

Michał Szpila
Polish Witnesses to the Holocaust Project
Polish
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Michał Szpila was born in 1931 in the small town of Bobowa. He talks of the impact of the Second World War on Bobowa and he recalls Jewish persecution. Michał Szpila was an eyewitness to the execution of Jews in Bobowa and he observed the ghetto liquidation. He also recalls the brutal pacification of one of the local villages [present-day name: Stróżna] in retaliation for partisan actions against Polish women who have relationships with Germans.

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[01:] 00:45:08 - [01:] 55:56:04

[01:] 00:45:08 - [01:] 09:43:11

Q: Good morning. Please introduce yourself.

A: My name is Michał Szpila.

Q: When and where were you born?

A: I am 79. I was born in Bobowa. There I also spent my childhood and youth - youth until the end of high school because I never returned to Bobowa after I left for college.

Q: Could you tell us your birth date?

A: 28 September 1931.

Q: A few months ago we talked to you about your experiences during the Second World War. Now we are back to video-record our conversation. Please tell us how the German entry changed life in Bobowa during the Second World War.

A: Life was changed radically, just as it happened throughout the rest of Poland and in other locations where Germans had entered. The change especially applied to select social, ethnic and age groups. Big changes were introduced in Bobowa starting with the first days of the occupation, starting with September 1. These parts became the area of many fierce fights between the Polish army and German units, who crossed the Polish-Czech and Polish-Slovak border. Local terrain is diverse and it was suitable for defense, for fierce fights between Polish and German units. After a few days of brave defense though, our units retreated and German units entered the town. Then the German authorities were organized and afterwards the General Government was established. Bobowa was annexed into the General Government.

Q: But what happened...

A: [The General Government] was commanded by a well known to history general...

Q: Could you tell us what happened to the Jewish population in Bobowa?

A: What happened? That same that happened to all of Poland and to occupied Europe. From the first days, from the first weeks and months after the German army entered this population [Jewish population] was at once subject to persecution. The persecution was manifested in many ways such as deportations, orders to wear special markings and armbands with the Star of David, and through obligation of forced labor for the occupants. Thus all the misfortunes tied to the occupation and war, which typically were shared by non-German population in any country, were primarily happening to the Jewish residents of our town.

Q: Do you remember the establishing of the ghetto in Bobowa?

A: Do I remember? Because I was I child I didn't notice it much. Nevertheless... because we didn't have any outside or inside borders, because Bobowa was a very small town of about two thousand people and about 40 percent of the population was Jewish. And this ethnic group was systematically growing because new Jews from the neighboring villages and towns, such as Grybów, and Krynica Zdrój were interned there as well. Shortly before the liquidation about 2200 Jews lived in the ghetto.

Q: Have you ever seen a transport of Jews from Krynica or other towns arrive to Bobowa?

A: No, I... no such... I don't remember that because these were not big transports, because in each town there were only small groups of Jews. It was especially so in the neighboring villages. And additionally all the transports were conducted by means of easily accessible forms of transportation, such as horse-drawn carts or other vehicles. However I remember the transports of Jews from southern Europe very well. Later I came to the conclusion that these were transports of Jews from Romania, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia to Oświęcim [Auschwitz]. These were train transports which consisted of many dozens of rail cars and they were guarded by canine patrols of German gendarmes. These transports were travelling from the south to the north, towards Kraków [Krakau, Cracow] and further to Oświęcim and Płaszów.

Q: Were these transports stopping—were they stopping in Bobowa? When did you have a chance to see them?

A: No, they didn't. They weren't stopping at the stations, unlike the regular passenger trains or other trains, even freight trains. Although they used to transport Jews in freight-cars which were bolted and locked in every possible way. They were also barred with barbed wire. But we could tell that the trains were transporting people, because we could hear the moaning of people, of Jews, to be exact.

Q: Where did you see these transports? Was it...?

A: Here, not far from Bobowa. Because Bobowa has a rail route, as we would call it today, from Kraków via Tarnów, and Nowy Sącz to Krynica.

Q: Were there many such transports?

A: Not as far as I remember. I only remember seeing them occasionally when we were passing nearby, walking near the tracks at the right time. We didn't know the schedule of the transports.

Q: Could you perhaps estimate how many times you saw such transports? It was...

A: A few times. It is hard for me to say how many transports I saw because they came in irregularly, at least that is how it seemed to us. I don't really know whether they came according to some schedule made by the Germans. In any case though, I witnessed such transports.

Q: And you said that you heard people moaning on the inside?

A: I could hear not only moaning but also loud commands and yelling of the guards, of the German guards who were escorting these trains.

[01:] 09:43:11- [01:] 21:39:12

Q: In what language were the orders given?

A: They were of course in German, or at least that is how I remember it. They were German orders. I remember that the freight-cars had permanent... they had installed permanently...there were booths attached [*he draws a shape of a booth in the air*]. At the beginning of the train, in the middle and, more or less, every two or three cars apart. These were the booths for the German guards, for the gendarmes. From time to time they had dogs with them and they were simply watching the whole transport, the entire length of the train. That didn't stop the transported Jews from attempting to escape because we found dead bodies about two times there: once on the railroad tracks and the second time next to the tracks. Since we were young we were reasoning in a childish way but we managed to figure out that these people tried to escape.

Q: Were you able to tell how these people died based on how their bodies looked?

A: It is hard to say because we had neither the opportunity nor the courage to come close and see...the bodies were frequently mangled and as little children we simply didn't have the courage to look at that.

Q: But based on... Were you able to tell that these were Jewish bodies, that these men were Jews?

A: I would say so; since we grew up with... we were close with this ethnic group, close with these people. I remember that I went to the first and second grade with Jewish children, with Jewish boys.

Q: Was the clothing... were there Jewish symbols on the clothes of these dead people?

A: I don't remember that.

Q: And what happened with the bodies later?

A: Some authorities or police took care of the disposal. But I can only guess where and how. They were probably transported to a Jewish cemetery.

Q: What year was it possibly?

A: It was '40, '41, and '42, because at that time Germans pursued the liquidation of Jews especially vigilantly.

Q: Did you perhaps witness the killing of Jews in Bobowa?

A: Yes, I witnessed many executions, both individual and mass executions. When I was older I later learned from various documents that the mass execution I witnessed took place on March 4, 1942. According to the documents.

Q: Could you describe it?

A: Yes. It was a mass execution. About 40 Jewish men, only men, were shot. I was going to school... This is how it was: I was going to school with my father. Polish children were allowed to go to elementary school and even middle school under General Government. So I was going with my father and when we approached the first buildings on the outskirts of town... There were two barns, two farm buildings.

Q: Could you please sketch it?

A: Of course. If I manage—I am not a graphic artist or a painter [*he is drawing*]. One building was here and another was there, and here was the road. There were a few single buildings here. It didn't have a compact city layout, but it had single, spread apart buildings and my father and I were walking over here to get to the town center. And at one point we noticed a German, or so it should be assumed because he was wearing a German uniform, a black German uniform and a black leather coat. He was escorting individuals and he was coming out from this street.

[*Another man*]

Q: Please draw a sketch and show it to the camera.

[*Interviewer*]

Q: Let's do it this way. Perhaps you draw it first and then lift up the paper because otherwise we are not...

A: Very well. So... Should I talk now or later?

Q: Perhaps you draw now and then you will talk after it is drawn.

A: And this is how it looked: there was one building, it still stands there today, and I was passing by it – these pictures come back to me after many, many years; it seems that I am there – so I was passing by. This building isn't there any more but there is another one in its place. And as it turned out, there was a line of men there. 30-40 men, because it was a long building.

Q: Can we lift it now to show it to the camera? If you could show us now...

A: *[He is showing the drawing.]* That is how it was, more or less. There were a few dozen Ger—Jewish men waiting in line to be executed. One of the German was taking another man in line from here, by the wall of this building. Another uniformed German in a black coat was there. They placed the man with his face to the wall and the second German would shoot at him with a pistol, with a short barrel weapon. He would shoot at that German [likely: at that Jew] and the Jew would fall down. Then the next one was brought in, and the next one, and the next one. And this is how they executed about 40 Ger—Jews that day.

Q: And where were you and your father?

A: My father and I were going this way. Over there. When we got within the dangerously close proximity and the German, the one who was shooting, shouted in a harsh, arrogant voice, I don't remember: "**Raus!**" [GERMAN: out] or "**Weg!**" [GERMAN: away], or something to that effect and he pointed to us the way to walk around the building, between the buildings. And when we exited that way we saw the Jews waiting in line to be shot. Then we crossed this little street and we walked to the town center.

Q: Did you perhaps see the shooting itself before you took that other way?

A: Yes, I saw when one of them was executed. It was before we were ordered to change the direction of our march, our route. He shot at him and then he saw us approach so he commanded us to change our course.

Q: How big was the distance between the execution site and you?

A: Well, the distance was about 20, 30 meters. No more.

Q: And were these Jews who were standing in line to be executed watched by anybody, for example, or was it...?

A: Yes. There were three to four German guards. And I could see it with my own eyes. Later I went straight to school without stopping anywhere and my father went to town to run a couple of errands which were the purpose of his trip.

Q: Weren't you [likely: were you] able to tell that the men were Jewish based on the way they looked?

A: Of course I was. We used to live with them, coexist together, we were living near each other every day and we had no trouble with identifying.

Q: Did you perhaps know any of the men present?

A: No madam, I was seven or eight at the time and I didn't know the adults. I knew Jewish children but as far as the adults... Supposedly many of them were doctors, some officials and other wealthier Jewish citizens. Because, as I found out later, it wasn't a random round up of the Jews to be executed. These German gendarmes came – because they weren't stationed in Bobowa – they came, they went to the office, to Judenrat, which was the office for the Jewish community, and from the list they were selecting, they were selecting certain citizens of that nationality.

Q: Were you coming by that place when you were coming back from school?

A: When I was coming back, when I was coming back home the execution was already over. My father came back home much earlier... I don't remember. And what did I notice? Unfortunately, the aftermath of that execution. I saw many dozens men lying in the streets, blood flowing in all directions on top of the melting snow and ice – it was early spring. And, of course, the Germans were already gone; instead there were very many children and women who came to the executions site to collect their loved ones.

[01:] 21:39:12 - [01:] 26:22:20

Q: And do you know...?

A: I don't probably need to tell you what atmosphere and what behaviors I could see there: crying and screaming, and a lot of commotion while looking for loved ones.

Q: Do you remember what happened with the bodies? Were women allowed to take the bodies?

A: Yes. The women were allowed to take the bodies and they were buried, as we later noticed, at the Jewish cemetery.

Q: Did you witness the disposal of the bodies?

A: No, I didn't because I didn't stop to watch. I was only passing by, because although I was just a child and perhaps I didn't understand it all, it still made a shocking impression on me and I tried to go home as fast as I could.

Q: Before you also mentioned that you were a witness to single killings. Could you also tell us about that? Do you remember such a situation?

A: I remember very well one individual execution when one Jew was shot. I was again coming back home from school when I noticed a German gendarme escorting a man ahead of me. [He was escorting] a grown-up man and they were going in the direction of... they were going in the same direction as I was. So I was generally intimidated and scared and I slowed down to increase the distance between us. At one point they turned from the road, from our road, into the road leading to the Jewish cemetery. Until this day there is a Jewish cemetery near my home, about 200, 300 meters away. And they turned right and then I accelerated my walk. Nevertheless at one point I heard shooting. I was surprised at that. You had to assume that that man was trying to run away because he was escorted by just one gendarme. He was probably trying to run away and he opened fire at him and he shot him with a few shots; he killed him.

Q: There were a few shots, correct?

A: Yes, a few shots were fired and after one of them he fell to the ground, on the grass and I stepped up my pace to...

Q: Did you see the moment when he was falling on the grass?

A: Of course I did. I heard shots from that direction so I turned my face and saw that whole scene, which was displayed in front of me about 50 meters away. How could you not see it? Especially that it was open terrain and it was a country road.

Q: Do you remember what the shot man looked like?

A: It was... we saw him later. It was after we came back home and did our homework – as you would say it in a contemporary language. We gathered a group of friends and with a group of friends we went to the Jewish cemetery. We were expecting that we could see something and indeed we saw that man. He was shot dead and he was lying in the grass. It was the same one... it was a strong built man with a beard [*he points to his chin*].

Q: Was it at the time when the ghetto still existed?

A: No, it was already after the liquidation of the ghetto. Such cases took place after the liquidation of the ghetto – they were catching individual Jews who were hiding.

[01:] 26:22:20 - [01:] 32:22:21

Q: And do you remember?

A: They were finding shelter with the Poles or they were hiding somewhere in the thickets, groves or in the grain, because we had grain fields there. And they were simply discovered and escorted to the Jewish cemetery to be liquidated or they were kept at the blue police station, because we had blue police in the General Government. They were gathered there and kept in jail and then deported somewhere: either to a work camp or to a concentration camp or somewhere else.

Q: Did you see when the Jews were caught—escorted to the police station?

A: No, I didn't. I didn't see that.

Q: Do you remember the liquidation of the ghetto? The chaos...Do you remember when the ghetto was liquidated?

A: I saw that last stage of the liquidation of the ghetto with my older brother Edward. The ghetto was liquidated on the 13th and 14th of August 1942. On the first day, on the 13th, I was also going to school with my brother. We approached the town border in the morning but they didn't let us in. The whole town was surrounded by sentinels and we had to go back home without finding out what was going on. Only after a few hours at home we found out from the neighbors and from other people that there was likely a liquidation of the ghetto. And nobody was allowed to get in during the entire day on August 13th and on the 14th ... On the 14th, on the 14th of August we were finally allowed to go to the center of town. I went there without my parent's knowledge. We went to this town, to the center, to the town square and we saw the last act, the last act of the liquidation of the Jews and of the Jewish ghetto.

Q: And what did you see?

A: What did I see? We saw a few dozen Jews from the distance of about 50 meters from the street that led to town. These were children, these were women and these were men and they were sitting in the town square. I am not sure if I may show how it looked exactly—

because I have this [*he pulls out a book*]; if you were interested... [*He shows*] Here is a present-day town square and here is a fragment of that town square.

Q: If you want to show it you must show it to the camera.

A: Just a moment, a moment, I could find something most...

Q: Perhaps later— [later]...

A: ...suitable.

Q: Perhaps we can find the pictures later. I would like to ask you a few more things now.

A: Very well. It was simply a square paved with cobblestones; it was a big area where we had an open-air market and fairs on Thursdays.

Q: And did the people, whom you saw sitting there, have any luggage with them or...?

A: They had simple bundles, primitive bundles and they had probably their necessities there.

Q: What did they look like? How would you evaluate what you saw?

A: What did they look like? They were most of all scared and they were tired. They were disheveled and they were most likely hungry and dirty because they were camping there for one or maybe even two days. Because gendarmes were bringing more people from the nearby houses to the square and other gendarmes stood guard, and still others were arriving on the trucks and they [the Jews] were loaded up and deported from the town. They were sitting there and simply waiting their turn.

Q: Were you present when the trucks were pulling in?

A: I saw one, because, as I said, it was the final stage of the liquidation of that ghetto. I remember a gray-green truck arrive. It was covered with gray tarp with the back opening which you could pull up and down. Two gendarmes stood on both sides [of the truck] and they had thick wicker canes and they were chasing women, children and men inside. They were hitting them randomly on the heads, on the backs and on the legs – children, women and all, so that they get on this car as fast as possible.

[01:] 32:22:21- [01:] 39:09:14

Q: How many people could fit inside the truck?

A: Well, it is hard to say because we weren't counting. We were shocked with what we saw and anyway it was hard to count from that distance. We should presume that a truck like that could fit 30-40 people.

Q: Did you see the truck leave?

A: Yes, I saw it. After the car was loaded the back flap was closed and the car would turn around in the square and then leave towards Gorlice to a town named Staszakówka. A few hundred Jews were supposedly shot in the forest there. Others were deported to camps in Płaszów, in Kraków, in Biecz and in Gorlice – [they were deported] to the ghettos or to camps but a portion of them was shot there [in the forest].

Q: I understand that based on the direction in which the truck left you can presume that it left to Staszakówka, correct?

A: Yes, that they were deported there – it was more or less the same direction: Staszakówka, Gorlice, Biecz – it was the same direction. It is simply hard for me to say where each group was deported. In any case the source publications informed later, and they still inform nowadays, that a portion of these Jews was killed the first day on the spot – 25 were executed in the town square and the rest were taken to a mass grave to the forest near Staszakówka. They were also deported to the ghetto in Biecz and to the ghetto in Gorlice. And from there some of them were taken to the camp in Płaszów, to that famous Płaszów camp near Kraków or to the work camp in Kraków itself.

Q: Were there any Jews left in the square after the truck had left?

A: Yes, there were few dozen left. A few dozen people were waiting for the next transport. I am not sure if the same car was coming back to get them or whether there were other cars. ... It is hard for me to say because we also didn't feel quite safe there and we had to leave that place quite quickly and run home. We also saw the last Jews escorted from their homes. They were hiding somewhere and so they weren't brought into the square initially. And they, they were simply dirty and wet and they were beaten...

Q: Was there any, any... Was there a Jew who, in particular, registered in your memory?

A: Rather not, because it was a distance of 50, 60 meters and it was hard to memorize a face.

Q: During our last meeting you talk about an incident when one of the Jews was likely hiding... he was very dirty and very wet and he was possibly hiding in...

A: Yes, I noticed that but I don't remember his face. He had to be hiding somewhere, most likely in the sewage in a septic tank because he was dripping that sort of dirt, which...

Q: And what happened to him?

A: Well he joined those who were waiting for the transport, so, so such situations took place and I witnessed them and I remember them to this day because...

Q: And during the time when the ghetto still existed...were you ever inside the ghetto?

A: Just like I said in the beginning, a small town ghetto had... it had different rules than, for instance, a Warsaw ghetto or Płaszów ghetto, or Białystok ghetto. In a big city, entire districts were separated from a big city. They were walled off and separated with barbed wire and this area constituted the ghetto. Here in Bobowa it was hard...the whole town was the ghetto. The entire little town was the ghetto.

Q: That means that the ghetto in Bobowa wasn't fenced off.

A: No it wasn't. There was no barrier made of barbed wire or brick. There simply was an order given to the Jews not to leave town. They weren't allowed to go beyond the borders of town because painful sanctions could have been imposed on them. But they had to leave because they had to find a way, an illegal way, of course "illegal" in the opinion of Germans, to obtain some food. They were coming—they were arriving to the houses bordering the town in the evening and at night, especially. They were looking for food. I remember they also used to come to our house.

Q: Really? Do you remember a situation like that?

A: Of course that I do. They used to come...they came...I especially remember that one Jewish woman was coming to get milk for her small children. My mom was buying the milk in the dairy store—of course skim milk, because we couldn't have whole milk. And, and, and all the other things that you could buy in the dairy store: whey and other. My mom was bringing it all home and she had them [the Jews], especially, in mind. Then they were coming in the evening and they were taking whatever...whatever they could see [get].

Q: Do you remember the Jewish woman's name?

A: Oh really [*he smiles*] I don't remember. How could I?!

Q: Do you know what happened to her?

A: The same as with the majority, unfortunately. Same as with the majority.

Q: I'd like to ask for a short break, OK?

[01:] 39:09:14 - [01:] 51:08:11

[Camera man]

Q: Please don't play with that paper because I can hear everything.

A: I am sorry.

Q: Neither with a pen....

[Interviewer]

Q: Everything, everything...

A: I am a nervous person.

Q: We can hear everything.

A: I am overly excitable...

Q: I wanted to come back to that mass execution you witnessed and ask you a few more detailed questions and come back to the mass execution you witnessed. When you were on your way back from school and you saw the shot bodies, could you perhaps estimate how many bodies were there?

A: A few dozen—I really didn't count.

Q: Were they...were they lying next to each other?

A: Yes. You could say in a helter-skelter way in various configurations. It is hard to describe. In any case, later I learned from the source materials—because to this day I am interested in the history of my home town and, among others, in the history of Jews. From other, later published sources, I learned that on the 4th of March about 40 men of Jewish nationality were executed.

- Q: I also wanted to ask about the last stage of the liquidation of the ghetto, which you mentioned before. You said that you saw when the last Jews were escorted out of their houses—the ones who didn't leave before. Could you describe how it looked so that we can all imagine it? Were they ordered to leave or were they escorted... How was it?
- A: It is hard to determine that. The town looked horrible—perhaps I will start with that. Houses had broken windows and broken glass was on the sidewalk and on the streets. A lot of garbage was lying around in the streets. There was straw, paper, rags as well as pieces of some home furnishings. Dogs were running around—I remember that picture as if it were today. Town square was paved with cobblestones, not like today—see! it looks quite European now. So cobblestones and it was surrounded by some scrawny trees, by poplars. And they were just... a few dozen people were gathered and congregated on this dirty pavement and that number kept growing because single—they were bringing individual people there. They were pulling them out [from the buildings]: two, three, four people at a time. Gendarmes kept finding them in their various shelters and they were picking them out from these hideouts and then bringing them to join the others who were waiting for a transport.
- Q: Were they bringing them in calmly?
- A: No, it wasn't calm. Nothing was happening in a calm way. It was accompanied by yelling and beating. Because, as I remember, each gendarme had a wicker cane [*he draws the shape in the air*]. You don't remember this type of cane—they were bent. And each one of them [gendarmes] had a gun and a cane and they were hitting [Jews] with their wicker canes randomly. The same was happening [to people] whom they were bringing in.
- Q: Were there many Jews whom they were bringing in?
- A: No, just single cases. These were... they were the last Jews who were discovered and then brought to the square.
- Q: And did you, for example, hear shooting during...
- A: No, I didn't hear it then anymore, not during the period we are talking about. Supposedly only during the first day they shot 25 people in that square, just to start the liquidation of the ghetto. I am not sure what purpose it was supposed to serve. What was that execution for...?
- Q: But you weren't present during the execution...

A: No, I wasn't. The execution of the first 25 took place on August 13th and we went there in the afternoon on August 14th.

Q: I would like to... You were telling us about the gendarmes. What... I wanted to ask what nationality were the soldiers who served in Bobowa?

A: In Bobowa itself there were no German posts, there were no German gendarmes or any other collaborating gendarmes. We just had a blue police station and I am not sure whether the blue police did or didn't take part in the liquidation of the ghetto. My brother and I saw only Germans in the black Gestapo uniforms. And we saw Ukrainian units—the Vlasov's units, as the adults would call them.

Q: How could you tell the Vlasov's soldiers from the Germans?

A: By their language.

Q: What language were they speaking?

A: They were speaking Ukrainian because they didn't know German. As you know from history, they entire Vlasov's army went to the German side. They surrendered and they served in...

Q: Were you able to tell the Ukrainian language?

A: Yes, of course I was able to. It wasn't hard to tell German from any other language, although I was a child.

Q: Did you perhaps witness any other crime committed on the civilians?

A: Yes, I was a witness – on civilians who weren't Jewish. I was an accidental witness, of course. For example the neighboring village, which today is called Stróżna, was **pacified** in revenge for a partisan action.

Q: What did you see there?

A: What did I see? A night before partisans, the local partisans, supposedly punished some Polish women who maintained relationships with the Germans. It was done in a customary way and the punishment consisted of cutting off—of shaving their hair. And a few girl—women from Stróżna village had their hair cut off. The following day they went to a police station in Bobowa and they reported it there. Afterwards, I don't know

whether it was the next day or a few days afterwards, a round up action was set up. It was a roundup of the village population. Numerous groups of gendarmes and soldiers arrived and they took revenge, cruel revenge on the Poles.

Q: What part of pacification did you witness?

A: I have to say that I wasn't an eye witness to what was happening in the village because nobody was allowed to get in there. We could just hear the screaming and the yelling, and the shooting. We could see the glow so the houses must have been set on fire and many people were arrested. They were simply taken to camps.

Q: Did you go into the village after the pacification, right afterwards?

A: No, No I didn't. No, I didn't go to the village but I know it from hearsay. I also witnessed the march of the German units towards the village. Because our house is situated on top of the hill, down below there is a stream and then a riv—road behind the stream, of course today it looks quite different. So there is a road and on that road the Germans forces and their mechanized units were marching out from Bobowa. We saw that from our house...

Q: Were there many Germans?

A: Of course. There were a few dozens of them, I could say. And we saw them return and then they weren't returning by themselves but they were coming back with many Poles whom they captured and who were arrested. And they were also shooting at us because a few of our...of my older brothers' friends were with us. When they [the friends] saw the column march they started to run away from our house. They started to run away to their houses in a panic. The Germans noticed that and they must have concluded that when someone was running away it meant that he was guilty and he needs to be chased. In a few minutes the police, the German gendarmes surrounded our house.

Q: And what happened after they surrounded the house?

A: Fortunately there was a man from Silesia in the German unit and he could speak Polish. I remember him speak with a Silesian dialect and my father explained to him who they [friends who were running away] were. Because they thought they were: „**Partisan**” [GERMAN: partisan], „**Partisan**”, „**Banditen**” [GERMAN: bandits], „**Banditen**”, „Where are they?” and they started to conduct the search. My father explained that they were neither bandits nor partisans, that they were our friends, children and so on. And somehow we managed to convince the Germans that they were children. .

Q: How big was the distance between the house and the road?

A: Well, there was quite significant drop of the terrain but in a straight line it was about 200 meters.

Q: Were they bringing with them many Poles?

A: It is hard for me to say because they walked in groups. The men were mixed together with the German soldiers and the gendarmes and it was hard to count

[01:] 51:08:11- [01:] 55:56:04

Q: Was it a dozen or just a few...

A: It was for sure a few dozen. They made many arrests at that time. I witnessed that action directly but I didn't see the executions or the burning of houses. People were set on fire in these houses; supposedly such things took place there. I didn't see that but I repeat what I heard from the neighbors and from my parents. And on second, second...

Q: We are interested in the situations you eye witnessed...

A: I also witnessed when they were bringing in [likely: people] from the roundup of the Wilczyska village. It is a beautiful village which, to this day, is situated on the way from Bobowa, via Grybów to Krynica nad Nowy Sącz. It is a big and beautiful village which worked in the underground, practically in its entirety. It belonged to „Bataliony Chłopskie”, Peasants Battalions, to a very active unit under Sęp's command—if I am not mistaken.

Q: Please tell us what you saw because this is the pur[purpose]...

A: After the round up of that village, I saw when they brought the dead, blood stained bodies of those who were shot. The bodies were lying on the horse-drawn carts.

Q: Where were they brought in?

A: They were brought in to town to the blue police station.

Q: Was there one or more carts?

A: There were a few carts. I remember that a few dozen people were shot.

Q: How many bodies could fit in one car, more or less?

A: These were small carts, the ones we used to have in the mountains back then. They could hold two or three bodies. .

Q: And who...?

A: They didn't even bother to give any decent transportation to these people.

Q: And who was driving the carts?

A: Farmers who were forced to run this, this transport. Local farmers from Wilczyska village and from Jezów village. Because first we have Wilczyska and then Jezów, we have these beautiful villages.

Q: Do you know what happened with the bodies of the murdered?

A: Yes, I know. They were buried at the local Catholic, Christian cemeteries. When Wilczyska was pacified they arrested a few dozen people and then they were brought to Gestapo in Grybów. Then after a few days they were all shot in the forest outside of town. I didn't witness that but I know about it from source documents. And in [19]45, right after the war when the Russian army entered in early spring, they exhumed the bodies of partisans and their families and they arranged a mass funeral in Wilczyska. [It took place] at the local cemetery and thousands of people attended the funeral. I also went there and I remember it until this day. Here is a picture.

Q: How far did you stand when you saw the carts with the bodies approach?

A: We didn't measure it back then madam. We would just run up to see and then we would run away not to provoke any misfortune. It is simply impossible to tell exactly. We would pass by and glance very quickly. We saw one, two, three bodies and we were running far away from this misfortune.

Q: I understand. Thank you very much.

A: I also thank you. I don't know to what extend I was able to satisfy... I even have a picture of this funeral somewhere here. This church...

[01:] 55:56:04

Conclusion of the interview.

No restrictions.

Translated by Agnieszka McClure on 5/06/2011.