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SZYMANSKI, Kazimierz
Polish Witness to the Holocaust
Polish
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This interview was conducted with **Kazimierz Szymanski**, who was born on **March 4 1929**, in **Lublin**. He is a witness to crimes committed on Jewish population during the World War II. In the beginning he talks about his family and describes the outbreak of the war. He talks about the deportation of the Jewish people from **Winiawa** district and also talks about the arrest of his father by the Germans. Further, he talks about so –called **Little Majdnek** camp, and describes crimes committed on prisoners by the Germans. Further, he mentions the execution of five SS officers, as well as the execution of 30 Polish hostages from the Lublin castle. Further, he discusses other crimes committed on civilians, prisoners, and Polish prisoners of Jewish origin. In the end, he describes so – called execution of 500, committed on prisoners from the Lublin castle.

[01]:00:51:07 – [01]: 53:52:11
00:51 - 53:51

[01]:00:51:07 – [01]: [01]:05:08:10
00:51 – 05:07

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Q: Thank you so much for being a part of this project, and for sharing your memories from the WWII. Would you, please introduce yourself, and tell us when you were born?

A: My name is Kazimierz Szymanski. I was born in Lublin, on March 4, 1929.

Q: My name is Patrycja Bukalska, and our project at the Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C is to collect the testimonials from the witnesses of the crimes committed on civilians during the World War II. Can you, please tell us where you were when the war started?

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A: I was in **Lublin**, on **Snopkowska 9 Street** – where I lived with my parents, and my sister. I remember the first outbreak of the war, as well as the first bombing of **Lublin**. It started in the center of **Lublin**. In fact, the story about extermination of the Poles of the Jewish origin starts at **Winiawa** district, where I used to live. I was just recently asked about the date that the Jews were thrown away from the **Winiawa** district – because nobody knew – and I was right. It took place on **May 3, 1940**. My father was still alive. I remember, it was around five o' clock in the morning, when I heard people screaming, and also some gunshots. We were not allowed to come close to the windows. The Jews were taken out of their homes. There were little Jewish houses on the other side of the street, from where the Jews were first taken to the Square, and then deported to the ghetto in the Old Town, I assume. We were able to live our homes after 11 in the morning, before noon.

Q: Did you live very close from them?

A: Their houses were literally in front of our apartment building. There was a wonderful bakery. I remember the taste of onion rolls to this day. Delicious.

Q: Do you remember names of your neighbors, who lived here before the war?

A: No. Not really. I only remember some names of the Poles, who used to live here.

Q: So the Poles lived here during the war, didn't they? Only the Jews were deported, right?

A: No. I saw that the area where the Jews lived was surrounded. We were not allowed to come close to the window. We were afraid that they would start shooting at us.

Q: So you only heard that something was going on?

A: I saw a little bit, when the Jews were taken out of their homes. My father didn't let me stay by the window.

Q: How did the war affect your family during the first couple of months?

A: The first months of the war were very hard on us. My father was... The post office was militarized, and all the mailmen were deported to the village – called – **Cycow**. It is located close to the Eastern border. That was where the Russians took over. Finally, after the correction of the **Ribbentrop – Molotow** pact, where the Lublin region in the first phase was to be Russian, but the Russians had occupied Lithuania earlier, so the Russians, and the Germans ended up occupying the entire Lublin region. My father came back home sometime in the beginning of **December 1939**.

Q: I am sure that everyone was happy that daddy came back?

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A: Not for too long. In **January 1941** the entire organization was arrested by the Germans. The **Gestapo** cooperated with **NKWD** at the time. The Eastern territories of **Poland** were to be Russian, so they had already sent their people over there, so I know for fact that **NKWD** took part in uncovering the Polish underground.

Q: This organization that your father was a member of, was it an underground organization?

A: Yes. He was a member of the organization called, **Defenders of Poland**. From what my mother told me, I know that he worked for the Intelligence, as he spoke several foreign languages.

[01]:05:09:18 – [01]:09:14:11
05:08 – 09:13

Q: How did he get arrested? Do you remember it?

A: My father was very nervous. The [**Kamela**] **Family** was arrested on July 12, **January 12** [I mean]. They were very well known on [**Bychowska**] **Street**. They owned a large colonial store. **Mr. Kamel**, his brother, and his son were arrested. So on [**January**] **14**, my father worked as a controller at the post office, and he was very stressed. He never said goodbye to us. He went with my sister. I was looking out the window. That was the last time I saw my father.

Q: He never came back home? He was arrested, correct?

A: Unfortunately, he never came back. The mailman brought my father's bag with his documents, and cash in it. That's why I was able to save this card.

Q: Did your family ever find out what happened to your father?

A: He was interrogated at the clock tower in the castle. There was a quite large cell that could accommodate around 15 prisoners. There were two priests in that cell. My father never graduated from the Seminary, but he spoke **Latin**, and knew how to say mass in Latin. I waited in a long line for several hours to leave a package for my father at the castle. It was in **January, February, and March**, and then in **April** all of the prisoners were deported to **Auschwitz - Birkenau**. Unfortunately, my father never came back from there.

Q: You never heard anything from him after that?

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A: We did. He sent a few letters. You will see them on the CD that I gave you. You will see his first, second, and the third letter that he sent.

Q: Were those letters send from the castle in Lublin?

A: No, the letters were sent from Auschwitz - Birkenau. You will see the original postage on an envelope.

Q: What kind of information do you remember that you were receiving from your father? Do you remember what he wrote about in his letters?

A: I remember the first letter, in which he informed us that he was in the concentration camp in Auschwitz - Birkenau. The letters were written in **German**. He was saying that he was feeling good, and informed us that my mom was allowed to send him some Polish money, so he could exchange it for **German Mark**, and then buy something. Well, it was a lie. My mother kept sending the money for my father. The last letter came on **August 20, 1941**. My father was begging us to... I am so sorry [crying].

Q: It's okay. Don't be sorry. Here is some water if you want. Please, don't worry. We understand how hard it is to talk about it.

A: It was the last letter from my father. **On September 14, 1941** we received a telegram informing us that my father died. It was dated on **September 13**, so my father died on **September 13**. As I found out later, the Germans were experimenting with the **Cyclone B** gas, and the entire hospital – because my father was sick at that time, and his block number was **27**, and it was called the hospital. All of the patients from the hospital were taken to the gas chamber and everybody died. My mom tried to search for my father through the **Red Cross**, but you will see on this CD that I gave you a notice from the Red Cross, informing us that my father was sick with typhus, and died in the gas chamber. This is all I can tell you about my father.

[01]:09:24:06 – [01]: 18:05:14
09:23 – 18:04

Q: I assume it was pretty difficult to find out any information during this time?

A: You will also find on that disk, a document stating that our family was expelled from the apartment at **9 Snopkowska Street**. Gestapo took over our apartment building because they demolished the Jewish homes that were located across the street from us. They cleaned up that area, and made it into a training field for horses. So, we were expelled from our apartment, and they relocated us to some place in Old Town. This place was in terrible condition, so my mom's sister let us move in with her. She lived at **39 Fabryczna Street**. There was a camp, known as "**Little Majdanek**" located across

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the street from my aunt's apartment. It was a **Plaga Raskiewicz** airport. They were producing Polish reconnaissance airplanes. I think they were called **Lublin**, or maybe **Lublin 4**. I can't remember. Anyways, the Germans fenced the entire area in, and there were huge hangars there because there was railway siding. The Germans created there sort of a working Commando, where all of the Jewish belongings were being delivered to. Confiscated Jewish belongings were sorted, and segregated here, such as clothing, money, etc. and then exported to Germany. I remember that at one point, the pile of clothes was so huge, that it was even taller than those hangars. We could see this camp from our windows. That's why I know many facts from that period of time.

Q: So the camp was very close? How close?

A: There was a sidewalk, street, and the barracks right on the other side.

Q: Who was segregating the Jewish belongings?

A: There was a huge group of prisoners "stripes" that were ordered to do the segregation.

Q: And at that time...you went to live there after your father was arrested, right?

A: Yes, yes, yes. We were expelled from our apartment... well you will see this document on that disc, that we moved out from the apartment at **9 Snopkowska Street** in **August, 1942**, and moved in with my aunt. We occupied one bedroom. Later on, we were expelled from that apartment as well.

Q: Did you witness any crimes committed on prisoners or civilians during your stay at your aunt's apartment?

A: I sure did. I actually recognized one of the Gestapo officers on the picture that I saw at the Museum in **Majdanek**. It was Sunday. I think. We were not allowed to look out the window. My aunt had those curtains – I don't know how they are called - but there was little chink in one of the curtains, so I was able to see everything. One time I saw a group of Gestapo officers along with one civilian at the camp [as I found out later, it was a Jew who was collaborating with them]. They walked up to some prisoner, who was in a shower. All of the sudden, they stopped and one of the officers pulled out a gun. I saw how prisoner's facial expression suddenly changed from happy into terrified. The German shot him straight in the heart. The prisoner fell on his knees. He was shot in front of everybody.

Q: So, I understand that there was no reason to shoot this prisoner, right?

A: No, not at all. Maybe he was just too happy showering...

Q: So, was it an outdoor shower?

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A: Yes. It was located on the side of the barracks.

Q: How did you know that this civilian was Jewish, you know the one who...?

A: Everybody knew. Everyone talked about it.

Q: Have you ever seen him before?

A: I have seen him several times.

Q: Do you remember his name?

A: I don't remember. But they know his name at the Museum in **Majdanek**. I guess, there were actually three Jews collaborating with the Gestapo. The rumor said, that he was shot in [19] 44 at the Majdanek camp, as well.

Q: Who was the officer that killed this prisoner?

A: It was the SS officer.

Q: How did you know it was the SS officer?

A: He was dressed in a black uniform, and had a hat on. I recognized him later. I recognized him on a picture.

Q: Did you see him any other time during the war?

A: I saw him again while we were staying at **39 Fabryczna Street**. I found it very strange, that they were transporting prisoners to the Majdanek camp during a day. The entire street was guarded, and I even didn't go to school that day. And my friend came – because I lived at **8 Wirowa Street** at that time – so **Zygmunt Slowikowski** asked me to go with him to see what was happening at **Fabryczna Street** [current name of the street is **Martyrs of Majdanek Street**]. So we ran through some yard, and hid behind bushes (I think it was gooseberry bush). There was a little gap between the buildings, so we were able to see a marching group of prisoners. They were throwing their belongings everywhere. The cars drove right behind them to collect all of the Jewish goods. So, I still see this picture in my head, where there is the end of the column. I see this old man who is unable to march on his own, and some young prisoner is trying to help him, and takes him under his arm. All of the sudden, one of the SS officers shot him.

Q: He shot the old man, you mean?

A: Yes. So the young prisoner left him, and joined the column. And the old man fell on his knees, with his head down. The SS officer came up to him, and lifted his head with

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his foot. Then he shot him again. Then, he looked at the direction where we were hiding. We were terrified that he could have seen us.

Q: The SS officer looked at you?

A: Yes. He looked at our direction, so we hid behind the bushes, went back through the yard, and went back to our street, to **Wirowa Street**. There was a passage that we knew about, you know?

A: So you don't know what happened with this old man later?

Q: No. We didn't see. I was afraid that he could have followed us, and find us. But we heard several more gunshots later on, so I am guessing that this officer guarded that column to the end.

A: Anything else that you remember...?

Q: There was another incident. I don't remember for sure. It was the summer of [19] 43, or [19] 44 or the fall of [19] 42. Anyways, I saw two SS officers at the camp. One of them was the same one who shot this old prisoner. The other one was very tall, and bony. Each of the officers were carrying some large wood poles, you know, the thick ones. Prisoners were running away, trying to hide. They finally stopped by this huge wooden water tank. It was a large water container, used at the camp in case of fire. Some prisoner walked by, so they called him up. He came up to them, and took his hat off. They ordered him to wash himself. When he bent over the water tank, they grabbed him by his legs, and pushed him into the water. They pushed him under water with their poles, and timed how long he was able to hold his breath under water. They left after while. Then, I saw a few prisoners, who got him out of the water, but it was already too late.

Q: Were these water containers really that deep?

A: They were pretty big. I would say, they were about 1,5 tall, and made of thick wood, you know?

Q: How far were you from the scene?

A: I saw this situation from my apartment building, so there was a narrow sidewalk, a narrow street, another sidewalk, and the barracks. So it was very close. I was able to see their faces.

Q: Did you recognize any of those SS officers?

A: I recognized one of them. I even witnessed his execution.

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[01]: 18:07:06 – [01]: 21: 30:15

18:06 – 21:29

Q: How so?

A: I found out that some other SS officer, [he was famous for shooting prisoners at the castle,] was hung later, as well. And there was another officer. He was tall and skinny, and none of his uniforms actually fit him. The sleeves were too short, and the pants always too short as well. I was already a scout when the trial of the five SS officers started, the ones from the Majdanek camp.

Q: It was after the war, correct?

A: Yes. It was after the war. The scouts, and soldiers were ordered to guard the territory around the gallows. There was one scout, one soldier, one scout, and one soldier. I was standing about 15 meters away from the gallows. It was maybe 20, at most. I saw the gallows right in front of me, and then I recognized that SS officer.

Q: Do you remember what year that was? It was after the war, but what year?

A: It was in the fall. I think [19] 44.

Q: [19] 44?

A: Yes. The first trial started then. I was going to school. Wait. Maybe it was [19] 45. I don't know. I don't remember now. But **Ms. Marta** from the Museum in Majdanek knows the exact date. I just don't recall it now.

Q: Can you describe this execution? Was this SS officer calm, or was he saying anything?

A: No. It was a situation. Well, let me tell you something interesting. I was on my way to school, when I heard the gunshots. My school was located at **Krakowskie Przedmiescie Street**. So we run to see what was happening, and that was when I saw those five people.

Q: Five SS officers, you mean?

A: Yes. Those five SS officers were walked for the final phase of the trial, which took place at **Solider's House** or **Officer's House**. People wanted to put their hands on them, but the guards were shooting in the air to scare them.

Q: The guards were shooting?

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A: Yes. Just to keep people away from them. There were about 20 or 30 guards in all. I went to school, but my friend stayed there. Apparently, the crowd stopped them right in front of the Solider' s House and beat those officers up. One of the officers still had a bandage around his neck at the time of the execution. Three cars drove through the camp in Majdanek, to show them the reason why they were going to be hung. They dropped them off by the gallows. Some other officers with white gloves on, put the rope around their necks, then they threw the gloves on the ground. I guess three of them kissed the cross before they died. Two of them shouted “ **Hi Hitler**”. Some other officer waved his hand, the cars drove off, and...

Q: Were those officers Polish?

A: Yes. They were Polish soldiers.

Q: So, from what you told me, you recognized two of the SS officers, correct? You saw them several times?

A: Yes. One of them was skinny, and tall. The other one was famous for shooting people.

[01]: 21:31:14 – [01]: 30:11:22
21:31 – 30:10

Q: Did you witness any other crimes committed on civilians or prisoners from the Majdanek camp?

A: Let me think. The prisoners from the Majdanek camp? I don't remember. It was **[19] 42** or **[19] 43** when the Germans killed 30 prisoners from the castle in Lublin. It happened at the “New Road”.

Q: They were the prisoners from the castle, correct?

A: Yes. They were Poles taken into a hostage. I was on my way from school when the **Wermacht** gathered a huge crowd of people to watch the execution. I heard the first salvo on my way there. Then, first ten people were shot. I tried to go around people to get closer because I was small and couldn't see anything. Then, I heard the second salvo. The second group of ten people was killed. I saw that SS officer, the one I told you about. He was famous for killing people. He was in a platoon squad, and he was making sure that everyone was dead. Then, they walked the third group consisting of ten people. I heard the salvo again. Some women from the crowd held me down so I would watch it. I remember one of the prisoners who was in that third group. He was standing on the left. He had nice boots on and wore breeches trousers and a light grey turtleneck. I remember him because later, when the bodies were transported to the Majdanek camp to be burnt, some prisoners tried to remove his boots. That's why I remember.

Q: So their bodies were transported by some other prisoners, correct?

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A: Yes. They were transported to the Majdanek camp.

Q: You said that they fired the salvo. Does it mean that ten people were shot at the same time, or were they shot individually?

A: No. The salvo was a firing platoon consisting of 20 SS officers. So each of them fired twice at one prisoner.

Q: How do you know they were SS officers?

A: I was close enough to be able to tell.

Q: Close enough? Can you describe how close you were?

A: It was about 30, maybe 40 meters away, at most. I was on the other side of **Bystrzyca** [name of the river].

Q: So there was a river between you and the execution area, correct?

A: Yes. The river wasn't wide at all.

Q: Do you remember how the Polish people were acting before the execution?

A: They had their mouth covered, and their hands were tied up. I think they marched in twos, but I don't remember.

Q: I am sorry for asking so many details, but were their backs facing the crowd?

A: No. They were facing the crowd.

Q: So they were facing the officers who shot them, correct?

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: Were people around you saying anything? How were they acting?

A: Many of them were crying.

Q: Does anyone know why those people were killed? You said that they were taken into a hostage, correct?

A: I don't know. The rumor said that some German was killed at "New Road", and that's why they killed those 30 people. That was the rumor.

Q: So nobody really knows, who those people were, correct?

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A: There is a board on a bridge where you can find out their names.

Q: Do you remember any other crimes committed on civilians that refer to the castle?

A: At some point the Germans took over our school building. They relocated my school to some place in Old Town. I think that building used to belong to the Jews. We could see some fields from the windows, and also the castle up on a little hill. I remember there was a class with professor, who in fact became a director of chemistry school after the war. It was in the middle of physics class when we heard the gunfire. Everybody run towards the windows. We saw some man running. It was in the fall. The fall of [19] 42, I think. He had a brown jacket on and was chased by some Ukrainian officer. They were called **SS Ukraine**, or **SS Galician**. We simply called them, the Ukrainians. Anyways, so this man run towards the fence, climbed it up, but was taken down by the Ukrainian. He was shot and fell down on the ground. Then, the Ukrainian came up to him, shot him again to make sure he was dead, then he lit a cigarette and left. We prayed for him this man in a moment of silence.

Q: Was his body left there?

A: Yes.

Q: Did he escape from the castle?

A: He was running from that direction.

Q: So you didn't see the entire situation, only...?

A: No. No. I only saw what I told you about. But there was another incident. Quite interesting one. I think it was in the summer. We walked through **Krakowska Gate**, across the street from the City Hall, when we saw a truck and also opel [car] driving behind it with SS officers. All of the sudden the car turns, slows down and some woman jumps out from one side, and some man runs out from the other side of the car. She runs up the stairs, and goes through a gate. The man ran towards the food market that was located just behind the City Hall. He runs through the market, and people started clearing path for him, and were crowding as the SS officer and his dog were chasing him. So of course, my friend and I run after them as well. This man run into a dead end, then climbed up some fence. The SS officer who chased him was a Commando at the castle, and he was called, "a Cow".

Q: Was that his name?

A: Yes. Well, everybody called him that because he was very fat, you know? He was short, and had really ugly face. Anyways, he pulled out his parabelum [German type of pistol], and fired at him. The man fell a little bit, but his leg got stuck between the wires.

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As he was trying to pull his leg out, the SS officer fired his gun again, and the man fell on the ground. The SS officer put his gun away, and run towards him. They were wrestling for a little bit, but the man was able to escape. "The Cow" fired his gun three more times or so, but he missed. I saw bullet marks on the wall. So he escaped. A couple days later, I saw a huge poster. There was a reward of five or ten thousand Mark offered for finding him. There was a picture of him. I still remember his frightened face when he was up on that fence, trying to free his leg from the wires.

Q: So, did you run after that man and the SS officer?

A: Many people did, you know? We were curious to see if he is able to escape or not. And he did.

Q: Were you scared?

A: Well, we took off as soon as he escaped.

Q: I guess, you and the other people must have been pretty close to the scene, since you were able to see his face?

A: It was about 15 meters away, not more.

Q: What did the SS officer do after that man had escaped?

A: I don't know because we run away. You never know with them. He was very mad so probably he would have killed anyone out of anger.

Q: That's why I asked because it seems like he would have to take revenge.

A: And this woman, they never looked for this woman, just for him?

Q: What did people say about this man? Did they know who he was?

A: Nobody knew.

Q: How so?

A: His name was on the poster, but I don't remember now. He wasn't very tall and had a light colored coat on. It was so called a "duster" [type of a coat for both men and women]. He was running. His had light hair, not too thick.

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30:12 – 34:46

Q: Do...?

A: One face...since we are talking about faces. We lived at **Snopkowska Street** at that time, and I think my father has already been at the camp during that time. I suppose it was May of [19] 42. The weather was beautiful. About five or 5:30 in the morning we were waken up by some cars. There was a place called **Gorki Czechowskie** where the Germans used to murder people. So, at first the cars drove by and then we heard the gunshots. So, later when I looked out the window I saw the empty cars coming back. We were in bed when we heard the cars coming again. I went to look out the window. I saw the first car, and the SS officer inside. They drove convertible cars. The SS officer was leaning over the cab, and there was some man sitting next to him. When I saw the other car driving by, there was a SS officer as well, but there also were two women dressed in furs. They were in a car. One of them looked straight at me when I was at the window. She was very handsome and young brunet. The other one was a dark blonde. One fur was very darker than the other. We heard gunshots about 20, or 30 minutes later. Then we saw empty cars coming back. I only saw their furs in the car. We prayed for those women.

Q: Do you know who those women were?

A: I don't know. From the castle, I suppose. They were shooting everyone from the castle. Later, towards end of **July**, people were allowed to enter the Majdanek camp.

Q: What year was it?

A: [19] 44. There were dead bodies of youth brigade in the camp. This group was called [Audim], and they were construction workers who worked within the organization **Toda**. Have you heard about them? They even carried little rifles. I saw at least two or three of them carried the rifles on the way to work. It turned out that a small group of them stole some rifles from the armory and joined partisans. That was the reason why they were shot in **July**, before the war was over.

Q: Who was shot? The ones who stole the rifles or their friends?

A: Their friends. When I was at the Majdanek camp, I saw some family from **Zamosc** or **Krasny Staw** that came to take home a body of their son.

Q: You mean the body of one of the murdered man, correct?

A: Yes.

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Q: Did you see their bodies?

A: Yes. They were lying in a row next to the crematorium.

Q: So, it was an execution then?

A: Yes, it was the execution.

Q: How many bodies were there?

A: More than ten.

Q: But you didn't see how it happened, just...?

A: No. It was impossible for me to see. They were murdered at the Majdanek camp.

Q: Did you see the bodies directly at the camp, or you saw them from your apartment window?

A: During that time everyone was allowed to enter the Majdanek camp. Not just me, but the entire group of scouts and youth started going to the Majdanek camp in [19] 44. We were collecting the ashes and the bones of murdered prisoners that were spread over the cabbage and beet fields. The German used their ashes as fertilizer. So we collected a huge

amount of their little bones, and now there is this great big graveyard consisting of ashes of murdered prisoners. Everything was collected by the scouts and the youth.

Q: But that was after the war, but the execution of those young boys happened...?

A: It was in **July**, before the war ended.

Q: Were they murdered by the Germans that were still in town?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you know anything else about that execution?

A: Not. That's all I know.

Q: Okay. Let's take a little break, okay? I need to go to the other room for a second, and will be right back.

A: Go ahead.

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Q: Would you like a glass of water?

[01]: 34:49:14 – [01]: 39:35:04
34:48 – 39:34

Q: Please, let me know when you ready to start again.

A: I am ready.

Q: Are you? Ok. Let's just see if my friends are ready. I am ready.

Q: Are there any situations that you remember that took place at the end of the war?

A: Maybe, there is one. It happened during the time that my family lived at **39 Fabryczna 39**, and before the Germans kicked us out for the second time. I went to school in the morning, but the night before we heard terrible gunshots. It was very loud, and we heard a lot of noise coming from the Majdanek camp. We thought that perhaps somebody had escaped. The next morning our neighbors said that there was a prisoner's body found close by. My mom told me that the next morning when I went to school, all of the prisoners were gathered at the Square. The SS officers selected a huge group of the prisoners, and they were put into disinfectant barrack. Have I not mentioned about it? That disinfectant barrack was located in the middle of the camp, and it was used for disinfection of clothes. Then, they were transported to Germany. So, the prisoners were put into that barrack. I was at school, so I didn't see any of that. My mother told me about it. There was a sliding window in the roof of that barrack. Some SS officer walked inside along with two prisoners who were carrying the guns. They opened up some cans and threw them into the barrack. The other prisoners started breaking the glass, and the SS officers were shooting at them at the same time.

Q: What was inside of those cans?

A: Cyclone B. For sure. So, then the prisoners who were not selected [to be murdered] shut the windows and 30 minutes later all of the prisoners were dead. Their bodies were taken to the Majdanek camp and burnt.

Q: What year was it?

A: I lived at **39 Fabryczna Street** during that time, so it could have been **[19] 39**. It was warm, in beginning of the fall, or maybe summer. I was in school so it wasn't during summer vacation. I would like to mention a little camp, located in the city center, next to a cemetery at **Lipowa Street**. It was a small camp for our soldiers of Jewish origin. They had their workshops there, and also segregated the clothes that were taken from the prisoners of the Majdanek camp. There were tailors, shoemakers, and so on, you know? So they were Polish prisoners, or maybe I should say Polish soldiers of Jewish origin. I

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suppose they had a pretty good life there. There used to find various valuables that were hidden in those clothes. It is not surprising, because when the prisoners got off the train at night, they were throwing their belongings everywhere. Sometimes people were finding valuable items in ditches and along the road. Anyways, one day, I guess it the summer of [19] 43 or maybe [19] 44 there was a column of prisoners marched from **Lipowa Street** to the Majdanek camp. Those Polish soldiers attacked the escort.

Q: Those Polish prisoners, correct?

A: The Polish soldiers of Jewish origin, our soldiers attacked the escort. I saw two dead bodies on my way from school that day.

Q: So, you didn't see the entire situation, just those two dead bodies, correct?

A: Correct. I saw one body at **Lecinska Street**. He was dressed in Polish uniform. The other body was at **Chelmska Street**.

Q: So, they didn't wear stripped clothes but...?

A: No. They wore Polish uniforms the entire time. Some of them wore civilian pants because their uniform pants were worn out.

Q: Do you know what happened to the rest of them?

A: All of them were shot at the Majdanek camp.

Q: So, the two of them died at the scene, correct?

A: More of them were murdered at the scene. Two days later I almost tripped over another dead body. It was close from the Majdanek camp, right by the **Maki** community, you know? I saw a body of the murdered soldier next to some old houses.

Q: So, it was another dead body that you saw, correct?

A: That's correct.

Q: Do you know what year it was?

A: I don't think I remember. Wait, I know. It could have been [19] 44 because the Germans have already known that they lost the war.

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[01]: 39:37:10 – [01]: 48:35:17
39:36 – 48:34

Q: Did you witness any other executions that occurred at the end of the war?

A: No, I didn't witness any other executions. Once, I heard gunshots on my way back from school. It turned out that the SS shot some Jew at the passage at **Fabryczna Street**.

Q: How do you know about it?

A: I was about 100 meters from the passage when I heard the gunshots. By the time I got there he was already dead. I found out from people that the Germans asked him to undress and they assumed that he was Jewish. He was shoot by two SS officers.

Q: But you didn't see the body, did you?

A: Oh yes did. His body was there. In fact, it was there for next two days.

Q: So, it wasn't a prisoner, just...?

A: He was a civilian.

Q: Civilian.

A: Yes.

Q: During our first meeting you mention some execution. It was so called the execution of 500 and occurred at the castle in Lublin, do you remember?

A: Myself, and other students from my school started digging trenches in mid – **May**. We were ordered to dig defensive fortifications for the Germans in **Cechow**. Our group was supervised by the Germans. On Friday, the Germans withdrew from the Eastern territory – the ones who were resettled. There were three columns of cars driving through the center of **Lublin** towards the direction of **Warsaw**. My family decided to move in with **Slowikowscy Family**, and her sister wanted to take the youth to **Dzialdyn**, which was located by **Parczew**. It was closer to the Easter border, closer to Russia. My uncle worked as a railwayman. He told my aunt to come to the train station and get on any train available. So, when we got there was a train sitting by semaphore but it happened to be a German transit. So, the lady who was with us told the train driver that we were my uncle's family, and he let us get on the train. The Germans put us in the first cart. Actually, the first cart was filled with sand, in case of explosion and we were in the next cart. So, we were getting closer to [**Libertow**] when we saw another train that exploded. The Germans put us on some large boxes so nobody would see us. We were past **Libertow**, and we were supposed to get off in **Grodek** but all of the sudden we heard

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Germans screaming “Halt, halt”. So, we jumped out of the train. It turned out that the Commando that was killed he was yelling: “**Zurich, Zurich**”, and we saw the train was backing up. We walked for about five kilometers when we finally got to Dzialdow. It was on Saturday, and the **Russians** came on Sunday. On **Tuesday** we heard the battles of Lublin, and also gunshots. Lublin was on fire at night. We were terrified by everything that was happening. **Teresa** said that we had to escape. So, on Tuesday morning around noon, each of us took a couple slices of bread and we walked up to the highway. We flagged down some Russian car. He asked us where we were heading. We told him we wanted to go to Lublin. He was transporting the ammunition to Lublin, so he took us with him. We sat on top of the boxes with ammunition and we got to **Regatka Lublin**.

Q: Who was Teresa?

A: She was Ms. Slawikowska’s daughter.

Q: So you were travelling to Lublin with Ms. Slowikowska’s daughter, correct?

A: Yes. We travelled together to Lublin. Anyways, I don’t remember how but there were people running towards the castle. She saw one of her friends. I don’t remember, you know? Anyways, by the time I made it to the castle, the “Cow” Commando was lying on the ground at the entrance to the castle with his throat slit. I saw people were carrying dead bodies. There were both women and men.

Q: So, the prisoners of the castle were murdered, correct?

A: Yes. Many of them died earlier. The prisoners were transported by cars and poisoned by fumes. There were about 1000 prisoners transported from the castle to the Majdanek camp. The [Germans] turned the engines on and by the time they got to the Majdanek camp, the prisoners were dead.

Q: Do you know the date of this execution? Was it before...?

A: It was on **Saturday, July 22nd**.

Q: I understand, that the Germans who were withdrawing from the city murdered those prisoners, correct?

A: From what I know, there was this special brigade called SS Galicia. It was a sort of [**Spiegel Commando**], if I remember correctly, you know?

Q: Who killed the “Cow” Commando?

A: A student who worked at the castle as a hairdresser slit his throat. He was shaving the “Cow” Commando, when heard them planning the execution. So, he slit his throat.

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Q: Do you know this student's name?

A: I don't remember. There is a book, where you can find out his name from, but I don't remember.

Q: So, the Commando was murdered by the prisoner, correct?

A: Yes.

Q: And all of the prisoners were murdered, correct?

A: I guess there was a group of prisoners who locked themselves in a cell. The Germans were shooting at them through the door but somehow they survived.

Q: So, when you got to the castle, you saw the dead body of the "Cow" Commando, correct?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you see other bodies as well?

A: Yes. I saw lots of dead bodies. There was a huge pile of them. People were still bringing more bodies outside.

Q: Did you see people taking the bodies from the castle?

A: Yes. I did.

Q: Do you know how many bodies there were, approximately?

A: From what I know, there were 500 hundred people murdered.

Q: How many did you see? Maybe ten or more?

A: I don't know. I rushed home. I know that the family of this young man took his body. They lived at **Zamojska Street**.

Q: You mean, the man who killed the "Cow" Commando?

A: Yes. Later, all of the bodies were buried in front of the castle. The exhumation took place later. There is a huge gravestone at **Lunicka Street**, at the cemetery at Lunicka Street.

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Q: You mention that SS Galician is responsible for this execution, correct? You also mentioned earlier some Galician who shot some man?

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: Did you ever have any contact with those soldiers, or maybe someone from your family did?

A: We have seen them on the streets many times. One of them was guarding the gate by the Majdanek camp. It was in the winter. My friends and I went sledding. He fired his gun towards us from about 50, maybe 100 hundred meters away. I guess we were out there during the police hour. He missed twice, and shot at the power station building.

Q: Did he fire the gun just at you or anyone else?

A: It was a large group of us sledding.

Q: You were there with your friends, correct?

A: Yes.

Q: How did you recognize him?

A: I could tell from the distance that he was "Black". He wore a black uniform. The SS officers looked more handsome in their uniforms.

Q: Was there a difference in uniforms?

A: Yes. You could tell a difference right away.

Q: What was different about their uniforms?

A: What do you mean?

Q: For instance, I wouldn't be able to tell the difference.

A: Their uniforms were poor, and not very elegant.

Q: So, the uniforms worn by the SS were better?

A: Yes. They were always very elegant.

Q: Who belonged to the SS Galician? Were they Ukrainians?

A: Perhaps.

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Q: Did they speak German to you?

A: No. They spoke Russian.

Q: Did you know Russian at that time?

A: My father was fluent in Russian. He graduated from Russian gymnasium, and he was in a seminary.

Q: Did you have any other contact with them, other than that one time when you were sledding?

A: No. I only know that the last group of [**Wlasow's**] army was fighting in **Wroclaw**. That's why Wroclaw was defending for so long. **Berlin** already collapsed, and they were still fighting in Wroclaw. They didn't know that **Stalin** was planning to kill them. So, in the Russians killed many of them in Lublin.

Q: You mean the Russians, when they approached Poland, correct?

A: Yes.

Q: So, it seems that SS Galicia were the last group to withdraw from town, correct?

A: I don't remember.

[01]: 48:39:03 – [01]: 53:52:11
48:38 – 53:51

Q: I have a couple additional questions for you. I would like to find out some more details, please. When you lived close by the Majdanek camp, you said that you saw the prisoners who were segregating the clothes.

A: I mean, we knew that they were segregating the clothes there. We saw them loading the clothes into the barrack, and then those clothes were transported to Germany.

Q: So, they were the prisoners from the Majdanek camp, but do you know if they were Jewish?

A: They were Jewish for sure. I remember one situation. Once, the prisoners from Majdanek were digging trenches by our house. I guess they were putting the water pipes down. They were supervised by **Czech** Kappo. He would always send one of the prisoners to watch for the SS officers. So this Kappo always yelled at them when the SS officers were close by. Otherwise he used to come to my aunt's house to have a cup of tea, or coffee or to eat something. He even came to visit my aunt after the war. It was two years after the war.

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Q: So, he used to come to your house?

A: Not to my house. He used to come to my aunt's house.

Q: So, that's how you know that he was Czech?

A: Yes. I think his name was **Zdenek**.

Q: Do you remember if he told you any stories?

A: I know he came from **Prague**. I don't know.

Q: So, that's why you knew that the prisoners were Jews?

A: Yes. Also, we used to go around our neighborhood to collect the money to buy something for them. They were always asking for fruit and vegetables. So we would hide the food in trenches, and cover it with paper and dirt. I would have been dead, if the Germans found out that we were helping them.

Q: Okay. But you found out that they were Jewish from Zdenek, correct?

A: Well, I knew they were Jewish. They had...

Q: So, they wore the stars of David, correct?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you know if they were from **Poland**?

A: I really don't know. There was a group of international prisoners. Some of them were from **Belgium**, and **France**.

Q: Ok. What about that prisoner who was killed in a shower? Do you know if he was Jewish, or not?

A: As far as I know, all of the prisoners from that camp were Jewish.

Q: What about that prisoner who was drawn in that wooden tub?

A: Poor guy. He was very thin.

Q: You didn't know him, did you? Do you have any information about him?

A: He was just walking by. They called him up. He came and took his hat off.

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Q: Was he Jewish? Do you know?

A: Most likely. All of the prisoners were Jewish.

Q: So, you didn't see him good enough to know that for sure?

A: No. He was standing sideways. Otherwise, maybe I would have seen his star.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to add, anything else that you can remember?

A: I am very emotional right now. It's hard to think about anything else. Sorry for the moments of weakness.

Q: Please, don't apologize. There is enough time if you want to think.

A: I only wanted to share one thought with you. In my opinion, the district, in which the Polish soldiers of Jewish origin were murdered, should be commemorated somehow. They were our soldiers. Maybe it would be a good idea to put up a board either in Majdanek, or at the actual place where they were killed. Nobody remembers about them.

Q: You didn't know them personally from before the war, did you?

A: No, but my father knew them a little bit. He spoke some Hebrew. My father was a polyglot.

Q: Thank you so much for your time, and for sharing your story with us. It was very important to us.

A: I just wanted to add one more thing. When we rode the car to Lublin with the Russian driver, we passed the train that we got off of. When we past Lubertow, we saw the explosion.

Q: So, the train actually exploded, correct?

A: Yes. The partisans wanted to stop the train from getting to Lublin, so they blew up the train. The Russians lost over 50 tanks in Lublin. The battles were very intense.

Q: Thank you so much again.

A: You are welcome.

[01]: 53:52:11

53:51

The end.

