

ZIMNOCH, Jan
Polish Witnesses to the Holocaust Project
Polish
RG-50.488*0048

Tape 1

In this interview, Jan Zimnoch, born November 10, 1917, and a lifelong resident of Saniki, describes the relationship between local Poles and Jews before and during the Nazi-German occupation of World War II. He talks about the deportation of Poles to Kazakhstan and Siberia during occupation by the Soviet Union. He focuses on the persecution of Jews under the Germans and speaks about the liquidation of the Jews from Tykocin on August 25, 1941, detailing his work in the ghetto post-liquidation. He mentions cases of Poles saving Jews from Tykocin. He also discusses his confinement in prison in Białystok and describes his work during the liquidation of the ghetto in Białystok. He also remembers prewar anti-Jewish activities by the National Party, “Stronniectwo Narodowe,” (SN), and describes partisan activities.

[01:] 00:08:05 – [01:] 07:06:11
00:00 – 07:15

The interviewee introduces himself as Jan Zimnoch, born on November 10, 1917, in Saniki, a village within the municipality of Tykocin; tells about his parents’ farm he took over and subsequently managed for 35 years; talks about the good, harmonious relationship between the local Poles and Jews; says the Jews accounted for half of the population of Tykocin; remembers beneficial Polish-Jewish trade and **Jankiel**, a Jew, who bought 2.5 hectares of land from his parents before the war; mentions insignificant changes in the Polish-Jewish relationship under the Soviet occupation and remembers some Jews cooperating with the Soviet police; remembers the Jew, **Josiel**, who helped people despite his cooperation with the Soviet police; talks about his acquaintance with the son of the Jewish deputy mayor of Tykocin named **Kohn**, also known as **Kadiś [Kadyś]**.

[01:] 07:06:12 – [01:] 15:09:19
07:16 – 15:28

He describes the deportation of the Polish community from Tykocin and nearby villages to Kazakhstan and Siberia; claims that people were chosen by the People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs, “Narodnyy Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del,” (NKVD) and locals who helped the Soviets; remembers that from Tykocin 15 Polish families were deported, whereas from Saniki two families were taken to the Altai region close to the Ural Mountains; highlights that under Soviet occupation both Jews and Poles were treated equally; mentions that he was arrested twice—first, in April 1941 for his activities in a youth organization and his love for books; remembers two months of confinement in Białystok prison with two Jews; remembers being freed June 20, 1941, the day the German-Soviet war broke out; describes the chaotic situation fleeing the Soviets and dangerous side roads back to Saniki, 21-22 June, 1941; remembers being in Tykocin at least once a week and seeing Germans there after his return from prison; says that at first there was an interregnum period, then the Germans managed to

administer everything after two weeks.

[01:] 15:09:20 – [01:] 23:35:17
15:29 – 24:15

Zimnoch talks about the persecution of the Jews in Tykocin under the German occupation; remembers conversations with Jews predicting that hard times were looming for both Jews and Poles; estimates the number of the Jewish population of Tykocin to have been about 2,000; says that in addition there were Jews from nearby villages seeking shelter in Tykocin; talks about August 25, 1941 [*points at his book where he described these events; the book is not shown in the frame*] when two German battalions encircled Tykocin and rounded up Jews in the market square; describes Jews being expelled to Jeżewo and Zawady; claims that certain Jews received drug injections; talks about rushing the Jews to Łopuchowo where locals were forced to dig pits for the Jews; in the course of these events he was not in Tykocin because he hid in his house, just like other locals did; remembers that only after the war people were courageous enough to talk about these events; highlights that he talked to elderly people about these events; says that the inhabitants of Łopuchowo heard screams, shouts, and the sound of machine guns that day.

[01:] 23:35:18 – [01:] 31:57:15
24:16 – 32:58

Being confronted with another version of the story of the deportation of the Jews from Tykocin, Zimnoch says that all he knows is that the Jews were brought to the market square and deported in the direction of Jeżewo; says he was not a witness to these events but was curious and asked locals about it later; talks about his arrival in Tykocin after August 25, 1941, and remembers the empty town; says that about ten Jews survived the deportation, among them a teenager, the son of the local butcher; remembers that the rescued Jew had come to Tykocin later with a colleague for an interview; denies that the survivor's name was **Kapica**; answers the question whether he knew if during the occupation some Jews were rescued, saying that it was obvious that some Jews would survive; asserts that it was known that some Poles helped Jews and kept them in their homes; comments on the story of Mr. **Łopiński** from **Skoronice Tomachowskie** who hid a Jew, Dr. **Turek**, in his cellar for some time; highlights that Mr. **Łopiński** was a merchant and often hosted Germans with whom he traded; adds that he was friends with Mr. **Łopiński's** son; says he did not see any of the rescued Jews; discusses an unsuccessful assassination of the gauleiter of the Białystok region, **Erich Koch**, organized by partisans; states that in place of **Koch** they killed a German lieutenant residing in Tykocin; says that this lieutenant was a good man who had helped people and warned them of Gestapo activities.

[01:] 31:57:16 – [01:] 35:11:21
32:59 – 36:20

He talks about his work in the Białystok ghetto, which lasted for two weeks, after the Jews were deported in the summer of 1943 in the aftermath of the unsuccessful uprising in August 1943; remembers that Germans recruited young Poles for work in the ghetto and adds that his brother and sister were also made to work there; describes the tasks he had to perform: searching dwellings, taking valuable items, and placing them in designated areas; lists the food found in the homes; comments on sleeping in the homes of the Jews; claims there were a lot of high-quality goods, as the Jews in Białystok had high living standards.

Tape 2

[02:] 00:41:13 – [02:] 08:56:18
00:00 – 09:10

He returns to the story of the rescued Jew who came to Tykocin with a colleague after the war; angrily remembers that they claimed that it was the Poles who turned the Jews over to the Germans and that the Knesset in Israel had the same information; says that they were not able to give any details; mentions a teacher, Mr. **Bialowarczyk**, who engaged in a discussion with the rescued Jew and his colleague; adds that he already knew Mr. **Bialowarczyk** under the occupation and that he was a teacher in Saniki for about a year; repeats that the relationships between the local Poles and the Jews were very good; talks about the change after *Kristallnacht* in 1938; describes the prewar boycotts of the SN who did not allow the locals of Tykocin to visit Jewish shops; explains there were about 27 Jewish, and two or three Polish shops in Tykocin; states that notwithstanding these boycotts he entered Jewish shops which led to SN vandalizing his house by painting anti-Jewish slogans on the walls; denies that under occupation the SN turned Jews over to Germans, says many members joined the partisans; remembers that Mr. **Bialowarczyk** hid a talented Jewish girl, and that after the war she went to Israel and became an expert in nuclear issues in the United States.

[02:] 08:56:19 – [02:] 13:28:21
09:11 – 13:54

He talks again about his work in the ghetto and states that cleaning the ghetto took six to eight weeks; remembers the items carried out of the houses: cupboards, silverware, and clothes; says that despite the recent uprising he did not find weapons; states that in Tykocin the Germans did not force the Poles to clean the Jewish houses; talks about the Poles who searched the houses for valuable things; describes the disastrous state of the houses; says that homeless Poles moved into these houses, and that after the war there were no empty houses in Tykocin; states that after the war Jews generally did not return to Tykocin, but that the first one was Mr. **Kapica**, whom he did not know; remembers the synagogue in Tykocin [*points at his book in which he described the synagogue in detail; the book is not shown in the frame*].

[02:] 13:28:22 – [02:] 17:27:11
13:55 – 18:02

He talks about the partisans and remembers the brother of **Stanislaw Garbowski** from Garbowo; describes in detail the well-armed partisans, using **Garbowski's** brother as an example; states that besides organizing the assassination of **Erich Koch**, the partisans also coordinated actions against the Germans and Soviets; remembers the liquidation of the "**Wiarus**" battalion by the NKVD near the village of Babin; remembers that Germans killed Poles from Tykocin, especially after the unsuccessful assassination of **Koch**; tries to recall the name of the good German lieutenant killed instead of **Koch** and comes up with **Philipp [Filip, Filik, Fink]**; remembers that two weeks after the assassination attempt in May 1944 German soldiers came and rounded up about 400 Poles; states that he was at home when Tykocin was freed in August 1944; says that unfortunately he did not establish contact with

former Jewish inhabitants of Tykocin; notes again that Jews did not return to Tykocin.