

Preface

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KASETA 3/1

Stefan KUCHARÉK

12 March 1998

Tape 1

[01:] 00:36:02- [01:] 34:12:15

[01:] 00:36:02- [01:] 03:51:13

00:31- 03:55

- Why are you staring at me?
- *Should I turn around?*

[Picture]

- *Here we go.*
- *Let's start: What is your name?*
- You know what it is.
- *Could you please tell us once again?*
- Kucharek Stefan.
- *And you were born...*
- In Małkinia.
- *What year?*
- In '22
- *Are you an engineer, a rail employee?*

Kaseta 3 KUCHARÉK, STEFAN

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- Yes, yes I am.
- *What were you doing before the war?*
- Before the war I was working in the saw mill in Rostki.
- *In Rózki?*
- In Rostki.
- *Aha, in Rostki. Where is it?*
- Well, about two kilometers away from Małkinia.
- *Could you please tell us, if there were Jews living in Małkinia before the war?*
- Ooo! quite a lot.
- *Many?*
- Yes.
- *Did you have any special contacts with them?*
- Yes. There was Iciek, _____ well, her name was Enia and the other one was Livka. We were always catching fish with a net in the Bug River, in the Bug of course. And I of course knew many others.
- *Did you go to school with the Jews?*
- Yes, yes, yes I did.
- *Did you have friendly relations?*
- Yes, sure thing, sure thing.
- *Did religious Jews, the ones with side curls live here?*
- Yes they lived here, you know, the older ones; kosher butchers [*or circumcisers; Polish meaning is unclear*] and rabbis. That's all.
- *And what would you say, more or less, for the entire population of Małkinia, how many Jews lived here? More or less, as you saw it?*
- Well. It's hard to say; mainly there were 50 percent of Poles and Jews.
- *And when did you become a train engineer?*
- Who, me? Right after the war.
- *Aha after the war has started?*
- Yes.

- *And do you remember when the war started?*
- I remember.
- *Could you describe the day when the war started?*
- It was '39; first—second of October.
- *We know that; but how did you overall feel, what did you see?*
- What did I see—I saw when the Germans; it was still...still second or first of October and they weren't in Małkinia; but the planes were bombing; right; the German planes were flying
- Were any houses ruined here?
- Sure. All: the train station, houses—all was ruined.
- *And could you tell us what was there in Treblinka before the war?*
- What could there be there in Treblinka before the war?—a regular train station and what else?—there was nothing else there.
- *Nothing else?*
- Well there was still...because before the war there was a side-track there; it ran towards the forest to take the gravel. And later the Germans forbade taking gravel from here. The engines were setting the cars [*he mistakenly says it in reverse order in Polish*] and pushing the Jews in; among others, I did that.

[01:] 03:51:13- [01:] 06:38:04

03:55- 06:48

- *And could you tell us when did you see the Germans in Małkinia for the first time?*
- Well, it was...it was after the 15th of October.
- *And what? They entered...*
- What do you mean what? Normal thing; everyone was hiding; everyone was trying to defend himself; because you know how it was.
- *And they came and stayed here?*
- No, they were gone; but gendarmes and Gestapo stayed here later.

- *And what did you do? How old were you—seventeen?*
- No way! Not seventeen. When the Germans came...and I was born in '22. So what, I was seventeen?! Let's not play that game, man.
- *So how old were you?*
- Well I don't know—what do you...I was born in '22 and the Ru—Germans came in '39; so how old was I?
- *Seventeen.*
- Seventeen; I finished seventeen.
- *Eighteen.*
- Yes.
- *And what?*
- What do you mean what? Everyone was hiding wherever they could; and later there was no other way out but to work on the rail. When you worked on the rail the Germans wouldn't deport you to do forced labor, you know; to do the maintenance work, as they called it. They wouldn't take you if you worked on the rail, so I started working the line as a young boy.
- *And when did you go on the rail?*
- Well...I am not sure; it was right after the war, damn it; right after the war
- *And what did you do in the beginning?*
- In the beginning I was working in a shop and then I started on an engine.
- *Did you learn how to drive an engine? Was there any training?*
- Yes there was, there was... there was.
- *Was it hard to drive an engine?*
- Well, hard...you know, you can learn anything if you want to; no problem. I had trust and for me it was not too tough, you know. And even...my dad was a train engineer before the war.
- *And where did you drive your engine in the beginning?*
- In Małkinia on maneuvers.
- *On maneuvers; you were only maneuvering?*

- Yes, I did, yes. And later, you know, we started going to Treblinka, to Warsaw, to **Usakudry** [*meaning unclear*]. You already had to have permission back then, you know. The Gestapo had to issue a permit that the train engineer or the helper had to—had the right to cross the border and go to Białystok.
- *That's right, because over here was the General Government.*
- Right, right, right.
- *And you were the en—engineer on the passenger trains.*
- I was. I was. Yes, I was. I was driving passenger trains.

[01:] 06:38:04- [01:] 10:52:00

06:48- 11:13

- *Do you remember in '41 when the Germans came and started to establish the camps here in Treblinka?*
- I do.
- *How did it go?*
- Normal thing, you know, because we delivered the rails over here, to Treblinka. And then they were assembled here; from Treblinka, you know, they were assembled. The rails and the ties.
- *Were the Poles and the Jews still here at that time?*
- Yes.
- *And what were they doing here?*
- Well, you know what the Jews were doing.
- *But I am still talking about that first period, when the work camp was here. You were here in '41, weren't you?*
- I was.
- *And...Did you see anything inside?*
- Not inside; you weren't allowed, they weren't letting in. Sometimes I _____, you know, he would come right up: blow your head off and be finished with it.

- *And you; why were you coming here? Were you bringing in any supplies, any goods?*
- Not goods but Jews'; we were only bringing the Jews.
- *But that happened later...*
- Yes.
- *So...*
- And before...before I didn't. Before we were only delivering railroad ties and gravel. We were sometimes taking gravel. The Jews were loading it with the shovels; on the cars.
- *Do you remember the first time when you brought in the Jews? I am not talking about the exact date but what happened, what they said to you?*
- It was in forty....probably two. When we entered the Warsaw Bridge—it was still called Siedlecki Bridge, because it went towards Siedlce. So I showed them that they are going here [*death gesture*]; and the Jew showed me that I was stupid [*gesture*].
- *But how did you know that they were going there...*
- I—I—I didn't know? Dear sir!
- *But how?*
- What do you mean how? Because we were bringing them in.
- *But I am talking about....*
- Sir, it was like that: when they were burning them—when they were initially burning them and when the wind was from the south, it stank in Małkinia, to high heaven/ God forbid! When they were burning them that is.
- *You...How was it; where were you taking them from, the Jews?*
- From Małkinia.
- *Were the trains from Małkinia long?*
- Yes. They had 42 or (4)4 cars each; and, you know, we were splitting them in half. That means, not me personally; the Germans; and we were pushing them from the back to Treblinka; to the gate. We were coming close here; we were putting the cars in; the gate would close and that's it.
- *How long did it last? How long were you here with the cars?*

- How long?
- *Yes.*
- How long we were...only a few...
- *And you were coming back with your engine?*
- *Yes..*
- *You only put them in?*
- I put them in; they took the Jew out; I picked up the cars and that's it.
- *And ...*
- And that's the end of the story.
- *Did you see how they were unloading the Jews off the trains?*
- No, there was no such possibility.
- *But you were waiting on the train.*
- No sir, they immediately unhooked my engine; I backed out about 50 meters [*he coughs*], you know, and they—and they did as they pleased with them. I don't know what exactly; I cannot tell you anything... because I didn't see it.
- *Did you know always...I understand that you took the trains from Małkinia...*
- Yes I knew about it. I did.
- *Did you also know when a given train was supposed to arrive? Did the Germans tell you ahead of time?*
- No, I wasn't told in advance. I was only told in advance that I have to be on duty here or there. Just like that.
- *That means...what does that mean here or there?*
- Yes. A transport in Małkinia and then from Małkinia to Treblinka. I already knew what for to Treblinka.

[01:] 10:52:00- [01:] 15:06:04

11:13- 15:38

- *Could you perhaps recall the first day; when you transported Jews for the first time?*

- It was ...
- *I am not asking about the particular date, only what they were saying and how it all went.*
- It was like that; I didn't know Treblinka very well then.
- *You didn't?*
- No. I didn't know Treblinka well. I only knew that they were bringing Jews to Treblinka and....and...And I knew about it then. But I was never there. Only later I got an order from the dispatcher that I have to go to Treblinka; with the train. What was there to say? Nothing. You had to go. I left half of the train in Malkinia and I brought the other half over here. That's all.
- *Were these freight cars?*
- What?
- *Were these freight cars?*
- Some were freight and others were passenger cars. The ones that came from France were passenger cars.
- *How did you know that they were from France?*
- I knew, because on the cars it said: France and Poland.
- *Did you ever hear what the Jews were saying on the trains; either on freight or passenger trains. Were they saying or screaming anything?*
- No, as I said—just like I told you a while ago; *[I showed them]* that they were going there *[to death]* and the Jews showed me that I was insane.
- *And you weren't afraid to show that?*
- Why! Did you know what you could get for showing? *[He imitates shooting]*
- *So why did you do it? You were risking your life after all.*
- You know, we are all human beings. A Jew is human and a German is human and ...and others are also human. You know, all—everyone tries to defend themselves the best they can; with what they can sho—show
- How long did the transports you had last?
- Well, they lasted almost a year.

- *Did you come here often?*
- Well, quite a few times.
- *Was there perhaps a special story that you remember from that time, an exceptional, special day? Something that got stuck in your memory?*
- Well, the story was always the same.
- *Did anything special happen?*
- Special? When I came close to the gate there was a **skuty** [*armed; drunk; unclear meaning*] Ukrainian [*imitates holding a rifle*]; I wanted to tell them something but he immediately opened up two or three times. Luckily the other engineer was there and he knew how to speak German. There was also a Gestapo man, if it wasn't for him the Ukrainian would have done me in; just for showing... [*He gestures: to die*].
- *Was that the situation when you showed them?*
- Yes. You had to risk, you know. And there...there was this case. It was October 15, (19)42, and.... It happened at the station in Treblinka. I was checking the train and there a Jewish woman was showing, showing to me [*gestures: to eat*]; she obviously wanted food and I had a sandwich. I know that the Jews don't eat ham or _____ But you know that for sure and I don't need to explain. But, you know, when you starve you will eat anything. So I got off the engine and I checked the cranks here and there... and she was in the first car, right behind the engine. So I simply threw this sandwich at her [*imitates throwing*] and she grabbed it. But, you know, the sons of bitches took it.

[01:] 15:06:04-[01:]18:35:16

15:38- 19:16

- *Who? The Ukrainians?*
- The Ukrainians, yes.
- *And it happened in the freight car?*
- Yes.

- *Through the window?*
- Yes. They took it; if it wasn't for the other engineer who could speak German—because they took the Ukrainians who could speak German; other wise they didn't take them.
- *Apart from the Poles, were there any German rail workers on the engine?*
- No, we were there alone, just the Poles.
- *Apart from you, was there perhaps a German, a Gestapo agent on the engine?*
- No, no, no, no.
- *Nobody?*
- No, there was nobody; only when you entered over here and it was the end. All was locked and good bye. They unhooked the engine; they gave an order to back out and good bye.
- *But later you came to get the empty cars.*
- That's right. I came; we waited about half an hour, the gate opened and this German [*would say*]: "Komm mit". That's it. And we were going. _____the engine right away, I hooked up the cars and I came to Treblinka and OK. And later in Małkinia we would leave the empty cars and we would take the ones with the others, the other half; and we would come here again.
- *Did you have a chance to see the empty cars; what did they look like?*
- Yes, I did; I did.
- *And how was it?*
- How was it?—you know, they were full of dirt, full of shit, full of... You know how it is; these were people.
- *Were the cars cleaned in Małkinia?*
- Yes, they were; and the Jews were cleaning them themselves.
- *In Małkinia? How did they get to Małkinia?*
- When they were building the engine house in Małkinia—it was the Jews who worked there.
- *Were they kept in Małkinia or here in Treblinka?*

- No. They were taking them from Treblinka (break)
- *(Keep taping.)*
- (...) I am not afraid and I will not be afraid. I am telling you what I saw.
[break]
- *Do you remember what the fence looked like here in the camp when you were delivering the transports?*
- There was no fence yet. When the Jews were digging the trench there was no fence; it was all just surrounded by the Ukrainians. It was surrounded by the Ukrainians, but it didn't last long. Later, buddy, they made this... *[He coughs]*, well, the barbed wire fence. And because later it stank here, and most likely—I didn't see him but Hitler *[he probably means Himmler]* was here and it stank—that means there was the Gestapo and the gendarmes in Małkinia—and because of that, you know, Hitler forbade to burn it here. So they made this, you know, well, something, let's say, like a table. It opened, they fell in, they burned and that's it. And it stopped stinking after that.
- *Did you know the station-master of Treblinka, Franciszek Ząbecki? He was here in Treblinka at the train station; don't you know him?*
- I don't remember so I can't say. I don't know.
- *And could you tell us—were there many Ukrainians-Wachmans here?*
- Here?
- Yes.

[01:]18:35:16- [01:] 21:26:20

19:16- 22:14

- Well, there were quite a few, quite a few.
- *Did you know them personally?*
- No.
- *And do you remember when they started to come here?*

- When did I start to come?
- *No, no; when the Ukrainians started to appear for the first time.*
- Well, it was right after the war; right after the war.
- *And how many Germans were here?*
- How many were here...four, five and the rest were Ukrainians.
- *Did you see that many?*
- Yeah, that's right, just as I said.
- *Did you perhaps have an opportunity to talk to a Ukrainian?*
- No way! We weren't allowed to come close.
- *And didn't they sometimes sho—show up in Małkinia?*
- No—they did show up. You know, when I was getting married there was this pub run by **Gwoździkowie** [**Woźwikowie, Wozwigowie**] *[he gestures heavy drinking]*; and there was this Mańka *[short for Maria]* from Warsaw; she lived right there, opposite; and she was screwing around with that Ukrainian quite well *[obscene gesture]*; and I, you know, already had my marriage papers; he wanted to fucking kill me with all the caboodle *[meaning unclear]*; blow my brains out. So my mother and my father started to scream and she, fuck it, ran in, and grabbed his hands— because he would have fucked me dead.
- *You said earlier that in Malkinia were ... that 50 percent of the population was Jews.*
- Yes, half.
- *And what happened with them?*
- I have no knowledge about it until now.
- *Did they bring them here?*
- I don't know. I don't know that. The Germans took them. Because you know, in Rostki there was a bor—[border]....first the border ran through the station *[somewhat unclear; there was no border in Malkinia]*, and then it was in Rostki; the second one; and that is how it stayed, well and...You know, Germans took it all and there is no trace left to this day...I don't know. And I told them all, to all my Jewish friends there,

“Keep me updated....”—nothing. To this day there is no trace; I don’t know. They either killed them all or I don’t know; they probably did...

- *You were telling us this interesting story that there was a Jewish woman, whom you gave bread with ham; did anything like that happen any other time?*
- Yes it did, it did.
- *How did it happen?*
- When they were building the engine house in Małkinia, there was this **Iciek**. I don’t remember his name –perhaps **Weder**, damn it. We called him **Iciek** and we lived on good terms with that Jew.
- *Was he from Małkinia?*

[01:] 21:26:20- [01:] 25:56:21

22:14- 26:55

- No, not from Małkinia, he was from Białystok. And he said: “Stefan”, he said, “Bring me a piece of bread.” He wanted bread; he didn’t ask for anything else with it. And that day I had a sandwich with bacon and I gave it to him. And that asshole, that Ukrainian noticed that and had to...but the German didn’t allow. Because he would have blown my head off for that. You weren’t allowed; no way!
- *Were there any other stories when you were hooking up your engine and someone in the car was calling for water?*
- Non stop.
- *Could you tell us a little about it?*
- It happened the entire time, dear, because when we arrived it was—the water was already contaminated with sadophos [*pesticide; malathion*]; you would kick the bucket if you drank it, you know; but at the beginning it wasn’t like that, so, you know, [*he chuckles*]; it is hard to say; well, you know... We would hand out a bottle or something; because these scoundrels were watching; it didn’t take much; a whack on the head and that’s all. What did they care if they blew your brains out?

- *And did the guards have their own car on the train?*
- Yes they did. They stayed in their own compartments. Their compartments in the cars, you know, break rooms. And the two of them were sitting in these rooms; one on one side and the other on the other side; they were armed.
- *Were there any accidents on the Malkinia route and ...*
- Yes, plenty; God damn it...
- *Did anyone try to run away?*
- Yes they did.
- *And?*
- And what? –don't even ask.
- *They were shooting.*
- Yes, sure.
- *Did anyone manage to escape?*
- That happened, happened; it did.
- *And then what?*
- They escaped and disappeared somewhere.
- *But the train didn't stop then?*
- No, no, no. It wasn't allowed; because there was a German on the engine.
- *He was on the engine with you, right?*
- Yes.
- *And what happened: [Germans said] "Schnell, schnell"?*
- Yes the deliveries were: "schnell" and there was a telephone on the end; that means that the last one—that means that the engine had the connection.
- *You said that you showed them this, right? [death gesture] If you weren't inside the camp—how did you know what was going on in there?*
- Ha, h, ha, ha. It's a normal thing.
- *Yes?*
- There were even such cases that people ran away from the camps. There was this **Isiek**, I don't remember his last name, dear, and he ran away. And he knew where we

lived so he stayed with us for the night and he said: “Stefan, take me across the border; to the Russians.” Well....take him—it is easier said than done. But I felt pity for him; I went with him to the border and I took him across; I lifted the wire and he got on the Russian side. What happened later, I don’t know; there is no trace [of him] to this day.

- *And he told you what was going on inside the camp; Iciek told you what there was?*
- No! Because he wasn’t there yet. He ran away still on the way there.
- *Well, then how did you now what was going on here? That they were burning people here, that so many....*
- Well, we knew, we knew; not just me, but the whole neighborhood knew.
- *And they were talking about it?*
- Yes.
- *Were the Ukrainians also talking about it?*
- I don’t know. That didn’t happen; it wasn’t allowed. If the Ukrainian said it to anyone and the Pole would denounce him to the Gestapo. Wow, that would be the end. Blow his head off and that’s it; shit. That didn’t happen. They were afraid themselves.
- *Was that smoke also in Malkinia? The smoke that had that smell...*
- Not the smoke but the stench! When we would sit at the table and there was a wind; from the south, from Treblinka to Malkinia; then you weren’t able to sit still. It stank so badly at the beginning. And later, you know my friend, they made this [he coughs]...the crematorium; they were burning._____later it didn’t stink; but at the beginning they were burning it in the open.

[01:] 25:56:21- [01:] 29:51:17

26:55-31:00

- *They say that there was a rebellion here in Treblinka, that there was a fight with the Jews, that the Jews, the Germans and the Ukrainians....*
- That’s right. It was—so what?

- *Well—did you hear anything about it?*
- I heard a few things, my dear. What happened?—they killed them and that's it.
- *But a few ran away?*
- Big deal! Phew! Who escaped? One in ten or even more—I am not sure.
- *And do you remember the search for escapees here in the neighborhood? They were bringing in the German military or the fire squads—do you remember that here in Malkinia?*
- Yes. So what?
- *They came here...right? Don't you remember anything?*
- I know about it very well.
- *And do you remember when it happened?*
- Well, it was probably....1942 or '43 –something like that. There was a search. We had Ukrainians here and perhaps about four Gestapo men. They couldn't manage and that's why they organized the search for escapees in the forest and all around here.
- *Did they find anybody?*
- No, they didn't. They would have needed the stupidest Pole coming forward to say: "Come. I am sheltering a Jew." Really! It happened to me. I gave shelter to two Jewish women—I gave them shelter for about three days. And later—later at night I showed them across the border.
- *Please tell us about it. About the Jewish women whom you offered shelter. They came to you at night...*
- Yes, at night. They came at—in the evening. It was evening.
- *Where were they from?*
- I don't know that.
- *From where did they escape?—From Treblinka?*
- No, from Łódź.
- *Mhm.*
- They were from Łódź.
- *But they were not here in the camp?*

- No—no—no—no. They weren't.
- *So they came to you...*
- They simply managed to run away from the train in Małkinia.
- *So they ran away from the train in Malkinia?*
- Yes, they did.
- *And where were you hiding them?*
- Well, they stayed at home.
- *But where at home? Simply in the house?*
- Simply in the house and that's that. But when they came I didn't tell anyone about that. Neither my father, nor my mother, nor I did.
- *You didn't tell your father about it?*
- What?
- *You didn't tell your father about it?*
- No, my father knew. He knew.
- *And you weren't afraid to keep them at home?*
- No—why? They were also people.
- *Well...But the Germans would come...they would kill you, your mother and father...*
- You know, unfortunately everyone was risking their lives. This was the truth back then.
- *And you told the Jewish women what was in Treblinka—what was going on here?*
- Yes, I did. Yes, I did. I told them everything. But they already knew anyways. Only they wanted to know for sure that I told them the truth. So...I remember one of them: her name was **Enia**. The other one I don't remember, I don't know—it was so many years ago.
- *And what happened with them?*
- I don't know. There is no trace—because I said to **Enia**: “**Enia**, if you survive...”—well, because it was obvious: if the Germans met them—blow to the head and that's it; no miracles—so I said: “**Enia**, if you survive please write or come and visit me.” There is no trace of them to this day.

- *So where did she go from your house? To the Russian border?*
- No. I took them to the border; then I took them across the border to the Russians and that's all.
- *Did you talk with your friends about the transports? With the other engineers?*
- No—you know, all the engineers knew about it. All of them knew but not all of them came here.
- *But how many—how many were coming here with you? How many did?*
- They are dead.
- *Are they all dead?*
- Yes, they are all dead.

[01:] 29:51:17 - [01:] 34:12:15

31:00- 35:32

- *Is **Tryfan** [Tryfon] alive?*
- Wacek?
- *Mr. Wacław **Tryfan**?*
- Yes. And how do you know him? He is my friend.
- *Did he come with you here?*
- Yes.
- *So how many Polish engineers worked here? I don't know...ten or more?*
- *Really! What ten!?* There were hundred, or perhaps even more. They came here, you know, from Łódź and Warsaw and... God knows where else, you know.
- *Did any of your friends tell you perhaps what they saw on the inside? Nobody was....*
- Nobody. There was no way, you know, unless...We came to the gate, the gate opened, we put it in, they unhooked the engine and that was it.
- *That means—you never saw when they were throwing them out of the cars?*
- Nobody could see it—not just me. Nobody could.
- *But did you hear screaming and crying or something else?*

- No way. What crying?—when it was, you know—from the gate—from that so called furnace room—from the camp—that was....I guess, about half a kilometer, you know. So what sort of crying could there be? ...And anyways, you know—what crying? You started to cry—they whack you on the head— on the head...
- *But there were also Jews who worked there, who sorted the clothing, or....*
- *Sorted what!? What sorting! You know, just like us here: we will all drink shots and one of us won't—and there.* It was the same in there. A normal thing. Sorting! You sorted today you _____ today and then what?—he killed you and that's it. That's how it was. It wasn't any different. What I know and what I saw—that's what I want to explain and tell you today.
- *So, could you tell us generally about your work once again? What do you really remember? —as if nobody knew anything about it. Could you explain—could describe your day at work. When was it? What time? How did you go to work? What did people tell you?*
- Well, it was mainly so, you know, that the train will come from France—or from somewhere else, from a different country. It happened mainly before noon, you know. And, you now, I knew mainly ahead of time when to come on duty. I walked up to the engine, get it ready for the road, you know, and we went to Treblinka—because initially the whole train would go there and later only half. Only half. The whole train would come to Małkinia and later we would take a half and deliver it to Treblinka.
- *You said that the first trains were going straight to Treblinka. You weren't here yet, were you?*
- No.
- *So who was the engineer back then? The Germans?*
- No, not Germans. It was, you know—it was the Ukrainians. But it didn't last long; you know, perhaps a week or two—no more. Just in that moment.
- And what was your daily shift?
- What daily pay! From the Germans?!—that's a joke.
- *How long did it last this whole business? Four hours?*

- *How long were you working back then?*
- How many?—seven, eight; something like that.
- *And that whole business: when you got on, hooked on the train in Treblinka...*
- Like I just said—seven, eight hours. It wasn't more, you know. Arrival to Treblinka, and then from Treblinka to Malkinia....
- *Did you go once a day?*
- Once a day.
- *That means you—took from Mal—from Treblinka—from Malkinia to Treblinka a half of the transport?*
- Yes, I left it and then I went to get the other, then I left it and that's it. And—and these cars stayed and I went by myself/without cargo to Malkinia. And later, the second day I delivered the cars—the cars from Germany, and I took the empty ones. First of all I would take the empty ones because there was no room and later...And later, you know, when they were brought in I went back to Treblinka and—and they were brought in again. And then instead of twenty some cars I had forty.
- *On the way out?*
- Yeah. On the way out...
- *And on the way—on the way in to Treblinka?*
- 22, (2)3, (2)4—that's how it was.

[01:] 34:12:15

35:32

[01:] 00:36:02- [01:] 34:12:15

KASETA 3/2

PLANSZA

Stefan KUCHAREK

12 March 1998

Tape 2

[02:] 00:42:00- [02:] 26:39:14

[02:] 00:42:00- [02:] 05:00:01

00:39- 05:04

- Initially, the track towards Siedlce had a side track to get gravel, right here. So initially we were just turning the lever, that is, away from us and a Ukrainian would unhook the engine and you weren't allowed to go any farther. They had a diesel engine of their own [*unclear*, slang: *kaczajka*]. And later it broke and supposedly Gestapo, or so, allowed to go closer to the gate and..... _____
- *Did you know what was in the cars when you were taking them from the camp?*
- Well, there were several things painted on the walls, there were.
- *What, for example?*
- Well, I didn't know Yiddish. They there—it was full of shit and piss and this there. A normal thing—people were riding there, not cattle.
- *And the cars you took were empty?*
- Yes, empty.
- *But you were also taking loaded cars?*
- No. Not loaded. I didn't take loaded cars. There were no loaded cars, because that garb—because... Only what I know for sure, you know—they were taking The Jewish women and men and children and they were undressing them—all naked and to this—

Kaseta 3 KUCHAREK, STEFAN

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to that hall, where they burned them—they didn't burn them but they poisoned them, you know. And then a big hole would open—I know that exactly because there was this guy in Treblinka, and later he was released. He was there and around.

- *But what did he do there?*
- He did punishment, you know.
- *And who was that: a Ukrainian, a Pole?*
- He was Polish.
- *And he told you about that?*
- Yeah.
- *Well, and what did he say?*
- He said, you know, that they were putting or placing them in a room and later they would close the door. You know...and they all fell down and there was screaming and nothing else. And that's how the story ended.
- *Was he working in there or was he a prisoner, this Polish man?*
- He was a prisoner. A prisoner.
- *And what else? Is he still alive?*
- No. No, he isn't. He was from here, from Górka. A guy—Wacek **Kalisz**. He is dead.
- *And the Germans let him out or did he run away? Do you know?*
- He ran away. Because he knew the area and somehow he escaped through the wires.
- *And what? Was he in Malkinia later on?*
- No.
- *And do you remember?—you know in (19)42 the German-Russian war broke out.*
- So.
- *Well, so—did anything change then?*
- What could have changed?
- *Well, you know, because they say that the camp, which started to accept Jews...Well, it was exactly the same day, or perhaps a little bit—a few days later when there was this war Pol—German and Russian.*
- And?

- *There wasn't any border with Russia?*
- The border still was there.
- *Exactly, and...*
- There still was the border in such way—because the Germans still stood next to—the Russians were gone, but the Germans stayed at the border. If you wanted to pass you had to have an Aus—Ausweis. And that's all.
- *How many years—how many months did you work here on the route Treblinka – Malkinia?*
- Well sir, since '39.
- *Well, no quite. In '39 there was still nothing here...*
- Just a second! Why are you interrupting me! When the war started in October of '39—on the first of October we already...probably in November we came here with the last train to get the gravel—when the Germans started to build the engine house. Later they closed it. In November.
- *They closed the gravel-pit?*
- Yes.
- *The gravel-pit.*
- Right.
- *And the track went there?*
- Yes. Later they closed it. Later they started to bring in the Jews and...and that's it.

[02:] 05:00:01- [02:] 09:10:02

05:04- 09:34

- *Do you know about it—they say that initially both the Poles and the Jews were here and they, as if, built that camp themselves?*
- Well, you know, it is true that the Poles were there—there were two camps there.
- *Over there, farther?*
- Yes. A Polish and a Jewish one.

- *Did you have any contacts with them back then? Did you know what they were doing?*
- No.
- *And did you know about the work camp that was farther down—two kilometers farther?*
- I did. I did.
- *Did you perhaps go to the gravel pit? The gravel-pit itself?*
- I didn't go there later. They didn't let us.
- *And who was servicing the track to the gravel-pit?*
- To the gravel-pit?—it was already closed. You weren't allowed to get in at all. If you wanted to get in and take some gravel you had to take the key from the worker on duty, from the dumper car. The conductor had it. So you went in and the Jews would shovel it on with the sho— gravel with the shovel.
- *But did you enter the gravel-pit?*
- Yes, I did. I entered the gravel-pit. How else?—how could I have...They loaded it up, they loaded about 20 or 25 cars—the Gondola type.
- *And what did the gravel cars look like?*
- The regular Gondolas. They are low like that over here.
- *Could you please tell us—you said before that you were backing out, right? Were you coming from Malkinia, because you were....*
- No. Because I would take the train from Małkinia. Then I would come to Treblinka, go around it and then deliver them here.
- *Aha so you were returning in reverse to...to Malkinia?*
- Yes. Yes, I did. How could I have turned around the engine? There was no way.
- *Exactly. You said before that there were also the passenger cars from France?*
- Yes, there were. There were.
- *Was that something special or did they come often?*
- They only came for France.
- *And how many were there of these ...*
- Trains?

- *Right.*
- Oh, there were a few. A few.
- *Did you see these cars on the inside?*
- Yes.
- *And how was it?*
- Well, but...
- *Were they Pullmans, cool?*
- No. The thing was that, you know, there was...there were bottles, you know, in these cars; and different leftover wine, you know...
- *And the people who were inside—did you see them as well?*
- No, they wouldn't let us. Are you kidding!?
- *But later you could go into the empty wagons?*
- Yes, to the empty.
- *And?*
- They didn't forbid that. Not at all.
- *Because, you see, I... I don't quite understand, because you said that there were also passenger cars here?*
- Passenger, regular passenger. The passenger Pullmans.
- *And what? And they also—did you also take them to Treblinka?*
- Yes. I delivered them and I took them back.
- *And when you would come with these cars, with the entire trains—were the Ukrainians and Germans here?*
- Yes.
- *Many of them?*
- Yeah, they were guarded quite well.
- *On both sides...*
- Yes. Yes, they did. On both sides. Armed.
- *And with the dogs?*
- What?

- *With the dogs? Were there also dogs?*
- No. No there weren't. There were no dogs.
- *How many were there, more or less, 100? 50?*
- The Russians?
- *No. The Ukrainians, the Germans.*
- There weren't too many of them. Well, you know, twenty, let's say, one car—so how many were here?—ten and that's all. On one side and on the other. Armed all right.
- *And who unhooked your cars?*
- That was a Ukrainian. He unhooked it. We weren't allowed to leave the engine.
- *And the Ukrainian who stayed with you on the engine, the one who watched you—he didn't leave either?*
- No.
- *And did he even talk to you during this....*
- We weren't allowed to talk at all. He would get off and take the cable and the phone; he simply got off and left.
- *Mhm. You know—that is, there was this famous Ukrainian here; very tall and very big; he was called "Ivan the Terrible". He supposedly established some contacts here in the village. You never met him? You never heard about him either?*

[02:] 09:10:02-[02:] 12:26:10

09:34- 12:49

- No. I did hear about him. I did. But we never had a conversation in my life. I don't know. Later—later it turned out that one was butchering another here in the camp.
- *What do you mean one another? Who with whom?*
- They killed.
- *A Ukrainian killed another Ukrainian?*
- Yes.
- *But why?*

- Ha, ha. Why? You tell me why.
- *What? Were they stealing? Please tell me...*
- Supposedly there was that one Gestapo agent who was butchering them one after another, because the Germans told him to. Supposedly. Supposedly, well, because nobody could witness it.
- *And could you also tell us this: what did you have there in Małkinia? In Małkinia, there were many pubs, restaurants, inns—and inns.*
- Well, there were not too many. Not many. The **Gwoździk's** had a pub, where—I just said that before—a Ukrainian wanted to kill me there. That was one—and another one was next to the church.
- *And these from the camp—did they come there often?*
- Yeah.
- *And—and how did they come? Did they come with a car or on a train? How many...*
- No. They will come on a train.
- *And how far is it? It is about four kilometers, right? Or...*
- Well, from Treblinka to Małkinia: six.
- *Six kilometers and what?*
- What do you mean what? –what was there to say. They had gold...
- *Exactly.*
- They had gold. They had gold and they were making deals. They had breads.
But... take the whole village—it is not enough that the old were screwing around with them; but what the fuck, the young girls too—because they could get [*gestures: money*]*—they did it for that.*
- *Girls—Po—Polish?*
- Yeah, it—it was –it is not—it is no rumor. A mother along with her daughter would go. Well, because it was all about gold. The Ukrainians could get as much as they wanted back then.
- *And you were afraid of them?*
- Why would I be afraid? Of what?

- *What? Well, you know, Ukrainians—they had guns, they had gold...*
- *So what that he had—I delivered, unhooked it and left to Malkinia and that's that.*
- *Were you already married in that period?*
- *Not yet.*
- *Were there churches—did you have a church in Malkinia?*
- *Two.*
- *Two churches. And what?*
- *The second one was recently built, back then there was one.*
- *Back then, did the priest say anything about it: that you shouldn't do it with the Ukrainians, that it wasn't nice...?*
- *You—you ask...such questions...!*
- *Is this a problem?*
- *A problem!? What was there for a priest to say—everyone was afraid.*
- *Of who—the Germans, the Ukrainians?*
- *Sure thing!—who else? Who else! You—what was there for you to say regarding a Ukrainian or a German? A Ukrainian would blow your brains out and that's it. This is how it was.*
- *Were there any cases that the Ukrainian –did they kill any of yours?*

[02:] 12:26:10- [02:] 16:44:03

12:49- 17:18

- *Gee! Not one! I could take you here to the forest—right there on the way to _____ -- to the saw mill, where two young Jews were killed and buried*
- *Who killed them?*
- *What do you mean who!? Germans, of course!*
- *But why? Were they running away or what?*
- *Yes, they were running away.*
- *And they caught them there.*

- Yeah. And they are still buried there.
- *Do you remember when—when it was over, that whole business with the trains?*
- *It was over when the Germans went after the Russians. It was 1940..., perhaps '41 or '42. No—it was '44.*
- *And what?*
- What—what?
- *Did it end this way that they told you—you—that the Jews were coming here for the last time or what...?*
- No. The last time was when we were driving the train over here—the 24 cars, you know, the passenger cars from France. And, you know, from then on the trail went cold.
- *And you didn't go there any more?*
- No, not any more.
- *And were the Ukrainians still here?*
- No, they weren't. All got closed and good bye.
- *It was—it was after—after the rebellion?*
- Yes, it was. It was after the rebellion.
- *And you weren't coming to the gravel-pit any more?*
- Not any more.
- *And to the camp either?*
- No more. It got closed. You weren't allowed and that's all.
- *And here...did you come here after this—after these trains. Did you come here during the war?*
- I came here to go mushroom picking.
- *When? Still during the war?*
- No. It was after the war. After the war. Not during the war.
- *But, let's say, after the Russians came—still before the final liberation?*

- No, I didn't go there right after the war. Because there were too many god dam mines—and all of that there. Everyone was afraid: you'd go, find the mines—and what happens to you?—everyone was afraid. I was there. Honestly and truly. Yes sir.
- *Is there perhaps something else that you remember very well? A story about the Jews and the Ukrainians?*
- The Ukrainians—fuck them dead, you know! I would blow his face off today if I could! Motherfuckers, you know, thief—the fucking bandits. The Gestapo! But here is the deal, you know. When they were building the engine house in Małkinia –right here, you know. Then—then, you see, the Jews were working by themselves. Just the Jews and these Ukrainians were watching them. And it was fine when everything went well. But when it didn't—a rifle butt to your head. They were beating them to death. And I just arrived from Warsaw probably—I am not sure now, but I think it is right, _____ and there, you know: *[he imitates a Yiddish accent]* “Oh, Mr. Engineer—could you give me a piece of bread.” So, you know, I still had a piece of bread in my bag and I gave it to him. And this son-of-a-bitch, you know, opened up at the engine. And a German—there was military train that was –and “You think you are so tough—Komm mit”. And there came these—A German! A German showed this Ukrainian, you know. What did he want to kill me for?—for a piece of bread. You know *[shrugs his shoulders]*. And there was no law anyways—human life wasn't worth anything: a blow in your face and that's all.

[02:] 16:44:03- [02:] 20:26:19

17:18- 21:09

- *And were you also going to Warsaw at the time you were going to Treblinka?*
- Yes I did. I did go.
- *And what was that – also the passenger trains?*
- And these were the passenger trains. The old fashioned cars had the side doors— but you know that, don't you?

- *And the rest—you...?*
- And the rest—the rest was freight, you know.
- *Did you also deliver freight/cargo to Warsaw?*
- Yeah.
- *Michał, would you like to ask a question?*
- *Yes, I wanted to ask how many railway employees were there—how many engineers at the junction in Małkinia?*
- In Małkinia there were over 100.
- *[Please, look over here]*
- There were over 100 in Małkinia.
- *100 rail employees or the engineers?*
- The engineers.
- *It was a very large.....*
- Ah! Certainly. The trains from and to the front were coming here.
- *So you also drove trains to the front?*
- Yes.
- *Military trains?*
- Yes, to Białystok. No farther.
- *And you talked with your friends in w...about the trains to Treblinka?*
- Well, you know—talked. Everyone talked, you know, that...because these were the engineers, you know...simply, and I don't know why they trusted, you know. Because the dispatcher—the German dispatcher was assigning you on duty to Treblinka
- *And what—and what did you say among friends—among the engineers about...*
- What did we say?—you had to take the Jews to Treblinka and that's it. It was a simple job. Every one of us knew about it.
- *And do you remember?—such an important German came here. You said Hitler—it was most likely Himmler. In '43—such an important person...*
- Well, Himmler was Hitler's assistant.
- *Right. And do you remember when he came here?*

- I remember.
- *And? And what—what—what happened?*
- What happened?—you know!? What happened!? They came together with the German convoy—what did we have to say, you know, or to know?!—nothing.
- *Well, but they said: „Someone important will come now. He came...” –or so. They remodeled the train station.*
- I am just telling you—who was curious back then?—you know! Everyone was scared shitless.
- *Well—the Germans were afraid, because their boss came here...*
- What are you...! The Germans?! And what about us?! _____taking...
- *And what were the locals saying about the women who were whoring with the Ukrainians?*
- And what?—what was there to say? The bitches are still alive. They all fell for ...
[gestures: money]
- *And what? But they had regular—they found the husbands and so on*
- What husbands! What the fuck—they were all after... [gestures: heavy drinking] They were making the fucking moonshine. They were fucking each other. Every fucking Ukrainian gave [gestures: money] for humping a child, the smallest. The old bag would fuck for a wedding band or some sort of other—dollars—and that's it. A normal_____ thing.
- *Anything else? Thank you very much.*
- Mhm.

[02:] 20:26:19- [02:] 25:31:05

21:09- 26:26

[Outside]

- *So? Were the trains coming from here?*

- From Małkinia.
- *But where from—where was it? Could you point to where the trains were coming from?*
- From France; from Poland.
- *I know, but from what direction?*
- From Małkinia.
- *But it was here?*
- Yes.
- *Please, point. From over there?*
- From over there [*he points*]. They were unhooking them [*the cars*] over there and putting them here.

[Camera zooms]

- *And how far did you get with the trains?*
- I'll go there in a moment and show you.
- *But now—is this the direction?*
- Yes. Straight over there.
- *How far is it—about 300 meters away?*
- Oooh! More than that.

[Camera shows]

- *And what was here? Was there a grove here before?*

[Camera shows the forest]

- There was nothing here—an empty field. And later the Germans planted the grove.
- *And the Ukrainians waited here— here in this spot?*

- Farther down.
- *Mhm. So nothing was here yet?*
- Nothing.
- *[Instructions in Hebrew] So what—let's go?*

[Forest road]

- *So what? This was the way to—to the quarry?*
- Yes.
- *And the Ukrainians were already here?*
- They were.
- *Mhm.*
- They were here.
- *And what was here before?* (the object the interviewer points at is cut off)
- Over here—nothing. There was a grove here.
- *A regular grove. And how did that gate look at all?*
- I will show you in a second—a little farther.
- *So it was like...*
- It was a blind—no throughway gate.
- *Was there any writing on the gate?*
- No. There was nothing .
- *Were there any cases that you would drive the train here at night?*
- No. Not at night. It wasn't allowed.
- *And why?*
- How should I know?
- *Were they afraid?*
- I don't know. I don't know.

[Commemorative train tracks]

- *So, you know—20 cars—this is quite a ...*
- *20—22.*
- *So how much is it? It is 100 meters, right? More perhaps? And this detour—how was it? Because you...*
- *Yes—there was a side track.*

- *Aha. Right here.*
- *Right here. There [he points]. This way. Come here.*
- *Just a second—so the track was turning here?*
- *There was a track switch over there.*

[Cut]

[02:] 25:31:05-[02:] 26:39:14

26:26-27:38

- *And what?—you arrived and then you pulled over there...*
- *Yes...the entrance was there. Over there. And the track to the pit went here. [He points.]*
- *And where were you turning around with—with the engine?*
- *But I didn't turn around: I would put it in and then I would back out.*
- *In reverse. And did you see the Jews when they were getting...*
- *No. No, I didn't.*
- *You weren't allowed to?*
- *No way!*
- *Aha.*
- *There was no exit— and good bye.*

- *And the Ukrainians were on this side of the tracks and on the other one?*
- They were on both sides.
- *And what was here? A forest? There was nothing? You didn't see anything from this side?*
- No. There was a young grove here.
- *But perhaps—you could see something behind this grove?*
- Nothing.
- *Nothing completely?*
- Nothing. It was fenced off with the wire for quite a distance.
- *Good. Thank you then.*

[An obelisk]

- I can also show you where they dug out a trench and where they were burning them.
- *And how could you see that?*
- I saw that right after the war.
-

[02:] 26:39:14

27:38

[02:] 00:42:00- [02:] 26:39:14