

WOIŃSKA, Janina
Polish Witnesses to the Holocaust Project
English
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In this interview, Janina Woińska, born in Milejczyce in 1919, who during the war was working in the pharmacy in Brańsk, describes how she was hiding Jews on the grounds of her pharmacy which was located within Brańsk ghetto. She concentrates on the family of **Szapiros [Shapiro]**, who thanks to her survived the war, but also mentions other incidents of people from Brańsk and its vicinity helping Jews. She describes the liquidation of Brańsk ghetto and discusses the role of **Cukier [Zucker]**, a head of local Judenrat, who was helping Germans to find Jewish hiding places. Woińska talks about the crimes committed on Jews, most likely by Poles, during and after the German occupation. She describes the Soviet occupation as well and talks about Soviet persecution of Poles including deportations and killings. She mentions Jewish role in some of these crimes and talks about their general behavior towards Poles during that time. Woińska received a medal of Righteous Among Nations for her help shown to Jews during the German occupation.

File 1 of 3

**[01:] 00:08:20 – [01:] 04:59:20
00:05:05**

The interviewee introduces herself as Janina Woińska, born in Milejczyce, in 1919; she says that she spent her childhood in Milejczyce, where she attended elementary school, after which, she went to **Dowiczyn [Dowczyn]**, where she graduated from middle school and then went to Vilnius to attend high school named after Orzeszkowa; she continues describing her education saying that she passed entering exams to Pharmacology Department at Vilnius University, where she was accepted and where she studied for two years, till the war interrupted her studies in 1939; she adds that in 1939 she moved to Brańsk to join her sister, an owner of the pharmacy, and that she worked at this pharmacy through the entire war, and that afterwards she stayed in Brańsk; Woińska also mentions that the co-owner of the pharmacy, her brother-in-law, Piński, was drafted by the army at the beginning of the war and came back only in 1948.

**[01:] 04:59:21 – [01:] 10:34:14
05:05 – 10:53**

Woińska describes the entrance of German army to Brańsk and says that although a small town, Brańsk was bombarded heavily in the very first days of the war; she continues to say that Germans did not only bombard the city, but they aimed also at gatherings of people and were even shooting at single farmers working at the field; she adds that Germans seemed to concentrate on bombarding Jewish parts of the town; she adds that the fire destroyed much of this district and

since her pharmacy was located at the end of it, she was fearing that the fire will reach their building; she describes how her sister and she escaped to the basement of the neighboring building where other people, among them her friend doctor Ciwiński, were hiding and saying prayers; she also says that when Germans came in, they separated men from women; she underscores her impression of might and horror upon seeing German army; she continues her description saying that after passing Brańsk, Germans went to Brześć and then came back to her town, at which point four German doctors took lodgings at her house; she underlines the fact that they behaved decently; she goes on to saying that after the front line pulled back, German troops withdrew and Soviet army entered the city; she compares the two armies saying that while German troops inspired horror, Soviets looked poor, dirty and disorganized; she stresses the fact that local Jews felt very sure of themselves under Soviet power and to illustrate her point, she tells a story about a Jewish man, Proszński, who as a **predsiedatel** (RUSSIAN: head of some organization) of some Soviet organization, came to her house demanding the new, elegant and costly furniture, which her sister and her husband just purchased.

[01:] 10:34:15 – [01:] 15:19:17
10:54 – 15:50

Woińska continues her story about behavior of Jews under Soviet power and gives another example of her interactions with Jews working for Soviets: she says that upon hearing rumors of Soviet's intervention in the affairs of local people, she and her sister hid some of their supply of medication; she goes on to say that the Jewish militia man **Trust [Thrust]** came to take them to the local NKWD (National Committee of Internal Affairs, Narodnaia Komisiia Vnutrennykh Dziel, NKWD) for interrogation which was led by another Jew, an NKWD man; she concludes saying that the NKWD man, who found some of their medications by chance, gave them back to her, but adds that his attitude was rather unpleasant; she adds that there were no Poles in Soviet militia at that time [*a male voice, a man named Zbyszek, adds that there was one Byelorussian in Soviet militia*]; describing the working of the pharmacy, she says that initially they were managing all right up until the Polish currency, złoty, was replaced by rubles, and the next day after this decree was issued, her sister was ordered to pay a large amount of money in rubles, which she didn't have; Woińska states that at this point the pharmacy was nationalized and **Chomski [Homski]**, a Jew from Brańsk and an owner of the medical supply store was nominated by Soviets a manager of the pharmacy; she underscores that he did not have needed qualification to manage a pharmacy, yet the Soviets gave pharmacy in his hands.

[01:] 15:19:17 – [01:] 20:05:08
15:50 – 20:48

She continues talking about the changes in the pharmacy saying that all the people whom **Chomski** employed were Jewish, but that he was not a malicious man; she adds that her sister died shortly after, on June 10th [19]40 and she was the only non-Jewish worker in the pharmacy; she also mentions that two of the house's rooms were taken by Soviet and housed unidentified Soviet organization; she remembers two local teachers, women, who shared rooms with her at the pharmacy house, Ms. **Kapówna** [*the form of this female last name indicates that she was single, the regular form of this last name was probably Kapo*], and Ms. Kulczycka; she tells their story saying that Ms. Kulczycka, who came to Brańsk in 1921 and had been teaching there till [19]51,

was sent by Soviets to Milenik as **nieblagonadziezhna** (RUSSIAN: undesirable element), while Mr. **Kapówna** was similarly sent to a small village near Cheremcha, half of which belonged to Poles and half to Russians; she also recalls *[with the help of Mr. Zbyszek]* that the local school was divided into Polish section and a section with Byelorussian as a teaching language; she also remembers that the principal of the school was a Soviet named **Finczenia [Finczeniak]**, who was married to a Polish woman who pretended to be Russian, that his assistant was a man named **Ferus [Ferusz]**, and that Ms. Kulczycka's position at the school was called "**zavieduiushcha po uchebnyi chkhaskhas**" (RUSSIAN: "a manager of learning time"); she concludes saying that **Finczenia** behaved decently.

[01:] 20:05:08 – [01] 24:55:14
20:48 – 25:50

Woińska remembers very well the outbreak of German-Soviet war; she says that at that time she, two teachers and a maid were living in the attic of the pharmacy house and that they were wakened up by loud noises at two in the morning on Sunday; she remembers going out to the balcony and seeing disoriented people walking through the streets and her decision to go to doctor Cywiński to find out what was going on; she continues saying that there was a suspicion that the war broke up, but nobody was sure of it; she says that after arriving at doctor Ciwiński's house located near the hospital, she saw **vtoroi sekretar Partii** (RUSSIAN: second Party Secretary), **Krabań [Khraban]**, who was stationed with his wife at the doctor's house, and who was making fun of the fear of local population, not believing that Germany could proclaim war against Russia; she remembers a Russian soldier who came in and let **Krabań** know about Germans firing from across the Bug and about casualties among Russian soldiers; she recalls how quickly Russian soldiers evacuated from Brańsk, and that German motorized troops were on the bridges leading to Brańsk already at three in the afternoon on the same day; she says that she was trying to escape to the nearby settlement together with doctor Ciwiński's family and the teachers, but Germans ordered her to remain in the pharmacy; she continues to say that only when the front line quieted down, she and the maid were able to escape to the settlement; she recalls a battle at **Domanowo [Domanowo, Domanów]** as well as firing near the cemetery.

[01:] 24:55:14 – [01:] 30:07:01
25:50 – 31:15

She admits that when Germans first came, local Polish population felt a little more relaxed because the absence of Soviets meant the end of deportations of Polish population which Soviets were organizing; she states that the last deportation took place on Friday before the German arrival on Sunday; she says that Soviets deported a number of Polish families, among others, the family of Mr. Płoński, in which the wife, two daughters and son were deported and he was shot by Jews in Soviet militia; she was an eyewitness to this shooting and saw **Trust** leading the prisoners to be shot *[voice of Mr. Zbyszek adds that there was also one Byelorussian Koniuch, in the escorting squad]*, she also saw the deportation of Płoński's family from the balcony of her house; she adds that the deportations were conducted via trucks to Bielsk and from there by train to Kazakhstan; she is not sure if Jews or Byelorussians were also deported *[male voice of Mr. Zbyszek interjects that two Jewish families and one single Jew were also deported]*; she says that Soviets deported mainly people who had been to or had contacts with the territory across the Bug river (this territory

was occupied by Germans), as well as Polish intelligentsia; she adds that the former school principal, **Rzepi [Żepi]**, who, fearing Russian persecutions of Poles escaped across the Bug, was revenged by Soviet by deporting his wife and daughter; in case of Płoński's family, she states that the reason for deportation was the misunderstanding between Jews *[Mr. Zbyszek explains that Płoński was the only merchant before the war, who could successfully compete with Jewish business]*.

[01:] 30:07:01 – [01:] 35:14:02
31:15 – 36:38

At the suggestion that Poles greeted German arrival with flowers, she answers that she did not witness anything like that in Brańsk and that people were not happy, just relieved that the Soviet deportations were over; she adds that she was scheduled to be deported on the following Tuesday; she continues her story about the pharmacy by saying that the pharmacy came back to her hands, first unofficially, but later the representative of pharmaceutical board in Białystok came and officially assigned her a duty of the manager of the pharmacy; she adds that it was a German board lead by **Von Storm [Von Shtorm]** and located in Białystok; she also mentions that their warehouse was very well stocked and that the medication was inexpensive comparing to the overall prices; she says that **Chomski** related to her all the accounts and as a Jew lived in the ghetto, that she wasn't in touched with him, and that he was later deported; talking about Brańsk ghetto, she says that it was established only in [19]42, and that till that time Jewish population somehow managed German regime; she adds that her pharmacy was located in the Jewish district, at the end of later ghetto and that the house itself was owned by a Jew, **Szapiro [Shapiro]**, who was a very solid and reliable citizen of Brańsk and with whom she, as his renter, had very good relationship; she described a house as having four rooms, kitchen, and an attic besides the pharmacy; she adds that the pharmacy was located in the same building till [19]62.

File 2 of 3

[02:] 00:23:19 – [02:] 05:37:17
00 – 05:45

She continues describing her relationship with **Szapiro** family saying that he had two sons and one daughter who was already married and lived somewhere else; she concentrates on her relationship with a younger of **Szapiro's** son, **Lejpko [Lejbko]**, whom she describes as a young, energetic man always ready to help her and vice versa; she says that when Germans established a ghetto, the house where the pharmacy was located was separated within the ghetto by two meter fence on the one side, and on the other, it faced the street leading to the Aryan part of the town; she adds that people could enter the pharmacy only from the street, not from the ghetto; she also mentions that because of the high fence, and because of the fact that she was busy at the pharmacy, she didn't observe much of what was going on in the ghetto at that time; she relates that right before the liquidation of the ghetto, when it was already closed and surrounded by Germans, she didn't even know about it; she adds that she could hear some kind of noises, like banging, which were probably shots, but she was not sure; she says that she found out about ghetto being closed and possible deportation of Jews from **Lejpko**, who one night came knocking on the back, kitchen door and told her the news; she continues saying that **Lejpko** asked her if he could hide his parents

in the pharmacy house, but she says that she declined because she didn't think that the house was safe enough for hiding Jews, since it was located within the ghetto; she adds that she feared the possible German search and the consequences for her and **Szapiros**; she states that later on **Lejpko** came again and that at this time she felt very uneasy, because she already knew what was going on in the ghetto and she knew that letting **Lejpko** in presented a danger to her; none the less she let him in and agreed to his plea to hide in the household building located at her yard; she remembers that **Lejpko** removed few wooden rails from the house and made his hiding place there; she states that her maid was bringing Jews hiding there food and whatever else they needed; she also recalls that the closing of the ghetto took place on All Saints Day, which fell at the beginning of the week and that the deportation begun on Saturday, so the closing of the ghetto lasted for about a week.

[02:] 05:37:17 – [02:] 09:58:24
05:45 – 10:15

She is not sure if there were any prosecutions of Jews in the ghetto before it was closed; she supposes that Jews paid money to Germans to be treated decently; she recalls one incident when an electrician named **Grynszpan [Greenspan]** came to her pharmacy and asked for poison, saying that he cannot take it anymore and remembers refusing him; she says that she later found out from people that **Grynszpan** did commit suicide, she doesn't know how, but she knows that he was not deported with others; returning to the story about Jews hiding in the household building of the pharmacy, she says that she doesn't remember how many times a day they brought them food, but says that it was enough to sustain them; she also adds that she was not afraid of maid's loyalty, because they were close and because they were the same age; asked how much Jews paid her for the food, she answers that of course they didn't pay anything, that nobody even mentioned it because it was a normal thing one would do for another person; she adds that they were trying to force money on her, most likely dollars, when they were leaving, but that she didn't accept it, saying that they will need money wherever they will be hiding next; she says that only **Lejpko**, his fiancée and his older brother were hiding at her place and that their father was deported with the others; she recalls that they left their hiding place on Thursday following the Saturday's deportation and admits that she urged them to go, for she was afraid of possible search at her place and about what would happen if the Germans found Jews at the household building; she also says that **Lejpko** and two others had previously arranged a hiding place at the farmer's in the nearby village of Popławy, and that a local priest, **Hwalko [Chwalko]**, made arrangements for two parties to meet: Jews were supposed to cross the pharmacy, a little street leading to the church, and go to the bridge where the farmer was to meet them.

[02:] 09:58:24 – [02:] 15:17:17
10:15 – 15:38

Continuing her story about **Szapiro** family, **Woińska** says that they stayed at the farmer's house for a year and a half, till the front came in [19]44; she adds that they were attempts at their life over there, for someone most likely informed on them and Germans came to the house of the farmer whose name was **Popławski**, looked for them, but did not find them because they were hiding in some kind of double wall; she mentions that **Popławski** was arrested and **Szapiros** were relocated by farmers to the house of their friends or cousins near **Ciechanowiec**, she mentions that the second farmer who was hiding **Szapiros** used to visit her; she says that **Szapiros** survived the

war, but that they started trading and did not pay taxes and when they were ordered to pay a large amount in taxes, they escaped to Białystok; she interrupts **Shapiro's** story to talk about the incident which happened already after the liberation, in Brańsk, namely, the murder of two Jewish women and a farmer woman who was hiding them; she described this incident saying that two Jewish women, Tykocka, a German scholar, and her friend, were hiding in the village at the house of Mrs. **Sztejmanowa** [*the form of the last name denotes that she was married to Sztejman, Steinman*] when unidentified people, perhaps partisans, came looking for them and despite women's explanations that they simply came to see their seamstress, they were shot while **Sztejmanowa**, who recognized the murderer and uttered his name was also shot; she adds that Tykocka and her friend survived the war hiding in Brańsk or the vicinity and that she found out about this incident because it became a well-known case in Brańsk; she also mentions that this incident took place in March of [19]45, which means which was almost a year after the liberation.

[02:] 15:17:17 – [02:] 20:02:15
15:38 – 20:44

She continues to say that the women were not living at **Sztejmanowa**, but went there to hide; she explains that there was animosity towards Jews at that time and speculates that it might have been caused by the fact that Jews started coming back to Brańsk and organizing themselves and that there was around 80 Jews in Brańsk at that time, Jews not only originally from Brańsk, but all those who survived in the vicinity; asked where they lived, she cannot give a clear answer saying that they must have come back to their old apartments, which was unlikely, because houses left by Jews were usually taken by new owners; she recalls [*with the help of Mr. Zbyszek*] that the territory of the former ghetto was occupied by organization **Junacy** (POLISH: literally meaning “young men,” denotes an organization gathering youth displaced by war, giving them shelter, work, and often an opportunity of education), whose members were employed repairing the roads; she concludes the subject saying that Jews who came back to Brańsk lived wherever they could; she adds that she is obviously against the incidents similar to the one with Tykocka and her friend, that she is of the opinion that one's nationality, ethnicity or religion is neither their fault nor their merit; going back to the Jews in post-war Brańsk, she adds that after Tykocka's incident they started fearing for their lives and gradually started moving away from Brańsk and going wherever one had some connections; she mentions that **Szapiros** moved to Białystok; asked about the taxes they were supposed to pay, she admits that she made a mistake, that they were already in Białystok when they were trading; she recalls that they were trading on the large scale, most likely in salt, which they were selling by wagons and when they were faced with the taxes, they decided that this is not the place for them to do business and then they escaped.

[02:] 20:02:15 – [02:] 25:08:06
20:44 – 26:03

Woińska continues her story saying that two **Szapiro** brothers moved to Austria, while **Leipko's** fiancée **Waserówna** [*the form of the name indicates that she was unmarried, Wasser, Wasserman*], whom by that time he married, stayed behind for she was expecting; she adds that **Waserówna** joined her husband and brother-in-law in Austria, but that she had a very ugly incident while traveling, for someone, under the guise of helping a pregnant woman, stole two suitcases she was carrying with her; she adds that she knows about it from **Szapiros** themselves,

because she stayed in touch with them; she mentions that **Szapiros**, after staying in Austria, went to America from where they wrote to her and finally invited her to visit covering all the costs of travel; she says that she accepted the invitation and went to America, to Baltimore where **Szapiros** lived, on November 25th [19]65 and came back on February 4th, [19]66; she adds that the women of the family are still alive, but the two brothers are dead; she says that **Lejpko** was shoot during the robbery of his house about a year after her second visit to America, which took place in [19]78, while **Fajwel [Faiwel]**, his older brother died, not so much of old age, but from illnesses and most likely psychological trauma resulting from all that he had to endure; going back to the night when the ghetto was closed, she recalls that during that night Jews made holes in the fence and were walking around her yard, but that she didn't worry about it because she was responsible only for the house, which was locked, and she couldn't controlled the yard; she remembers that the second time **Lejpko** came to her, he simply jumped over the fence and came to the house, but this time, he knocked on the window, not at the door; she says that this time she already realized what was going on, and the fact that she does something forbidden by letting a Jew into her house, but she let him in anyway.

[02:] 25:08:06 – [02:] 31:23:19
26:03 – 32:34

Convinced by the interviewee that her testimony is only for future generation and that she shouldn't be afraid to say anything, she tells the story of Poles denouncing Jews who were escaping from the ghetto; she describes the entire day when the incident took place and starts by saying that the front of the pharmacy was facing a street across which was an Aryan side of the town and that leading from the pharmacy, was a diagonal passage to the church, behind which was a road to the bridge leading to Popławy [*Mr. Zbyszek adds that this was a route of escape from the ghetto*]; she says that the day of deportation was an All Saints Day and she as well as the teachers and the maid wanted to go to the church, but when the maid went out to open the shutters, she was stopped by the German guard and they were ordered to remain inside where they stayed until they heard shouts in their yard; she reports that after she went out, she saw a lieutenant from local gendarmerie and a guard together with a woman, wrapped in a village kerchief; she recalls that they were trying to establish whether the woman was Jewish to which she responded that the woman didn't look Jewish; she says that the woman was just about to let go, but she hesitated for a moment and that moment was enough for the gendarmes to take her to the police station; she says that later on, the lieutenant told her that she was in fact Jewish, that she was from **Świryt [Świryt, Świrytowo]**, one of the Jews from neighboring villages whom Germans brought to the ghetto and that she was locked in the ghetto with other Jews; she says that later on, thanks to the intervention of the lieutenant from the local gendarmerie, they were allowed to go to the church, but told that they cannot let anyone into the pharmacy.

[02:] 31:23:19 – [02:] 36:08:15
32:34 – 37:30

She continues saying that at some point priest **Hwalko** called their attention to the fact that when the German guard was going in the opposite direction, several Jews crossed pharmacy's yard, crossed the adjacent street and went in the direction of Popławy; she recalls thinking to herself that she was responsible for this yard, but decided that she could pretend not to see anything; she says

that around eight people escaped this way, but that two women from across the street, from the Aryan side, waved at the gendarme to draw his attention to what was going on; she states that as a result of their actions, all the Jews were caught and returned to the ghetto; she talks about how after this discovery a Gestapo man and gendarmes rushed into the pharmacy and started beating up an innocent medic from the local hospital who was waiting for his prescription to be filled out; she said that she intervened and the Germans left him alone; she continues saying that the Germans left the house and nailed down the outside gate so nobody else would escape; she mentioned that this gate was locked for a good month; she adds that the only one who was saved was a woman from **Świryt**, who was among the escapees, but who, instead of taking a road to Popławy, went in the opposite direction to the outskirts of Brańsk and hence saved herself; going back to the closing of the ghetto, she doesn't remember any public shooting or hanging, but she says that about a week after the deportation, three Gestapo men came to search their house and with them, **Cukier** [**Zucker**], a head of the local Judenrat; she reports that **Cukier** was driving Germans around and showing them the hiding places of the Jews who remained in the ghetto.

File 3 of 3

[03:]:00:09:21 – [03:] 05:15:17
00:00 – 05:20

She continues to describe the search saying that just before the Gestapo arrived Ms. Kulczycka went to the household building to clean it up and heard strange noises which turned out to be Jews who were hiding in a similar household building of the adjacent house and who were trying to catch her attention to ask for some hot water; Woińska says that Ms. Kulczycka came back to the house very frightened and told her about this incident, but that despite their fear, the maid started cooking something for them just as the search party arrived; going back to the search itself she says how a very tall Gestapo man, **Cukier** and another Gestapo man in plain clothes were interrogating her, Ms. Kapówna, and the priest, who happened to be visiting, in a small study of the house; she remembers that at this interrogation **Cukier**, whom she didn't know at that time, announced that old **Szapiro** told him that his sons are hiding at Woińska's house and that if they are not here she would know where they are; she describes her feelings at this time saying that she lost her head from fear and disbelief that the father could denounce his own sons and the head of the Judenrat can lead Germans to the hiding Jews; she underlines that she was only 21 years old at that time and feared that **Cukier** just pronounced a death sentence on her; she relates that at this point she asked her maid, a tall, very manly and authoritative looking woman, if she knew anything about Jews and that she denied at which point Gestapo man ordered a search of the house and the yard; she recalls that Ms. **Kapówna** led gendarmes around the house, while Woińska was ordered to go out to the yard with the Gestapo men; she also remembers that one of the gendarmes found footsteps on the snow and accused her of hiding something, to which she replied that she cannot be responsible for the entire yard, because anybody can enter it even without her noticing it and suggested that they put a guard here.

[03:] 05:15:17 – [03:] 10:05:20
05:20 – 10:22

Asked if she spoke German, she says that only a little, just enough to communicate; she says that during the search **Cukier** went into the household building where **Lejpko** and two others were hiding but which they since left, and that he started talking to them to make them come out; she adds that she was very lucky, because **Lejpko**, without her knowledge, left his suitcase in the household building, but they did not find it; she goes on saying that upon leaving, **Cukier** relayed to her a message from **Fajwel's** wife, who was deported and who was asking him to come back so they can face whatever awaits them together; she adds that when Germans closed the ghetto, **Fajwel** was visiting his father and that he was with his wife, his little daughter, and that his wife's mother was very ill; she comments that **Cukier** most likely did not realize what he was doing, that his way of thinking was just that: that Jews should meet their fate together; to strengthen her argument, she underscores the fact that **Cukier** was shot by Germans too; she says that all together **Cukier** denounced 70 people whom Germans took to the outskirts of the city, to Kirkut, and shot there; she recalls an awful site of horse wagons, which she saw herself and on which Germans loaded all the Jews whom they found; she also adds that they took with them and shot two Catholics (meaning Poles) whom they found looting the ghetto; she recalls one of them who had a chance to escape, but refused to for he thought that he was not guilty of anything; she also recalls that on the same day, in the evening a fire broke up in the ghetto and that other Jews, those not discovered by **Cukier**, were forced to leave their hiding places and the two gendarmes present in the ghetto, especially one named **Martin [Marten]** shot from around six or eight people; she also mentions that most likely there was a child among the shot Jews; she adds that the fire was started by some Jewish woman who wanted to boil some water, for they were hiding without any nourishment for a long time; she also mentions that during the fire the Jews from the neighboring household building crossed their pharmacy and escaped to the village, but they were not lucky enough to survive; she also adds that she did not see the shooting herself, because it happened further into the ghetto where she did not go; she does remember that the fire broke out on Monday, eight days after the deportation.

[03:] 10:05:20 – [03:] 15:18:00
10:22 – 15:47

Continuing to examine **Cukier's** actions, she says that when director Mierzyński was making a film about Brańsk ghetto, she wanted him to show not only bad deeds of Poles, but also those of Jews themselves; she adds again that she doesn't believe **Cukier** realized what he was doing, that he probably believed Germans who said that they were taking Jews to the ghetto in Białystok; she comments that despite the obvious, it was hard to believe for anybody, Jews included, that Germans were taking thousands of people to death; asked if any Poles participated in deportation or shooting, she answers that most likely not; when talking about the deportations, she remembers hearing that Germans summoned 240 horse wagons and that they simply loaded people on them and the armed guards escorted them all the way to Bielsko; talking about this transport, Wońska speaks against the opinions she encountered that Polish drivers could help Jews because there were not that many guards escorting the convoy; she says that Poles couldn't do anything, because they were mostly afraid of their wagons and horses and in general, they did not have a chance against armed Germans, no matter how few of them there were; she adds that it is easy now to say what if, but in order to really judge their behavior one should have lived through these events; she comments that she was very devastated by what she had gone through herself and what she had seen that she didn't want to go into the ghetto and hence did not witness any other possible crimes;

she also says that about a month after the deportation an SS-man, a highest party member in Bielsk district came to the pharmacy because he heard about the search and the suspicions that she was hiding Jews; she recalls him yelling at her and behaving inhumanly.

[03:] 15:18:00 – [03:] 20:07:24
15:47 – 20:49

Asked about the suitcase left by **Lejpko**, she says again that she didn't know about it until she found it after the search; she adds that there was another one hidden in the house, of which she also didn't know; she remembers that after a while **Lejpko** sent for his suitcases and that someone from the family where they were hiding came and fetched it; she says that she know Jack Rubin and that Rubin told her that he was not sure if he would be as brave as she was; answering the question if she knew Rubin before he came to Brańsk after the war, she doesn't give a definitive answer, instead, she says that she didn't know many Jewish people in Brańsk before and during the war; she starts talking about how Jews from Brańsk living in America came to greet her at the airport when she was visiting **Lejpko's** family and how nice they were to her making it possible to travel and see things like New York and Niagara Falls; when asked about the medal of Righteous Among Nations, which she received, she answers that it was in recognition for help she lent to **Szapiro's** family, because without having a chance to hide at the pharmacy grounds, they would not have a chance to survive; she also mentions that there were other Jews hiding in Brańsk and the vicinity and that sometimes people who were afraid to keep them in their houses, were taking them food to the fields where they were hiding; she observes that only later, when it was safe to speak about these things, people started talking and admitting to hiding Jews during the occupation, but there was a period of time, right after war, when people were afraid to talk *[Mr. Zbyszek adds that 67 Jews from Brańsk survived the occupation hiding in Brańsk and vicinity, which is more than the number of Jews who survived in larger towns located nearby.]*

[03:] 20:07:24 – [03:] 25:31:00
20:49 – 26:26

Woińska also talks about incidents where Jews were killed by Poles, but she says that she knows them only as a gossip, not as facts; she mentions a little, four-years-old girl *[Mr. Zbyszek corrects her, saying that it was a little boy]*, who was left behind by her family and whom someone denounced and as a result the gendarme came, took her away and killed her, she also mentions the gossip about the Jews who managed to escape through the pharmacy the day when the ghetto was closed saying that they were found in a ditch killed and that it wasn't Germans who did it; asked about Poles pillaging the empty ghetto, she answers that she doesn't know about it, because she wanted to stay as far away from such things as possible; she repeats that **Junacy** lived there and that the Jews who came back to Brańsk lived wherever they could find an empty apartment; she does remember one more incident of killing a Jew after the war: she recalls that when she was already studying in Łódź, she came to Brańsk for few days during the carnival season and heard about a Jew named **Finkelsztajn [Finkelstein]**, who came to the market place and was shot by unidentified person.

[03:] 25:31:00 – [03] 25:31:05
26:26 – 33:02

Asked about Jewish relations with new government after the war, she answers that they were good, because it was “friends” who came to power, that Jews were the ones who suffered most during the war and hence they were taken under government’s protective wing; she cannot give specific examples of government protecting Jews in any special way *[Mr. Zbyszek adds that there was a specific phenomenon after the war, when surviving Jews were selling memorabilia of their families and especially houses left by Jews. It wasn’t always legal, because Jews were selling any empty houses previously belonging to Jews whether they were related to the family who owned the house or not. He also adds that many of people from Brańsk bought houses at that time in this way and there are still documents of ownership which were produced by Jews illegally.]*; asked if there were any Jews in militia after the war, she cannot give an answer; she also says that she didn’t know many of the 80 Jews who came back to Brańsk after the liberation, because she was simply too busy running the pharmacy.

[Mr. Zbyszek asks questions]

Asked about what she means by saying “our gendarmes,” she responds that they were Germans who were stationed in Brańsk through the entire German occupation; she recalls their nicknames: **Cebulka** (POLISH: onion), **Majster** (POLISH: handyman), **Przymiński [Pszyński]**; she talks about **Pszyński**, who was a Volksdeutsche, and says that he was from Grudziądz and that his mother did not want to acknowledge him as a son when she saw him in gendarme’s uniform; she also mentions that she had sort of an offer to become a Volksdeutsche because once few Germans came to her pharmacy and hearing her speaking German, asked her if she is German, but she said she was Polish; asked about who exactly was taking part in the liquidation of the ghetto, she answers that there was a special German unit which arrived especially for this mission, but she doesn’t know of any Poles or any other national groups which might have helped Germans during the liquidation; she does mention a man from blue police named Falkowski, but she didn’t see him physically helping Germans; as she puts it, he was there as a representative of the blue police; she didn’t see anybody from blue police helping Germans either.

[First interviewer]

Asked how it was possible that she didn’t see 240 horse wagons summoned for deportation, she answers that she was at the pharmacy all the time and didn’t have a chance to go out; she adds that she knows about the number of wagons only from what people said.