

WIECZOREK Gotfryd

Polish Witnesses to the Holocaust Project

Polish

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Interview length: [2 links]:45min

This interview was conducted with **Gotfryd Wieczorek**, who was born on **January 22, 1934**, in **Blachownia**. In the beginning of the interview, he talks about his family, and also about his house, that was located in the vicinity of two camps. Further, he describes the camps, where the British, and Jewish prisoners lived. Then, he talks about the evacuation of the Jewish camp, and he also describes a day, when the Jews stopped for a night in **Ciesznow**. The second part of the interview takes place outside, where Gotfryd Wieczorek points out the places, that he described in the first part of the interview.

### **Tape 1**

**[01]:00:56:19 – [01]:06:26:11**

**00:57 – 06:26**

Gotfryd Wieczorek was born on January 22, 1943, in Blachownia. In the beginning, he talks about his family- he lived with his parents, and a younger brother. When he was 8 years old, there was a chemical factory built in Blachownia, and in 1942, the prisoners started working at the factory. They were brought from different countries. Gotfryd Wieczorek describes two camps. First of them, was called **[Wizlager]**, where a movie theater was located. The second camp, called **[Kanal lagier]**, was occupied by the British prisoners. There was a barber shop at the British camp, so even Polish people used to go there, since there was no barber in the village. The British prisoners were treated well, and they had plenty of food. Mr. Gotfryd saw them on their way to work every day. They always carried candy for the kids to give away. The British prisoners were treated as workers, not as prisoners. They worked for several hours a day, and then they had time to relax, do sports, or different activities. In addition to British, there were also French, Italian, German, and Jewish prisoners, as well as criminals (they had yellow stripes on their shoulder). All of them were treated much worse than the British. However, Jews were treated the worst. The Jewish camp was separated from the other camps, and it was located in the direction of the station from **Slawiecice**. On the left, from the camp, there was a crematorium built in the forest. When the first people died, their bodies were buried in the ground, but the wild pigs dug the human bodies out, so the furnace was built to avoid possible epidemic. Mr. Wieczorek saw the furnace after the war. There was a stretcher, where they placed dead bodies on, and then there were thrown into the furnace.

**[01]:06:33:19 – [01]:14:24:08**

**06:34 – 14:24**

Gotfryd Wieczorek describes the Jewish camp. He saw their camp very often, as it was located near to the road. The camp was surrounded by several layers of barbed wire, so it was impossible to escape from there. He saw the prisoners almost every day on their way to work. They were dressed in white and black striped clothes, with a symbol of the star on the back. As a child, Mr. Wieczorek, and his friends talked to the Jews many times. They were curious about their life in the camp, and if they needed anything. They were always hungry, and asked for food. All of them knew German very well. It was impossible to bring anything to eat for them during the march, because they were watched very well by the Germans. The Jewish prisoners were engaged in various types of work, such as, cleaning, digging ditches, and repairing roads. Mr. Gotfryd claims that he only saw male prisoners, and they were different ages. They always asked for something warm to eat, and drink. If only possible, Mr. Gotfryd, and his mother always shared their food with them. Best time to bring some food for the Jews, was when they were at work at the factory, otherwise there was no chance for it at the camp. Mr. Gotfryd's grandmother had some pumpkins, and the Jews always asked her for them. She sliced the pumpkins up, and then the prisoners roasted them over fire, and ate. Mr. Gotfryd says, that it was a great satisfaction to be able to help the Jews, and they were always very grateful, and thankful for everything.

The Jews were usually guarded by the German soldiers, but there were also other guards, who were called, **Kapos**. They were big, and strong men selected out of the group of Jews. They were violent, and mistreated the Jewish prisoners. Mr. Gotfryd says that they probably became Kapos to be treated well by the Germans. Kapos wore black berets, and they were big, and strong man. **In 1945**, the local people were relocated from **Blachownia** to **Ciesznow**. Mr. Gotfryd doesn't remember what month it was, but he was still attending school in Ciesznow. As he claims, the conditions were not very good, since all the kids were taking class in the same classroom, so they didn't get a chance to learn anything. Mr. Gotfryd's family was assigned to live with the [**Kajdos**] Family, in Ciesznow. Their house was located next to a large property, and a little chapel. When the war was almost over, and the Jews were evacuated from the camp, they marched from Blachownia, and stopped for a night in Ciesznow. Mr. Wieczorek saw lots of Jews that day. They were hungry, asking for food, and something to drink. Mr. Wieczorek's mother made some food for them, and Gotfryd Wieczorek, and his younger brother were taking the food for the prisoners.

Here, Mr. Wieczorek mentions one situation, which particularly stuck in his head. He saw a young Jewish man, who walked his blind father, and he was asking for food for him. It was very sad to see. Because there were so many Jews, they had to be divided in two groups for a night. One of the groups was put in a pigsty at the property, next to Mr. Gotfryd's house, while the second group of Jews was taken right outside of Ciesznow, where a large barn was located.

[01]:14:33:15 – [01]:21:32:17

14:34 – 21:32

Mr. Gotfryd talks about two situations. The night that the Jews stayed in Ciesznow, one of the prisoners tried to escape. He was shot in the back while he was running. The German, who shot at him from the distance, run up to him, and shot him in the back of his head. Then, he turned his body on its back, and his face was completely destroyed. Mr. Wieczorek was 3 meters away from the scene, so he saw it very well. He also witnessed another situation, which took place the next day. The Jews started marching the next day towards [**Kazimierz**], and many of them were exhausted, and had no strength. One of the Jews was extremely weak, and couldn't march anymore, so the German, came up to him, and put a grenade in his pocket,

and then he pushed him into the ditch. Mr. Wieczorek saw the parts of his body flew in the air, after the grenade explosion.

At this point, Mr. Wieczorek talks once again about, where the Jews slept during their standstill in Ciesznów. One of the groups slept in the stable at the property. Children were curious, and talked to the prisoners. Mr. Gotfryd doesn't remember the conversation, and he says that no adults were allowed near to the Jews. The kids were giving them food. The Jews stayed there only for one night, and the next morning they marched on, but nobody knows where, and what happened to them. Mr. Gotfryd's mother said that all of the dead bodies were loaded into carts, and taken somewhere. Most of the Jews, who died during the march, died of exhaustion, and cold. The Jews were dressed in shirts, and pants with white and black stripes. They had black and white berets, and wooden shoes on their feet. Apparently, many of the Jews escaped at night while staying in Ciesznów. At that point, the Germans were not supervising the prisoners, as strictly, as they were in the beginning of the war. None of the Jews escaped to the nearby homes, because the locals feared for their lives. Mr. Gotfryd's family left for **Austria** in the end of the war, and they came back to [**Cisow**], to Mr. Wieczorek's grandmother after the war.

**[01]:21:38:20 – [01]:26:34:02**

**21:38 – 26:34**

Mr. Wieczorek talks about the Jewish camp in Blachownia that he visited after the war. When he returned from Austria, he was curious to see the barracks. He never found anything valuable there. He remembers playing with a mouse trap that probably was made by one of the prisoners. Mr. Wieczorek saw empty bunks, tables, and chairs. He recalls one of the German holidays that the prisoners celebrated in the camp once a year. He doesn't remember its name, but he thinks that it was very fun. The prisoners performed, and there was a singing show, they even had marry-go-round at the camp. The locals were able to come to see shows, and listen to the music. These camps were located very far from the Jewish camp, as the Jewish camp was the only one set up separately from the others. All of the camps were open, because the prisoners only slept there, and there was a road that led between the barracks. The Jewish camp was closed, and nobody was allowed in there. The Jews mainly worked at repairing roads, or digging trenches. Mr. Wieczorek never knew any Jew by name, because they usually just exchanged a few words while the Jews were at work.

**[01]:26:43:19 – [01]:35:42:23**

**26:43 – 35:42**

Mr. Gotfryd says that the Jews were poor, so they never paid him for food. The British prisoners, on the other hand, never needed anything. They always had plenty of food, and were treated well. Mr. Gotfryd played soccer with them at the soccer field, in Blachownia. Mr. Wieczorek's house, was the first after the bridge, and was situated next to the camp, so he saw the prisoners very often. Every Sunday, he passed the camp on the way to church, in **Slawedzice**.

Once again, Mr. Wieczorek talks about the day, when the Jews stopped for a night at the property, in Ciesznów. As he claims, the Germans allowed his mother to feed the Jews at that time because they didn't have any food supplies left to feed them, but the Germans never paid any money to his mother for the food. Nobody else in the village was helping the prisoners at

that time. There were only four families left in Ciesznow because most of the locals were relocated at that point. There was one woman, named **Luga**, who lived with her son, and the grandmother, at the property during that time.

Mr. Wieczorek mentions one incident that his uncle told him about. He was riding a bicycle from work, when the three Jews attacked him. Apparently, they tried to steal his clothes. His uncle fired his gun in the air, and they escaped. Not everyone owned a gun, but his uncle supervised a water facility, so he was able to carry a gun. Mr. Wieczorek doesn't know what happened with the prisoners from other camps. Perhaps, they were transported somewhere by cars. Only the Jews were marched, Mr. Wieczorek saw them pulling a big, steal cart that was filled with food. Mr. Wieczorek doesn't know how many of the Jews died in Ciesznow, but his mother saw two carts filled with dead bodies the next day after they marched. The night that some Jew escaped, was cold, but there was no snow on the ground. Mr. Wieczorek's mother never saw any Jews who managed to escape at night in Ciesznow. The Germans told her the next morning, that when they counted the prisoners, many of them were missing. They ordered to search for the Jews at the barn, but they never found anyone.

## **Tape 2**

**[02]:00:53:13 – [02]:09:57:07**

**00:53 – 09:57**

This part of the interview takes place in the field, Mr. Wieczorek, and the person conducting the interview follow the same route that the Jews marched during the war in Ciesznow. He points out the places, that he described in the first part of the interview. First, he shows the house, where he lived during the war. Then, he points at the road that the Jews were gathered, when they first came to Ciesznow. On the opposite side of the street, he shows the area, where the barn was located. Then, he talks about some Jew, who tried to escape, and was shot several times in his back by the German, while he was running.

Mr. Wieczorek shows some other buildings that the Jews also slept at, during their stop in Ciesznow. He doesn't know the owner of the property that the Jews occupied during the standstill, but he remembers some woman, named Luga, who rented a room at the property, with her son, and the grandmother. Mr. Wieczorek says that when the Jews came to Ciesznow, he walked outside, and they were asking him for some food, and they were thirsty. His mother, and the other lady cooked potatoes, made some coffee, and milk for them. There were so many Jews, that he carried the food for them in large buckets, and the watering cans were filled with coffee, and milk.

He points at the field that some Jew run through, and was shot several times in his back by the German soldier. He fell on the ground, and then the German came up to him at shot him in the head. When he turned his body on his back, Mr. Gotfryd saw his deformed face from the shot.

Mr. Wieczorek also talks about some other Jew, who was exhausted, and wasn't able to march any longer. The German put a grenade into his pocket, and pushed him into a ditch. Mr. Wieczorek shows the area, where this incident happened. There used to be a large tree, by a ditch, where the grenade exploded. Mr. Gotfryd saw the parts of the body flying in the air.

