

Stefan Ostapiuk  
Polish Witnesses to the Holocaust Project  
Polish  
RG-50.488\*0183

07/10/2003

*[Approximately 60 min]*

## SUMMARY

*[It is very hard to follow the interviewee's story due to a lack of chronology and details.]*

Stefan Ostapiuk was born on January 17, 1925 in Osowa near the future sight of Sobibór death camp. He talks about the transition camp for the Jews built near Osowa. Mr. Ostapiuk recalls that the transition camp covered the area of a few abandoned farmsteads and that no additional buildings were constructed in the camp. The Jews who were brought in from Warsaw and Łódź lived in the barns from spring to early fall and worked on the melioration of the nearby swap. He comments on the passive and docile behavior of the Jews despite the scarcity of camp guards. Mr. Ostapiuk briefly mentions that the locals were supplying Jewish laborers with food in exchange for money or personal belongings; he recalls that many workers were foreign. He talks of abuse and killings of the Jewish prisoners by the Germans and mentions a German commander named **Bajka**. He recalls the mass killing of Jews by the Germans near the local river *[likely Tarasienka River]* and speculates that Germans selected prominent and influential Jews for execution. Mr. Ostapiuk underscores that although Jews knew Sobibór to be a death camp they didn't attempt to flee during deportations to the camp; he briefly recalls escorts of Jews from Włodawa, Sawin and possibly Staw *[interviewee's pronunciation is unclear]* to the Sobibór death camp. He talks about local partisans killing one of the German commanders; he recalls that Polish women would arrive in the area to engage in prostitution with the Ukrainian guards. He mentions the Jewish escape from Sobibór in 1943. Mr. Ostapiuk visited the Sobibór camp after its liquidation *[it is unclear whether it happened during or after the war]* and can describe the gas chamber.

[Prepared by Agnieszka McClure on 11/25/2010]