

JAŻWIŃSKI, Miron
Polish Witnesses to the Holocaust Project
Polish
RG-50.488*0148

Box 1 Tape 1

In this interview, Miron Jaźwiński, born on January 5, 1928 in Maków Mazowiecki, where he lived during the war and where he still resides. He talks about his memories from before and during the war years. He describes a gradual change in the situation of local Jews, from being a part, often a prosperous one, of the local population before the war. He talks about their initial harassment by the Wehrmacht soldiers within days of the occupation, the establishment of the local ghetto in 1940, and its evacuation at the end of 1942 or beginning of 1943. He describes how he and the townspeople witnessed the evacuation, which he says was a macabre sight, which he compares to Judgment Day. He explains that during the evacuation that took place during the night, the Polish neighbors were standing in the streets surrounding the ghetto.

[01:] 01:10:00 – [01:] 10:25:25

He explains that a few years after he was born, his family moved to Łomża, where his father co-owned a brewery; explains that in 1938, after the business in Łomża failed, his father moved the family (and the business) back to Maków, where they owned a house; explains that Maków's population at that time was about 5,000 to 7,000, with the Jewish population probably less than 50 percent; explains that the Jewish population's role in the town's commerce and industry made them very visible; mentions that farms surrounded the town; remembers that among the businesses there were two mills and three tanneries which were owned by Jewish families; explains that shoemaking was a very popular and profitable business; explains that since his parents had a business producing carbonated drinks and beer distribution, they knew everybody in town and everybody knew them.

[01:] 10:26:00 – [01:] 22:45:25

In response to a question whether he had any contacts with Jews in Maków before the war he talks about two elementary schools located on the outskirts of town: one Jewish and one Polish; explains that there was also a market with Polish peddlers on one side but the other side, the Jewish side, was always more crowded; explains that he did not think that there were any problems between the Poles and the Jews at that time; explains that in addition to Poles and Jews, there was a sizable German population, mainly in nearby villages; explains that the Germans were farm owners, and were called colonists as they were settling on the lands they bought from the Poles; refers to them as a "fifth column" at the time of war, and even before the war started; explains that his father was conscripted into the military on August 30, 1939; discusses how many people near the

border anticipated that the battles would take place nearby and were leaving en mass; explains that he and his mother decided to stay, since the Polish military requisitioned their truck.

[01:] 22:46:00 – [01:] 36:18:25

He explains that the German soldiers entered the town on September 3, 1939; explains that the local Jews who stayed, most of whom many were elderly shop owners at the town market, were subject to ridicule and harassment; gives examples: their beards were shaved, and sidelocks cut by Wehrmacht soldiers; attributes the soldiers' behavior to Nazi anti-Jewish propaganda in which they had been immersed for years; explains that within a few days of the invasion, property and valuables that belonged to the Maków population were declared to belong to the Reich and were passed to their new German owners who came from the East Prussian town of **Morong**; explains that these newly arrived Germans from East Prussia became town officials, storeowners, policemen, etc.; points out that Maków's name was changed to **Makaim**, and it was incorporated into Reich; points out that following the chaos of the first two weeks of the invasion, the Germans established their new system, with the Gestapo replacing Wehrmacht soldiers; explains that at first the local people, Poles and Jews, were treated alike but this gradually this changed and after about six months, Jews were required to wear yellow stars.

Box 1, Tape 2

[02:] 01:19:20 – [02:] 07:29:25

Talks about how in November 1939, the Germans asked all the sick people (with chronic diseases, psychiatric diseases, etc.) to report to the local Jewish school (Heder, Kheder). They and their families hoped that the Germans would be sending them away for treatment; points out that about 200 people came to the school; explains that they were locked in for five days and were not let out; mentions that their screams could be heard from afar; discusses how after five days they were taken on trucks with SS escort and driven 8 km out of town; points out that ditches dug and were awaiting them; points out that all of them were executed (near **Severinow**) and buried there; points out that despite being only 11 years old he remembers it very clearly; mentions that during that time the Germans were resettling the Polish intellectuals, physicians, etc. to other places in Poland; points out that many local Jews, especially the young ones, also left town; explains that since Maków was only 50 km from the Soviet border, some people left for the Soviet Russia; explains that, in that early period, many [*left off here...*]; explains that Jews continued to work in their professions.

[02:] 07:30:00 – [02:] 18:15:25

He explains that the Germans reorganized the town's administrative structure, establishing two main offices, which dealt with work and property management

oversight; explains that Jews were ordered to do various public works such as cleaning the streets, shoveling snow, etc.; explains that gradually, a ghetto evolved; points out that the ghetto bordered the market place at on one end, the old Jewish cemetery on the other, and also the housing quarters Przystnicka and Grabowa; explains that at the end of 1940, all of the windows facing outside were boarded and a tall fence (more than 3 meters) with the four rows of barbedwire at the top surrounded the ghetto; points out that Poles and Jews continued to interact; explains that Jews purchased food from Polish farmers; explains that Jewish policemen carrying sticks could be seen patrolling the ghetto; points out that there were two gates that were patrolled by the Germans but it was known that they could be bribed easily to let Jews in and out of the ghetto; explains that this state of affairs continued until the end of 1941; points out that on January 1, 1942, when he turned 14, he received a work order and started to work for a local German's business; explains that he replaced a Jewish man named **Orlik**, who had worked for the same German since 1939 prior to the ghetto closing; explains that before the war **Orlik** had been a well-off owner of several tanneries.

[02:] 18:16:00 – [02:] 28:39:25

He explains that the Germans used a group of young Jews from the ghetto for hard labor; including for the construction of railroad trucks at Sielun, approximately 30 km away from Maków, located approximately 20 km from the Soviet border; points out that early on many of the workers escaped to the Soviet Union after bribing the guards; adds that the Germans transported Jews from, Ciechanow, Ostrołęki and other neighboring towns to the ghetto in Maków; points out that there were approximately 10–15 people living in every apartment; points out that it was rumored that once the escaping workers at Sielun beat their German guards; points out that in reprisal 20 Jewish men from the ghetto were hung; explains that among the people selected for hanging were some who had been bribing Germans; says that he thinks that they were selected to prevent them from incriminating the Germans who received the bribes; one additional individual who was hung was a German Jew who was a physician; explains that the German chief of police was in charge of the hanging; explains that the whole town, the Jews in the ghetto, and the people on the Polish side were ordered to view the execution; explains that the men who were going to be hung were brought in, stood on chairs and the Jewish policemen kicked the chairs out from underneath them; the physician's rope broke and a new rope was brought in and he was hung; says that this event was conducted in order to terrorize the people, both Jews and Poles; explains that the Poles expected that after they were done with the Jews, the Germans would treat them similarly.

[02:] 28:40:00 – [02:] 36:05:00

Explains that Jews were not permitted to walk on sidewalks and that if a German walked by they had to greet him by removing their hats; remembers how at the end of 1942 or beginning of 1943, the ghetto was liquidated and people were moved to the Mława ghetto first but that eventually all the Jews from Maków ghetto ended up in Auschwitz; explains that the Germans brought around 100 SS men and told the Jews that they needed to leave within an hour. At the market square there were about 100 carts pulled by horses;

explains that the horses pulling the carts kept moving and people had to run and jump into each cart; explains that those who were not able to do so were grabbed and thrown onto the carts; explains that bones were broken and screams could be heard; compares the scene to the Judgement Day; explains that before this event most Jews had believed that death awaited them, but they realized their fate at this point; says that people on the Polish side were all in shock and cried.

Box 1, Tape 3

[03:] 01:06:00 – [03:] 07:19:25

[*The interviewer asks him to describe the scenes that he personally saw*]. He says that he observed how one of the evacuated Jews jumped off the cart to try to escape and was shot and killed on the spot; explains that he and other Poles stood in the street, across from where the events were taking place, and watched; explains that he does not think that anybody was able to escape the liquidation; says that because of his father's business and their ability to get around the town and surrounding areas, they were able to obtain information about all the events in town.

[03:] 07:20:00 – [03:] 17:19:25

He tells about whether there were any chances, at the time of liquidation of Jews, of escaping and being hidden; describes an encounter two weeks after the evacuation in which a German (*Volksdeutsch*) policeman riding a horse, tied up someone and pulled them by a rope; says that he knew the young man who served as a Jewish policeman in the ghetto before the ghetto's closing; explains that he saw the man being taken to a house by two German policemen and that they later left the house without him; assumes that the young man was killed; [*The interviewer asks if to his knowledge any Jews from Maków survived the Holocaust*]; mentions that, soon after the war, several people came back but did not stay; points out that he does not know how they survived; tells about a Jewish man from Maków who was in Auschwitz and whose job was to burn human remains; mentions that the man's diaries were found in Auschwitz; explains how, after the war, a Polish man from Maków told him how this Jewish man recognized him in Auschwitz and rescued him by pulling him out of the line of people rounded up for elimination.

[[03:] 17:20:00 – [03] 33:14:25

He explains that the property left behind by the Jewish evacuees was considered state property and he does not know what became of it; talks about how during the war the tombstones from the cemetery were used for construction; points out that after the war the stones were dug out, thanks to a visitor's effort, and a memorial was erected using these stones; [*The interviewer asks if he also witnessed execution of Polish people*]; says that, witnessing executions was obligatory for all people; points out that in one case,

which took place in 1941, Polish hostages were brought to the top of a hill with their hands bound, they were shot and their bodies pushed downhill; explains that two of them escaped a day before the execution; points out that he is not sure who did the shooting in these executions; [*He is asked what he knew about German collaborators*]; describes the wealth of information his family obtained because of the nature of their business; explains that since it involved both the sale and distribution of drinks to various sites, their employees knew the exact number of soldiers, SS, policemen, etc. in every German unit; explains that this information was passed on to the resistance; explains, in addition, since the sales also took place in his parents' house, people could stop by to have a drink and share information with them.