

KUCZYŃSKI, Jerzy
Polish Witnesses to the Holocaust Project
English
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In this interview, Jerzy Kuczyński, born on September 16th, 1932 in Szczepankowo, talks in great detail about his family hiding a little Jewish girl, whom they called **Danusia** [diminutive from **Danuta**] and the tragic end of this endeavor. He even presents a hand-made map on which he shows the exact unfolding of the tragic events. Kuczyński also speaks about other incidents Poles hiding Jews, and mentions his neighbor who received a medal of the Righteous Among Nations. Interestingly, he describes a little known practice of “renting” Jewish craftsmen from Łomża ghetto, which was allowed by Germans. He mentions Soviet treatment of Polish citizens as well.

File 1 of 1

[01:] 00:27:13 – [01:] 03:14:13

00:00 - 02:50

Q: Good afternoon.

A: Good afternoon.

Q: Can you introduce yourself?

A: My name is Jerzy Kuczyński.

Q: When and where were you born?

A: I was born on October 16th, 1932 in Szczepankowo, which means in the village located one kilometer from the place, where this took place, where this incident took place.

Q: We were here few months ago and talked about your memories from the times—

A: Yes.

Q: —And now we came back with the video camera in order to record this conversation. Let's start from a question where were you during the war, where did you live?

A: Over there, in this village, literary 300 meters from this place.

Q: What was this place called?

A: Wszerzecz. It's a rather complicated name for the foreigners.

Q: Wszerzecz. How, if you remember, did the situation in Wszerzecz change after Germans entered. Did Germans station in Wszerzecz?

A: No, they didn't station exactly in Wszerzecz. They had their gendarmerie stations in somewhat larger villages. Before they were called Liminna village, or Kościelna village. In those smallest administrative centers. And there they simply had their posts. And all this territory was under their control.

Q: Mhmm.

A: Because all this took place some 12-13 kilometers from Łomża, a rather large town which had twenty something thousand denizens. On the Narew river. An old, almost thousand year old town.

Q: Mhmm. And when Germans stationed, when they had these territories under their control, did they introduce any changes?

A: Administrative, or—

Q: In general, did something changed radically in your life?

A: No, it was a normal life in the village, except that there were these compulsory quotas, that everything was recorded, private farm was under strict control. It was not allowed, for example to mill wheat, all cattle was clip-marked, the punishment for killing a pig for one's own consumption was simply death.

[01:] 03:14:13 – [01:] 06:06:22

02:50 – 5:59

Q: Mhmm.

A: Well, there were constant revisions, it was a normal thing.

Q: And what happened with the Jewish population?

A: In this region, exactly in this village there were no Jews. In Szepankowo on the other hand, meaning a kilometer, a little bit more than a kilometer away, there was a group, several Jewish families. Windmill for example, belonged to Jews, there was a [Jewish] tailor, shoemaker, several Jewish families had craftsman services. But mainly they were connected with this windmill. Simply a mill. Besides that, there weren't any Jews. But in Śniadów, a place seven kilometers away, there were a lot of local Jews. Well, and in Łomża, there was 30 percent, I don't know exactly, but 30 percent or more were Jews. It was a large Jewish center.

Q: And were you perhaps a witness of the repressions against Jews?

A: During this time, well, farmers' life went this way that so-called markets, if one needed to do shopping, or had other needs besides shoemakers or tailors, one would go to this market, to the town, meaning to Łomża in this case. They took place twice a week, on Tuesdays and Fridays— simply farmers from the neighboring villages would come on the horse wagons and this was the supply for town's people and for the farmers, if they needed to do some shopping, buy some tools

or something. And it could be seen, when one was passing by on the horse wagon, because horse and wagon were the means of transportation, one could see how the Jews were treated. Besides, well, quite fast, when Germans came in, because Germans came in [19]41, after the invasion on our neighbors from the east--because Russians were on these territories till [19]41. It was so-called Byelorussian Socialistic Republic from 17-18 of September [19]39. And later, Germans were systematically introducing their order. But the organization itself, ghetto in Łomża, was established probably at the end of [19]41. Quite large, because it contained not only Jews from Łomża itself, but also from neighboring villages, from the helmet of Jedwabne known for other incidents [*he is talking about infamous Jewish pogrom perpetrated by Poles*], but it was also in these parts. But this is a separate story.

[01:] 06:06:22 – [01:]08:58:09

5:59 – 8:35

Q: Mhmm. And during these trips, did you see how Jews were treated?

A: Well, similarly to well-known images, for example from films about Warsaw ghetto. Well, they were simply people of different class. It was, I saw it with my own eyes, when we were driving the horse wagon, how two smart alecs from **Hitlerjugend** [Hitler's Youth Organization, a part of Nazi Party, established in 1921], such youngsters, maybe 13-14 years old, my age more or less, when a Jew was passing by, because Jews had to have a sign, this David's star, they were simply spitting on him. For them these were not people. Such whipsters you know, wet behind their ears.

Q: And were you ever inside the ghetto in Łódź? In Łomża, I am sorry.

A: I wasn't in the ghetto itself, but going—because the situation was such that for some time, I already don't—people from the neighboring villages, meaning farmers, could use services of Jewish craftsmen. Of different specialties. And it was possible, with the permission of German authorities and Jewish self-government, which apparently existed, to hire a specific person, a tailor or a shoemaker—my father for example, had problems with his teeth, so he could hire a dentist. It was permitted to take such person home. Naturally, under the condition of timely returning of this—

Q: And such dentist lived at our house?

A: Yes. Various craftsmen, tailors were also at our place. Because this was, simply this was a way to help Jews, because where else could they—when he was going back, he usually had on the horse wagon either a sewing machine or other tools of his trade. One could enter the ghetto on this horse wagon. But I did not go in only my dad was driving in. And one would drive somebody outside and then back inside, under the sheaf of hay, because otherwise a German would use his bayonet, this SS-man [*he demonstrates pricking of the hay with the bayonet*] and check. He was from the camp's guards. But people were doing simply everything to help.

Q: Meaning, I understood that when a Jew was coming back to the ghetto, he didn't have to hide on the horse wagon?

A: No, he would drive out and come back without hiding, but in case of this little girl, she was driven out under some sheaf of hay. Simply like that.

[01:]08:58:09 – [01:]11:10:20

8:35 – 10:46

Q: Well, yes. I also wanted to ask you, when these Jews from the ghetto lived at your house, did they, for example talked about what was going on in the ghetto? Or did you not talk to them

A: Everybody knew about it. It was simply a common knowledge. It was obvious, there was nothing to talk about. Naturally, when somebody was at our house, we talked about it all the time, but it's impossible to constantly talk about the same thing, right?

Q: And did you perhaps meet Jews who were not in the ghetto, who were hiding outside the ghetto?

A: When the ghetto was already established, I didn't meet any. I did, of course. Among others, a married couple. How did they know my parents it's hard to say, because they were—they were hiding at our place, simply in the barn, on the hay. But one night they left. Even my mother was surprised. She went to bring them breakfast, something to eat in the morning and they were not there. Later on, we commented on it at home, wondered why, what was the reason. Most likely, this is what we were guessing, these Jews wanted to pay us back somehow. There were different incidents, there were people who were doing it for money, for some kind of payments. And in this case, this woman gave my mother a golden chain. It was even in my presence. My mother did not want to accept it. You know, these are unpleasant things, but this is how it was. And we thought that when my mother refused, they could have thought that we don't want them. Well, you know, it's hard to say what their reasoning was. They were gone in the morning. Because my mother categorically refused, there wasn't any discussion about it, they were in our care and that was it.

[01:]11:10:20 – [01:]14:00:01

10:46 – 13:36

Q: And do you perhaps remember their names?

A: No. No, you know, so many years.

Q: You just mentioned, when we were talking about coming in and going out of the ghetto, you mentioned a little girl who was taken out of the ghetto under the sheaf of hay, yes?

A: I did not witness it. Because my father would often drive with me, because my brother, an older brother was in Warsaw at that time. They simply established new borders and he stayed at my mother's sister who lived in Warsaw and simply went to school there because there were no schools here. And I drove up to the gate so the guards saw that there was someone there, a child, right. My father said "get away," but already the three of us came back home. So it was smart,

under the cover, supposedly it was the same person whom they saw before. And my father could say that this child did not have any documents, that it was his son who was entering with him, right? Well, you know people could come up with the ways to fool Germans.

Q: And when did you see this girl for the first time?

A: Several days later. But practically we were coming back from Łomża together.

Q: But when you were returning from there, did you know that there was somebody with you?

A: Yes, of course, we—although my father did not tell me that we were going to get something, some specific person. Why exactly this girl, but it was a result of my father's contacts with Jews in this ghetto. Maybe it was—there was also a well-known doctor, a Jew from Łomża. And my mother had open wounds from varicose veins. And she used to see him. Perhaps—and she was in constant touch with him. Besides that, my mother had a store in Szczepankowo before the war. This was the place of my mother's birth, [the store] was behind my mother's, I mean my grandparent's apartment. And there were simply constant contacts with Jews. With warehouses, different things, just like it is in business, a store in particular. So my parents had a lot of contacts among Jewish population in Łomża. But I, as a child, was not interested in it, you know. But I am guessing that there must have been some contacts in this case. Because why exactly **Danusia** [a diminutive of **Danuta**]. I don't know her real first name, I don't even know her last name.

Q: How old was **Danusia**?

[01:]14:00:01 – [01:]17:06:11

13:36 – 16:43

A: She was either a year younger than me or my age. Literally.

Q: How, did she live at your house?

A: She lived at my grandparents. Because, meaning in the next house, about 250 meters to the left. There were also two grown up persons, two women, sisters of my father and two men—two boys. Also grownups, two brothers of my father. That was—and my grandmother, because my grandfather died before the war. Besides that, there was one more brother of my father, who lived in Ostrołęka, a bit beyond Ostrołęka and he often visited with his children, also about my age. One of them is still alive and lives in Ostrołęka, but he is few years younger than I, so at that time he was a little, five-years-old boy. And they were coming all the time. So there were simply a lot of children. On the other hand, there were only three of us, my sister, my brother and I and we lived at the beginning [of the road], and they lived 300 meters away from the road, in the house of the former landowner, whose land was divided up—he simply didn't pay his debts to the bank and his land was taken over and divided. People were saying that he lost his fortune in Monte Carlo. He blew through his fortune after the war [*he means I WW*]. He was simply in debt, the bank took over his land and divided it into 15-hectares plots more or less and people in installments—and the former soldiers from the 20-ties could get them as a compensation for fighting Bolsheviks.

Q: And how long did **Danusia** live at your grandmother?

A: Several months, several months.

Q: And do you remember since when, when did she arrive?

A: Sometime during the winter time. It was in winter of [19]42 to [19]43. It's hard for me right now, somehow this moment, she simply came and stayed. But when it was, I think in the fall, in the fall or in the early fall.

Q: Mhmm. Can you tell us what happened with **Danusia**?

A: Well, my grandmother was hiding her under the pretext that there were always children at her place. And all of them rather dark, not blond, with literally black hair. My father's sisters both had such curly hair, all in waves with these locks. And dark skin.

[01:]17:06:11 – [01:]21:17:12

16:43 – 20:54

A: And so there was a resemblance, because she also had dark hair. She was probably 11-12 years old at that time. There was a year difference in our ages or there wasn't. She was simply living there like, like, better than—gendarmes saw her many times. And it so happened, that, but these are whole stories. In order to hold a wedding, one needed to have permission from gendarmerie. And you know, a village wedding without vodka, it just can't be. So one who had contacts would bribe gendarmes. And gendarmerie post was in Miastkowo, a village of Miastkowo, it's on the way from Ostrołęka to Łomża, also few kilometers from us. Some had contacts and took care of it. Germans got the bribe and they came to check if the vodka, which my uncles were making was in fact for the wedding. And she opened a gate for them when they were entering on the horse carriage. So they knew her and they knew that she is a part of this household. How did it happen that they got the information, because most likely they got the information that she is a hiding child, someone had to, it's hard to say. It happened suddenly and it was at the end of May, the beginning of June, because the wheat was already high. They simply came in the morning, at five o'clock in the morning. At this time in the summer it's already light outside. When they were going for some operations, it usually happened in the morning. [They came] on two horse carriages with a specific goal to find this, this girl. And people were in general on alert, so when the gendarmerie was going somewhere, they communicated to each other that something must be happening somewhere. They were coming from Szczepankowo and when they turned here in our direction, into our side road, the first house on the crossroad was ours, everybody was already in alder grove as we called it. It was a little river, alder bushes, forest, meadows. So everybody escaped to the alder grove. When something like this was happening, I don't know how, but everybody knew. And when they were already turning towards my grandmother's house, so everybody who lived there also—because farm life start early, they get up early in the villages. Somebody got up first, noticed the horse carriage was already 200-300 meters away. There was still a little gate and a tree-lined driveway to the house. Everybody managed to escape but they simply didn't have time to take her, because she

was in this camouflaged place. And that's all. They dragged her out of this place and the tragedy took place.

Q: And what was going on with you in this sit—at this moment?

A: When they were coming, I was running away from my house, perhaps a curiosity was guiding me a little, and I ran through the wheat field, between a wheat field and the meadow and stopped in the field some 200-250 meters from this house, which stood a little further away from our road. And I had, well, I was simply observing what was going on.

[01:]21:17:12 – [01:]24:00:11

20:54 – 23:37

Q: And what did you see?

A: I saw the moment when they were—well, I simply heard shouts, because the distance was about 100 meters and in the summer the voice carries over the dew. I saw them standing on this terrace leading to the house and at some point, and I saw this commandant, this **Belke [Belcke]** was his name, but everybody called him Angor, this was his nickname. It was this man around 50 years old, about 120 kilograms, such *[he shows how stout Belke was]*, **Belke**, everybody called him **Belke** because he was so *[he again shows how stout and tall Belke was]*. *[In Polish “Belka” means a thick wooden beam and phonetically sounds similar to the commandant’s name. That’s why people called him by his last name]*. He was a commandant of this, this gendarmerie. Incredible hooligan, simply a criminal. I also saw how they were shouting something to the effect that they didn't find anybody, that there is nobody there.

Q: You mean the gendarmes were shouting?

A: They shouted among themselves. Because it was all quite loud. He was angry that his operation ended in nothing. And I saw how he was running around the house. Why, I don't know because the distance was maybe 150 meters. He was looking around, and some of them, perhaps five or six, stood on these steps which were leading to this terrace in front of the house.

Q: I am sorry, this 150 meters was it between you and the house or—

A: Between, it was some 200 meters from me to our house, but from the point where I was standing, sitting rather in the wheat, to *[this house]*, because it was perpendicular, because it was this direction *[he points to the right]* it was maybe 150 meters.

Q: And what happened when this **Belke** ran around the house?

A: And suddenly I see that they are leading her from the inside of the house, in my direction, to the front of the house. She was only in the nightshirt, a white nightshirt, I remember so vividly this image; she wasn't wearing anything else. They were still gesticulating, doing something. We commented on this later, and I will tell you why in a minute. It was simply chilly. It was after Saint

Sophia [in Polish calendar each day is devoted to particular saint. Farmers still measure seasons according to the dates of particular saints. Saint Sophia day must be a “measure” of early summer], as we say “cold Sophia,” and the morning temperatures were only several degrees above zero, especially with damp air.

[01:]24:00:11 – [01]27:12:10

23:37 – 26:49

A: And she backed into the house and took this shawl, not shawl but a kerchief in a shape of a triangle, a knitted kerchief about one meter long. Because she came out in this kerchief and we saw her shot in this kerchief. And so she entered into the house in this nightshirt and disappeared. And again chaos, shouting, screams, but she was only dressing in this kerchief and Germans did not notice her. And there was a second exit from this room, a kitchen literally, where she was, a second entrance opened for the summer and leading to the other side of the house. It had two-winged glass doors which were closed for the winter and during Christmas time we would put some decorations on them, between the glass because they had double glass. And if she closed this door behind her, only one wing was opened, they wouldn't know what happened to her. But she, obviously all anxious, left this one wing open. And they jumped out [of the house], because after a moment of waiting they didn't see her and they noticed this open door and they all jumped out of the house, from this other side of the house, through this kitchen. There was this so-called hall and this kitchen. And this was where the first shots were fired. I heard that. And, exiting this house, she ran to the left, along the farm buildings, she ran about 50-60 meters, because that was approximately the distance [from the house to the farm buildings] and this is where they noticed her. When the first shot was fired, she passed by these farm buildings and she turned a right angle and ran along the barn, because there was this barn there, near the farm buildings. She started running in my direction. So, and there was a fence, so they couldn't cut her run so they were running after her. When they reached the corner, she was on the other side of the yard. And she already entered this orchard with fruit trees in it. Then there was this stretch of the forest or something like that, few quite high trees. And some of them, some of them run after her, some backed to this terrace and from there they started shooting. Literally everyone was shooting.

[01]27:12:10 – [01]30:01:06

26:49 – 29:37

A: Towards her running, but the distance was maybe 100 meters, not more than that. And she passed these trees, some well, or something like that, some shed. So she passed these trees and she found herself on the ope—on the opened space, only in some low wheat of some kind [unclear]. And they were firing constantly, but through these trees, bushes, all these things, so all these shoots were missing her. But there was this one or two of them, no, probably one, there was some discussion, this one was so glad. From the standing position they couldn't hit her, but near the exit from this house towards the fields, there were those two big stones, so nobody would drive into our yard from the side. These two large stones and the horse wagon could pass between them easily. One of them lied down at this stone and from this position he hit her in her leg. I don't remember if it was a right or left leg. In any case, wounded, she fell some five meters from me. If she could run two meters further, she could jump into this ditch towards which she was running. And it was dry this time, because sometimes water ran through it, because it was a ditch taking the water from the fields to this little river, to these alder bushes. And when she already fell, everybody, including this shooter [who shot her] was coming towards her through this orchard,

this little garden next to the house, the whole group, I don't know, there were maybe five or six of them. They came and she was lying face up. One of them, whether the one who shot her or someone else, it's hard for me to say, turned her face down with his boot and shot her in the back of her head. So the bullet came through the eye, this white brain core. I see how it was flowing to this day. And at this moment, I was literally two meters away, behind this ditch in the wheat. I lost my nerve and I jumped up. It was literally maybe five meters away.

[01]30:01:06 – [01]33:13:13

29:37 – 32:50

A: And I saw all this, ah—and this **Belke** „come” (GERMAN: come over), he calls me come over. He took out, with his left hand he grabbed my throat [*he shows where he was grabbed*], he stretched this hand, with his other hand he took out a gun and put it literally to my eye. So I will also remember this moment till the day I die.

Q: I am sorry, you moved a mike, we have to—

Q: You started talking about gendarme **Belke**, who threatened you with a gun.

A: He didn't threaten; he simply took out the gun and put it to my head. And at this point I heard some conversation between them in German. The translator, who was also there, translated it for me. Aha, and he took me and pushed me so hard that I fell backwards [*he shows how he is falling backwards*], because he was a big man, 190 centimeters tall, gigantic. The translator translated to me [the question] where am I from, where do I live. I say “here, in this house.” Because it was literally in the fields above our house. “Bury her here, because if not, you will be lying together with her.” They came to the conclusion that there was nobody to bury her and if they also shoot me, then it will be even worse. And that's why I am alive. I think only because of that. And they said, „we will come and check.” They didn't come. In any case, they went to this house, got into their horse carriages and left. We were expecting repressions, but it was shortly after this wedding and perhaps this also saved us, the fact that they got a milk can full of vodka from us. Literally.

Q: And did you really bury **Danusia**?

A: And we all bury her there, because they said that they would come to check, so you know. Because it was like “amen in a prayer” as a Polish proverb goes, it was for sure that they would come. But they didn't. But we simply bury her there, we wrapped her in a white sheet and bury here next to this, I don't remember any more if it was a birch tree, or some other tree, although I was there recently.

[01]33:13:13 – [01]36:06:00

32:50 – 35:42

A: And she is still there, her body lies there. Yes.

Q: Your story was very detailed, but I know that you prepared a map of the place where this incident took place. Perhaps you would like to show us this map and remind us how the events took place. This will allow us—

A: Visually.

Q: —to envision this situation.

A: *[he shows hand-made map of the place of events]*. On the map, even on the detailed map, this is this road which leads from Szczepankowo to Uszniki *[he shows the road on the map]* and this road which goes along here, here I even put this house in which I lived *[he shows the house]* and this is the house where **Danusia**, my uncles, my aunts and my grandmother lived *[he shows the house]*. I wrote here approximate distances. This is this little road *[he shows the road]* leading to the buildings of my grandmother. The distance is about 200, to the house itself, maybe 220-250 meters. From here to there *[he shows the distance from grandmother's to his house]*, it's approximately the same distance. They were coming from here, from Szczepankowo's direction. These here are free standing houses built on the plots from the divided land of this landowner *[he shows the houses]*. This is Wszerzecz settlement, and the entire village is here, on this side of the road *[he shows the direction to the village]*. This was already dense development, a typical Polish village development. This is a sketch of this, this house *[he shows the plan of the house on the map]*. This is this terrace we spoke about, where they were standing, here they entered on these horse carriages *[he shows the driveway to the terrace]*. Here this incident took place *[points to the terrace]* and I was in this place *[he shows it on the map]*, beyond my house. She was in this very small room, it was a ice house for the wint...for the summer *[he shows the room on the plan of the house]*. Because it was a stairway to the basement and next to it a narrow room, literally one and a half meters by two and a half meters long. It was accessible only from here *[he shows on the plan]*, from this place, from the back of the kitchen.

[01]36:06:00 – [01:]39:10:14

35:42 – 38:47

A: From which by the way, there was also a passage to the basement. And she had a bed here *[he shows on the map of the house]*. This was blocked by a wall unit *[he points to the passage from the girl's room to the kitchen]* which was previously in my mom's store. When my mom had a store, there was flour, kasha, various compartments for jars and other grocery products. This unit was about three meters wide and it was hiding almost this entire wall including the entrance door. When that gendarme was running around this house and looking into these *[he points to the farm buildings]*, because other gendarmes were searching everywhere. Few of them were standing here, on this terrace and here *[he points to the girl's room]* there was a vent. Literally a ventilation grill like in the apartment. And he noticed it. Because they were on the staircase to the basement, but this room, this addition to the building, which was a bit over three meters *[he shows the girl's room again]*, [it was] like a part of a room. They got to this room from this side here *[shows the side]*, they moved this wall unit, this is what we saw afterwards, and dragged her in this nightshirt here, on the terrace. And then, we are only guessing, she backed [to the house] to get this kerchief, in which she was wrapped, this handknitted, large kerchief, because it was simply chilly. And instead going back to them, she used this door leading to the other side of the house *[he points to the door]*. And she was running along these here farm buildings *[shows the direction of the girl's run]* and there was a fence there and the backs of the farm buildings. She was here *[he shows a turn in the girl's run]* when they jumped from here *[he shows the back door leading to the house]* and the first shot was fired from this place. And she turned again in this direction *[he shows the direction behind farm buildings]* she ran maybe 50 meters, maybe more and here she was already

on the completely opened space. And she turned in this direction [*he shows diagonally towards left*] because she knew that here, because we even played here, that here was this melioration ditch, narrow, which at that time was dry. Here were these obstacles in form of trees [*he points to the orchard in front of the house*], bushes and some other things and they were shooting from here [*he shows the terrace*] because there was also a garden next to the house, so these shots were ineffective. But this one, or two of them lied down here, on this stone [*he shows the stone behind farm buildings*] next to the entrance to the yard, fired, also some 150 meters, perhaps more, and he hit her here [*he shows the place where the girl was wounded*].

[01:]39:10:14 – [01:]42:03:14

38:47 – 41:40

A: Literally some two meters before the ditch. Because literally another split of a second and she would jump into this ditch and we could run here [*he shows a ditch leading to the right*], because here this ditch was turning, and going here, under this little bridge [*he shows a bridge on the map*]. And beyond it there were already fields, and here, also a road, also tree-lined [*he points to the road*]. Along these roads there were a lot of trees [*he shows the roads around the farm*]. Mostly weeping willows, such branching trees. But no luck. And I was literally here [*he points to the place beyond the ditch*] two and a half meters on this side. When he called me, it was here, in this place [*he shows a place next to the one where the girl was shot*] where he shot here. I was watching how he was shooting her, how he was turning her literally with his boot.

Q: And do you know the name of this gendarme who shot her, who—

A: No. There was **Szulc [Schultz]** among them and he spoke a little Polish. We were guessing, but no, because a Pole would save a life. He was either from Silesia or from Poznański province, because he spoke Polish but a regional Polish. He was later telling my parents, I wasn't present at that time. Besides there were also other incidents, other repressions

Q: But what was he telling your parents?

A: I don't know exactly. Or someone else was telling, because he wouldn't be able to talk with someone alone. When they were passing by in the horse carriage and when **Belke**, or someone else of higher rank, because **Szulc** was just a private. For example there was this incident. They were passing by once in the evening and the blackout was obligatory. And they noticed a ray of light from a lamp in some house. So he simply shot in this window. One evening they were passing by our house and from the road to our house [*he shows on the map the distance from the road to his house*] it was about 100 meters, so **Belke** sent, because he didn't feel like moving, he sent this **Szulc** and he warned us, "what are you doing," he said, "he was going to shoot." Again, a different incident. My father killed a pig.

Q: Let's put a map away, we won't need it anymore.

A: For some holidays, in general for our own use. And so this pig was hanging, ready to be prepared. He comes in and also says "you are lucky, **Belke** is not in today."

[01:]42:03:14 - [01:]45:03:08

41:40 – 44:49

A: And he was at our place once and I think he was trying to establish some contacts, but I don't remember. In any case, my mother and everybody was of opinion that he saved many lives. Because this **Belke** was capable, when he was passing by in this horse carriage and small children were walking, and his nickname was Angor, and he didn't know Polish at all, only when he was entering some house, children would shout "mom, Angor," because he was collecting angora wool, obviously he was sending it to his countrymen. To his family. So all small children, well, they didn't realize, they shouted "mom, Angor is coming," when he was passing by. And so he simply was shooting at them.

Q: And did it happen that he shot a child?

A: Yes. Not in our neighborhood, but it was a common knowledge. And this **Szulec** said "you are lucky that he is not in today." Because he was capable to go [to the house] himself and if he didn't use a gun, he would, do it—at the house. There were such incidents.

Q: I wanted to make sure, because **Belke** was present when **Danusia** was killed, but was it him who shot her?

A: No, not him. No, not him. It was probably the one who was shooting from the stone, but right now, you know—

Q: Mhmm, mhmm.

A: In any case I saw smiling snouts—

Q: And as you said, there was a translator with them—

A: The translator was wearing plain clothes. I don't know who he was. In any case, a typical look, wearing a hat, like in movies—

Q: I understand. And I also wanted to ask, earlier, when you were talking about the ghetto, do you remember who was guarding the ghetto in Łomża?

A: Gendarmes. What I saw—

Q: But were they German gendarmes or soldiers of different nationalities as well?

A: First of all there were gendarmes, but there were also German guards. I mean Jews under German command. Literally like on the pictures from Warsaw ghetto.

Q: And were they dressed in some characteristic way?

A: They simply had black uniforms.

Q: Those Jewish policemen?

A: Yes. They had black uniforms. Black or dark blue, dark. In any case close to black.

Q: I have one more question. During the time when Soviets were on this territory, at the beginning of the war.

A: Yes.

Q: In this period, did you witness the incidents of civilians being killed?

A: By Russians?

Q: Yes.

A: No, but I did witness—they were collecting money for the equipment for the Red Army

[01:]45:03:08 – [01:]48:11:07
44:49 – 47:48

A: This **NKWD** member [National Committee of Internal Affairs, Narodnyi Komitet Vnutrennykh Dziel, NKWD], then there was **predsiedatel** (RUSSIAN: a head of some governmental organization) as they were calling him, the head of some Russian administrative organization and the third one, he wasn't a translator, because people could understand them, some Party activist. And they were collecting donations. And exactly in our case, it was spring of [19]41, my father was preparing a field in the garden for planting carrots, celery root and other things. And they went „**gospodin Kuczyński**” (RUSSIAN: Mr. Kuczyński), it was in my presence. „**Tol'ko 50 rublei vy dali na Krasnuu Armuu**” (RUSSIAN: „You gave only 50 rubles for the Red Army”). My father says, „I gave as much as I had.” „**Takoi Kulak**” (RUSSIAN: „such rich farmer”), because they called him „**kulak**” (RUSSIAN: „rich farmer”) because he had three or four cows and two horses, so he was already a „**kulak**” house [unclear], „**tol'ko 50 rublei**” (RUSSIAN: “only 50 rubles”). And they were tormenting my father from the morning for good few hours. And my father would drive the horses about 30-40 meters, turned around, and they would go again, „**Gospodin Kuczyński, tol'ko 50 rublei**” (RUSSIAN: „Mr. Kuczyński, only 50 rubles”). „I gave as much as I had,” and he would drive the horses again. They tormented him till noon and they did the same in every village, one by one. We were on the list of those to be deported to Siberia. Why? But this is another story.

Q: I will ask for a moment of break, all right?

Q: I would like to go back to the incidents which you described and ask you few detailed questions. At the beginning of our conversation today, you mentioned two young boys from **Hitlerjugend**, who behaved badly towards Jews. I would like to ask you, how did you know that they were from **Hitlerjugend**?

A: They were wearing uniforms. Shorts, a shirt, a tie, a Hitler armband. They were wearing ties, they were recognizable.

Q: And were they from this area or—

A: No, they were Jew...they were, when I was driving with my father towards this central point where the gate to the ghetto was, because it was in another part [of the town], we had to pass Gestapo and SS post. And they came from inside it. The two of them, I would like to use a better description.

[01:]48:11:07 – [01:]52:47:14
47:48 – 52:24

Q: But you didn't know them personally?

A: No, no. They were Germans because they spoke German among themselves. And when we were driving, my father was in the front and held the reins and I was sitting next to him, with my back to him. They wanted to mount the horse wagon and take a ride. But because my father knew German a little, so he said something to them, right after they mistreated this Jew, because this Jew was just passing on the sidewalk. It was about 30 meters from the entrance gate to this place where gendarmerie and Gestapo were stationed. And my father told him something, but I didn't hear it. They started laughing and my father made a move as if he wanted to hit them with his whip, but you know what the consequences would be if he did. Well, my father was in the army, so he knew a little about such things. And he knew German a little bit. And he said something to them and they started laughing "ha, ha, ha" and jumped off this wagon. I don't know, maybe they were afraid that they would be hit, that my father would hit them with this whip. And he had a good whip, made from young oak.

Q: I understand that as you said, it was after they mistreated this Jew.

A: Yes, it was a reaction to their treatment of this Jew.

Q: But when it comes to this ghetto in Łomża and when it was possible to take those Jewish craftsmen for a week for example, did one have to pay for this, let's call it „renting”? Yes, or was it—

A: I don't know exactly. They didn't talk about it at home. My parents would say that it would be good to take someone, or something. I think everything was done based on my parents' previous contacts with Jews.

Q: Yes, but Germans simply allowed to take these Jews—

A: Well, for some period of time, yes, because they knew from this **Arbait** (GERMAN: identification card), from this passport, well, from the ID card, they were writing everything down, they knew everything, from where and you know what the punishment for lying was.

Q: Yes, but I mean, did one need to do some formal—

A: One needed to write some kind of application, something like that, I don't know about it. My father would simply go to some office next to the entrance to the ghetto, there he would take care of everything and I didn't know the details. In any case, we were coming back with a tailor, once with a dentist, who was making a set of teeth for my father at home. And it was all from knowing them before, because of my mother's health and, and in general these contacts with people...with Jews were very much alive.

Q: I also wanted to ask if you heard of or saw—did you know about other instances of hiding Jews, just like you were hiding **Danusia**?

A: Yes. One didn't talk about it, but one man from our village was hiding a family. Maybe they were those who left our place, it's hard to say. In any case he has a medal of Righteous Among the Nations.

Q: And do you remember his name?

A: Bieniek. And I know more, because when my wife and I went to Jerusalem in 2000, we were in Yad Vashem and I saw a tree with his name.

Q: Was he hiding a couple or the whole family?

A: I think a couple. About this, you know these were delicate matters People were saying that somewhere somebody, but the fact that it was him was become known only after the war.

Q: I understand.

A: Because there were also those toying with communism. There was this boss, I don't remember his name anymore, who wanted to organize a **kolhoz** (RUSSIAN: "collective farm"). I mean supposedly he was a farmer, he had one horse, no he didn't have a horse, probably he had one cow. So he was the best representative of peasant class and [best suited] for **kolchoz**' boss. Russian, he was [present] during this visit of **NKWD**, that my father gave so little money for the Red Army.

Q: I understand. Thank you very much.

A: Thank you kindly.

Conclusion of Interview

There are no restrictions on this interview.

Translation: Elizabeth Kosakowska

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