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Polish Witness to the Holocaust Project
Polish
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Box 1, Tape 1

In this interview, Anna Świetlicka (née Łysakowska), born on July 25, 1928, in Piaski describes her observation on the life of Piaski Jews and their murder by the Germans as seen through the eyes of a twelve-year-old Polish girl.

[01:] 05:15:03- [01:] 12:22:18

[01:] 05:15:03

A: Well, but in (19)4—*[does not finish the word “40”]*. Well, my husband told me which year but I don’t know any more. (19)40 or (19)41.

Q: The year is not important. It is more about—

A: (19)41. The ghetto was already established. Since January.

Q: How did the ghetto look like?

A: How did the ghetto look like? Well, by then we already lived here. But the Poles, who lived in the area where the ghetto was supposed to be established, had to look for a place to live here, outside the ghetto. Most of the time it was a swap: Jews went over there and Poles over here. Well, we had two Jewish neighbors. **Ackerstein [Akerstein; Akerstajn, Akersztajn]** *[lived]* on one side and **Pogoda** on the other side. And they went to live in the ghetto.

Q: *[Did you have]* neighbors here in this place or neighbors there?

A: There. They had to live there and the Poles just came here from where the ghetto was. The ghetto was surrounded by a 2.5 meter (7 ft.) wooden fence. There was barbed wire on top. Here, on **Lubelska** Street was a house where the Gestapo lived. The localization *[of the house]* was such that whenever they stood on the balcony, they could see almost the entire ghetto. This way they were well aware of what was going on in the ghetto.

Q: Besides that, was anyone else watching?

A: Well, yes. That means, at first there were Jewish police at the time ghetto had already been closed *[the separation of Jews was completed]*. And it was one of those Jewish

policemen that came to see us often. Because in principle, I never was in the ghetto when these—but he kept on coming, because he was allowed. For this Jewish policeman, for this Jew it was allowed to walk around **Piaski**. They [*the policemen*] were not abusing it, but if there was a need—and he was coming—

Q: Were they in some sort of uniforms?

A: Yes, they were uniformed.

Q: What sort?

A: Well, what sort? Seems, black or navy blue—it is hard for me to say any more, some dark sort of—and [*they were*] much alike any other uniform.

[01:] 07:40:08

Q: Did they have?—

A: They had hats.

Q: Were they armed in any way, did they somehow?—

A: They had rubber truncheons. Rubber truncheons they had. Well—

Q: And did you see what these policemen were doing?

A: Well. I know that they kept order there. [*I know*] that when Germans issued an order to assemble, they were somehow mustering the Jews. Contributions were laid. It is the policemen who were levying these contributions. There was also a sort of **Kahal** [**Kachal**; **Kachau**] or whatever it was called in Jewish [*she doesn't say Hebrew*]—Germans turned to this **Kahal** and were levying—they levying the contributions very often.

Q: But ..., I am sorry, let's come back to the policeman who was visiting you—

A: Yes. He was visiting us [*she scratches her nose repeatedly*]. He kept coming to us and he knew that as—because just then the deportations were starting. That means, they [*the Germans*] were first bringing [*the Jews*] in from: Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Austria. Those Jews— they [*the Germans*] were telling them [*the Jews*] that a colony would be established for them here, that they would live here, that they would have good accommodations and overall that everything would be marvelous.

[01:] 08:57:16

They were still bringing them in when the ghettos were not closed. That is why, here, next door there were a Jewish woman and her son. I more or less came in contact with them. Well, but later when all the ghettos were closed then—I just lost my trail of thought, what else did I want to say—

Q: We were talking about this policeman.

A: About this policeman. Well, this policeman was coming to us, he had an idea what was going on with the peo— [*people*] who were transported out. This with—so, they were transported in such groups, and were driven to the station in **Biskupice** [**Biskupiec**] even by foot. And— they were either transported— these who couldn't walk were taken by cars [*trucks*]. Sometimes by horse-drawn carts, but it was rare.

Q: Did you see such deportations?

A: I did. Not many though. Well, my grandpa had an adventure with the car [*truck*] that was transporting the Jews. He used to go for a walk and he would go there, towards **Chelm** [**Chelmno**; **Helmno**] into such a—on this— on the road. And the car full of Jews was just coming. It was too full. It was a truck. And it was too full and the truck bed came open in the back, just where my grandpa was, and together with the Jews my grandpa rode—[*rode*] went into the ditch. He was already 74 or 5 years old. He was already an older man and he broke this here [*tries to show*], a fem— [*femur*], well—

[01:] 10:37:08

Q: A hip.

A: He had a broken hip and Germans gathered him together with the Jews and wanted to deport him there. Well, **soltys** [*a village administrator*] or somebody else was near by. Well, and—after all grandpa had his ID with him [*proof of Polish citizenship*—and he [*village administrator*] testified that grandpa was not a Jew. So they let him out, but for the rest of his life grandpa had a broken—and he couldn't walk with that hip.

Q: And did you Madam?—when you saw these deportations—you said that a few times you saw for yourself—

A: But it was from far away. It was not close, because the Germans forbade coming near and I had it forbidden both by the Germans and by my parents as well. They [*the parents*]

forbade me to approach because it was punishable even by shooting. Well. Germans were shooting at my friend. Somehow she managed to escape.

Q: Why were they shooting?

A: Well, she was walking up...because she lived very close to the ghetto.

[01:] 11:44:04

And she was hand—[handing] perhaps she was selling... but also giving bread. She said that she was giving—because her father was trading. He was a sort of a butcher. He said that from time to time he was giving away meats because there was hunger in there *[in the ghetto]*. And bread. The bread. They wanted some bread. As she was handing it out, I said that they *[Gestapo]* could always see from the balconies *[formerly mentioned watch towers]*, *[a German]* he came and he started to shoot. She barely managed to escape. But I never approached closer.

Q: How did you Madam—how did you Madam—?

A: But when I came close...I would tell you in a minute. *[The following paragraph is not highlighted. She never describes what happened when she came closer though; next she gives a detailed description of how the ghettos were divided]*

[01:] 12:22:18

[01:] 05:15:03- [01:] 12:22:18