

-TITLE- Wladyslaw Misiuna
-SOUND_QUALITY- Excellent
-IMAGE_QUALITY- Excellent
-DURATION- 1 hour 33 minutes
-LANGUAGES- Polish

0:00:00Misiuna Wladyslaw was born to the Roman Catholic family in 1925 in the city of Radom. Misiuna as long as he can remember lived close to Jewish population. One third of Radom population about 30000 people were Jews.

0:03:24Misiuna's family lived in Glinice on the outskirts of Radom, It was the poorest neighborhood in Radom, inhabited by Polish and Jewish population. Poles were poor, but Jews were paupers. On the Gorna Street, Zabia Street, Kosna Street Jews lived in small, desolated dwellings, twenty people crowded in one room.

0:06:10Misiuna and other Polish and Jewish pre-school kids played together in the streets. Kindergartens were run by Catholic nuns. Jewish children didn't go there. Most of Jewish children didn't go to elementary school either. Few attended cheder, but most stayed home.

0:11:32Political party called National Democracy portrayed Jews as people who were ugly, unkempt, smelly, always conveying a sterotype of somebody that can't be liked. Misiuna knew that his Jewish friends were different. The antisemitism was on the rise. Misiuna's father was ardently fighting National Democratic ideology.

0:13:32The family was called kike lovers and pro-communists, because according to Polish rightists, all Jews were communists. Once at school Misiuna had a fight [conflict] with the priest, who talked against Jews while teaching religion. Misiuna contradicted him. Fortunately another priest took Misiuna's side and the incident passed without any consequences.

0:17:09At Misiuna's class there were also some German students from German settlements in the Radom area. He was in love with a German girl, Halina. In the 8th day of

war she was wearing Hitler Jugend uniform and she enthusiastically welcomed German soldiers.

0:18:42 Her attitude to her classmates changed immediately. One of the classmates was Rivka (Ryfka), a Jewish girl. She was unattractive girl, redhaired and fat. Rivka was an easy target for racial jokes. Misiuna tried to protect her. Next day after Germans seized Radom the German girl with another Hitler-Jugend thug went to Rivka's house, beat her up and broke her windows. Rivka was alone at home at this time. Rivka's classmates, who harassed her before, now changed their attitude toward her. They helped her clean the house. tried to cheer her up and offered different kind of help. Misiuna noticed that Poles became more friendly and sympathetic toward Jews.

0:20:55 His family did not change, because in his family prejudice against people of different religion or different race didn't exist. But some people who distanced themselves from Jews before the war, now seeing the way Jews were treated started to develop warmer feelings toward them.

0:26:35 There were two ghettos in Radom, Large Ghetto ("na wale") and Little Ghetto ("na Glinkach"), where Misiuna was born. Inhabitants of both ghettos were not allowed to move outside the boundaries of the Ghettos and the Poles were not allowed to contact with them under the death penalty.

0:32:15 The food was rationed for everyone, but the Jews were receiving extremely small rations and were cut off from free food market. People who helped them were treated as criminals and punished by death penalty. They were hanged in public executions and left for public view to scare off others. There were people who smuggled food to the ghetto to make money, but those smugglers traded only with Large Ghetto, where lived people with some resources.

0:38:00 The Little Ghetto was inhabited by poor people who could not buy food for inflated prices. Misiuna had contact

with The Little Ghetto only, where lived his family old neighbors. He and his brothers - as well as his other relatives - tried to send food to the friends in their old neighborhood. Misiuna and his brothers knew some secret passages through the backyards leading into the ghetto and used to go there and take any food they could get. Since food was expensive everywhere, they had to steal potatoes and onions and other vegetables from farmers fields. Bread was a luxury and Misiuna could hardly buy it.

0:40:25In 1941 the Germans started to relocate Jews from the ghettos in small towns and villages to Radom. The Jews were cut off medical supplies and Misiuna tried to take to the ghetto not only food, but medical supplies too. Every relocation was an additional hardship for Jewish population. Jews were getting poorer and had less possessions what meant less items to trade for food.

0:44:25Soon after the Germans started to organize labor camps. There were two Polish war production plants in Radom. One was a big armory manufacture, the other one produced gas masks. Those plants were taken over by Germans and worked for German war production.

0:47:00In 1942 Germans, who had difficulties with work force depended mostly an forced labor. In 1942 the Austrian firm Steyer-Daimler-Buch built a labor camp for Jews and kept them in condition that did not differ much from conditions in the concentration camps. They lived in the horse stables turned to barracks with sleeping banks on thee levels, with no running water. They lived in primitive nonsanitary conditions, in place which was not meant to be inhabited by human population. They were kept in isolation and watched by camp guards.

0:51:10At that time Misiuna's and his family's life took another turn. With the help of his uncle, who worked in the Armory, Misiuna organized a hare raising farm inside the Armory. The farm was a cover for underground activities. The opportunity to be closer to the Jews

in the camp appealed to Misiuna. The hare raising farm was not under constant surveillance. The guards were not supposed to be inside the kennel, because hares could be easily scared. Misiuna was allowed to move freely on the plant grounds, in order to scythe grass to be used as fodder.

0:57:15 There was a food production plant in the camp and hare raising farm was a part of it. Moreover, hare fur was supposed to keep soldiers warm on the Russian front. Misiuna asked for help to feed hares and got a Jewish woman from the camp. The hare raising farm was a pet project of Director. Now having contact with the Jewish labor camp, Misiuna was able to help the Jews in the camp.

1:03:30 Their food rations were 500 to 700 calories daily. It was not sufficient to survive and people in the camp needed help from outside. People, who were too weak to work or were sick were killed. Misiuna did not work alone to help the Jews in the camp. The Jewish women who worked for him and two Polish men, whom he hired as his assistants and one Polish woman were his helpers.

1:05:17 Having female help was very important. Misiuna was very young and prudish and could not talk about female hygiene, that had to be discussed to help effectively people in the camp. There were pregnant women, who needed help to abort their pregnancy. In the camp there were married couples and being pregnant meant death sentence for the women. Misiuna spent most of his time with the Jews from the camp. He avoided sleeping at home and built a hiding place in his backyard, because he expected to be caught and arrested any time.

1:07:30 Some guards (Bahnschutz) were friendly toward Misiuna. He tried to win their friendship by talking with them in their native language, bringing them books to read. In return the guards kept him informed about planned searches inside the Jewish camp, so Misiuna could give the warning to the Jews. In the book of Dr. Bauminger

titled Sprawiedliwy (The Righteous) Misiuna is remembered for taking food and medication to the camp. Once to get a medication for a camp prisoner sick with eczema he rubbed his hand against the infected area of a sick person. The Germans would kill the sick person on the spot if they had noticed eczema.

1:10:30 On many occasions Misiuna was beaten by guards when he was caught in some suspicious situation. His back hurts every night and reminds him of the past. When Misiuna was taken by his uncle to work in the German production industry he was brought into underground organization to gather information about the place and to send those information outside. Unfortunately, his reports about the Jewish camp were received with disbelief. He was asked to provide photographs. It was a terrible risk, but he did it. Misiuna gathered information for the Jews in the camp. The Jewish women who worked with him in a hare raising farm conveyed news about the happenings inside the plant, who was keeping guard that day, and what was happening in the outside world. That information were very helpful to uplift morale in the camp.

1:16:35 At that time Misiuna started to write poetry to keep up spirit of the Jews in the labor camp. He used a pseudonym David Rewin. His pseudonym in underground was Boruta. He was well known by the Jews in the camp as their friend. Misiuna tries not to remember two tragic events, but it has to be told. First event is termination of the little ghetto.

1:20:20 It happened very quickly. In the late evening Misiuna wanted to go to the ghetto to see the Pinkus family, old neighbors and friends of Misiuna's family. The Misiunas used to share with them everything they had. The street was closed and the people told him that the Ghetto didn't exist anymore. The Jews were taken away. People told him the gunshots were heard from behind a brick yard. The old abandoned brick yard was located on the White Street, bordering the Little Ghetto. Behind in were fields. On those fields Jews were killed by gunfire and corpses were burned on the

spot. Misiuna wanted to come closer to take pictures, but it was impossible. His camera could not take pictures in the dark and the danger of being caught was very real. The terrible smell of burned human flesh almost suffocated Misiuna. It was the most tragic night in his life. He didn't know if his friends were among those who were killed and he never learned it. He never saw them again.

1:23:50The termination of Jewish labor camp in the firearm plant came as quickly and unexpectedly as liquidation of the Ghetto. Misiuna was always well informed. He had inside information from Ukrainian guards. However this time the guards were not informed about planned action. On July 26, 1944 Misiuna was downtown running errands. When he came back to the plant he learned that in the couple of hours - when he was away - all Jews were taken away from the Camp and from the plant.

1:27:40Misiuna was in total shock and lost control of himself. He ran away from the plant, but later on he returned. The SS group was inside. Their brutality was unspeakable. They were drunk, they were brutally beating people, even German guards. They were searching the plant for hidden Jews. Misiuna saw those beasts finding and killing the hidden Jews. It looked like a mass execution and everybody's life was in immediate danger. Misiuna saved himself by hiding in a wagon full of manure. A driver was retarded, unable to speak, but smart enough to break a tooth of the dung-fork. The guard stabbed the manure with the broken dung-fork, and let the wagon pass the gate. He did not find Misiuna.

1:31:05After the war Misiuna learned that the Jews from the camp were taken to Auschwitz. Misiuna got a warning from the underground organization, and went into hiding. He was found and arrested and put into the same camp from which the Jews he used to help were taken away. The camp was a part of the infamous labor camp Majdanek. He spent five months there. He escaped in January 1945 when the camp prisoners were marched to be killed.

1:32:30 Those Jews who survived the Radom camp and Auschwitz came to Radom to see Misiuna and thank him for his help. Unfortunately Misiuna was not in town and missed many of them. Some he met forty two years later in Israel and in the United States.