

CZADERSKI, Jerzy
Polish Witnesses to the Holocaust Project
Polish
RG-50.488*0164

In this interview, Jerzy Czaderski, born on June 2, 1924 in Warsaw, describes his observations during World War II, especially regarding the ghetto of Zduńska Wola. He mentions that he witnessed the execution of eight to ten Jews and his discoveries in the ghetto after its liquidation. While walking through the emptied housings of the ghetto, he went to a former hospital where he found two or three bodies. He describes the conditions of the Jewish ghetto. Czaderski also mentions how his acquaintance, a Jewish policeman named Mandel, survived the ghetto.

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[01:] 00:08:12 – [01:] 19:43:11
00:00 – 20:34

Q: Please tell us your name, when and where you were born.

A: You wrote it down just a few seconds ago.

Q: The camera was not switched on, then.

A: Ah– ok. I was born in Warsaw on June 2 in 1924.

Q: Where did the war meet you?

A: The war got me in Zduńska Wola, in the village of Strońsko.

Q: Ah, you did not tell us your name, yet.

A: Jerzy Czaderski.

Q: Fine. The war met you in Zduńska Wola. And you, did you– live– How did the occupation begin and where did you live then?

A: Actually I did not live there. We used to live in Warsaw and had family members in Zduńska Wola, in Strońsko. We always spent our holidays there. And then the war broke out. You see, I didn't live there.

Q: But you resided there.

A: Yes, I lived near Zduńska Wola, in Strońsko.

Q: Have you often been in Zduńska Wola itself?

- A: Yes. Because it [*where he lived*] is situated nine kilometers away from Zduńska Wola and when I was a teenager I liked cycling so much, so I was also often in Zduńska Wola.
- Q: Did you see here what happened to the Jews under the German occupation?
- A: I saw it because I lived very— I lived near the ghetto so I saw.
- Q: But you lived in Strońsko.
- A: No, dear. You asked me where the war met me. When the war broke out we left this Strońsko and escaped to Uniejów. And from there my mother thought houses had been saved in Strońsko — she wanted to go back. But it turned out that they had been destroyed as this place is situated on the Warta River. There had been fights there. Everything had been burned down. And we had to stay in Zduńska Wola, as we could not get back to Warsaw in the first phase, in the first few days of the occupation. And afterwards, after it became possible to travel, we stayed in Zduńska Wola. And my family— my sister lived and the house we lived in was in Warsaw.
- Q: Please tell us, you said, you lived very close to the ghetto, right?
- A: Yes.
- Q: But before the ghetto was established, did you have the possibility to observe the life of the Jews from Zduńska Wola already during the occupation?
- A: Yes, because our first flat was situated in the center of the ghetto. This was by accident, because my sister married a local of Zduńska Wola and we lived next to them and had some acquaintances so that we could stay on Ulica Stęszycka that is in the center of the ghetto. And until they closed the ghetto, I stayed on the area of the later ghetto.
- Q: Before the closing of the ghetto did you observe any scenes of persecution, beating— or— I don't know— any abuse of Jews?
- A: Yes, sometimes I saw things. The German police went past and they wore very nice uniforms. And I saw that they sometimes beat someone up.
- Q: And what happened to someone like that then?
- A: That is hard to say. I witnessed how they beat with batons or fists.
- Q: And this was German police?
- A: Yes.
- Q: And did you happen to see any other formations?
- A: No. Then it still was German police. When the ghetto was opened, there was also Jewish police but they didn't have uniforms.

Q: And how—

A: They went in plain clothes.

Q: In plain clothes. And were they somehow armed?

A: No. That means I didn't see that.

Q: Did you see how the Jewish police treated the Jews themselves?

A: No. I only heard of that. I heard of it because I had an acquaintance who was a Jewish policeman actually. He was called **Mandel** or **Mendel** — I don't remember anymore. And the neighbors next to him accused him of beating someone up sometimes.

Q: But all of this you only know from hearsay—

A: Yes. I didn't see it with my own eyes.

Q: I forgot to ask if— Because you couldn't as they closed the ghetto, and what? You stayed on Ulica Stężycka?

A: No. We had to move in fact. And started to live on Ulica Ogrodowa, right at the gate— at the gate to the ghetto.

Q: What did the gate look like? Who took care of it?

A: It was closed. It was of wood. It was opened for— so that a wagon could get in. The wicket was at the side. And next to it on the field there was a fence made of barbed wire.

Q: And who took care of the gate?

A: I don't know that. Generally it was closed. When they drove through, then—

Q: That means there was nobody standing outside?

A: No.

Q: And could one manage to get into the ghetto?

A: Ah yes, because I got inside. I had acquaintances. And I also very often went to the ghetto because I had started to trade a little. I sold corn to the Jews. My acquaintance brought it from the area of **Szatek**. He brought it to me and I lived very close to the gate— and he also brought two sacks of rye and I passed it on and transported it into the ghetto.

Q: What did you get for this?

- A: They paid me. I got [food] stamps for it. I don't remember what kind of, what kind of compensation. But for sure it was beneficial for me because I bought from this acquaintance and I sold it with some profit for me.
- Q: And did you also do any bartering?
- A: No. I only sold corn and rye.
- Q: And everything for stamps?
- A: Yes. And they had small grain mills; they ground it [the corn and rye] and baked bread from it. I also baked bread from it. I had a mill in my chamber. ____ this corn. And mother baked bread at home because there wasn't much bread.
- Q: Please tell us, when you were inside the ghetto in order to trade did you see any dramatic scenes?
- A: No. I only saw two dramatic scenes. The hanging of eight or ten persons and after the closing, the liquidation of the ghetto I went to— maybe half a day, a day— I don't remember— or maybe two days after the Germans had chased the Jews away, to this small hospital I went and there I saw—
- Q: Now please tell us about those two scenes, but in detail. First, the hanging.
- A: The hanging.
- Q: When could this have happened? Do you remember?
- A: No. I remember that this could have taken place either in spring or in fall.
- Q: Of which year?
- A: I don't remember.
- Q: Ok. This is not that important. Most important is what you remember, I mean the scene.
- A: The place where it took place I remember perfectly. And I found myself by accident on Ulica Sieradzka because I had a friend, a wheelwright, on Ulica Sieradzka near to previous Ulica Szulwega and I was at his place. And finally I somehow knew that they were being hanged and that we went to the fence actually— I saw the whole execution.
- Q: But how did you know that they were—
- A: They had a wheelwright workshop on Ulica Sieradzka and the back of it approached Ulica Sęszycka and there were no buildings. And at the corner of Ulica Sęszycka and **Szulwegi** they had made a gibbet and there, from the fence — the distance might have been 400 or 300 meters— I saw how they were hanged.

- Q: And what did you see? How did that look like?
- A: They brought them on a car, led them on a kind of little bridge but I saw that from a certain distance. Then they put the rope around the neck, pulled—
- Q: And who put the rope on?
- A: I don't know. No uniformed this time. I don't know who put them on, but they weren't in uniforms.
- Q: But Germans?
- A: Please, I don't know. I cannot say this, who.
- Q: You don't know. But have there been in general people in uniforms?
- A: Yes. Oh yes. With guns. I guess now, but at least four, six Germans armed, in uniforms and with rifles or with guns of steel. And there was a whole crowd of bystanders watching.
- Q: That means Jews? Because this—
- A: Yes.
- Q: I interrupted you, when they had the ropes on, what happened then?
- A: Then they pulled this bar and it fell and I saw how the people winced, struggled with their legs and feet.
- Q: For long?
- A: Oh, please. I cannot tell.
- Q: No but you see, if— how did you remember it? Was it— a few seconds or—
- A: A few, maybe some ten seconds. And the bodies stopped moving. And I watched that. This, what I am telling, I watched with my colleague Tadeusz Innowiecki. He was the younger of this— the family who had the wheelwright trade.
- Q: And please tell us if you saw who pulled this board away under the legs of the convicts?
- A: No, because it was pulled with cords.
- Q: But who pulled these cords?
- A: This board stood on trestles. And it was pulled from these trestles. The board fell and the people began to struggle with their legs.
- Q: And just before the execution was there any speech? Did anyone say anything—

- A: Yes, there was something. Yes. I heard something. There was something. You could see that someone was speaking. Germans spoke. But the distance was too long. Finally I couldn't get words— surely they spoke German or Yiddish. I don't speak German that much in order to— In the end no noise reached me because this— I only saw it.
- Q: And from the Jews did anyone say anything? Or not?
- A: I don't know.
- Q: Did you see how the gathered Jews there behaved or reacted?
- A: You know from this distance I saw a crowd which was gathered. Maybe there was some movement but I cannot say if someone cried or screamed. For this it was too far away in order to tell.
- Q: That's clear. This second case as you mentioned you experienced after the liquidation of the ghetto—
- A: After its liquidation already.
- Q: But I wanted to ask as well, do you remember the liquidation itself anyhow?
- A: No. I know that they brought them to **Tyrchol**.
- Q: Had you seen that? Maybe you saw them going?
- A: No.
- Q: Then you know it only from hearsay, don't you?
- A: Yes. I didn't see this on my own.
- Q: Then tell us please how you made your way through the ghetto right after its liquidation. What did you see?
- A: Well, I went through those empty open flats and was curious to see how everything looked like, some details there. I collected stamps. That's what I recall, and that I found a stamp album which I took with me. I even remember the place where it was. And there were some other small things.
- Q: Were these stamps valuable?
- A: No. Rather not. I collected in those days so I was a bit interested in that stuff.
- Q: I once also collected, but—
- A: I saw that album so I took it. That's what I remember. Well and later I looked in this little hospital because I knew where it was situated. And there I saw much blood

which came from two or three bodies lying on the floor. You asked me what my strong impressions were, these two.

Q: That means you went on the area of the ghetto after its liquidation and you saw these two or three dead bodies on the hospital site.

A: Yes, in this little building with only one floor used as a hospital.

Q: Did you inspect the scene longer?

A: No, I left immediately. I escaped from there.

Q: But could you see in what way they have been killed?

A: No. I only saw the blood on the floor. I saw much blood on the floor.

Q: Were the ones killed adults or—

A: Yes. I think they were, but even this I don't remember exactly.

Q: Did you see any other bodies?

A: No.

Q: Well, was there any— did anyone else collect things the Jews had left after the liquidation of the ghetto?

A: Yes. Many people did so.

Q: Many people, indeed?

A: Yes.

Q: How did they behave?

A: Well, when someone went inside a flat and there was something useful to him so he simply took it. And after some days the Germans did a clearance sale of furniture. You could get inside the ghetto with a wagon, load on it as much as you like and what you like and on the exit gates there stood a German with a bag— this I still remember— and said “10 mark, 20 mark.” And the whole wagon could have been full of firewood, even some furniture they took out of the ghetto. I did it myself.

Q: Please tell us if someone survived the liquidation of the ghetto?

A: Well, I actually remember this Jewish policeman called **Mandel** with whom I traded a bit. It occurred after the war in Zduńska Wola. I also met him by accident and know that he had a job in the **Urząd Bezpieczeństwa** in Zduńska Wola.

Q: During the war when someone tried to hide himself did you observe such case happening?

A: No.

Q: And did this Mandel tell you after the war how he managed to survive?

A: What should he tell me, I beg you pardon. But I found out that he was in the **Urząd Bezpieczeństwa** because I had been in the Home Army, "Armia Krajowa," (Polish resistance against the German occupation), at the end of the war. I was also, I was afraid. And I also knew that some of my elder colleagues had been arrested so I indeed was a bit afraid. But someone told me that he had survived somehow. I remember that I was told but I don't remember any details. Anyway I met several times but after some— Since then this rather— But this was just after the war, maybe some half a year or a year I met him and he told me that there were some allegations against me because of me being in the Home Army, but he ignored and drew the curtain over this. "Now you are clean"— so he said. And I thanked him for that. I don't know whether this was the truth or not but they did invite me to the **Urząd Bezpieczeństwa** and I had to declare myself, so I think that it was positive for me.

Q: Have there been any other Jews in the **Urząd Bezpieczeństwa** there?

A: I knew about this single one.

Q: Ok.

A: But I heard that there were.

Q: Ok, I thank you then already but please don't stand up, yet. Maybe they will there— they see us on the monitor and maybe someone—

Q: Ok, well, only two more minutes.

A: Ok.

Q: I'd like to ask you to specify the localization of that place. That means, where and how you watched this hanging of ten or as you said eight condemned— as far as I remember you stood on a fence with that friend?

A: If you had a map or something to draw on I would be able to specify.

Q: Will you— Maybe it will not be necessary to draw. This was, please tell us where you stood then?

A: Ok. Ulica Stężycka, the street where it happened, and Ulica Sieradzka ran almost parallel. I was on the street Ulica Sieradzka on the side where Ulica Stężycka passed because his workshop was a bit aside of the street and hidden, maybe I can say it like this, yes. That means in the direction of the Ulica Stężycka. And it was fenced. This fence—

Q: There was a fence. What kind of fence?

- A: A wooden fence.
- Q: No, but was it the fence of the ghetto?
- A: No, dear. Maybe there was the border of the ghetto, yes.
- Q: Did the hanging take place within the borders of the ghetto?
- A: Yes it did. On the corner of the streets Ulica Stężycka and Ulica **Szulwegi**.
- Q: Was it obvious that Jews were hung there?
- A: I heard about this, because they had probably been selected a day or two earlier and they sat in the small prison of the German police. Today there still are the police. I had heard about this.
- Q: But these gathered people were of which nationality?
- A: Well, Jews. They commanded the inhabitants living close to observe them— This was for reasons of fear and terror.
- Q: I understand. It only was important for specifying if these were— if they were really Jews.
- A: For sure. But no one could— That means nobody entered the ghetto except for the Germans.
- Q: Well, you stood on a fence and you could see the execution inside the ghetto.
- A: Yes.
- Q: Well, this little hospital to which you went and there you saw the bodies. Was this inside the ghetto?
- A: Yes.
- Q: And this— Ok. This is actually—
- A: This was in the middle of Ulica Ogrodowa southwards. This small house doesn't exist there anymore. A small house with only a first floor. It had four rooms.
- Q: Ok. For us we only wanted to be sure if this was inside the ghetto. And if they were Jews.
- A: I know for sure that this was an interim hospital for ill Jews.
- Q: Thanks a lot.
- A: You are welcome.

[01:] 19:43:11

20:24

Conclusion of Interview