



FRANCISZEK JAKUBASZEK, WŁADYSŁAW MICHAŁEK, JÓZEFA SOBÓTKA

Office for the Remembrance of Jews

I would like to describe a brief account from the period of World War Two which stuck in the memory of the six-year-old that I was at that time, and which is also known to me from the frequent recollections of my parents after the war.

After he was demobilized, my father, Wawrzyniec Sosnówka, worked on a farm and took care of the family because there were already two of us: myself (Józefa) and my brother Feliks, two years my senior. My father was a good, helpful man and consequently had good relations with the people who were persecuted at that time, that is the Jews, who were being hunted down and murdered by the Germans and traitors collaborating with them during the war. My father fed them and even provided them with shelter in his own house, thus putting himself and the entire family at great risk. At that time, aiding and abetting Jews was punishable by death and burning the entire household. Not minding the danger, our father sheltered a Jewish family. It was a woman with children. Her name was Naftula, and her daughters were Ryfka and Chabaja. She also had a son, Jasiek, whom she had sent to the USA in 1939. As she later told us, he studied law.

When the persecutions and murders of Jews intensified still further, Mrs. Naftula took her daughters and her belongings and hid them in a safe place. Nobody knew what happened to them or where they could be. She herself remained in our house.

Once, when my father was returning from Kraśnik, he was arrested by the Germans and the people cooperating with them and was severely beaten. They tried to force him to confess that he was sheltering Jews and to give up their location, but he did not break. But that was not the end of it: on many subsequent occasions, our house was raided and searched, be it during the day or at night. During each such visit, my father and mother were beaten and we were threatened with a rifle so that we would point to where the Jews were hiding. We, the children, never knew where this shelter was. There was a double wall in a room, and between these walls the Jewess was hiding, first with her children and later alone.



Our parents did not tell us where the hideout was because, threatened with death, we might have identified this spot.

More searches followed, but Mrs. Naftula was not found. Our parents did not confess to hiding her because they knew that if they had, neither they themselves nor we would have survived. We would have been murdered together with Mrs. Naftula. After this incident, we were left be for a while and nobody raided our place, until the memorable day of 22 July 1942, when, on the pretext of meeting some high-ranking German official, all the residents and all the Jews staying in the village were driven to a yard between Zdziłowice Czwarte and Zdziłowice Drugie district.

Bandits, together with the Germans, stormed into our house and started to search it, inch by inch, knocking down walls in the process. Then they found the hideout where Mrs. Naftula was staying. She was taken away together with all her belongings to the yard, where everybody else had been gathered. That day, my father was not home. He was working in the field and this may have saved his life. My mother was taken to the yard, where all the people gathered were supposed to be executed, when suddenly an SS aircraft appeared and dropped leaflets with orders or something similar. This is why only 72 Jews and 30 Poles from that yard were executed. All males aged over 16 who were in the yard, as well as one man from a house where there were two men, were taken away and transported to Germany for labor.

Our village survived until 1944, when the retreating German troops burned down our entire district four and district two; on the opposite side, not a single house or building survived. Our house, together with the outbuildings, was completely burned, while districts one and three survived. Since the entire village comprised four districts, the most affected were those where the highest numbers of Jews were staying.

We do not know if Mrs. Naftula was executed that day in the yard or if she managed to survive. Many Jews and Polish suspects escaped from the yard, saving their lives. Since that tragic moment, all contact with Mrs. Naftula has been lost. We know nothing about the subsequent fortunes of that family. All those murdered that day were buried in a huge pit, which was dug out on the orders of the Germans, and, under their supervision, all the bodies were put inside and the pit was filled in.



These experiences took a terrible toll on the health and wellbeing of my parents. My mother was always sick and agitated, which led to her developing cancer. She died aged 54. My father was also sick all the time; at nights, he would relive all those persecutions and beatings. He, too, died young.

I confirm the veracity of this account with my signature, as well as providing the names of two witnesses to those events who are still alive.

Józefa Sobótka *née* Sosnówka
[...]

Władysław Michałek
Franciszek Jakubaszek