

CYPRYSIAK, Maria
Polish Witnesses to the Holocaust Project
Polish
RG-50.488*0054

Box 1, Tape 1

In this interview, Maria Cyprysiak, born August 1914 and a lifelong resident of Kalinowszczyzna, a district in Lublin, Poland, describes her experiences during World War II. She speaks about the large local Jewish population of her area, discusses the murders committed by Nazis and describes the help she offered to Jewish people during the war. She describes, in detail, an event in 1941, in which she witnessed the Germans dig a pit near the glassworks factory where they murdered about a hundred orphans.

[01:] 00:07:19 – [01:] 10:22:13
00:00 – 10:41

Cyprysiak begins by noting her birth date and place as August 1914 in Lublin; says that her father worked at a meat processing plant and had been there since it first opened; says that after her schooling she worked there as well; says that before the war she completed her primary school in the Kalinowszczyzna district of Lublin; says there were many Jews; says there were more Jews than Poles; says she lived in a tenement house that belonged to a Jewish man, Mr. **Podkowiak**; says he was a very religious person; says that in school there were many Jewish pupils; says half of the pupils were Jewish and the other half were Poles; remembers talking with her Jewish classmates in Polish, but that among themselves they spoke Yiddish; notes that she was able to speak Yiddish as well as German, which was taught in school; says that during her school years she worked in a glassworks factory to earn some money; says after that, at the age of 16, she started work at the meat processing plant, where she worked her entire life until her retirement; notes she lived her entire life in Kalinowszczyzna; says that after the outbreak of the war she got married, but her husband was killed by the Germans; notes he was born in Warsaw; says they had two children together, a daughter and a son; remembers being afraid when the war broke out; says at that time she was working and did not live far from the synagogue in Kalinowszczyzna; says that during the occupation, Jews were still living in Kalinowszczyzna; says that during the war the Jews were afraid of the Germans and hid from them; says they would not leave their houses; says she helped them and would hide them; remembers seeing Jews being chased in Lublin; says other people were not allowed to come near to them; remembers watching them cry; says this happened near her house; says she does not know where they were taken; says entire families were taken; notes that the Germans did not hit them, but rather they shouted at them.

[01:] 10:22:14 – [01:] 14:16:05
10:42 – 14:44

Cyprysiak remembers that her landlord Mr. **Podkowiak** and his family were killed; says the youngest son survived because he hid; says she did not live there anymore at that time so she did not witness this; says people explained they were probably shot inside of the house; notes that many Jews who lived in tenement houses were killed; says she heard that they were

chased to a square, but does not know where exactly; says the Jewish women she knew hid in basements and attics; says she hid them also in her basement; says that when the Germans arrived, her Jewish friends came over to her house and after the Germans left they went back home; says that many Jews went abroad.

**[01:] 14:16:06 – [01:] 22:17:17
14:45 – 23:06**

Cyprysiak says that on Grodzka Street there was an orphanage and many Jewish children lived there; remembers witnessing the Germans putting children onto a large truck and driving away with them; says at that time she was visiting a friend who lived near the orphanage; says the Germans dug a pit near the glassworks factory, and she followed them there; remembers being afraid and did not see anything but that she heard a lot of gunfire; says after the Germans left, she went with a friend to the pit and they saw the dead children lying there, some of them still moving; remembers a school friend who climbed on a tree and watched the Germans take children by one leg and shoot them; thinks there were more than 100 children; remembers the children crying when they were on the truck and the Germans shouting at them; remembers two Jewish women who were looking after the children crying and being very upset; says those women had taught the children and were eventually murdered as well; says that when she saw the children on the truck, she and her friend ran barefoot a few meters to see what was happening; says this occurred in the summer of 1941; says they did not bury the children, rather they covered them with just a little bit of soil; says that after this, the local Jews carried the children in carts to the Jewish cemetery; notes that the Germans dug the pit with about ten men using shovels.

**[01:] 22:17:18 – [01:] 29:09:03
23:07 – 30:15**

Cyprysiak remembers how Jews tried to hide in the meat processing plant slaughterhouse; says there were a lot of places to hide (e.g. the attic) as the building was still under construction; notes that Jewish women worked with her and lived with her cousin; says most of the Jews that emigrated survived; says those who remained in Lublin were killed; notes that only some of the workers knew that these two women were Jewish; says she knew because they all had attended school together; says that every time the Germans came, they hid the Jewish women; says these women worked legally in the company and that some time later they ran away; thinks the Jewish women she hid possibly fled to Palestine during the war; says that after World War II there were a few remaining Jews in Lublin; says that they primarily owned stores, but not butcher shops because of the pork; states that her friend lived close to the Jewish orphanage and that they worked together at the meat plant; says the children did not wear anything distinguishing themselves as Jewish, but everybody knew they were Jews; says the children were often hungry so she would give them food; says the children were afraid of the Germans, especially the older ones, as she thinks they knew what was going to eventually happen.

**[01:] 29:09:04 – [01:] 35:33:06
30:16 – 36:56**

Cyprysiak says that at Majdanek there was a concentration camp and that she was able to see it from a distance; says she never went close because she was afraid; remembers there were many Jews there; recalls a crematorium and seeing smoke; says she knew that they killed

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Jews there; says she took pieces of bread and threw it over the fence and she heard the Jews crying; says she looked through the fence for friends and she saw former school friends in the Majdanek concentration camp, but does not remember their names; remembers how they were caught in the streets and thrown into cars; says she always escaped and hid; says she lived in Lublin through the end of the war and that she recalls when the concentration camp was closed.