

GRODZKA-GUZKOWSKA Magdalena
Polish Witnesses to the Holocaust Project
Polish
RG-50.488*0214

Box 1, Tape 1

Magdalena Grodzka-Guzkowska describes her experiences during World War II, which she spent in Warsaw and Southeastern Poland. She was engaged in various underground resistance organizations and describes her work finding and eliminating collaborators. She describes the rescue efforts for Jews and describes how both adults and children were saved. She narrates the difficulties of a life in hiding and acknowledges the help of friends as well as strangers.

[01:] 00:55:24 – [01:] 08:47:03

Magdalena Grodzka-Guzkowska states her birth date, as well as her living situation prior to the war; explains that when the war broke out, she was living in the home of **Ms. Głowińska** in **Rawa Wyżna**, close to the Czechoslovakian border, due to her health; describes the outbreak of the war and the German invasion of the village; tells about her family's decision to leave for Kraków; explains that the train ride was long because of the invasion; explains that they planned to continue to Warsaw but the Germans redirected the train to **Lwów (Lemberg)** to a village called Radymno, where they divided the passengers up into designated housing; describes her first traumatic encounter with German violence toward Jews; describes, in detail, the public humiliation Jews suffered at the market square; explains that a Jewish woman thanked her with a gift for taking care of the living-quarters to which they were assigned; explains that the woman refused to enter her former house in order to avoid the Germans; describes how her mother organized the journey back to Kraków.

[01:] 08:47:04 – [01:] 13:16:21

She describes how she remained at her grandparents in Kraków to continue her education while her mother and sister returned to Warsaw; describes her lessons at the school **Królowej Wandy**, before the Germans shut the school down; explains that after the school closed she took lessons at the **Aula Kopernika** at the Jagiellonian University; explains an incident at the university in which she witnessed the forced arrest and abuse of professors by the Germans; describes how the German "reforms" ended all genuine possibilities for education; describes her return to **Rawa Wyżna**; describes **komplety**, which were a number of secret courses given by professors who either escaped the initial arrests or returned alive from the concentration camp in Oranienburg; describes how she was contacted by the regional underground resistance organization, explains that the organization was established by **Karas Tokarzewski** in Warszawa and was named

“Służba Zwycięstwu Polsce” and evolved during the war into ZWZ and later “Armia Krajowa” (AK); mentions that she was accepted into her local branch of the organization, organized by Get Getyński, in January of 1940; explains that her ability to speak English, French, and German played a large role in her acceptance; describes how she listened to and translated foreign news broadcasts such as by the BBC; points out the dangers that came with these kinds of activities, such as arrest and being sent to a concentration camp; explains how the group organized the safe passage of pilots out of Poland through the mountains, so that they could join the cause in France and England; mentions her cooperation with Pastor **Końdziolek**, **Jaś Guwiński**, and **Ludwik Meier**.

[01:] 13:16:22 – [01:] 21:37:21

She explains how her father was called to London by the Polish Government in Exile in 1941, but instead ended up being interned at the concentration camp in Flossenbug; points out that he survived; explains how she returned home to support her family, finish high school, and start medical school; points out that her mother died, and her sister and aunt were arrested in a large raid, in which the Germans arrested 144 people, including **Get Getyński**, who died in Auschwitz; explains that the raid was the result of collaboration by one of the directors of the resistance with the Gestapo, which forced her to start a life in hiding; explains that she decided to send out a message to the arrested resistance fighters to identify her under torture in order to protect the identity of other resistance fighters; says that she was accepted to the “Organizacja Kontrwywiadu Wojskowego 993/W” (codename “Firma”), and that her duties, among others, included identifying collaborators to the resistance organization, which would then execute them; explains that she completed six such assignments in addition to many less important ones; describes her own arrest in a raid in January 1943; *[prompted by the interviewer to talk more about the aspect of Jews]*.

[01:] 21:37:22 – [01:] 29:18:25

She describes her hiding place with **Ms. Plużanska**, who was hiding Jewish adults; explains how they survived with Polish names until the uprising; mentions the names of **Romek Andrzejewski** (born **Liebfeld**), his brother **Służynski**, and many others; describes how they all left Warsaw together with other Polish people; explains that the Jews were helped by both individuals as well as underground groups such as the Council to Aid Jews, “Rada Pomocy Żydom” (Żegota), mentions the names of members **Irena Sendlerowa** and **Jadzia Piotrowska**; continues with the description of her rescue operations of Jewish children; specifies some of the difficulties in concealing their “Jewishness,” because of circumcision, as well as their pale skin; explains that the children were assigned to her by “Firma,” and then she helped to place them throughout the country and in convents run by nuns; tells the story of one particular boy, age 6–7, **Włodzio**, whom she saved from a raid; remembers this story in particular because it reflected the child’s comprehension of what was going on; describes the dialogue between the child and herself, in which he asked her if she knew what awaited her if Germans caught her helping him; explains that she replied: the same that would have happened to you; describes another dialogue with the same child, in which he asked her,

what was burning in the ghetto; explains that she replied “people” and the child thanked her because, before, everyone told him “Jews.”

[01:] 29:19:00 – [01:] 33:50:25

She describes various situations, which due to her inexperience could have ended tragically; states that due to security concerns, she never knew what happened to the children after she passed them on; describes a particular situation when a child named **Risio**, hidden alone in a shack, mistook the Russian attack on Warsaw for a storm.

[01:] 33:51:00 – [01:] 43:21:25

She describes the various places where she hid: the home of the **Beniecki's**, in underground bunkers, and the island close to Karczew; describes the process of acquiring false documents, such as “Kennkarte” (identification cards) or “Arbeitspapiere”(working papers); describes an incident where she was caught in a raid at Różycki market while waiting for her false documents; describes the terrible conditions in the detention hall at Pawiak and on the train to the concentration camp in Majdanek; describes how she succeeded in escaping from Lublin and returned to Warsaw; states that the “Firma” succeeded in buying her aunt and sister out of jail.

[01:] 43:22:00 – [01:] 51:22:25

She recounts the traumatic experience of saving a Jewish boy, **Adas**, who was later severely burned by a Polish mob; describes how the mother pleaded with her to take the child as her own; describes the process of bringing the child home with the help of ordinary Polish citizens; explains that she acquired free medication from the pharmacy and treated him at home before bringing him to the Maltański hospital because he was in critical condition; explains that the Maltański hospital was the only hospital in Warsaw that accepted every patient; explains that because of a tipped-off Gestapo raid, they were forced to move the child to a convent run by nuns, where he died in good care.

[01:] 51:23:00 – [01:] 57:19:25

She narrates the difficulties and dangers that came with trying to bury the child; explains how they were caught with the dead body in a raid but that how the Germans were so disturbed at finding the burned body that they fled the scene saving the lives of the people involved in this mission; describes the identification, process, conviction, and execution of the Poles involved in the murder of **Adas**.

[01:] 57:20:00 – [02:] 00:24:25

She explains how she had to continuously change her documents and hiding places; explains she left the island close to Karczewo where she was hiding because she thought it was overrun with snakes; points out that after a massive and murderous raid on all the Jews hiding there, she was sorry to find that she had mistaken the noises of fellow hidden

refugees as snakes; recounts stories of Jews who survived the Warsaw uprising and left Warsaw with the Poles who saved them, only to be caught and murdered by the Germans later on.

[02:] 00:25:00 – [02:] 03:44:25

She gives a brief account of the Warsaw Uprising, which she spent with the **Kilinski** group; explains that her group had opposed the uprising on the grounds that it was a hopeless attempt and should have happened in coordination with the ghetto uprising; explains the fighting between resistance groups that led to the eventual failure of the uprising.

[02:] 03:45:00 – [02:] 06:29:25

She states that the only child with whom she was able to establish contact was **Risio**, whom she made contact with in the 1970's.

TAPE 2

[03:] 00:30:00 – [03:] 05:46:25

She describes her efforts saving Jewish adults; describes the process of teaching them to behave like Polish people, including how to walk the streets without appearing to be frightened, how to behave in churches (which were monitored by the Germans), and how to recite Christian prayers under stress; describes how she taught Jewish women to flirt with the most important German officer passing in the streets in order to avoid spontaneous raids.

[03:] 05:47:00 – [03:] 08:36:25

She describes the process of finding out who collaborators were; describes one mission in which her group found a collaborator and then subsequently executed him.

[03:] 08:37:00 – [03:] 11:31:25

She gives a short explanation of how she ended up in the concentration camp with other women who were officers in the "AK"; describes her disappointment with the fact that, to this day, she has not found a description or any recognition of the heroic acts women performed for the resistance in any of the historic literature she has read; she describes the scenes she witnessed as a result of fires in the ghetto; describes the experience, which she found traumatic, of witnessing a Jewish family praying on the balcony before jumping one-by-one into the fire; recounts how Germans rounded up young mothers in the ghetto, as well as an incident in which an officer took an infant from his mother's arms and smashed his head on a wall; finishes the interview with her own inner conflict of trying to comprehend the Holocaust, where simply being Jewish was reason enough to be condemned to death.