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Polish Witnesses to the Holocaust Project
Polish
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In this interview Karol Błotniak, born February 7, 1911, and a lifelong resident of Wysokie, discusses life in his village before, during, and after World War II. He focuses on the relationship between the locals and the Jews, as well as his time with the Home Army, "Armia Krajowa," (AK).

Box 1, Tape 1

[01:] 00:42:00 – [01:] 06:59:00
00:00 – 07:10

Błotniak begins by noting his date and place of birth as February 7, 1911, in **Wysokie**; says that before the war there were a lot of local Jews; notes that they represented almost half of the inhabitants; says he knew many of them because he grew up with them, and that even though the Jews knew Polish, they seemed to stick together; names some of the Jews he knew from school: **Maier Fiterman, Brana, Chawa Fiterman**; notes that he used to live on **Lubelska** Street; mentions names of the streets where the Jews lived; says that in the present day the Jews no longer live there; says that before the war he worked in a Jewish sawmill, which belonged to **Syrkli**; describes him as a noble, good man and who paid well; says he worked there in a locksmith shop as a specialist, not as a regular worker; describes how the information about the outbreak of the war came to the village; says that about a week after the outbreak, the Germans invaded and some of the locals, including a few Jews, escaped; says some Jews fled to Russia and eventually came back with the Soviet army; notes that **Fiterman**, from whom he bought his house, came back as well as **Brana**; says that after the initial invasion by the Germans, nothing happened to the Jews; says that they were later sent to **Turobin** and afterwards **Bełżec**, where they were gassed; describes the time when the Germans shot an older Jew, **Berek**, because he said he would go no further; says he (Błotniak) was an eyewitness to this event.

[01:] 06:59:01 – [01:] 22:39:01
07:11 – 23:27

Błotniak knows that the Jews were transported to **Bełżec** because one of them returned with a German and Ukrainian; says the Jew promised to give all his gold in exchange for setting him free; notes that he was rich and he had a big store; says that although he gave the gold and jewelry, he and his family were gassed; says he witnessed them entering the house, and a Jew watched them take the gold away; says this Jew was hiding, but she was found and subsequently shot; says the Jewish tailor living near **Paweł Jarosz** was shot, as well as the Jew living by the **Kądziercecy** family; says they were killed and buried on a hill; says that someone betrayed the Jews hiding there; says he knew about Jews who were hiding; says that the tailor lived in his neighborhood, and that **Paweł Jarosz** hid this man in a barn; says a man named **Wojastykowie** hid a Jew named **Ignas**; says that after the war he went to Warsaw; says **Ignas** hid on a hill, and he met him in the forest; comments that no one betrayed **Ignas**

07/10/1999

and that he was a young, good boy, about 17 or 18 years old; remembers seeing Ukrainians and Germans take the tailor away by car towards **Żółkiewka** and shoot him at the edge of a forest; says **Paweł Jarosz**, with whom the tailor hid safely, similarly with **Kądziercecy** family; says **Rubin Kopf**, who lived by **Paweł Jarosz** as a lodger, was also taken away and shot with his wife after all of the Jews were removed from the town; says that since 1941 the Germans were removing the Jews and shooting them; says a group deportation took place only once—to **Turobin**; says the rest were caught individually; says that before the war, local Jews lived without any problems; says he and his wife gave Jews food; recalls a Jewish woman who hid with **Jan Jarosz**, the brother of **Paweł**; comments that she worked as a cowherd; says she was also shot by the Germans and Ukrainians; says the Navy Blue Police, “Policja granatowa,” informed them as to where **Jarosz** lived; says in **Wysokie** there were Navy Blue Police and that the Germans came periodically; lists the names of the Polish policemen; says they were like those before the war; says they behaved decently towards Poles and Jews; says that for hiding a Jew people could be sentenced to death; says that his aunt risked it, as did **Jarosz** and **Kędzierski** who were punished for it; says that in **Wysokie** there were Jews from other areas like Warsaw and Łódź; says they had fled towards Russia together with other people and arrived at **Wysokie**.

[01:] 22:39:02 – [01:] 29:47:00
23:28 – 30:51

Blotniak describes how it came to the killing of the Jew, **Berek**: a group of Jews fled without any possessions or luggage as a result of the declaration that if a Jew was found then they would be killed; says that **Berek** did not want to go and was shot by an Ukrainian; remembers along with other locals seeing his body; says the village administrator ordered for it to be removed; says that **Berek** was buried on **Kierkut**; says the houses left by the Jews were empty; says that he would later move into one of them; says that when **Maier Fiterman** came back from Russia, he (Blotniak) reported to him; says that **Fiterman** sold a house to his uncle by a deed, and that he sold a few other houses as well; says **Liberbaum** also sold many houses to his family; says later he went to **Wałbrzych**; says **Fiterman**’s brother moved to Palestine, and assumes **Kopf** probably went as well; says two Jewish brothers, living illegally with **Paweł Jarosz** were shot by the Ukrainians and Germans; describes the execution of the **Kopf**’s family: they stood, clothed, and held their hands, forced to stand over a pit; says the wife of **Jarosz** shouted and after a moment a shot was fired; says he watched this with other locals from afar; mentions the Jews who hid: **Miek Honik**, **Jan** (a Jew who had converted to Christianity), and **Lidia**—the **Dzierszonowie**’s daughter.

[01:] 29:47:01 – [01:] 35:13:00
30:52 – 36:33

Says **Honik** went into the underground army with him; says that although he (Blotniak) spent more time at home, **Honik** acted with the underground army of the Peasants’ Battalions, Bataliony Chłopskie from **Maciejów**; says he (Blotniak) belonged to the Home Army, “Armia Krajowa,” (AK); says that the armies acted together; says they each had rifles from the army; mentions two operations: one of stopping German cars and another of burning birth certificates in the town hall; comments that some Jews participated sporadically but that **Honik** participated regularly; says a few Jews survived the war; says his aunt saved **Ignas**; says that after the war he went to Warsaw where he continued to work for the army; says in the summer of 1944 the Russians arrived at the Vistula River; says the Ukrainians joined the Germans, but they fought mainly at the rear.

Box 1, Tape 2

[02:] 00:40:00 – [02:] 07:11:00
00:00 – 07:20

Blotniak says that the **Kopf** family asked **Jarosz** to send them their family pictures; says **Jarosz** destroyed the photos for fear of trouble after the Germans murdered the family; says a few Jews came to see him personally for help, but never for hiding; says he gave food even though it was illegal; says he was not afraid even though he was married and had a son.

[02:] 07:11:01 – [02:] 13:20:00
07:21 – 13:40

Blotniak says he joined the AK immediately after the outbreak of war in 1939; says his commander was **Jan Dutka** from Wysokie, pseudonym **Biały**; mentions that the underground army killed three Volksdeutsches and a policeman who snitched on Poles to the Germans; says that he who was for the Germans had to die; says the underground army's relation to the Jews was pretty good; mentions that the Germans shot his brother because he worked for the underground army; says his other brother, at the time twelve, survived, but that his cousin and a neighbor died; says that on June 3, 1944, 50 members of the underground army were shot; says he acted in the underground army till the end of the war; says that during the years of the Polish People's Republic, "Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa," (PRL), he concealed his affiliation to the Home Army; says he also worked with the Peasants' Battalions; says in 1947 he came out; says the Ukrainians came then and killed the neighbor **Włodarczyk**, a chemist; says Lieutenant **Drzewa** was shot by the Ministry of Public Security, "Urząd Bezpieczeństwa," (UB), because of affiliation with the Home Army, but that he was let off; names why he was dismissed: prowess and affiliation to the underground army; comments that all of the "navy blue police" do not live anymore; names a policeman, **Piskorz**, who cooperated with the underground army; says People of the Ministry of Public Security pulled him by the car.