

SAWLEWICZ, Piotr
Lithuania Documentation Project
Polish
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In this interview, Piotr Sawlewicz, born on February 24, 1909, in Krzyzaki, Lithuania, discusses the local mass murder of 707 Jews and three Poles. He also describes his own subsequent involvement in transporting the clothing of the murdered victims. The last part of the interview takes place at the site, where the events that he describes occurred.

Box 1, Tape 1

[01:] 00:52:08 – [01:] 04:03:23
00:53 – 04:04

Piotr Sawlewicz begins by noting he was born on February 24, 1909, in Krzyzaki, in Lithuania; says his parents ran a farm and sold corn and cattle in Vilnius; notes that sometimes some Jews from Rozolimka bought cows from his parents; mentions their names: **Jeba, Abram, Wielkucki,** and **Ziec**.

[01:] 04:03:24 – [01:] 07:16:21
04:05 – 07:17

Sawlewicz says that when the war started, the Germans began liquidating the local Jews; says there were 707 Jews and three Poles murdered in Wilanow; talks about a white house, located in Wilanow, where the Germans kept the Jews before the mass liquidation started; notes that young Jewish men were made to dig trenches in the nearby forest; remembers witnessing the Jews being taken from the aforementioned house to the forests, where they all were murdered; says he did not witness the shooting but did arrive at the scene shortly after; notes that the bodies of the dead were covered with thin layer of dirt and there was a pile of clothes sitting next to them says that the Lithuanian police is responsible for murdering all of the Jewish people and that the Germans were not involved in this cruel act.

[01:] 07:16:22 – [01:] 13:01:21
07:18- 13:13

He talks about the house where Jews were kept before the murder; says they stayed there for three or four days; says the young men were forced to dig a trench for a couple of days and then on September 23, 1941, all of the Jews were taken to the nearby woods in Wilanow and brutally shot; says that first, a group of young men was killed, then their families, and then the elderly; says that some of Sawlewicz's friends were killed that day and mentions some names: **Wielkucki**, and **Jacek** [*unable to recall last name*], and **Hajum**; says there was no way to get close to the house where the Jews were staying because it was surrounded by the police.

[01:] 13:01:22 – [01:] 25:13:17
13:14 – 25:14

Sawlewicz remembers how the Jews were taken into the forest; comments that each of them had a star of David on their chest; says he was not there where the Jews were murdered but saw their dead bodies shortly after they were killed; remembers their bodies were covered with dirt and that they were lying in the trench, with their clothes next to the trench; says he was selected to come to the scene to take the remaining Jewish belongings to the police station; says that the police sold the clothes to the locals later on; says it was the same people who shot the Jews that ordered local men to transport the belongings; says the shooting began around eight or nine in the morning and lasted until one or two in the afternoon; says that about thirty carts were immediately sent to transport Jewish clothes; says that the Jews were only wearing underwear and the rest of their clothing was collected in a big pile; notes that those transporting the belongings were able to keep anything for themselves; says they were threatened that their bodies would be lying next to the murdered Jews, should they take anything; says the selling of Jewish clothes started on the second or the third day after they were killed; says that people came to the police station to choose what they wanted to purchase; notes that some of those people lived in his village, but there were also people from other villages; says his family did not buy anything; says his father preferred to wear old clothes than buy the clothes that belonged to the murdered Jews; says there were eight Lithuanian policemen who were shooting at the Jews and that the rest of the police officers were bringing the Jews from the house to the forest.

[01:] 25:13:18 – [01:] 30:22:18
25:15 – 30:23

Sawlewicz mentions also other places where Jews were murdered; says that one of them is **Wiatrowka**, where the Jews were shot, and the other place is **Bezdany**; says the Jews worked there on the bog; says that one day, the Jews were taken into a house and burned alive; says he knows about this event because of locals and also because he has seen the burned house.

[01:] 30:22:19 – [01:] 42:02:18
30:24 – 42:03

[This part of the interview takes place at the scene, in the forest, in Wilanow] Sawlewicz points out where the trenches filled with dead bodies are located; shows where the piles of clothes and shoes were located; says there were piles of clothes, shoes, glasses and rosaries; says one of the policeman gave him a pair of glasses; notes that he does not have them anymore.

Box 1, Tape 2

[02:] 00:42:03 – [02:] 10:45:11
00:00 – 10:46

[In this part of the interview, Mr. Sawlewicz shows the house, where he was raised in] He comments that his brother now lives in the house they were raised in; says there is a white house located opposite of their family home, commenting that it was not there during the war; shows the house where the Jews were kept before the mass murder; points out stairs where the Jews were taken from and were then taken through the fields and into the forest; says this house is located about a half kilometer from his old family house; says he heard (Jewish) women screaming; says the men were quiet and did not make any sounds; says that children were murdered first, then women and young men, and finally a group of elderly people; says he did not see how the Jews were murdered and that he only heard the shots; says that later, when he went to take the Jewish clothes, he saw dead bodies lying in the trench; says the house where the Jews were kept before they were murdered is very large; says there were many Jews kept in there; comments that some of them were even sitting on the stairs because there was no more room left inside; says the house was surrounded by the police, so nobody was able to escape; says the Jews stayed in that house for about a week; says it took them about three days to finish digging the trench; notes that it measured 50 meters in length, 3 meters in width, and 3 meters in depth.

[02:] 10:45:12 – [02:] 29:24:20
10:47 – 29:25

Sawlewicz says that the Jews were not given any water or bread; says they only ate or drank if they brought their own food or water; says he never heard any screaming coming from the house; says that nobody was allowed to come close to the house; says the Jews generally did not oppose because they had no choice; notes that first, one of the group was taken from the house (about 30 people); says they were taken to the forest, forced to undress and put their clothes into a pile; says they were then shot and thrown into a trench; says that afterwards, the second group of Jews were taken to the forest and murdered as well; comments that the women had wool scarves on; says that two local men, who came to mow the lawn, found those scarves in the field; says that if not for the intercession of the mayor, named **Szwarcewicz**, they would have been killed as well; says there were 707 Jews and three Poles murdered in the forest; comments on two young Poles, named **Naruszewicz**, who were curious to see the Jews digging the trenches; says they were caught by the Lithuanian police, taken to their commander and then put in the house with the other Jews; says they were taken and murdered in the woods in the last group with women; says their hands were tied with wire; says that when the Jewish women were taken, they were screaming and crying, but that the men did not make any sound; says in the morning, before the Jews were taken to the woods, some Lithuanian policemen came to him [*Sawlewicz*] and explained that they were going to start taking the enemies, the Jews, Jews from the house; says he and his family were ordered to watch the Jews walk to their deaths; says the columns of Jews were escorted by Lithuanian police; says there was one officer in the front, one in the end, and one on each side of the column; remembers hearing the shots coming from the forest; says the Lithuanians, who murdered the Jews, were dressed in uniforms, belts, and had machine guns; comments that they were all drunk; remembers one of the Jews, **Hajum**, trying to escape in the woods; says he was eventually shot and his body was put in the trench with the rest of the Jews.

[02:] 29:24:21 – [02:] 35:38:08

29:26 – 35:39

[This part of the interview also takes place at the mass murder scene, in the Vilnius forest]

Sawlewicz says that when he came with his cart to transport Jewish clothes, he saw a trench filled with dead Jewish bodies; says the trench was not covered with any dirt yet; says the third day after the tragedy, they were ordered to cover the trench with dirt; claims that dirt in the trench was bloody and it was “moving”; notes there were still some people alive; says that small children were killed in a different way: they were struck in the neck with a pall and then thrown into a trench; remembers seeing the bloody palls that were used to murder small children; recalls a commander, who commanded there, spoke Russian, but does not remember his name.