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TOMCZUK, Antonin
Polish Witness to the Holocaust
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Summary

The interview is made with Mr. Antonin Tomczuk, born 01.01.1923, who as a young man was forced to work in Treblinka. He describes the camp and remembers the executions of Jews.

Tape 1

[01]:00:47:12 – [01]: 05: 18:05
00:41 – 05:23

Mr. Tomczuk gives his personal details and tells how and why he was taken to Treblinka. Mr. Tomczuk was born the 1st of January 1923 in **Sarniów [Sarnów]**. He tells that in Sarniów was a dairy and in the near forest appeared a group of guerilla who stole the butter from the Germans. Because of this the Germans came to Sarniów and took approximately 30 people with them. They were ordered to get on a car and were taken to **Sokolów**. The next day all of them were driven to Treblinka.

He remembers a German who had a big manor called **Trochinder [Trochynder]**.

[01]: 05: 18:05 - [01]: 09:34:13:05
05:23 – 09:50

Mr. Tomczuk remembers that they didn't know where they were driven, not until they arrived and were singled out (distinguished) he saw the inscription „Treblinka”. Near the gate they were lined up in groups of three or four. At the end walked a German, in front was a Ukrainian. They were searched and were ordered to lay down their belongings in front of them. He remembers one older person who had two grosze (polish money) in his shirt. After one of the Ukrainians noticed the money one of the Germans **Schwarz [Schwartz]** began to hit him.

He tells that the guerillas troubled the Germans also at the airport in **Rogowo** and because of that also people from Rogowo were taken to Treblinka. He doesn't kept in mind those people very good, but remembers one tall and handsome man, who probably was able to escape, but was caught again. When he and the others got up at 5 or 6 o'clock in the morning to go to work, this man was laying shot dead near the gate.

Afterwards he counts out two more places from where other prisoners also came from: **Warsaw [Watszawa/ Warschau/ Warsaw]** and **Koszalin [Köslin]**.

[01]: 09:34:1305 – [01]: 14:30:24
09:50 – 14:59

Mr. Tomczuk remembers the appearance of the camp.

In the barracks were (multi)- storied beds for sleeping. For the night a bucket (container) for faeces (“toilet”) was put out. There were some windows.

He counts out that in the camp were approximately six to eight barracks: a kitchen, the Jewish barrack, a dairy, a butcher’s and a bakery and the polish barrack. He tells that the Jews were mostly craftsman (skilled workers who worked at the machines), whereas the Poles were taken only for (simple) work.

He remembers that in the bakery worked a Jew called **Józek [Józef, Joseph]**.

He tells that at the area of the camp were located two little estates: **Milewek** and **Socha**. He continues that at Milewek was a laundry. Male Jews were allowed to go there only at Sundays or special holidays, whereas female Jews and their children were working there regularly and that he was bringing them lunch.

[01]: 14:30:24 – [01]:19:03:03
14:59 - 19:42

Mr. Tomczuk estimates that at Milewek worked approximately 30 to 40 women, mostly young ones and that there were also children. He assumes that when the male Jews were going there at Sunday that there was an escort with them for sure.

He remembers that when he was taken to Treblinka, the Jews from Sokołów were already there. One of them, who worked by the horses asked him, what the guerilla in Sokołów was doing. Mr. Tomczuk tells that he didn’t answer, because he didn’t know with whom he was talking and because he was afraid of being killed. He continues that this asking Jew later escaped. By the horses were working also two Czech Jews **Gustav** and **Aaron**, whom the German landlord asked, if they could recommend him someone else for the work by the remaining pair of horses. He tells that those two Czech Jews recommended him and that since then life was better for him, because the work by the horses was easier.

He remembers that one day the German landlord **Rottenfield [Rottingfield/ later called Rottenführer]** noticed him while he was eating some potatoes which was forbidden. He continues that when the German noticed, like he was shaking out of fear, said: “Polish, eating, eating not good” („Polnisch, essen, essen nicht gut”), but that he didn’t do anything else.

[01]:19:03:03 – [01]:24:45:04
19:42 - 25:38

Mr. Tomczuk tells that the crew of the camp consisted only of approximately five Germans, the rest were Ukrainians. He remembers that when they were goaded (forced to go) to the place of the hydraulic engineering (“Wasserbau” I don’t know if this is the correct translation for “Wasserbau” in this context), they were guarded by three or four Ukrainians, but only one German. When he was going to get the horses he was also guarded.

Mr. Tomczuk remembers a situation which took place at Socha. Besides the working quarters and a barn there was a house where a person from Poznań with his wife and daughter lived. The oldest Ukrainian, called “Oberwachmann” (main watchman) who supervised over every Ukrainian who guarded the prisoners, ordered the daughter to buy vodka.

Being drunk he wanted to shot someone. Two other Ukrainians hold him back, but during the quarrel one of the Ukrainians pushed him from the cart and he was driven over. He tells that he had to work even with his bruises.

[01]:24:45:04 – [01]:29:03:06
25:38 - 30:07

Mr. Tomczuk tells that in the camp were always the same Jews. He remembers that the Jews had a superior (przełożony) called **Aaron** and that they lived without problems with each other. He mentions also a privileged Jew called **Ignac [Ignaz, Ignatz]**, who was not guarded even when he went to **Kosowo**. When the last transport of Jews from Warsaw arrived, he was told that he could choose a wife for himself. He chooses a young woman with a little son, who later on lived with him together in the camp.

Mr. Tomczuk tells that the Jews collected weapons and made two hills (?). He assumes that someone told about it or showed the Germans, because the Germans found the weapons. He tells that the oldest Jews (Aaron and Ignac) were goaded to the forest; afterwards he heard only the shooting.

[01]:29:03:06 – [01]:31:12:24
30:07 - 32:22

Mr. Tomczuk answers the question why the last Jews were guided to their camp, but not at once to the Jewish one. He tells that the camp with the crematory was located 1km – 1.5km away from theirs and that the crew had difficulties to take all Jews at once to the crematory and because of that they were taken first to the work-camp. They were told to sit in one of the empty barracks and that they will be able to go to a bathroom soon. Everybody had to take off all clothing except for the underwear, because they were told that after having a bath they would get clothing folded into a square. Afterwards both men and women together were brought to the crematory.

[01]:31:12:24 – [01]:35:39:09
32:22 - 37:00

Mr. Tomczuk remembers that when he was carrying hay to the village **Wólka** 3km away, they were burning the Jews and that the smell was not to be withstood. He tells that after the uprising the crematory was not existent anymore, but that corridors made out of concrete were build. He mentions that when they burned the corpses in bonfires the human fat flew down into barrels which were buried at the end of those corridors. He tells that he saw such a situation two times with his own eyes.

He continues and describes the outbreak of the uprising. He tells that the storehouse of ammunition was operated by Jews. At that time the Ukrainians and Germans were bathing in the **Bug** and nearly nobody was in the camp. He remembers that they had to collect stones when they heard the shots and saw the smoke in the distance. One Ukrainian ordered them to fall to the ground; afterwards they had to go to the barrack.

Tape 2

[02]:00:37:18 – [02]:07:40:16
00:31 - 07:51

Mr. Tomczuk saw some Jews running away, but the Germans at once began the manhunt. The uprising took place approximately one month after the discovery of the weapon.

He remembers also the excavation of potatoes in October near the camp where some pines were standing. The Jews had to dig out the trees and after they ended the work they were hit with a baton at the head. Two unharmed Jews had to lay the corpses on his cart and he had to carry them to **Maleszewo**, a village near the camp. He remembers that both, the dead and the still conscious were thrown into the holes.

[02]:07:40:16 – [02]:15:42:07
07:51 - 16:13

Mr. Tomczuk again counts the existing barracks in the camp: the kitchen, the work- barracks, one barrack for the women, one for the Poles and the Jewish one – together there were seven of them. Mr. Tomczuk tells that he did not have any more contacts with Mr. **Rottenführer**.

He continues that one day, when they were working at the field, their Ukrainian guard laid down to the ground with his face to earth. Seven working persons run away in the direction of the forest. Only when he heard the shots from the observatory- tower he jumped to his feet and saw only him and his colleague by the horses. He remembers that the Ukrainian later explained himself saying that the runaways were shooting at him from some weapon. The next day, four or five Germans and Ukrainians with rifles in their hands entered their barrack and they were searched. They were ordered to lay down everything they had in front of them. Nobody had anything, except for one man from Rogowo who in his collar had sewed in 400 złotych (polish money). When the money was found, the man was tied to a ladder and was hit by two Ukrainians. Mr. Tomczuk tells that he also had 100 złotych and tells that he did not knew whether he should show the money or not. He continues that when everybody had to strip naked he walked to the German Rottenführer and asked him, if he also had to do it. The German answered “no, no” (nein, nein) and he as the only one had not undress and kept his 100 złotych.

[02]:15:42:07 – [02]:24:43:22
16:13 – 25:37

Mr. Tomczuk remembers that the runaways in the direction of **Maleszewo** were only Poles. He mentions that his colleague by the horses was from **Korczewo**.

Mr. Tomczuk recalls other crimes done to the Jews and tells that when they were going to work or to lunch the Ukrainians ordered them to sing although they were out of breath. He continues that in their barrack died eight men. Under the dead was a deaf-mute who was not able to follow not hearing the orders and was killed because of that.

Afterwards he gives details about the release of people out of Treblinka. He tells that people were released after seven months three or four times in groups of four or ten persons.

Mr. Tomczuk tells that he did not see any Jews till the end of the war. But he remembers that after the war one family in Sarniów kept three Jews – two younger men and one woman.