

07/15/2002

KLINGER, Stanisław
Polish Witnesses to the Holocaust Project
Polish
RG-50.488*0163

Box 1, Tape 1

In this interview, Stanisław Klinger, born in February 1932 and a resident of Zduńska Wola since the age of two, describes his experiences during World War II in that town. He describes the relationships between the local Polish and Jewish people. He also outlines incidents such as the invasion of the Germans into the town and the beginnings of the Jewish ghetto.

[01:] 01:01:02 – [01:] 05:11:12

Stanisław Klinger notes he was born February 24, 1932, in Łódź; says his parents moved with him to Zduńska Wola when he was two years old; recalls living on Sieradzka Street along with Jews; recalls there was a mix of poor Jewish families with wealthy shop and factory owners; explains there was a synagogue and a Jewish school; says when he would see Jewish children playing on the street or old Jews with beards, they would wear characteristically Jewish clothing; thinks the local Polish and Jewish people did not disturb each other much and that the Jews did not injure anyone; explains that sometimes the local Poles ordered goods from Jews because it was cheaper and Jews had to deliver the goods themselves.

[01:] 05:11:13 – [01:] 11:09:21

He talks about when the Germans came to town; explains that airplanes flew over unexpectedly and bombed a few houses, a church, a few apartment buildings on Szadkowska Street and one factory, probably owned by a Jew; notes that his parents' newly built house was bombed twice; says at that time he and his family were hiding in a shed; says it was a miracle that everybody survived; says when it was all over his neighbors, including German people who also lived locally, came to see what happened; notes that in his opinion, the German people were happy when their army arrived; remarks that on Sieradzka Street, Germans and Poles used to live on the west side, when most of the Jewish people stayed on the east side of the road; thinks that the Jews and Poles at the beginning of the war were treated the same way by the Germans; says many Poles were displaced, transported, and forced to work in the concentration camp; explains that Jews had to have a Jewish star on their chest and back, and the women had to also wear a star on their headscarf; says he did not see how the Jews were ridiculed, rather, he only heard from others that they were forced to dance and sing on the street, or they were beaten up when they did not bow.

[01:] 11:09:22 – [01:] 18:39:03

He describes the circumstances of the creation of the local ghetto; says the Jews living at the end of Sieradzka Street by the Plac Wolności square and the Town Hall (where Poles and Jews had been shot down) were displaced to the ghetto on **Stężycka** Street; mentions he does

07/15/2002

not remember when the ghetto was built, but thinks it was at the beginning of 1942; says that the Germans did not want to seize the places that belonged to the Jews, so they were left abandoned; says the synagogue was destroyed, left in smouldering ruins, and that even the candlesticks were missing; explains that all of the Jews from his street and probably mostly all from the town were taken to the ghetto; describes that the ghetto was fenced but cannot remember what kind of fence it was; says there was also a gate, protected by an old Jew wearing a green shirt that stood in front of it; remembers that this Jew had something in his hand, probably a kind of truncheon and he was required to ensure nobody left or entered the ghetto; thinks that Jews in the ghetto had nothing to eat; says he heard other people felt sorry for them and would try to bring them something to eat; says they took a lot of risk but the guard would pretend not to see; says the only other thing he remembers about the guard was that once he thinks he saw him speaking to a German, but does not remember anything else.

[01:] 18:39:04 – [01:] 25:18:18

He tells about the liquidation of the ghetto; remembers it was in 1942 toward the end of summer, most likely September; says the brigade that came to town to liquidate the ghetto numbered 20 people; says there were not as many buildings in the town like today, so he could see the ghetto from about a kilometer away; notes that his parents did not allow him to get any closer; explains that he heard screaming, groans, and frequent shooting very often; says he heard when somebody said that about 12 Jews had been hanged as an example to the rest; says he went in the ghetto after its liquidation and viewed the ruins that were once houses; presumes that the Germans were looking for hidden jewellery; describes the situation when the Jews were liquidated from the ghetto: the time was between four and five, and Germans with guns urged on a group of approximately 80 Jews, all of them wearing black clothes and carrying bundles; says they were beaten and frightened; says they were not allowed to watch, so people were hiding behind curtains; remembers hearing someone saying they needed water, but nobody could give them some; says the procession moved very fast because the Germans were urging them on; thinks they were been beaten up and pushed with the guns; asked if the Jewish gendarme was there, he says that he does not know.

[01:] 25:18:19 – [01:] 30:29:20

He says also that his house was not very close to the gate of the ghetto and that he could not see the ghetto because it was separated from his house by some buildings and the town square; remembers when he was closer, he could see the gate and a Jew standing in front of it; explains the relations between the guard and the other Jews in the ghetto as very impolite and rude when the Germans were looking; says due to his old age the guard probably wanted to survive; thinks that the guard even beat other Jews when the Germans were watching, but he (Klinger) was not a witness to this kind of situation, he only heard this from others; says that the group of Jews he observed on his street, was heading towards “kirche” in Sieradz – the Jewish cemetery, where they were probably buried together.