

Halina Błaszczyk  
Polish Witnesses to the Holocaust Project  
Polish  
RG-50.488.0086

Halina Błaszczyk was born in Izbica near the Wieprz River on April 8, 1929. Her father was a local miller. Halina remembers that the town of Izbica before the Second World War was populated mainly by Jews. She describes Polish and Jewish relations and talks about the ghetto in Izbica. Mrs. Błaszczyk describes dramatic deportations of the Jews which took place during the war and discusses the involvement of the locals. She remembers looting which took place during the deportations and talks about the citizens of Izbica who both helped to hide the Jews or denounced them to the Germans. She comments on the involvement of the Polish firefighters, blue police and the Ukrainian “blacks”. Mrs. Błaszczyk tells the story of Kurt Engels, a cruel German commander, and his second in command, **Klim**, who was Polish by birth. She also recalls **Hanan**, a Jewish boy who found shelter in her home.

**File 1 of 3**

[01:] 00:41:01 - [01:] 35:44:15  
00:34 - 37:06

[01:] 00:41:01 - [01:] 05:09:00  
00:34 – 05:14

Q: Could you please introduce yourself to the camera and tell us when and where were you born and where you lived.

A: Błaszczyk Halina, 8. 04. 1929, Izbica by the Wieprz River, Targowa [Street] 14 – this is where I live presently. I used to live on **Krolanda**, also 14.

Q: Could you tell us in a few words about your family.

A: About my present family?

Q: No, about your parents.

A: About my parents during the occupation, correct? I lived with my mother and father and two sisters – I am sorry. One sister was born after the war... During the war there was one sister and I. That was us.

Q: And what did your father do?

A: My father had a private mill.

Q: At that time there were many Jews in Izbica. Do you remember them from before the war?

A: Yes, that means... I do remember... I only know the last names of neighbors and a few others. But just from seeing, when I was going to – let's say to the bakery, or to the grocery store or somewhere else—I also remember.

Q: Did Jews and Christians live in Izbica together or separately?

A: Right here in this, so called, valley in Izbica, there were very few Poles. Poles lived on the mountain, along the way you were taking from Lublin. Izbica village was on the mountain and the Poles lived there. We unfortunately lived down here and a few other families lived next to us. A few percent of the five thousand population of Izbica were Polish. All the rest were Jewish.

Q: So living next to you were pretty much just the Jews?

A: There were some Polish families. Next to the movie theater was a grouping and there were a few [of the Polish families] there. But our closest neighbors were – it was **Moszek**. There was **Chaim**, I am not sure if it is the first or last name, but that's what we called him. **Moszek**, **Chaim**, next there was – I don't remember – **Szyja**, typical Jewish [likely: names].

Q: And when the war broke out? – What was happening in Izbica when the war broke out?

A: In [19]39, correct? Well, nothing really was happening in [19]39. The Germans had entered and right afterwards the Russian army entered, right? The Russian army entered. Many Jews, we had many Jews, escaped with the Russians when they were retreating, because they were afraid of the Germans. I know one, his name is **Bialowicz** [**Bielowicz**] and he lives in Israel, he visited us, and he was one of those who escaped with the Russians.

Q: And how long did the Russians stay here?

A: I don't remember that.

Q: More or less.

A: Not long, not long. Perhaps half a year, or not even that much. I don't remember so well.

Q: And then when the Germans came... and even before, when the Russians came, how were they greeted by the Jews?

A: Very well. They were very happy when they [the Russians] came because the Germans had an unfavorable attitude towards the Jews right away.

**[01:] 05:09:00 – [01:]10:24:15**

**05:14 – 10:42**

Q: At first the Germans were here for a little while, correct?

A: Yes. The Germans were here for some time. I don't remember r how long, and later the Russians came, I am sure you know that from history.

Q: But what did it look like in Izbica? How did the Jews welcome them?

A: They welcomed them very much: "Ours are coming, ours are coming." The Russians were marching and they had their rifles slung on strings. They looked ragged; it was a poor, poor army. And the Jews came out in the streets. They were welcoming them very much, very.

Q: Did you see it?

A: I did. Because you would go out in the streets to watch. It was very interesting. They were throwing flowers at them – I am not sure if I didn't throw flowers myself. Because it was something different *[she smiles]*.

Q: And when the Russians were entering was it just the infantry or also other troops?

A: As far as I remember it was the infantry, later there were a few cars. But they weren't here long.

Q: But when the Russians were still here what kind of order did they make?

A: Nothing was happening. We had a little bit of a mess. Nothing special was happening.

Q: And later, do you remember when later the Germans entered?

A: Well, when the Germans entered they started to gradually make a new order.

Q: That means?

A: They started to get to the Jews slowly. First they established something called Judenrat. That house is still standing.

Q: Where?

A: *[She points in a general direction]* By the main street. Yes. It was written beautifully: “Judenrat”, it was something like a Jewish council, something like that... And the Germans started to make the Jews meet quotas very frequently, but they didn’t approach individuals but Judenrat was arranging it all. They put up the posters. They were the Jewish authority. They even had their own police. Only—

Q: And did you see the policemen?

A: I saw they, they were boys... That happened at a later time when foreign Jews were brought to Izbica: from Paris, Austria, Germany, and France. Then they selected young, handsome –just like you, really *[she laughs]* – such boys. . And we were teenagers, girls and they were trying to pick us up. We were walking on the streets on purpose and they were on duty. On regular duty. He walked—they walked together through the town, also at night. These boys finished badly *[they died]*. They had uniforms and they were beautifully dressed.

Q: How?

A: And Engels (SS-Hauptsturmführer Kurt Engels), Engels – do you know him? That means – have you heard about Engels? He was an executioner, a Gestapo man who used to live in front of the municipal building *[POLISH: **gmina**]* There was a building, which served as his headquarters. They said about him that he wouldn’t eat his breakfast before he had killed a Jew. And he used to run outside in the morning and: bang, bang somewhere – wham and he killed one or a few.

Q: Did you see it?

A: I saw those killed very frequently because they were lying around. Immediately there was a buzz and people flocked to see them. I didn't see when they were killing them. Only—only he was famous for killing with a smile. He wasn't nervous only he had a smile on his face at the time.

Q: And did you see many—many shot by Engels?

A: Well, I don't know if it was many. Back then at night, or maybe it was in the morning—because there was a restaurant in Izbica, it was **Nur für Deutsche**[**GERMAN**: only for the Germans]. Most likely he was drinking with his second in command through the entire night. He had a second in command. His name was – before the war it was **Klim**, and after the occupation it was **Klemm**[**Klem**]. It was a man who used to be a second lieutenant in the Polish Army in Zamość. My uncle knew him very well because he was also [stationed] in Zamość as a sergeant. And there were also many others who knew him from before the war period.

Q: This **Klim**?

A: This **Klim**. Yes.

**01:10:24:15 - [01:] 18:19:05**

**10:42 – 18:56**

Q: But he was a Volksdeutscher....

A: Reichs...

Q: Reichsdeutscher.

A: A Reichsdeutscher, yes, because **Klemm**. Yes, and both of them... **Klemm** was so...when somebody approached him with a bribe or something else [*she winks*] you were able to grease his palm. There was no dealing with Engels, on the other hand. He was the devil incarnate. And you asked whether I saw it. That night when he was drinking he got out in the morning and he shot all of these young policemen, these Jewish boys who were keeping guard. And they were lying around—one was here, another one was there. Izbica was buzzing. People were telling each other and we were hurrying to go and see.

Q: Were there many of them?

A: Eight or ten perhaps. We didn't pay attention.

Q: And how many Jewish policemen were there at once? Were there about ten of them in Izbica?

A: Yes, yes, yes. There were many of them, because they felt safer that way...

Q: And these were the Izbica Jews?

A: Not really. Policemen were foreign.

Q: And how did they communicate with the locals?

A: *[Shrugs her shoulders]*. I am not sure if they spoke their common tongue—in Jewish, other than ours? It could be, correct?

Q: They were all foreigners?

A: All...Foreigners were in this military.

Q: And were you allowed to walk around at that time in Izbica? It wasn't fenced off?

A: No, Izbica ghetto was a temporary ghetto. There were no barriers like in the other ghettos we know. Because the landscape in Izbica creates... We have mountains all around us, right *[she draws a circle with her arm]*. And here we have the Wieprz River. And they used to organize it this way: when the Jews arrived to the square— I am not sure if you came that way *[she leans towards the window]* – we have a little park here. It used to be a square. And they were supposed to gather in the square and then of course to the rail cars. And they were transporting them. Where to? They were taking them to Majdanek, to Treblinka, to Trawniki and also—I don't remember – somewhere beyond Tomaszów.

Q: But...

A: Beyond Tomaszów to...

Q: Probably to Sobibór or to Bełżec.

A: To Sobiboru. To Bełżca. That's right.

Q: But you didn't know where they were taking them back then?

A: We... Initially we all thought that they are taking them to camps such as Majdanek. We knew about Majdanek, right? And the other ones were liquidated very quickly. Only Majdanek stayed the other ones... Sobibór, correct? Until the uprising there used to be...because I know someone who escaped from Sobibór.

Q: You do?

A: It was **Bialowicz**. He visited us this year. **Bialowicz**, Filip **Bialowicz**. He ran away. When they started the uprising he ran away. Now he lives in New York.

Q: And you saw him after the war?

A: **Bialowicz**.

Q: **Bialowicz**.

A: **Bialowicz**—I knew him because he had a pharmacy and I remembered him. But I didn't pay attention that it was him. He came here after the war and he said that so then [*unclear meaning*]...

Q: All right, let's return; let's return to the ghetto in Izbica...

A: Just the ghetto.

Q: Before they started to relocate Jewish foreigners here – did they make all the Jews move here, but the Poles were still allowed to live on this territory?

A: Yes, yes. We lived here just fine.

Q: And they didn't displace you?

A: No, no. They didn't.

Q: Did you have to have any passes to stay there?

A: No. We didn't have to have anything. They had the Jewish stars

Q: Were they allowed to live in the ghetto?

A: This is how it generally was. Izbica is a small town and they were standing by the exit roads from Izbica – and they weren't always Germans. Sometimes they were our blue policemen, the ones from here. And they weren't letting in any Jews or any trade, any people with merchandise. Milk, butter, eggs, potatoes, and flour, right? Because where did it come from? It wasn't like it is today. Trade in Izbica was mainly in Jewish hands back then. And everything stopped. We had nothing in Izbica. And they used to take it away. When a farmer was trying to bring something in they would take it away. But people somehow managed to smuggle in a few things, away from the [main] road somehow. And they managed to live somehow. But no nettles grew under the fence. All the nettles were eaten. They were simply dying of hunger. There was nothing to eat....

Q: Did you see people who died of hunger?

A: I don't remember, you know. There were very many dead all the time because of typhoid. We had typhoid in the house next to my mom's... There was a house where **Moszek** lived, but he had to give it up when they brought in a family from Paris,; he gave them a room with a kitchen. There was a husband, a wife and three sons. The father was a doctor, one of the sons was an engineer; all educated people. And they got sick with ~~the~~ typhoid. It was a strange miracle but the father survived. The three sons unfortunately... But the father and mother survived. They were old but they got over the typhoid. It was horrible, horrible. We became friends, very respectable people, very... Because my father was sick, he had sciatica and he was coming over and my father couldn't even move from the bed. In two weeks he was cured without any medicine. Without any medicine! He was just doing various massages, other things... And later when we were supporting them because ... But when they had typhoid there was a sign [on the door] that they had typhoid. No German would go inside. At least nobody bothered them because no German would walk in. This is how it was.

[01:] 18:19:05 - [01:] 24:01:18

18:57 – 24:54

Q: And do you remember any other killing, for example the girl that came to you to get food.

A: Well, the girl was coming to get food ... And every day he was behind that prison, I will call it a prison, although it was very shabby. But never mind—a prison. There was a square behind that prison and he was chasing them there every day and he was shooting. “Wham, wham, wham, wham”—they all fell.

Q: Did Engels do it himself?



A: It was mainly him. Once I remember they were taking a transport but it wasn't from here. I don't remember where from. And the train was passing right by us. And they were riding it. And you could hear it when they were riding because there was noise in the cattle cars. For example it was scorching heat. The windows were small and they were barred [*she draws a small window in the air*] and later on the road goes up towards Izbica. I am not sure if you ever took a train to Zamość? It goes uphill and the train slows down naturally and two Jewish girls ran away. But they...they were naked. They were about 18, 20 years old. And the Germans were escorting them by our house taking the short—the shortest way. And we saw that, we saw that. All the people came out. They just had medallions on their necks. I am not sure if they were Cath...[Catholics].

Q: And what happened to them?

A: What happened was that they took them to by the prison and they shot them. They shot them and the Germans took the medallions... and later they took them to the watchmaker. They brought them to the watchmaker to buy [*she means to sell*]. The watchmaker took it because he of course didn't know. Only later the story was passed around and it turned out that the medallions belonged to the Jewish girls.

Q: Did you see it when they were shot?

A: I didn't see when they shot them but I saw when they were lying later. Because as I told you the mill had windows that were coming out on that meadow behind the prison. And when something was going on...the window was open and my father naturally... And then he called us and said: "Look, they are already down, the ones that were just chased."

Q: And how long did the execution like that last? How many times did you see these executions on the meadow?

A: Well with that prison – I am not sure if that by any chance wasn't happening every day, if it wasn't every day. Because when they caught for example—when they caught a Jewish woman carrying a piece of bread, coffee or some milk, or a few eggs, then she was shot. They were shooting not only the Jews but also Poles, the Poles.

Q: Could you tell us some more about **Pelcówna** [**Peltz, Pelc**](her last name indicates that she was a single, unmarried girl) who was coming to get milk.

A: Well... I told you that **Pelcówna** was a poor Jewish girl and she was selling...she was selling ... they had nothing. The Jews who were brought from abroad came in passenger

trains. Not on the ones for pigs but they [arrived] elegantly, with luggage. These Jews didn't resemble ours at all.

Q: How so?

A: You weren't able to tell that they were Jewish.

Q: Why?

A: There were no... [*She points to her chin*]. Here in Izbica the Jews were rather poor, here were few... but they had [*she points to her chin*] beards. You must have seen it in the movie or somewhere else. And the other ones had class. I am not sure if they weren't selected somewhere or whether there were only rich Jews abroad? I have no idea. I don't know that but these people really represented something. And when they descended the train they were told to leave their luggage at the station, because "we will deliver it home." And [they had] only carryon luggage, this is why they were so poor. Because when she took a purse or even another smaller bag – what could she have had inside? Either a woman or a man, right? And they took the entire luggage. For luggage [unfinished]—they designated a prayer house [POLISH: **boźnica**] for all the Jewish things; they were deposited there and also in our church. Tarnogóra is right across the river and there is a church. That church was a warehouse for these things. They took everything and sorted it and then sent it to Germany.

[01:] 24:01:18 - [01:] 24:55:23

24:54 – 25:50

Q: Did you see when the cars arrived at the station? Could you see it?

A: Nothing was covered, it wasn't. Later they were escorting them to town by fours. And here their tragedy would start. They had to put on the stars to [show] that they are Jewish and... And their tragedy would start. Although at the beginning they believed that they came here just for a short time. They didn't want to accept it that they were going to stay here. They didn't want to. They would go... When there was a first round up, when it was announced that they should show up—they would go like the lambs. We [told] our neighbors: "Don't go, because you would never come back!"—"Perhaps it will be better there?" yes, for sure it will be better... They didn't believe that it can be like this

[01:] 24:55:23 - [01:] 33:02:01

25:50 - 34:16

Q: The French neighbors?

- A: Yes, and many other foreigners. My father could speak German so he was talking to them. Because we were allowed to. So my father spoke German to them, they conversed together. For example there was a Jewish woman from Austria. She was a lady; her husband was a major in the German Army during the First World War. And she was Jewish in the fourth generation. And she believed—she kept going—she carried her husband's picture and she believed all the time that she was going to be released. And the first transport—she used to even come here—and then she left on the first transport. She said: "I will go because I believe that I am going to be released", so [as you see] these situations were quite strange". Because ours [our Jews] knew. They knew right away because they could see that they were killed for no good reason. That they were not allowed to do this or that, so they knew. But the other ones simply couldn't comprehend what was happening.
- Q: And who was deported first; our people or the foreigners?
- A: Our people, because the foreigners weren't here at the beginning. They [the Germans] had to make some room first, so they deported a few first. Later it didn't matter anymore.
- Q: Did you see it when they were deporting the Izbica Jews?
- A: You know, in the town square—because very few came to the town square, because they knew what will.... So they hid away. They were hiding in the attics and they were hiding in the basements, because Izbica was – when there was a roundup Izbica was always surrounded by the so called "blacks".
- Q: Who was that?
- A: Blacks were the Ukrainians in the German Army. They had black uniforms and people called them "blacks". They were the Ukrainians in the German Army. And they were mainly used to do roundups of the Jews, of course on our territory. And who else was there...?
- Q: And how were the roundups carried out?
- A: The round ups happened like this: the firefighters mustered – the firefighters, blue police, because as far as the Germans were concerned – we had only Engels and his second in command and perhaps two other Germans in Izbica. And the Germans didn't bother with that [roundups] anyway—only the blacks. The town started to buzz early in the morning when Izbica was surrounded because we knew that something bad was happening. There

were the mountains and all the roads [implied: were surrounded] and here was the river. They couldn't go anywhere; there was no way to escape.

Q: But it was surrounded by the blacks...

A: By the blacks...

Q: ...by the firefighters and by the police.

A: Firefighters [came] later... firefighters... firefighters had no weapons only... Let's say there was one black and two-three firefighters and they were going inside the houses, into the attics, into the basements and they were pulling out whoever was hidden. Into the gardens – if a garden was overgrown they would go inside and look around. When they caught [someone] they took him to the station – to the cattle cart and that was the end.

Q: And the blue ones too?

A: Yes, but there were only a few of them, so they weren't that visible. But unfortunately they also participated. And the blue ones were our police force from before the war.

Q: And at that time... What happened that they didn't go to your house? Did they know where, in which house, the Jews lived?

A: Yes, they did. Because a firefighter was with them and he knew. He was with them and he knew.

Q: And they were not searching your house for any Jews who were hiding?

A: In our place... They were searching our place when he [*she is talking about Hanan*] was hiding here. It was in [19]42 and it was the last raid. Almost everybody had been already deported. There were hardly any Jews left. They picked them out from all around and then they rounded them up. I remember it very well. It was the 1<sup>st</sup> of November. It was very memorable because it was All Saints Day and we didn't go to church because of the raid. We didn't go into the streets because they were shooting after the Jews who were running away. Everyone was tucked away at home. And that day they rounded them up in the town square – our guy too. They caught his mother and his father earlier and he stayed with his older brother. He was twelve and his brother about 16 and they were caught. They caught them all and they didn't escort them on the highway, like you go to Zamość – because the train station was there, right? [*She shows a general direction*]. Instead, they were taking them this way. Have you been there – on the way to Tarnogóra,

near the police station? Haven't you? You have! So [they went] that way by the nobleman's [POLISH: **hrabia**] pastures. It was a swampy terrain so the pasture had draining trenches. They were driving them through these meadows, through the trenches. It was November and the weather was terrible. It was wet and it was cold. Through the trenches, and they were deep, on the meadow and to the station. In that time the partisans started to blow up the trains so they were not coming regularly and the train didn't come for the two whole days. They were sitting outside and it was raining and the weather was horrible. I even said that it was so cold probably just for them. It was pouring and on that meadow—children, elderly, sick, right? Different people. And the trenches... just imagine the trenches they had to go through. The trenches were filled with people.

Q: How so?

A: It was a bridge made of people. Because there were the old – he couldn't, he couldn't jump, he walked in and he fell. The black kept on hitting and he pushed another person, who was also weak. He fell too. And later it was simply—these meadows are very wide and they simply looked like a battlefield. When they took them it looked like [scene from] a movie. Literally a battlefield.

Q: Did you see when they were escorting them through the meadows?

A: Did I see it? I did, because my aunt lives close to the meadow and I went to my aunt's and we were watching when they were driving and driving them. And they were falling into the ditches and they were screaming because they were beaten. It was horrible. This was an undescrivable show. Horrible.

Q: Were they shooting at them?

A: They were shooting when someone was running away. When they were running away they were shooting.

**[01:] 33:02:01 - [01:] 35:44:15**

**34:16 – 37:06**

Q: Many of them?

A: They were running away, they were running away.

Q: Did many of them run away?

A: They were running away because they knew they would die anyway. Perhaps he'll run away, but no one... That means our boy—I will talk about it later. But when [I was] at my aunt's... They were taking bribes. One would let him go and another one would catch him later. A black one came inside suddenly, and we got disconcerted. We didn't know what he wanted. Then he lifted his pants [*she shows how*] and he had plenty of watches there, and then he lifted his blouse [*she shows*] and again the watches. He wanted to sell these watches. And my uncle said: "Out! Get out. Get out of here and go", he said: "take your watches and go!" And they were robbing. And later when they were all sitting on the meadow, Engels and **Klim** mounted their horses and the blacks were walking among these people with the buckets and they were walking up towards everyone and they wanted gold. They wanted everyone to throw gold into the bucket. If someone didn't they would beat him with a —what do you call it?—the thing they beat with.

Q: Rifle butt?

A: Not a rifle butt — they had rubber sticks And we saw how they were riding around and we were surprised, because there were so many people there—I would have taken one off the horse [*she makes a gesture*] and I would have done something to him. And they were just like the lambs, they were walking. Really, it was puzzling. And how did their tragedy end there on these meadows? They didn't have, they didn't have their train. Two whole days the people were moaning and groaning there. There was such buzz. Finally they drove them into the movie theatre; you can see it right behind the train tracks [*she points in the general direction*—this building there. They drove them into the movie theater and just like the sardines, because there were many of them and the theatre wasn't very large. Two days and two nights without eating or drinking, without anything! And they were dying in that theater, right? So my friends and I, girls, children, you know—there was the blue police on guard and they were changing. Many of them. They were standing near the theater. I had a school friend, my best friend, and her father was a blue policeman. So when he was on guard we would... [*End of tape*]

[01:] 35:44:15

37:06

**File 2 of 3**

[02:] 00:42:42 - [02:] 23:37:05

00:36 - 24:28

[02:] 00:42:42 - [02:] 08:22:12

00:36 – 08:35

Q: And they were gathered in the movie theater And how many of them were in there?

A: It is hard to say. There were very many of them because the theater is quite large. Perhaps, perhaps about two thousands if not more. If not more, because there were very many of them and also very many stayed on the meadows there: either they were wounded or dead. Ten horse drawn carts were taking them to the cemetery; they were taking them from the meadows. They were collecting them. And there... there even was a baby buggy and it was such a memorable scene. It was a stroller with the twins and it was put on the cart, on top of the dead bodies pile. And you could hear the children whimpering and crying. And they put [the buggy] there and they took them to the cemetery. And the ones in the movie theatre were kept there for probably three days. On the third day they started to move them out in the cars...unfortunately.

Q: But how...?

A: Mainly to Trawniki.

Q: Did they give them water and food when they were in the theatre?

A: They didn't give them anything. I am telling you that we were taking advantage and when the black one left – because the black ones were drinking and they were leaving the blues ones, and the blue ones were mostly...they were our people. So mainly the children, because grown ups didn't go, because they were afraid. So we were giving them bottled water. Water, tea, braed. There were so many hands in the windows [she stretches out her hand] but what—what was it? It was nothing for so many people

Q: Did you go?

A: I did, I did. All of us frie [unfinished: friends]—I went there with friends from our neighborhood; we were running there all the time.

Q: Many times?

A: And we were running there as soon as we gathered some bottles, when we collected the bottles. We were collecting bottles from everybody because when handed out a bottle we couldn't pick it back. And there was milk and tea and just about anything, anything. Even water. They also wanted water. And there was nothing but squealing and crying. And

because they ...there was vapor, you now, vapor was getting out through the windows...  
Horrible!

Q: The windows were open?

A: They were barred.

Q: Without glass?

A: No, they would have completely suffocated. They opened it.

Q: They.

A: Only these.

Q: They probably tried to pay for food and water.

A: Yes, there were people who were making money, that's true. They were taking a fiver for bread. For bread a round gold coin, a fiver. They were giving it, they were throwing it out but I...but we children...we weren't even interested in that. For us it was a type of a game. But there was so much crying, so much crying that we wanted—oh my gosh. We couldn't sleep. We didn't sleep for three nights because it happened near our house. Maybe it was like from here—like from here to the road.

Q: And the blue ones, the blue ones were friends so they were letting you pass.

A: Exactly, exactly so. You only looked and when the black one was gone you would run to the window.

Q: So you didn't have to hide from the blue ones?

A: Not really. Not really. There was commander and he was stricter. But ours were fine, fine.

Q: Because...did you know the father of your friend?

A: I knew him. Of course I knew him.

Q: Was that your classroom friend or...?



- A: From my class. We were going to school together and there were also many Jewish friends and they were living next door. **Szyja** was his name and three girls—we were going to school together. Not to one class but we were going together. At the beginning the Jews were also going to school.
- Q: And...and this girl whose father was a policeman...what was her name?
- A: **Ferdynus. Ferdynus** was her name.
- Q: And her father was a decent man.
- A: He was decent. He...he took bribes. A bribe taker.
- Q: But the police generally liked to take bribes.
- A: Yes, but she was saying it openly, just like children do. She would say: "My father", she would say: "today got a lot because they were delivering food to town." *[She laughs]* One gave him ten eggs or a piece of meat, and one was left alone, right. So it went both ways, both ways. And our friend, the one who was hiding with us escaped from that movie theatre.
- Q: What was his name?
- A: **Hanan [Chanan] Lipszyc. Hanan Lipszyc.**
- Q: And since when was he hiding?
- A: He was a boy...
- Q: At your place...
- A: With us, with us... His mother and father died in the first raid. And he stayed, just a boy...  
Well, then he was younger, but later he was twelve. Perhaps he was ten. He was short. You can see it in the picture *[they don't show a picture]*. He never grew to be too tall. He was a little boy and his brother was tall. His brother was 1a boy of 17. Howe did we know them? His mother and father were baking onion cakes [POLISH: **cebularz**]. Onion cakes were very poplar among the Jews. They were baking them and they were always coming with their mother to the mill to get flour. Later when their parents died his brother came here with him and he said: "Mrs. **Babiarzowa [Babiarz]**, I can manage but

**Hanan**”, he said: “is hungry. I don’t have a job and I don’t know how to bake breads. Take him with you, he could...” Well, we had chickens and geese and turkeys and cows. It was a little farm not just the mill. And my mother said: “Let him come and let him walk.” And he was walking with our geese and our chickens. He was sweeping when needed and he was around. But unfortunately they caught him.

Q: In the back yard?

A: I don’t know. He probably went to get something from town. And in town... He thought that they knew him, he thought that... No, he didn’t look like a Jew at all. But unfortunately they somehow recognized him and they caught him.

Q: And when he was tending your geese did he wear an arm...did he have a star or not?

A: He had a star, he did. I am not sure if he didn’t take the star off when he went to town. Because when one didn’t have a star and he was recognized as a Jew – then immediately a bullet in the head.

[02:] 08:22:12 - [02:] 16:39:18  
08:35 – 17:13

Q: And then he escaped?

A: He escaped from the movie theatre. It was evening and we were all sitting at home the door opens and he walks in, as I said it was cold. They were crowded in there. First they got wet out there in the meadow. His clothes were all wet and dirty, because everyone relieved themselves while standing in that movie theater. There was no way to squat or to sit. They were crowded like sardines. They had to do it standing... Three days and nights, two days on the meadow – this is a lot. And they... It was very good that my father wasn’t home but at the mill. Because he was very afraid because before he was... My father liked his drink. He grew up here, among the Jews and he knew everyone. Once, after he had some vodka he was standing with one of them and talking, they were making a friendly conversation. A German came – what’s that? He took them both because it wasn’t officially allowed to stand and talk with a Jew. He took them to jail, he kept them overnight. It was fortunate that Engels was on leave then. In any case he wasn’t in Izbica. And grandpa, because grandpa was still alive, father’s father went because you had to give bribes to everyone back then. The blue police was constantly here – bribes. He went to the commander and he said: “Come”, he said: “Let’s somehow set that **Klemm** drunk”, he said: “so that he releases my son”, he said. And he immediately shot that Jew because he had found on him a gold coin, right here in his pocket. He knocked out father’s teeth, a

few teeth and put him to jail. And grandpa gave him a huge bribe, and they were drinking somewhere the whole night and then my father was let out in the morning. But he was so scared that he didn't go home. We were waiting; we knew that he was going to be released so we were waiting near the prison. Father left but he didn't want to talk to us. Behind the house we had our potato field, he went into the potatoes and he was lying there for two days. "I will not go home because I am scared." He was so afraid. And from then on when he saw a Jew – he always said to **Hanan**: "Get out of my sight. Go away." And luckily he wasn't there [*now she refers to the situation when Hanan came to ask for shelter*]. My mom and I and my younger sister were at home. He walked in [*she drops her arms*]: "I am dying." What shall we do with that? My mom gave me the keys and—I don't know. You probably you don't know that, but we had a special shed for potatoes [POLISH: **lochy**]. It was a shed for potatoes and for beets. My mother gave me the key to this shed and she said: "Go first slowly, if there is nobody around then lock him up in that shed." I went there and I locked him up in the shed. And I prepared and took him some clothes because he was all soaked and smelly, because of the feces; they dirtied one another. I took it slowly, I took a bucket as if I was going to get potatoes, I took it to him, he changed and he stayed there. And he sat the whole winter in the shed. The entire winter. We occasionally let him out in the evening for a little bit, but it was nothing. In the spring... in the spring he said to my mother: "You know...", and we had a wood pile next to the shed, these were logs for our new house, a lot of wood. And he said: "I could make a hideout in the wood and I wouldn't have to be in here", because he was getting blind [*vegetable sheds are very dark to prevent the roots from sprouting*], right, the entire winter—"I would sleep there." All right, go ahead. We gave him clothes, he pulled out some wood at night; it was spring and he stayed [there]. At night he came out and he was sitting together with the guard next to the mill. And next to the mill we had a barn and we had pigs, cows and so on there. And he was there [*in the wood pile*]. It was early spring and it was still dark and it was raining then. And he was sitting on the threshold, and the guard was sitting and him and the dog. And the dog started to bark And they...they immediately look and **batarejki** [POLISH DIALECT: flashlights] and Ger—Germans. German voices, the Germans were talking. The security got scared and the dog kept barking. The Jew ran away somewhere, he disappeared. A German ran to the security and he started to beat him, and he knocked out his teeth. "Where is the Jew?"—"There was no Jew"—"So who were you talking with?"—"With a dog"—"No, you were talking with a Jew". So somebody had already told them, somebody got to them and told them. They beat the security up... Aha, and what they were doing? In the barn there was a loft and in the barn was hay. They started to [stab] the hay with their bayonets. And the security didn't know where the Jew was, he thought that maybe he jumped up there. He said that his heart almost [stopped] that they would find him. Because that would mean the end of the security as well. The end. But they didn't find him. They didn't find him and they came here. They lined us up with our backs against the wall they searched and they went

to the attic. They went to the attic and what was there? There was a pillow there was a comforter, there was a blanket, because my father liked to sleep in the attic. But they [said] [it was] not father and they started to beat father and he said: "A Jew is here; where is he?" My father said that: "I come here"—"No, a Jew comes here." They were quite well informed. They additionally went and pulled apart the wood and they found the hideout. Unfortunately they took the security guard because they heard the conversation. They arrested him. They didn't find the Jew. Engels wasn't there and our grandpa took the money again and again...with vodka and with a bribe and the guard got released, luckily.

[02:] 16:39:18 - [02:] 19:36:11

17:13 – 20:17

Q: And the prison? It was run by the blue ones, correct?

A: No, it was under that Gestapo man, under Engels.

Q: So your grandpa was drinking with the Germans?

A: Yes. With **Klemmem**, with him...this **Klemm** was... he spoke Polish and it was best to...he took cash. An back then...but we didn't know where the Jew was. We didn't know. Nobody knew. Wher the Jew was. Only later, perhaps in a month or two, when I was going somewhere –we had such a big garden, "Halina, Halina!" I jumped. It was evening, twilight. I said: "**Hanan**, is it you?"—he said: "Yes. Don't be afraid. I", he said, "I am in **Ostrzyca**. I am with the partisans. Only", he said: "we have no food. Give me also some clothing." I went home, organized everything, he went away and he was coming back every once in a while in the evening, late, around eleven, twelve. He would take food, we prepared him some clothing and he survived. [19]43 came already. He didn't have long till [19]44. He still knows partisans' songs better than I. He learned well as a partisan.

Q: And where does he live now?

A: He lives in Tel Aviv, in Tel Aviv. We visited twice. When we were there he said: "Let's sing" and he was singing, he was singing quite well. He has a pretty voice and [he knows] all the partisans songs. "You don't know them", he said: "I do!". "Very well", I said. But before he went to Ostrzyca because it was later [when he tried] to get there—my aunt used to live in Izbica, my dad's sister. It was spring and he...He didn't have anywhere to go and my aunt had a big dog and a doghouse outside. There were storage sheds and a barn and that dog in his...And he didn't have anywhere to go so he went to ...He knew that dog because he used to go there and he went to the dog house. And my

aunt was saying: “Whatever we give him...” because she was feeding the dog well, she didn’t skimp and he was eating it and that was his nourishment. And it was...

Q: Your aunt didn’t know that he was hiding in the dog house?

A: No. He told us about that later.

[02:] 19:36:11 - [02:] 23:37:05

20:17 – 24:28

Q: And did he stay in the dog house for a long time?

A: He stayed in the dog house for about a month. And later he thought of going to **Ostrzyca**, because he knew somebody there and then they directed him and he stayed with the partisans in Ostrzyca in the forest luckily.

Q: In what partisan group?

A: *[She hesitates and shrugs her shoulders]* It was for sure BCH because we had “Bataliony Chłopskie”, Peasants Battalions over here.

Q: And when **Hanan** was hiding, were there any other Jews hiding in Izbica; did they organize any raids to catch them?

A: It was all cleared up and it was the last raid. Perhaps there might have been a few individuals left and when someone left [the hiding] they were immediately caught but nobody was hiding in Izbica. They were hiding in Zalesie, where the forest is. Three were hiding there – I am not sure if you... because there was a movie... **Blatt [Blat]**, Tomasz **Blatt**. Did you hear about him?

Q: I know him.

A: Aha, you know **Blatt**.

Q: **Blatt** who had a bullet in his jaw ...

A: *[Points to the jaw]*...who has a bullet in his jaw. Tomasz **Blatt**, the three of them were hiding here on the outskirts of Izbica and the rest unfortunately...

Q: The three of them were hiding and two died because that farmer was shooting at ...

A: *[She nods her head]*. The farmer was shooting and fortunately his bullet *[she points to the jaw]* didn't explode, right? The other ones walked out first because they were hidden in the barn and they were walking out to get food. And he figured out... The first one came out and he shot him and then dragged him outside and he dragged the second one and this one was meant to stay alive. His bullet didn't explode ... He *[the farmer]* also dragged him out.

Q: I know because the farmer who did the shooting isn't alive anymore. **Blatt** was looking for him. He wanted to...

A: **Blatt** was here right after the liberation, because he came here since we were buying his house. Not this one of course. When he was selling it he came here and he told us that he went to that house because that house was still standing but he *[the farmer]* ran away somewhere to the West when he figured it out—when he found out that **Blatt** is alive. Because he buried the other ones and **Blatt** escaped and he knew that **Blatt** will be a witness.

Q: And how did the last raid go—when they caught **Hanana**—which raid was so big? How many live raides were there?

A: Raids...? There were about ten raids. I don't know exactly because nobody counted them, they were deporting them frequently. And then from the movie theater they took them on the trucks to Trawniki. To Trawniki behind Tomaszów... Is it Bełżec behind Tomaszów? No, not to Bełżec, only to Trawniki. Because they were taken to Bełżec by trains previously. So to Trawniki and they were finishing them off in the pits in the forest. And the rest—because it was really the end of them—to the cemetery here. There are two mass graves there.

Q: And were they shooting at them at the cemetery?

A: Yes. They chased them...

Q: Did you, did you see it?

A: No, I didn't see it. Later we went there—later when it was already buried. They weren't buried deep. Not everybody was killed either. With the machine guns... There are two mass graves there.

*[Technical difficulties]*

[02:] 23:37:05

24:28

[Technical difficulties]

**File 3 of 3**

[03:] 00:42:11 - [03:] 16:21:12

00:34 - 16:53

[03:] 00:42:11 - [03:] 05:04:19

00:34 – 05:08

Q: And you were talking about the dentist's child.

A: About the dentist's child...

Q: That she was taken to these neighbors—what was their name?

A: Aha. **Siewak**. To the **Siewak's**.

Q: And...

A: To the **Siewak's**.

Q: And you were watching through the window what was going on...

A: We were watching what will be the outcome because they were running from house to house. They were pulling them out ... And in about two hours a firefighter escorted the child. Only the suitcase stayed behind. Later everybody was talking about that suitcase. Yes—that it had to be that someone informed somebody. Well, somebody had to—because otherwise they could have hidden a child, right? This is how it was . A little suitcase ...I don't think that people got rich on that. What was plundered? Because plundering happened after each raid. Even if Jews stayed behind they had to hide [*dogs are barking*] .They had various constructions made in the attics and somewhere in the basements. And sometimes ... And people ran immediately to the buildings – not all of them, of course, but there were those who... Just like they rob the stores or something else during when there is war – they ran in and they took better things, unfortunately. There was a man, unfortunately not alive anymore, named, **Pasieka**. He also died so tragically. He [the robber] came in and he grabbed something valuable, I don't remember

what now, and the Jew came out and unfortunately ... he grabbed an ax and he killed the Jew

Q: How do you know that?

A: Because it was well known, because the Germans weren't allowing that. It was punishable. When someone was caught robbing, they simply would arrest or [apply] some other form ... They didn't kill but they were punishing whoever was robbing. It was forbidden.

Q: Were these the firemen who came to get the dentist's child?

A: A fireman the escort.

Q: Did only one fireman come?

A: Yes. One fireman was escorting that girl. And we figured out that someone had to inform.

Q: And...

A: Unless it was one of the neighbors.

Q: And when they were coming—when they were coming was it the firefighters or the blue ones or who? During the raids.

A: Not so much the blue ones. It was the black ones, the black ones and they had the assistance of the firemen, the firemen.

Q: And when they were all chased into that meadow—were people robbing the ones who stayed in that meadow?

A: No, there was no access because they were surrounded by the black ones. They kept guard around them. There was no access.

Q: So where, where else were they robbing them?

A: They were robbing houses after the raids. There was an empty house and the thugs would trespass and take the better things.

Q: And where was it that they were taking the shoes off the beaten people?



A: This was on the meadow, after they were moved to the movie theatre. When they were taken to the theatre there were very many dead or almost dead.

Q: And what happened?

A: They were taking them onto the carts and to the cemetery. On the carts.

Q: So that probably means that they were using our drivers?

[03:] 05:04:19 - [03:] 10: 55:00

05:08 – 11:12

A: Firefigh[unfinished]—yes during the German—near the municipal building [POLISH: **gmina**]  
—there was a daily cart duty [POLISH: **stójka**] next to the prison. Two horse drawn carts were ready to German disposal. Perhaps they had more carts at that time, I don't remember exactly, but there were these hay wagons with ladders and they were transporting the dead.

Q: And what was happening then?

A: Nothing was happening anymore; they were taking them and then they were burying them.

Q: But they were also taking their things, correct?

A: Well...

Q: Of the beaten who were transported?

A: Well I...when...not after they were loaded on the cart. Because the firefighter wouldn't do it then anymore because he was afraid. The black one wouldn't do it—unless possibly secretly he took off a watch or so.

Q: Only before?

A: Only before. People ran to the meadow—and there were many various people: drunks or others. And they ...what do they care who they take things off?

Q: But what were they taking?

- A: They were taking off shoes, coats; they were taking off pants or perhaps a watch, a wedding band. They were people who were running there. And we were yelling at them: “How can you?! Where are you going?! Why are you going there?!” And some—for example—because they [the Jews] were sitting there and they had a broken hand or so, and they [the Poles] were going there and handing out bottles with water to bring them to life. But that didn’t really help. They were all wasted—they were all sent for liquidation. For destruction ...
- Q: But since people were able to get to them in the meadow they must have not been guarded by the blacks anymore.
- A: When those who were able to walk were taken to the theatre only the dead or those who couldn’t walk were left. Because those who could walk went to the theatre.
- Q: And they weren’t finishing immediately those who couldn’t walk?
- A: No, no. I don’t know—perhaps they were finishing them off at the cemetery. But when they were piled on the cart—one atop another, like sardines, then they suffocated. This is how it was, unfortunately.
- Q: Did any Jews from Izbica come back here after the war?
- A: Many, many—not many, but there were [a few]. They were selling their houses. He had his house or a house of his aunt’s or his cousin’s and they would make the papers and then sell it.
- Q: And this house was also Jewish?
- A: Yes, but we bought this house from a Pole. He on the other hand bought it from a Jew, and then we from a Pole. Literally about half of the houses in Izbica are sold by the Jews. They belonged to their distant cousins’. Even now when **Bialowicz** was here he was going to the municipal office [POLISH: **gimna**] and he was asking about some house of his cousin’s. But it has already been half of a century and it was sold from one person to another ...
- Q: And people weren’t upset that the Jews want money for the houses, or how was it?
- A: No, why?

Q: Well, because they already settled in, it was as if theirs and they didn't know where the owners were.

A: No, we didn't have anything like that. They were selling and they weren't taking much. We bought it from **Blatt**. He somehow showed up; he showed up because of our **Hanan**, because he was hiding here and then **Blatt** showed up. He even came with his wife and then he sold it. And we bought it but we didn't live there because it needed major remodeling, it was just a so-so house. We sold it to someone else and we bought this [*she looks around*]. It was already renovated. The man who bought it did some remodeling but it is old... You know, after the liberation it was the fertilizer warehouse and these stains are unfortunately \_\_\_\_\_

Q: Nitrates?

A: Yes, from that... you can't get rid of them and it looks so silly but it is enough for us.

Q: Because in some other towns and cities it happened that Jews were beaten or killed when they were coming back after the war and the reason were the houses, the real estate. Were there cases like that in Izbica?

A: No I don't remember that and I don't think so. It didn't happen. Maybe in a bigger city the houses were bigger and more valuable and they also had various factories. The biggest house here is the one with the red [roof] and a rabbi lives there [*she points towards the window*] I am not sure if you can see it. Can you see it from there; can you see the red roof? This is the rabbi's house and it is the biggest.

[03:] 10: 55:00 - [03:] 16:21:12

11:12 - 16:53

Q: And did the Jews who survived stay here long or just a short time?

A: They didn't really gather in Izbica, they went more to Lublin. They went to Lublin and many of them went to Israel.

Q: Were there any who stayed here, who...?

A: No, no. Not after the war. They didn't really settle here. **Hanan** came here about three times and he immediately took to trade. He was a big—he was selling clothes at the bazaar. He came here he made some money, he found a rich uncle, his uncle sold an apart—a house in Izbica, and he had money to leave. He left to Israel. There he joined the military and I don't know who they were fighting at that time...

Q: With the Arabs.

A: Yes with the Arabs as usual. But he wasn't in the military long. He has a wounded leg and he has something artificial in his knee.

Q: And what happened to **Klemm**?

A: With **Klemm**, I can honestly tell you that I don't know what happened to him. **Klemm** was arrested or killed somewhere. Do you know what happened to Engels? It was in the paper and I sent it to them in Israel. After the war Engels had a beautiful hotel and a restaurant in Germany and he was doing very well. They couldn't find him for a long time. When he was here he used to ride a motorcycle with a side car. The cars weren't popular as they are now. He rode it like the devil himself. Like the devil. You could hear it from a distance and people were running away so that they wouldn't be run over. And he had a bike shop. And that other one had another motorcycle. He had a bike shop and Czechoslovakian Jews were working there. There were two who always worked on his bike... Supposedly he liked them very much and he had a heart for them. After the liberation I... Someone recognized Engels in Germany. Engels was arrested and even **Hanan** called here and said: "You know, Engels is in prison and I and a few others are going to trial." I said: "Very well." Later there was an article about the trial in the paper. It was about 20 years after the war... Well, I don't want to say how long exactly because I am not sure. In any case it was a longer time. A man changes. So what did they do? They announced for the Jews who knew Engels to arrive. You do and you make an identification, correct? They introduced them to Germans who were dressed more or less the same and who looked alike—who looked somewhat alike, right? And they let the Jews in so that they could identify Engels. And it read: "Luckily one of the Czechoslovakian Jews who worked in his shop and made the repairs survived." That boy survived and he was describing that they walked through once and he didn't know which one. He doesn't know although he was in closest touch with him. They walked through the second time and nobody showed which one was Engels. He said that he was beyond himself with irritation [*she makes a fist*]. He went the third time and he set his eyes on one of them and that man smiled. "Just like he did when he was killing people. This one!" [*She points*]. And Engels was arrested and at night he committed suicide. That's how he was identified. "Because of this smile", he said, "if he didn't... but he couldn't take it and he smiled." And he was killing with that smile and this is how he was recognized. Just like that. But his punishment was too light.

Q: Thank you very much.

A: Thank you. This is how it was.

**[03:] 16:21:12**  
**16:53**

Conclusion of the interview.

No restrictions.

Translated by Agnieszka McClure on 03/22/2011.