

Mostowicz, Arnold
Polish Witnesses to the Holocaust Project
Polish
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[Approximately 270 min]

SUMMARY

A writer, Arnold Mostowicz (former name **Aaron Moszkowicz**) was born in Łódź before the First World War [*born on April 6 1914 , died on February 3 2002 in Warsaw*]. He came from a non-traditional Jewish family. He talks about his father who grew up in an orthodox Jewish community in a small town, was a self made man with a passion for theatre, and who was involved in left wing organizations such as BUND [*Jewish Labor Organization*] and PPS [*Polish Socialist Party*]. Mr. Mostowicz's mother came from an assimilated Jewish family and some of her relatives were baptized. Arnold Mostowicz attended both Polish and Jewish schools in Łódź, and later emigrated to study medicine in France where he was affiliated with left-wing and syndical movements; he was also a founder of a Jewish Student Association in Tuluz. Mr. Mostowicz provides an analysis of prospects and obstacles to the young Jewish intelligentsia before the Second World War in Europe, particularly in Poland. He talks about his return to Poland shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War and his work in the hospital during the German attack on Warsaw. After the capture of Warsaw, Mr. Mostowicz returned to Łódź. He talks about the establishing of a Jewish Council in Łódź, which was headed by Mordechai Rumkowski; he recalls the Germans killing Rumkowski's first cabinet and then his establishing another; Mostowicz defends Rumkowski as a Jewish leader and comments that he was unjustly hated and blamed for aiding in the extermination of Jews. He gives examples of German persecutions of Jews and explains the gradual changes which took place in the Jewish community in Łódź before the establishing of the ghetto. Mr. Mostowicz talks about creating separate health centers for the Jews; he recalls the relocation of all Jews to the ghetto and eventually closing the ghetto in 1940. Arnold Mostowicz analyzes the specific character of the Łódź ghetto, which was located on a German territory and surrounded solely by the German community; he comments on the differences between the ghettos in Warsaw and Łódź and points out the absence of black market trading in the latter. He explains that the Jewish Council created labor offices in the ghetto and adds that it was the only ghetto where all the work shops were fully owned by the German state; he provides an economic analysis of the production of goods in the ghetto and adds that German officials illegally profited from it; in his opinion it was one of the reasons why the Łódź ghetto was the last to be liquidated. Mr Mostowicz talks about his work in the hospital and comments on the types of illnesses present. Because of the scarcity of medicine, he believes that he often had to decide who would die and who would live;

additionally, he saved the lives of people recommended to him by the underground organization by providing false diagnosis and pronouncing individuals unfit to be transported out of the ghetto. Mr. Mostowicz explains that his profession allowed him to get greater food rations and automatically placed him in prominent ghetto circles. When asked about prostitution, he answers that various forms of prostitution were flourishing in the ghetto; he adds that old values and codes of conduct had no place in the ghetto. Mr. Mostowicz recalls many left wing activists, and comments on his own communist affiliations. He talks about the first deportation from the ghetto in 1942 that consisted of the old, the young and the sick. He describes the Gypsy camp within the Łódź ghetto where he was summoned for a sick call and traces the typhoid epidemics to the camp; he recalls that all of the gypsies were liquidated in the Chełmno death camp. Mr. Mostowicz talks about the transports of Jews from Germany and Czechoslovakia to the Łódź ghetto; he recalls saving a little Jewish German girl from death by hunger. Arnold Mostowicz briefly recalls the ghetto underworld; he talks about the radio contact and the political awareness in the Łódź ghetto; in 1944, he knew about the Warsaw ghetto Uprising and the impending end of the war. Mr. Mostowicz talks about the liquidation of the ghetto; he describes the selection on the platform in the Oświęcim camp, where he was sent together with his wife. He talks about his psychological method for surviving Oświęcim and about his friend, **Kępiński [Kempinski]**, who served in the “kanada” unit, a special task unit responsible for servicing the crematoria and sorting property of the deceased. Mr. Mostowicz provides a psychological analysis of the feeling of hunger, its impact on brain functions and the vanishing of self-preservation instinct. He talks about his transport to the camp in Jelenia Góra (German: Hirschberg), where the SS didn't know about the extermination of Jews in Poland; he recalls soccer matches between the German soldiers and camp prisoners in Jelenia Góra. Mr. Mostowicz talks about his transfer to the camp in Cieplice (German: Bad Warmbrunn), where he assisted in the response to typhoid epidemics; Mr. Mostowicz comments that during the middle of the war all sick prisoners would normally have been exterminated and the camp closed, but that shortly before the end of war German SS soldiers were scared and tried to keep the camp going and set up a phony hospital for the sick in hopes of being kept from the front line. After the war Arnold Mostowicz got sick with tuberculosis and gave up his career of a medical doctor; he instead concentrated on his writing career and became the head editor for the satirical magazine “Szpilki”. Mr. Mostowicz is a chair of the Society for Jewish Fighters for Freedom and Democracy [*Polish: Związek Kombatantów Żydowskich*]; despite experiencing anti-Semitic persecution after the war, he considers Poland his home country.

[Prepared by Agnieszka McClure on 12/15/2010]