Chelmno. In Wutsch and in K... there were ghettos, but not here.

L. -And so? How were they transport them to Chelmno?

H.B. -By truck.

L. -By truck? Or on farm carts?

H.B. -No, by truck... by truck.

L. -They saw it? With their own eyes?

F.B. -Yeah, yeah, yeah. And they took small children like the ones we're seeing right now...

L. -Yeah.

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F.B. -...They would take them by the legs and throw them into the trucks.

L. -The woman saw this?

F.B. -The elderly, as well.

L. -You saw the... you saw the children in the trucks?

B. -Yes.

L. -And what did she think?

H.B. -...They were so packed in, the Jews one on top of the other, that in the truck bed that was too... too small like that, there were three or four families.

L. -How was that?

H.B. -That is to say...

L. -Not before the war, right?

H.B. -It started in '40.

L. -Okay... Did the Poles know that they would be gassed in Chelmno? Did he know?

H.B. -Yes.

L. -Yes?

B. -Yes.

L. -Did the Jews themselves know?

H.B. -They knew, but not at the time; because for example... the Jews who lived here that the gentleman knew really well because they had played when... when they

were little—he had known him since he was little—well, when the man said to him, “listen... you see what they do with the Jews... what they are doing with the Jews,” he responded, “Oh, no, those aren’t Jews, they’re of different nationalities!”

L. -That was the man’s response?

H.B. -No, it was the Jews’. Because, in any case, the Germans would tell them that they were going to take a bath... not that they were going to be exterminated, of course!

L. -What effect did it have on him for his classmates to be getting killed like that?

H.B. -It deeply troubled him.

L. -Ah, yes... does he mourn the Jews?

F.B. -Of course! They were nice Jews, the woman says.

L. -Yeah.

H.B. -Then the gentleman went... he says he went to Chelmno, three days...uh... a... after the Germans

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pulled out from there; at the time, he was a military commander.

H.B. -So then, there were doctors who came from Koutnan, and he went to see how... how things were in Chelmno: there were still heaps of... of ashes, there were vertebral columns, teeth, everything.

L. -Okay... cut, cut, cut, cut!

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Bobine No. 134

CHELMNO 90

L. -Barbara, please ask the woman if she has always lived in this house.

D.B. -It’s always been their house; there was someone else, a neighbor, who lived here further back, but this here is their house. Yes, there was a Jew, if I understand correctly, who lived there, straight across.

L. -It was... it was a Jew who lived...

D.B. -A Jew named Schmidt... (Sound masked by the noise from a car)

L. -Okay, and then... now she... tell her to make a space there... that she is distancing herself a bit too much... What is it... Good she’s staying there, okay. What has become of him, this Jew named Schmidt across from here?

D.B. -They were deported to Chelmno.

L. -Oh! She saw it?

D.B. -Well, all the Jews, they were... they were put in the church and then... they were all deported to Chelmno.

L. -And the woman even saw the deportation, the rounding-up of Jews here?

D.B. -Well, they... they weren’t actually driven out from there... they were given the order to surrender themselves to the church and they had to do it themselves. And then they... two trucks came and they were deported to Chelmno.

L. -Were there a lot of Jews here in Grabow?

D.B. -It seemed like a lot... The woman’s husband, the fourth, says that there were indeed many of them.

- L. -There were many of them.
 B. -Yes.
 L. -So, she remembers, since she was there!
 B.D. -A great deal, not bad; her husband worked in Chelmno, so he always says there were a huge number of Jews living there.
 L. -Yes, yes... and she has always lived close to the synagogue, right?
 (We frequently hear the word "bouguinska" in the woman's responses.)
 B. -Yes, in popular Polish, one says "bouguinska" and not "synagogue".
 L. -Oh, that's it, of course! What is she saying?
 D.B. -She says: "now it's a furniture warehouse, but in any case, nothing malicious was done from a religious standpoint. It was

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- not... (wait... what it is called? ...well, in French, there is... there is a special word for it!) (you hear in the background, "defiled")
 B. -defiled, that's it!
 L. -Oh, the synagogue hadn't been defiled!
 B. -Defiled, basically there's... there has been a warehouse there for a very long time.
 L. -But does the woman remember the synagogue's rabbi?
 D.B. -She says that now, she is... she is eight... eighty years old, so she... she doesn't remember it that well anymore, because the Jews have been gone for at least forty years.
 L. -No, not forty years, a bit less than that!
 B. -Yes, pretty close!
 L. -Alright... then she doesn't remember the rabbi?
 D.B. -No.
 L. -And were there many religious Jews here?
 D.B. -Well, there were a lot of them, but she didn't count them; she had children to raise, her husband...
 L. -Oh, okay.
 D.B. -... died, so her children occupied her; she didn't have the time to busy herself with the Jews.
 L. -But what were the religious Jews like? Did they have a special outfit? What were they like?
 D.B. -There were some who had beards, there were some who had...
 L. -And what were they like? Were they kind? Were they nice?
 D.B. -She says that the Jewish women were really beautiful.
 L. -Yeah. That's what she said.
 B.D. -No, no, no... (she's asking me if... that's my family, right?)

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- D.B. -The Poles really like romancing Jewish women.
 L. -Oh, yes! And are the Polish women happy that there aren't anymore Jewish women now? What is she saying?

- D.B. -No, she says that... the women now who are of the same age as she is also liked the romancing... there you have it.
- L. -And so... with the Jewish women, was it a competition?
- D.B. -The Poles loved the little Jewish girls, it's crazy that they liked them.
- L. -And the Poles miss the little Jewish girls?
- D.B. -Of course, such beautiful women! of course!
- L. -Why? In what way were they so beautiful?
- D.B. -Well, they were beautiful because they didn't do anything; the Polish women, they worked; the Jewish women, they only... they... would only think about their looks and they would dress well.
- L. -Oh! The Jewish women didn't work.
- D.B. -They did nothing at all.
- L. -Why not?
- D.B. - They were rich. They were rich, and the men had to work and provide for them.
- L. -I hear her say the word "capital".
- D.B. -(Very weakly). They had... there was capital in the hands of the Jews, yes.
- L. -Oh, yes... yes... and you didn't translate that.
- D.B. -All of Poland was in the hands of the Jews.
- L. -All of Poland was in the hands of the Jews... huh... they weren't that abundant, were they? They were what?... 10% of the Polish population.

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- D.B. -Yes, in fact, there were a lot of them, and for example.... for... fabric, all of that... was found... uh... in the hands of the Jews.
- L. -And is she disappointed that the Jews aren't there anymore, or does she find this rather better?
- D.B. -What do I know? I am someone who... who has no education, so I consider how I am now. Right now, I am doing well.
- L. -Does she feel as though she is better?
- D.B. -Well, now... Before the war, she had to harvest potatoes, whereas now, she sells eggs, she has a... an egg business... so she is doing much better...
- L. -But, is that because the Jews have gone, or is it because of socialism?
- D.B. -That doesn't interest her; she is happy because she is doing well now.
- L. -Yes, that's right (very quietly). So, ask her, did the Jewish women... did they wear a lot of makeup?
- D.B. -They were very pretty women, careful, well-dressed, made-up, and everything.
- L. -Right. Was it... Ask... was it?...
- D.B. -She says... you can laugh, but they were elegant women.
- L. -Elegant... yes. And tell me... ask her: were the Jewish women... did the Polish women romance the Jewish men?

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- (You hear "no, no, no"...) Why? They weren't as handsome?
- D.B. -No, she says no... it was because... they... the Polish women
- L. -They had to work.
- D.B. -They had to serve in... in Jewish households, they were often servants for Jews.

- L. -The Polish women were servants for the Jews? The woman was a servant in a Jewish home?
Cut. We need to recharge.

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BOITE 135 CHELMNO 93

On January 19, 1942, the Grabow rabbi, Jacob SCHULMANN, wrote the following letter to his friends in Lodz:

“My dears, I haven’t responded to you until now since I didn’t have any details about what I was being told. Alas, to our deep despair, we now already know everything. I have with me an eyewitness, who, by chance, has been spared. I learned everything from him. The place where they were exterminated is called Chelmno, near Dombie, and they are all buried in the forest next to Joachov. The Jews were killed by 2 different methods: they were either gunned down, or gassed. For some days, thousands of Jews were being brought from Lodz, and the same was being done with them. Don’t think that this is all being written to you by a madman. Alas, it is the heartbreaking truth. Horror, horror, man, take off your clothing, cover your head with ashes, run in the streets and dance, go crazy. I am so weary that my pen cannot write more. Creator of the universe, come, help us.”

The creator of the universe did not come to help the Jews of Grabow. A few weeks later, they were all killed, with their rabbi, in the gas trucks of Chelmno. From Grabow to Chelmno, it is exactly 19 km.

CHELMNO 95 and 96 is the same account. Lanzmann reads the Rabbi’s letter.

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SS POLAND

Claude Lanzmann and Barbara in front of the Chelmno monument

Shot of the monument in the clearing in Chelmno, turned non-synchronized, here the sound is off:

L. Engraved on the pediment of the monument to the victims of Chelmno is an excerpt of a letter written by a Jew who was gassed here. The letter was thrown away by a wagon porter, and then recovered, and we are going to read it.

B. We were taken, from the elderly to the babies, between the villages of KOWA and DOMBIE. They took us into the forest, and there, we were gassed, shot, and burned. We call out for our future brothers to punish our assassins. We ask once again that the witnesses of our persecution declare this murder to the entire world.

L. We ask that the witnesses of our persecution proclaim this murder to the entire world

B. You may settle it however you’d like.

L. Good.