

BARŠČEVSKIS, Marjans
Latvia Documentation Project
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Disk 1 of 1

In this interview, Marjans Barščevskis, local resident of the town of Višķi, Daugavpils region, talks about the life of local Jews before World War II and their fate during the time of the German occupation.

[01:] 00:51:00 – [01:] 02:15:59

He gives his name (Marjans Barščevskis/Barscevskej), date and place of birth (June 3, 1923; Višķi, Daugavpils region, Latvia); comments on his being of Polish descent.

[01:] 02:16:00 – [01:] 07:39:59

He describes Višķi as a predominantly Jewish town; estimates that about 200 Jewish families lived there before the war, making 85–90 percent of the total population; states that the town was self-sufficient by having, e.g., its own blacksmiths, barbers, tailors, tinsmiths, furniture makers, ice-cream producers; notes that there were 30–40 small and medium-size Jewish shops that specialized in everything at once (sugar, flour, buttons, kerosene, etc.), which also sold on credit; notes that Jewish children went to their own school; mentions that there was a big synagogue and that there was a team of Jewish firefighters, which on May 1 would put on their uniforms and participate in public events; talks about biweekly dancing parties organized by Aizsargi (Latvian nationalists), which were frequented by the Jewish youth; describes Jewish life as overall easy-going and relations between Jews and non-Jews as friendly.

[01:] 07:40:00 – [01:] 08:24:59

He mentions that the purges and the terror started when the Soviet army came to Višķi.

[01:] 08:25:00 – [01:] 16:09:59

He tells how Germans entered Višķi in two tanks; one tank fired and killed a group of bystanders; mentions that more Germans came later on motorcycles; describes a round-up of a group of Jewish men a few days later; they were locked up for several hours in the fire station, robbed of all valuables, such as watches and rings, and released; Marjans, his brother and father were arrested with them but released earlier when a neighbor intervened on their behalf with a German officer; after the event Jewish store-keepers organized nightly patrols to protect their property.

[01:] 16:10:00 – [01:] 21:29:59

He talks about the Aizsargi and the two Jews in their orchestra, the drummer and the conductor; mentions the arrest of Communists and their “sympathizers” by Germans; describes how Višķi was emptied of Jews: first, a group of about 100 Jewish men between the age of 17 and 60 was sent to Daugavpils on foot, supposedly for work, then two groups of remaining women, children, and elderly people were sent away; discusses that Germans hung posters telling Jews to gather at a certain location, and the Jews complied; notes that local policemen did not mistreat Jews, possibly because of shame, as they knew each other personally.

[01:] 21:30:00 – [01:] 34:44:59

He describes a group of 40–50 Jewish women, children, and elderly people from **Oglomlya** or **Samarsa [Samagals]**, passing through Višķi, some time in 1941 in a convoy (of Germans) and followed by Gypsies and prisoners carrying spades; tells how a Gypsy woman tried to snatch a coat from a Jewish woman; mentions hearing gunshots a little later; talks about the place of execution, which was a pit next to the road, where clay was produced; the murdered Jews were buried in the pit; describes seeing a big car with a pipe stopping at the place in 1943; relates seeing five to six German soldiers and civilians exhuming and burning Jewish corpses in that car; mentions that a monument was put up near the pit after the war; says that with the exception of the local teacher **Ionova**, nobody was interested in learning what had happened there.

[01:] 34:45:00 – [01:] 36:18:59

He says that during the war they were horrified by what was done to Jews, but could not do anything about it; talks more about the Jewish conductor of the Aizsargi orchestra.