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SZURKOWSKA, Olga
Polish Witnesses to the Holocaust Project
Polish
RG-50.488*0085

In this interview, Olga Szurkowska, born July 1931 and a lifelong resident of Białowieża, discusses her village's situation during World War II. She focuses on her time in primary school, as she was 8 years old when the war broke out.

Box 1, Tape 1

[01:] 00:45:17 – [01:] 03:32:05
00:00 – 03:25

Szurkowska begins by explaining she used to attend a mixed school for all children because there was no school for strictly Jewish students; says children did not stick to their ethnic groups; specifies that even during Christmas all of the children would celebrate together around a Christmas tree.

[01:] 03:32:06 – [01:] 06:26:23
03:26 – 06:21

Szurkowska does not give much information after being asked how the Polish part of Białowieża reacted to the Russians coming in; notes the only change she could remember was that the school was split in two—a Russian and a Polish school; explains that the Russian teachers came from Russia to teach at the school.

[01:] 06:26:24 – [01:] 09:08:20
06:22 – 09:07

She explains that she was in the Russian school because she was Belarusian; says that in her class there were about two or three Jewish students.

[01:] 09:08:21 – [01:] 12:44:00
09:08 – 12:57

She explains that all men from the village were taken to the forests to work; notes there were many German policemen; recalls that after the Germans arrived the schools were abolished; says the school buildings were taken over by the Germans; remembers she went to a private school run by **Wolska**, a lady from Bulgaria; mentions that at the school the primary language was German, but that there were Polish as well as Belarusian children.

[01:] 12:44:01 – [01:] 17:10:13
12:58 – 17:35

She recalls a few incidents regarding Jewish people after the German occupation; she recalls a few incidents; says one time she observed, along with a few others, German soldiers outside

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of her house taking the furniture and personal belongings from a Jewish house; says the Germans did not take the family but only their things; notes that after few days the family was eventually taken as well; remembers when the Germans transported a group of about 20 Jews; says the Germans were running after the Jews, but were not using violence that she could see; describes a scene that took place on Stoczka Street: every other household was Jewish, and in the middle of the street there was a truck which the Germans were taking the furniture and personal belongings; notes again that she did not see the Germans taking any Jews into the truck.

[01:] 17:10:14 – [01:] 19:48:15
17:36 – 20:15

She says that she did not actually witness what happened to the Jews, but that during the period of the occupation, there were no Jews there; recalls the third or fourth day of the occupation; says on the corner of the street there was a huge house situated on stones; says the Jew who did not escape hid under the house between the stones; says the German woman who was living there told a German soldier about people hiding under her house and the Germans killed them; says she went there with other people to see the massacre—one of the dead had an ear cut off; remembers also seeing a family that was hanged by the Germans; the family's name was **Bremutów** and they were hanged in front of the Culture Palace; says the family was from Belarus and was living in the forest; says the two daughters survived; says they were left hanging there three days and nobody was allowed to bury them.