

BORYSIK, Jan
Polish Witnesses to the Holocaust Project
Polish
RG-50.488*0156

Box 1, Tape 1

In this interview, Jan Borysik, born July 12, 1930, in Gąbin, Poland, where he spent his childhood and youth during the time of the World War II, talks about his experiences in the city at this time. He was a witness to the entrance of German troops to Gąbin, and saw cruel and violent murders of the local Jews. He mentions the destruction of the synagogue and the local Protestant and Catholic churches. He describes the establishment of the Jewish ghetto, the horrible living conditions and cruelty towards Jews. Also gives the names of some Jews who were murdered. In the end of the interview, he describes the liquidation of the ghetto, and mentions Jews that he saw after the war.

[01:] 01:47:09 – [01:] 03:43:23
00:00 – 03:55

Jan Borysik begins by discussing the German's invasion into Gąbin; says were very cruel towards the Jews from the very beginning; remembers the Nazi SS, dressed in gray uniforms and hats with the symbol of the skull; says they were very offensive and contemptuous to the Jews.

[01:] 03:43:24 – [01:] 05:02:08
03:56 – 04:58

He talks about burning of the synagogue; remembers seeing a large fire, which subsequently caused the burning of five or six nearby houses; says one of the houses belonged to a German; says an eyewitness told Borysik, that three Nazis entered the synagogue, threw a grenade, and poured out gasoline.

[01:] 05:02:09 – [01:] 06:39:18
04:59 – 6:43

Borysik talks about people watching the terrible scene of burning synagogue; says they were crying, running, and hiding, fearing for their lives; discusses the bombing of the local Protestant and Catholic churches.

[01:] 06:39:19 – [01:] 08:40:23
06:44 – 08:47

He describes the establishment of the Jewish ghetto, which occupied some of the streets in Gąbin; says this took place in the late fall of 1940; gives the names of the streets: **Kilinskiego, Poprzeczna, Cmentarna** (Cemetery Street), the so-called "**budki**" area (shelter area), and continues to **Połnocna** (North Street), and **Suchego Pnia** (Dry Stem Street); describes awful housing, hygiene, and health conditions; notes that the imprisoned

Jews wore a star symbol on the chest, and a yellow triangle on the shoulder; recalls the forced labor of the Jews; notes that it existed between the end of 1939 through April 1942, which was when the deportation of the Jews to Chelmno began.

[01:] 08:40:24 – [01:] 19:11:16
08:48 – 19:15

Borysiak comments on witnessing the bombing of the Jews and Poles; explains he does not know who they were or how many were killed, because the explosion was extremely powerful; talks about the brutal murder of a young Jewish woman, **Rozia Boczkowna**; says it happened on December 31, 1939; says she was kidnapped, raped, and dramatically shot several times; says her body was found behind the shed; notes that he has not seen the body, but knows that the story is true; says he does not know what happened with her body and suggests it may have been buried; discusses an event he accidentally witnessed: says about three hundred Jews were at the market square to work on the demolition of a church; says they were supervised by a civilian German who brutally shot three of the Jews: **Hilbert** – property owner and a wealthy merchant, **Eichelt** – local printer, and **Moses Geist** – the night watchman in the orchards; says they were highly respected in their society; says they were shot on the stairs; says he remembers blood marks on the wall and blood stains on their clothing.

[01:] 19:11:17 – [01:] 28:36:14
19:16 – 28:49

Borysiak describes liquidation of the ghetto; says he remembers it only partially, but he learned a lot about it from his friends, as well as from his mother, who worked as an office assistant in the municipal office at that time; says all Germans were called to the market square where under the command of the German Police and the Nazi Party marched into the ghetto; discusses the cruel treatment of the Jews, who were thrown in the streets, the bestial treatment of the sick, disabled, and older people; comments on the Germans kicking infants and children; recalls the names of some of the Germans: **Braun, Mass, Gustaw Kramer** and **Heiniger**; says it was they who kicked, beat, and tormented the Jews; explains he [*Borysiak*] worked for a Polish barber at the time, which where he learned about the abuses within the ghetto; recalls the crying, screaming, shooting, and a huge crowd of people running through **Plocka** Street, **Strazacka** (Fireman Street), eventually gathering at **Plac Strazacki** (Fireman Square); says the Jews were kept in terrible conditions from Saturday until Monday afternoon, without food or clean water; says the Germans gave them one barrel of dirty water that they were supposed to use to drink and wash; notes that he never saw the barrel, but that he knows about it from Mrs. **Anyszewska, Wroblewska, and Stepniowa**, who witnessed it; says that on Monday, around 2 pm, the last portion of Jews was deported to Chelmno, where they were murdered; recalls huge trucks, full of people, that he saw on **Kutnowska** Street, and remembers the crying and screaming of terrified children.

[01:] 28:36:15 – [01:] 33:08:18
28:50 – 33:11

Jan Borysiak personally doesn't know any local Jews that managed to survive; mentions the **Wand** Family, who, he was told, was able to escape; says that **Wand** was the president of the Jewish Committee and that their six-years-old son was kidnapped by the Nazis; explains his mother told him that the boy was kept for two weeks in the municipal cell; says that

according to **Wiktor Lewandowski's** daughter (**Wiktor Lewandowski** worked as a janitor at the municipality at that time), that the boy was thrown into a toilet by one of the SS members; says he was told that the boy was begging, crying and kissing the SS's shoes; says he does not know what happened to the boy's parents.

[01:] 33:08:19 – [01:] 35:48:02

33:12 – 35:46

Borysiak talks about the local Jews he saw in Gąbin after the war; says he remembers a visit of a Jew, his mother's friend from before the war, who talked about his friends and family that were killed; talks about the visit of several Jews from Israel that came to Gąbin after the war and gives their names: **Nosal**, related to the **Hajda Family**, **Porenstein**, **Zalmach**, and **Zielonka**; comments that he enjoyed the visit, that the visitors spoke very good Polish, and that they remembered Gąbin very well.