

KUŹNIAK, Zofia
Polish Witnesses to the Holocaust Project
Polish
RG-50.488*0149

Box 1, Tape 1

The witness, Zofia Kuźniak, maiden name Krużewska, born May 15, 1927, describes her forced evacuation to Wodzisław, where she lived with the Jewish family of Aaron until the departure of the Jews from the village. She describes the chronology and manner of the ethnic cleansing of the Jews, starting with nightly deadly assaults on selected Jews and the final death march. She describes the role, in the extermination of the Jews, of the “Bahnschutzpolizei” (a small para-military force within the SS that oversaw the security of the railway systems and prisoners on the railway), the “granatowa policja polska” (the Polish police), and the Jewish police.

[01:] 01:18:00 – [01:] 04:45:25

Zofia Kuźniak, maiden name Krużewska, describes the forced evacuation of Polish families, including her own family, to Wodzisław; explains that in her family there were five sisters, named **Halina, Zofia, Jadwiga, Basia,** and **Marychna** (all of whom died) and one brother, **Philip**; explains that they were housed with a Jewish family in an apartment with one room and one kitchen; explains that her family lived in the room while the Jewish family resided in the kitchen; explains that the Jewish family was headed by the father, named Aaron, with his wife and four sons named, **Lejbu, Idu, Szlojme,** and **Szabse** and two daughters, named **Estera** and **Maria**; explains that Aaron had traded in agricultural produce.

[01:] 04:46:00 – [01:] 12:59:25

She described life in the General Gouvernement or Generalna Gubernia, the German-occupied Polish territories that were not annexed to the Reich, which included Kieleckie, the county in which she lived; mentions that Krakow was the capital of the General Government; explains the peaceful relations between Jews and Poles in the village before the war; explains that there was no ghetto, and Jews were not marked to stand out; points out that the majority of the town was Jewish; describes that starting in 1941, Jewish shops were closed down by force, with the exception of workshops owned by shoemakers, tailors and water-carriers; mentions that there were three policemen, one who resigned, the second, named **Sztukocki**, who cooperated with the resistance, and the third named **Machowski**, who participated in the murder of the Jews; describes the denunciation of the Jews and the organized raids and murders, during the night, carried out by the Gestapo, who arrived from Jędrzejewo; explains how the corpses were lying in the streets until the next morning, after which they were transported to the Jewish cemetery;

specifies that most of the victims were older men, who were either wealthier, had some influence, or belonged to the Jewish intelligensia; narrates that the Germans took younger men to work; describes that some Jews cooperated with the Germans as Jewish police, with the false hope that cooperation would save their own family.

[01:] 13:00:00 – [01:] 17:34:25

[*In response to the questions*] she details the chronology of the genocide in her village; describes the nightly raids during which Jews were pulled out of their houses and killed in the streets; explains that later the Jews were taken to the cemetery and after presumably digging their own graves shot to death; states that she witnessed such executions multiple times; states that things went on like this for a year; explains that the Polish resistance warned Jews of Gestapo raids, so that some could hide in the woods and return when it was over; explains that when the Gestapo organized the final liquidation of Jews out of Wodzisław, all the young Jews fled; points out that the only Jews who remained were the elderly, the women with children and the sick; points out that the German “Bahnschutzpolizei,” short “Bahnschützen,” with the help of the Jewish police rounded up these Jews, which numbered around one hundred; describes how they forced them to march in the heat to Sędziszow.

[01:] 17:35:00 – [01:] 21:35:25

She narrates that Aaron, with his wife and the two youngest sons, had a hiding place with farmers; explains that the two older sons had been taken by the Germans to work; details that only **Estera** along with her two little children remained in the house; explains that **Estera**’s husband, **Fishman**, had fled, leaving his wife and two children; explains that the Germans ordered the Jews to report to the market square, from where the death march to Sędziszow began; describes the scene at the market place; points out that only the elderly, the sick, and the women and children remained; states that all of those who could not walk were shot instantly; describes how she and her sister tried to help **Estera** with the two children; explains that she was able to walk with **Estera**, carrying one child for a couple of kilometers; points out that once the “Bahnschütze” realized she was helping, she had to leave under the threat of death; describes how **Estera** struggled carrying the two children; points out how out of exhaustion she put the one-year-old baby down and the baby was shot immediately by the “Bahnschütze” in full view for all to witness.

[*Emotional Silence*]

[01:] 21:36:00 – [01:] 24:34:25

She describes her walk back home and how the Germans shot other exhausted Jews; narrates how while walking home she saw many corpses and dying Jews; states that Poles could not help because then they were shot immediately; narrates the story of the elderly Jew named **Klein**, who hid himself from the march and poured gasoline on two little children and himself and then burned them and himself to death; states that the reason she wanted to tell these horrifying events is her hope that younger generations will learn and remember.

[01:] 24:35:00 – [01:] 27:59:25

She estimates that one hundred Jews were forced by the “Bahnschutzpolizei” and the Jewish police on this death march; says that no one survived the march; says that she only knows of one Jew who survived, named **Kuba Niszawski**, who was hidden in the cellar by **Małgosia Bolicówna**; reiterates that such help was given under penalty of death.

[01:] 28:00:00 – [01:] 33:03:25

She narrates how her father helped some Jews to escape to Warsaw, where some survived; tells the story of one surviving Jew, who took her family name under which he ran a small store in Łódź; explains how her father tried to raise the money as ransom in exchange for **Idu** from the Germans and how unfortunately **Idu** had already been taken away and never returned.

[01:] 33:04:00 – [01:] 36:18:25

She states that after the liquidation, no Jews remained in Wodzisław, a town that had been historically made up primarily of Jews; [*In answer to the question*] details once again the role of the Polish police in carrying out the genocide; states that the policeman who willingly cooperated, **Machowski**, was tried and executed after the war because there were an overwhelming amount of witnesses.