

Tomasz Miedziński
Polish Documentation Project
Polish
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[Approximately 210 min]

SUMMARY

Tomasz Miedziński was born in 1928 in Horodenka (present-day Ukraine), in Stanisławów voivodship. He was one of five children: four sons and one daughter, of a carpenter, **Josef Szloime Szlach [Joseph Schleume Schlah]** and his wife, **Klara Kupferman [Clara Kupfermann]**; Tomasz Miedziński assumed his Polish name in the 1950's. Tomasz Miedziński comments that his family was not religious; the family spoke Yiddish at home; the children attended Jewish and Polish schools and therefore were fluent in Polish and Ukrainian; he talks about the prewar atmosphere of Horodenka, whose population consisted in equal parts of Poles, Jews and Ukrainians; Tomasz Miedziński notes that the relationship between Horodenka Jews and the Polish and Ukrainian nationals was friendly and peaceful until 1937, when the nationalistic Ukrainian movement began. Horodenka Jews were not orthodox and they participated in Zionistic organizations as well as Bund [*The General Jewish Labor Bund of Lithuania, Poland and Russia was a secular Jewish socialist party in the Russian Empire, active between 1897 and 1920*], and secret communist organizations. Tomasz Miedziński talks about the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 and its impact on Horodenka; he explains that the majority of Horodenka Jews welcomed the Soviet Army and believed their propaganda of equality and liberty for all, while others, seeing Russian poverty and prompt deportations of Polish intelligentsia, were skeptical. He recalls the beginning of the German-Russian war in 1941 and talks about the bombing of the sugar manufacturing plant in Horodenka immediately followed by the outbreak of panic among the prominent Jews working for the Soviet government; he talks of the formation of a temporary Ukrainian government, which was headed by engineer **Rypczyn**, and its anti-Semitic character. Tomasz Miedziński recalls Ukrainian atrocities and the mass murder of the Niezwiska (present-day Ukraine: Незвисько) village Jews. He mentions that **Rypczyn** was planning the Jewish pogrom and organizing the Legion of Ukrainian Sich Riflemen; however, after the entry of the Hungarian Army to Horodenka, Commander **Isztwan Kowacz [Istvan Kovacs]** disbanded the Ukrainian Police and despite minor Hungarian persecutions of Jews the town experienced a period of relative peace; under **Isztwan Kowacz** the Jewish quarter [*German: Judenviertel*] was officially established. Tomasz Miedziński remembers the funeral procession of the Ukrainian police commandant, **Iwan Waskuł [Waskól]**, who was executed by the Hungarians and comments that the funeral turned into a Ukrainian nationalists' demonstration. Tomasz Miedziński recalls the retreat of the

Hungarians and the entry of the Germans in August of 1941. Promptly, German administration was established by elder **Hans Haas** and his assistant **Fritz Doppler**, who was infamous for his persecution of Jews; Tomasz Miedziński talks in detail about the persecutions and shows pictures of the deplorable present state of the Jewish cemetery; he is emotional about the desecration of the sites of Jewish martyrdom by Soviet authorities. He talks in detail about the Jewish quarter under German rule and remembers that it was fenced and guarded; he recalls mass Jewish relocations to the quarter, to include Hungarian Jews. Tomasz Miedziński describes the difficult living conditions in the Jewish quarter and the outbreak of illnesses; he mentions an Austrian, **Reuter**, who was a police captain that helped his father; he gives a detailed and emotional account of the first dramatic deportation of Jews from Horodenka and their execution by the Germans in the nearby village of Siemakowce (present-day Ukraine); those deported included his mother and two younger brothers, of which one, Szmulek, managed to miraculously escape. On his way back to Horodenka, Szmulek was helped and sheltered by a Ukrainian farmer. Tomasz Miedziński talks about the second deportation of Jews from Horodenka in the summer of 1942 to the Kołomyja ghetto (present-day Ukraine) to include his family. Whereas the strong and the young were sent to work in the Janowska work camp in Lvov (Polish: Lwów; present-day Ukraine: Lviv), a few of the Horodenka Jews who were highly skilled craftsmen were allowed to remain. Tomasz Miedziński talks in detail about the inhuman and crowded living conditions in the Kołomyja ghetto; he recalls Krwawy Iwan [*English: Bloody Ivan who was prosecuted and sentenced to death in 1946*]; he gives a detailed and emotional account of the dramatic selection in Kołomyja ghetto and explains that his older brother was likely killed during his attempt to escape from the ghetto; he adds that he and his younger brother **Szmulek** were separated from his father during the selection. Tomasz Miedziński talks in detail about his train transport to Bełżec and explains how he and his brother **Szmulek** managed to escape; he recalls unknown locals who helped them during their return to the Kołomyja ghetto via Lvov; he talks about his brief imprisonment in Jankowska work camp in Lvov. In Kołomyja, Tomasz Miedziński never found his father, who had been executed by the Germans near the village of Szeparowcy (present-day Ukraine); eventually he became separated from his younger brother, **Szmulek**, who likely died in Szeparowcy as well. In November, 1942, Tomasz Miedziński travelled eastward disguised as a Ukrainian peasant and found employment as a field hand for one of the Ukrainian farmers; he next voluntarily joined a Jewish work camp in the proximity of Tarnopol (present-day Ukraine), where he worked in the fields until he realized the impending liquidation of the camps; he then sought work as a Ukrainian field hand and was employed by a Ukrainian farmer **Wasył Dziuba** in 1943; although his true nationality was soon discovered, he continued working for the farmer, despite Mr. **Dziuba's** son's involvement with the *banderowcy* [*members of the OUN- B fraction of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalist, which was founded by Stepan Bandera*]. Eventually Tomasz Miedziński left the **Dziuba** family and joined the partisans; he took part in local battles until the liberation in March of 1944. He then found his sister in Horodenka and together with her family, Tomasz Miedziński moved to Kłodzko (city on the newly regained Polish territory; formerly German: Glatz); later he became a government employee in the Polish Department of Education.

[Prepared by Agnieszka McClure on 12/11/2010]