

Interview with SEVA NEMKO BAUMAN
Holocaust Media Project
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I'm Martin Nemko and my mother is a concentration camp survivor and spent most of the years of 1939 through 1944 in the Lodg Ghetto and then was taken to Auschwitz and later a work camp. I'm going to ask her to describe her life before the ghetto and then continue all the way through until her liberation in 1945.

Q: Do you want to start by telling us what your life was like before the ghetto?

A: I was born in 1925 in Lodg. My parents were middle class. I had a very good childhood. There was a lot of devotion in my family. I just grew up as a normal child. There were threads of a catastrophe coming, nobody could believe that it would every materialize in the future. On September 1, 1939 the war broke out and within a couple days German soldiers, an army all over the place, it seemed like a war with the Jews only. At the outset they started to dislocate us take away our private homes and belongings, jewelry and other assets and force us to get in the same city of Lodg. We lost our self-esteem, we were treated like animals and were forced to get into the Ghetto. Eventually in 1940 it was shut for all the Jews remaining there.

Q: When you were, in 1939, just before the Ghetto started, what were you doing. Were you in school? What was your ?

A: I was a student in elementary school. I had my second education in junior high school and I completed my high school after the war when I came to the United States.

Q: How did you become aware that there was going to be a change in the way things were in your life. What was your first awareness that something was going to be different, starting with the Ghetto. How did you find this out?

A: Well the Germans were very cruel to the Jews. We were forced to wear an armband with a yellow Jewish star. We were treated worse than animals. We were forced to do work, any work, beneath our dignity. We had to obey orders. We were caught in the street, given orders, and we had to abide or we would be killed on the spot. This was indicative of their attitude, the German attitude towards the Jews, be it man, woman or child.

Q: But it wasn't always that way in Lodg. At some time you were almost citizens in Poland, I assume. Is that true?

A: That's correct and the change in our lives started September 1, 1939, when the German army came in.

Q: Do you have any recollection of what happened on that day. How did it start? Exactly, do you remember what you were doing, what happened and how did it happen. How did your life change from that moment. What went on?

A: There was fear, there was panic.

Q: How did you know to be afraid?

A: Because they started with the Jews right there and then.

Q: What did they do?

A: The beat up the Jews in the street.

Q: The army entered the town?

A: Yes, they entered the town. They started with the Jews in the streets.

Q: Where were you at the time. When they entered the town?

A: We were in the country. We went to the country for summer vacation and we were just on the way coming home right after our vacation; preparing for school; preparing for next semester and on the way we saw a lot of vehicles with furniture, bedding, you name it, and we knew that something was brewing and something very drastic. We didn't realize what the future might hold but it was a bad start a bad omen. Anybody could sense it that something terrible will happen in the future. We didn't know to what extent.

Q: What gave you the next inclination, now you knew something was wrong what was the next event that confirmed for you that indeed horrible things were about to happen?

A: Among other symptoms were the signs hung on the walls all over our streets

Q: What did they say?

A: Jews will be rounded up; Jews have to come and report to us; Jews have to bring their jewelry; Jews will have to be evacuated; Jews have no rights as gentiles will; Jews will have to have a curfew at a certain time in the evening they have to disappear from the streets; they gave certain dates when Jews should leave their homes and stand in the street in front of their homes because they will be round-ups. Sometimes the round-ups were supposed to be just for men; others were for women and others were for children. Sometimes it was like a joint effort. Many Jews sensing where they would take us, hid, but not everyone had the opportunity so very often the truck was in front of the house, they forced us to get on the truck. Some of the German army were subtle, telling us that we are just being relocated and nothing will happen to us. But we had the premonition that we are going to the unknown and the unknown might be death.

Q: I'd like you to continue with the personal story of your family. When you came back from summer vacation, you got the first signs that there was going to be bad things happening. What was the next thing that affected your life. How did your own family life start to change?

- A: Now, first of all the school was discontinued. Some people made an effort to leave the country. Very few had the chance. For instance, there were two children in our family, two sisters, my sister was older and somehow she had the foresight of leaving in a hurry against the wishes of our parents. Celia Bauman was her name. One day she decided to leave and to go to Russia with a group of her friends. It was against our parents better judgment, they didn't want to lose their child, but she was very decisive and she decided to leave because she anticipated the worst in Poland. She left. I was the youngest and I stayed with my family. Shortly after the Ghetto--shortly before the Ghetto--was in existence, we were forced from our regular residence which was Ligainski (SP?) 27. We were relegated to another address.
- Q: How did this happen? How did they relocate you? They came with guns? What did they do?
- A: They came with arms, yes.
- Q: Describe exactly what happened.
- A: Sometimes there were two, four or ten but we read it in the posters which were hung in the streets telling us that all Jews have to go a certain district.
- Q: So you followed the prescription of.
- A: I followed all the orders. It was either follow or be dead. By then we knew already that they meant business and the war was against us. After a couple of months of being where we were in the 2nd house already, we were told that there is a Ghetto on the outskirts of Lodg.
- Q: Before you left your first house, you read the notice and then you and your family, now you were still there with your mother and father,
- A: I was still with my mother and father that's correct.
- Q: In the first house, and you saw a notice saying that people in your district had to meet in a certain place and you were going to be relocated. Is that correct?
- A: Right.
- Q: When you received that notice you and your family, how much of your possessions were you able to gather with you at that time?
- A: Very few. Whatever we could take with us. No furniture, no bigger items, just I would say, clothing
- Q: Now this was just about September, 1939, is that right?
- A: This was after a couple of months, this was not September

Q: This was now closer to December?

A: Right

Q: At that point had you heard at all about the resistance fighters, anybody resisting the Germans?

A: Not to my recollection, no. There was not such a thing as resistance at the beginning of the war.

Q: What was the first time you did hear about any resistance in Lodg Ghetto?

A: I can tell you that I had no recollection of speaking of resistance. It does not mean that there wasn't any, but somehow, I was a child, and I just did not take part in this aspect of the war.

Q: So now we're at the end of the, you're taken from your first home and you're now, I see a picture of you in the street and describe that scene and what happened when you were in the street, and relocated away from your first home. What did they do with you?

A: We had to do it on our own. We were not allowed to take anything with us.

Q: What did you do? What did you take with you. How did you get there how did you know where to go.

A: This happened to be an apartment of one of our relatives, that lived in this particular district. These people already left the country so we really had the apartment to ourselves.

Q: You were basically told to leave one area of the city and concentrate in one smaller area of the city.

A: Yes. That's correct. We lived there a couple of months.

Q: How did you feel during this time, as a child?

A: I didn't, at the time, look at it as a catastrophe. Of course there was a change in my life, a tremendous change, but I guess the real feelings rather from my parents, I still had food at the time. I was not afraid that they would kill us. I did not comprehend all the seriousness of the whole thing. So they told us we are going to the ghetto. We followed orders and we went. Moving from one place to another.

Q: So now you're in the 2nd place and about how long did you stay, what was that like, was there, was it alright?

A: We were still not hungry at the time. We managed to get the minimum amount of food. We went to bed hoping that tomorrow would be better and the whole thing is like a bad dream.

Q: You said you weren't aware of there being a problem. Why do you say it was like a bad dream?

A: At the time I was not afraid of being killed. I thought it was just a matter of days and it's a war and we are a part of the victims.

- A: I didn't realize fully that it was only a war with the Jews, not territory or enemy or other purpose. Just any old war and it will blow over.
- Q: After you lived in the second place, in the Lodg ghetto,
- A: The second was not a ghetto. Gentile still lived there.
- Q: What did they do next to you.
- A: Well, they didn't do anything as far as coming to our house. But there were limits, for instance, when we came out to the street. Then they made us, they reminded us that we are Jews and we don't have the same privileges as the Gentiles.
- Q: How did they remind you.
- A: They beat us up. German people, the soldiers, excuse me. The German people followed suit.
- Q: Were German civilians doing this to you.
- A: Mostly I would rather say the soldiers.
- Q: They were stationed in the streets and they would stop a Jew and, you were wearing the yellow,
- A: They could identify us easily, no reason, just because we were Jews. Jew do this and Jew do that and Jew wash the toilets and Jew do any, get off the sidewalk, you are not allowed to walk, the best is ours.
- Q: Did a German officer ever stop you?
- A: No. and I will tell you why. I was the only child at home and my parents made sure that I don't stay in the streets. They kept me in so I didn't have the direct contact with the German soldiers.
- Q: So you were enclosed in your house, but at least you were'nt in danger when the Germans made the next move right?
- A: We knew about the ghetto for quite some time. One day came and all the Jews around Lodg and on a certain date they had to go to the Ghetto in a certain district.
- Q: How would you know that before hand. You said only heard about it.
- A: Yes. as you say, we didn't believe in it. We were not sure. We thought they were threats. But eventually we found out that this was what they wanted us to do. We didn't know for what purpose, for how long and what life would be like there. We just followed orders as I said because the only alternative of refusal was instant death.
- Q: Did anybody refuse to go to the Ghetto?
- A: If there were people, I'm not aware of this.
- Q: You were only 14 at the time.

A: Right, I went with my parents. It just so happened that we had a relative who lived in the vicinity of the, within the boundary of the Ghetto.

Q: Was there a wall around this Ghetto?

A: Not exactly a wall but there were soldiers all over the place. It first it was partially open and people could get in and out for sure, then they shut it closed and after each interval there were soldiers guarding us, there should be any escape. The only people who had contact with the Gentiles were outside of the Ghetto, were police, people that the German soldiers needed to do some work and to be productive.

Q: Change Tape OK we were at the point in our interview where you had already been forced to move to the Ghetto, the Lodg Ghetto and you were talking about the barbed wire and the guards. Do you want to describe some more about what happened to you when you, your personal experience, in the Ghetto.

A: At the outset, we were told by the German authorities to follow every order.

Q: What were some of your orders that you had to follow?

A: No one of the Jews were supposed to go close to the barbed wires that surrounded us. Nobody was supposed to have any contact with the guards or Gentiles inhabitants of the other side. No body should sneak out for food or other purposes. We had a curfew and just to watch for orders to come. So as you can see we were limited right away in our behavior, in our way of life. Everything changed. We were told that we would have to register for work so people having their second professions registered and eventually they were called for work.

Q: I'm interested in your experience as a 15 year old. Do you recall the changes in your life that took place personally, the restrictions or any changes in your life that took place as a result of being in the Ghetto?

A: The restrictions were tremendous. We were not the same people. We were stripped of our dignity. We had to do exactly what we were told at every moment of night and day. We never knew what the next moment might bring. I started to work and so did my parents. I worked for an outfit for a German outfit that specialized in army uniforms and I did my work as required of me. I did not get paid for it. In return for my work I had a very skimpy allowance of food. I was given a ratio, so did my parents and all the other Jews in the Ghetto. We could barely survive on what we got. Things became worse every day. We could not complain. We just stayed alive from day to day and hoping for the war to end.

Q: You mentioned that you felt your dignity was stripped from you. Can you give me some specific examples of how exactly what the Germans did to strip you of your dignity.

- A: We were less than second hand citizens. We became numbers. We had no rights, as other human beings had. We were considered a lower class, not even a race, an enemy to the German Reich. We were people with mixed blood, people that had no rights to live, or to exist, people that had to be extinct from this earth.
- Q: What about yourself? Your personal experience.
- A: This was my experience too.
- A: How did they let you know you were a second class citizen?
- A: I was not allowed to shop. I was not allowed to have freedom of speech. I went hungry. I had no rights. And I have to identify myself wearing the Star of David on my arm so they could identify me easily. I had nothing to say in my defense. I was beaten up several times in the street as a Jewess. So did my parents. There were threats of evacuation or relocation to other places. Eventually I heard that they are going to evacuate older people, elderly.
- Q: This was in what year now?
- A: This now we are talking about 1941. They had no use for Jews period, especially for old ones and for children. These were the first victims to go. They did it in such a manner. They didn't give us enough time to think about it or to have our say or to have any protest because the slightest, under the slightest provocation we would be hit and killed on the spot.
- Q: You mentioned having been beaten in the streets. Do you recall the specifics of that incident. What were you doing at the time and how did, can you describe that in detail.
- A: One day my mother send me in a line for a bread ratio. This happened many times. As I stood on line a truck of Germans came by stopped and tried to round up the people. I was one among them, I was taken out at random, stepped upon, beaten and threatened.
- Q: What did they threaten you with?
- A: They threatened us, me actually, that they kill me if there be any resistance. I should obey and I should do exactly what they tell me to. I was petrified. I think this was my first experience with a direct German. I was very panicky and fortunately enough under the circumstances, that after beating me up I was bleeding from my head, and face, they let go of me, shouting "run home quick before we shoot you". I don't know what happened to the other people. I ran home without the bread as fast as I could. I forgot about my hungry parents and myself. It was very secondary in comparison to what could have happened had I stayed there longer and had they done something to me which was crucial to my existence. After this incident, my parents tried to protect me as much as possible. They would rather go out for bread or other essentials rather than send me out to be exposed to these dangers. My parents were also beaten up under similar circumstances. My father was beaten up by a few people at other times he came home with a black eye, with blood on his body

- A: but this could not stop him from future trying to go out for the bare essentials and survival so to speak.
- Q: You spoke of your working in a army uniform factory. It would be interesting if you possibly could, if you could chronologically retell a typical day from the minute you would get up in the morning during the times that you were working until the minute you could go to sleep so we could get a better picture of what your actual typical daily existence was.
- A: My typical day was getting up at 6, being at work at 7, it was walking distance but it was quite far. We had no other means of transportation and we didn't think much of it, it was just a way of life for us. At the factory we were supervised by Jewish people. There was also a supervisor who was German. There were quite a few around the place. Just to oversee how well we produced, how fast we are working, whether there is any conversation among us. I was told not to speak to others, just to concentrate on my work and to produce as much as possible. They were talking about quantity and of course quality, or else! After 10 hours of work I came home after having a meager soup during the day and a slice of bread. My mother usually was home already at the time. She was also working in a different outfit and she prepared whatever there was in the house. The house was cold, we had no fuel. The food consisted of some, at best, a few potatoes, very few, very often we had only peels of potato, we had to save them for a rainy day. We were rationed like a few grams of bread daily. Once a week we got a few decagrams of horsemeat and this was considered a holiday. We were not so much concerned about the amount of food we gotten, what was on our minds in the family and people at large that there were rumors that the Germans want to do something very drastic to us. I lived in the shadow of fear, so did my parents. Nevertheless we are hoping for the day that we survive the crisis and this situation will come to an end. It's been a couple of years already.
- Q: You know the teenage years are typically the times when the most carefree times in a person's life. Girls start to be interested in boys and just enjoying the freedoms of growing up. What was being a teenager like for you?
- A: Under the circumstances and unfortunately we didn't think much of our personal lives. I, as a child, was stripped of all these luxuries that under normal circumstances people take for granted. I didn't have contact with a school anymore, not with a library, whatever books I had at home I read and sometimes I was preoccupied with more important matters. I didn't think about boys, this was less on my mind. I was hoping that I'll survive with my family and someday we might pick up the pieces and the lost time. In the process my father took sick. Up to this point he seemed to be a healthy man, but he could just not adjust to the hard times and to the lack of food. Shortly after we got into the Ghetto he developed an illness that was puzzling to us but as we recollect now, it was an illness of starvation. He just couldn't take the amounts that he was given and eventually he was stripped of his strength, became weaker from day to day, and one day in his sleep alongside me, he died. This was a blow to me and to my mother. We could never recover from the loss, but we had to pick up the pieces and just go on living, and hoping for a miracle to happen.

- A: One day we were told my mother and I, that we would have to get down to stand in front of our house because the Germans are going to come and take us away to another place. They mentioned, please no resistance because anything that we hear that would not please us would result in your death. We knew what was coming and we were trying to find a place in the yard to hide because we figured going with them and then not going I'll probably be dead too. But we had chosen the path of hiding. The court was full of factories. As a matter of fact one of the factories belonged to my uncle that left a couple, before we got into the Ghetto. He left with his family to Russia. They were quite well-to-do people and he had the means somehow and he left. So we hid in this factory in the back behind a lot of merchandise that was left and we were lucky enough although they looked for us, and other inhabitants of this particular address, they caught others, they did not catch myself and my mother. All this round up took about 1/2 hour. They left with a lot of people. We heard the truck pulling out and we came out of our hiding, happy that we could still be here and in our home. These incidents happened quite often. Sometimes as much as a couple times a week. A few times we were fortunate and managed to hide. One day there was an order to gather at a certain square with all our belonging, this goes for my mother and I and other people that lived there in the Ghetto, that they are going, they would relocate us to another place but we should not despair, because we will be working there and everything will be just fine. Somehow, our premonition told us otherwise, but orders are orders and we had to go.
- Q: Had you, what knowledge actually did you have, what kind of stories had you heard to give you those premonitions? What was the evidence what made you believe that this was not just as they said?
- A: Some people that left the Ghetto before us managed somehow to send in some letters, I don't know through what channels, that we should not believe what the Germans tell us; once we leave the Ghetto we go to be exterminated, and more and more of these this information came in so we had every reason to believe that it is true. We rather believe our brothers and sisters than the Germans. We packed up, they, we were told that we are entitled to take along our jewelry and possessions, whatever we can carry and on the day, I don't recall the exact date, thousands of people including myself and my mother gathered at the square and we were taken to trains that were waiting for us. Those were freight trains.
- Q: Something puzzles me, you had some evidence from the people you could trust, this was no tomorrow, if you went on those trains, that was the end and yet history has shown and it sounds like you're going to be telling me, that thousands of you went on those trains. What wasn't there more resistance?
- A: Look my dear, can a weak person fight against a giant. Now what means of resistance could I have or my mother or thousands like us. We were weak in spirit, physically weak, no ammunition, we were not organized. It was like one on one, excuse me, like one on the thousands. What could we do to protect ourselves. We were then going and then staying as I mentioned before, so we took that road, the hopes were so minimal

A: that they are trustworthy and they say what they mean. There was always a ray of hope and we went.

Q: What was your feeling like. Now you're getting on the train with your family on this freight car, do you want to talk about that.

A: This was a nightmare that I'll never forget as long as I live. As we went up on the ramp to the train, there were no windows, no seats, no food, no light, no information what our destination would be, we just had around us a lot of German soldiers who, with dogs, that ordered us around, we were not allowed to whimper or whisper or discuss or say anything. We were thousands of people in one wagon. People were fainting, crying, and screaming, they didn't care at this point any more about their lives. Many people were shot on the spot for misbehaving. We had no bathroom facilities. People were vomiting, excuse me they used their physical needs wherever they stood, they became animals. Everyone for himself. At one point they gave us a piece of bread and our destination was unknown. The trains were just dragging on like back and forth in very slow motion. We were so disoriented we didn't know what direction we are going; what our destination would be. The shouts of the German voices was excruciating, it was like a sharp pain to us. After many days of this kind of traveling, the car stopped. The train rather, stopped. The Germans were screaming " " meaning all the Jews out! and fast! they opened all the doors. We jumped down. There were a lot of Jewish people in uniforms that were waiting for us. Those were people that came before us and were employed temporarily by the Germans because they didn't want to touch us directly. It was beyond their dignity to deal with us directly so they had our people to deal with us. They wore certain uniforms in stripes that are very identified up to this date, you can recognize them immediately. They ordered us to a certain place. We still had our luggage. They told us to leave all the luggage as it is. To leave all our shoes our clothing, our jewelry, our rings, anything that anybody had. It was a lifetime of savings, of sentimental value, without a whimper we had to give it all up. We stood naked in front of all the German soldiers. Our next stop was to delousing which meant that since we were Jews we had to be disinfected. After a short stay under the water we came out and they gave us old rags to wear. Tall one got something very short and short one got something very torn, I for one had a very long dress which was rather a rag, more a rag than a dress, but it didn't matter at the time. I was aware of the situation and I knew that everything was foreboding. They took us to another spot a couple hundred feet away. The weather was very hot. It was August, it was in the 90's. We were starved for water, more than food, and we begged just to get a drop of water. When they brought us a little water, there was such, people were running for it, stepping over each other just to get a drop of water. Their lips were dry, from the sun, and we were told that they'll find work for us. They brought us to barracks, they were about, there were thousands of people there, my mother and I among them, the first thing they did to us after actually, I have to go back a little bit. Before they took us to the showers they shaved off our hair right away we looked like unrecognizable animals, stripped of every dignity that a human being can think of. They told us what the day would consist of,

A: a certain time of morning should be awarded to roll call. We had to stand at attention and they counted us, threaten us, beat us, and no matter what the weather, we had to stay there for hours.

In the barracks there was a lot of commotion. Some people could not take the environment, people were arguing for an inch of space.

Q: What did you do when you got there?

A: I was very overprotective of my mother. I wanted her to be as comfortable as possible, although it was impossible. The first night was excruciating. German women were supervising us, they were with whips in their hands beating us for no reason at all. Just because we were there and we were Jews. Some of them I really remember very clearly. They abused us physically, verbally and otherwise.

Q: Do you remember any of their names?

A: I don't recall their names, I would probably not recognize them after all these years. But there were some that were of course recognized right after the war, and they were brought to trial. Some of them escaped but some of them had to stay to trial. One day, this was after being I would say 3 weeks in Auschwitz, I was still with my mother.

Q: What happened the next morning. You got there in the middle of the day and they cleaned you up and they shaved you and they took you to the barracks. Now it's about evening time, is that about right?

A: Yes. I'm with my mother.

Q: When you woke up, describe what happened.

A: The night was a nightmare!! Nobody slept, people are crying, and screaming and fainting and wanting to commit suicide. A life in Auschwitz did not change much from day to day, actually it was every day the same thing. A roll call was in the morning, the late afternoon, one soup a day and from that point on I was told that there are experiments being done by German doctors. They took people at random. I was fortunate enough not to be taken. They needed these experiments to check what makes people tick, how are, how is the Jewish race different from other, what would be a good idea of making the world juden free, pure aryan race. We were the unneeded people in this world and they had to kill us in the worse way and as fast as possible. Every day came orders that they need several hundred people. As it was known afterwards that these people were just taken either for experiments, or death. We never heard or saw them again once they left the barracks.

Q: What happened on the first morning after roll call. I want to try and get a sense of what a day in Auschwitz might be like. After roll call what did they do with you. Do you recall?

A: We just sat there, moping, crying, talking to each other when they were not around. They were guarding us 24 hours a day, but at certain

moments, they were a little distance away so we could communicate in whispers. One day we were told that there is a doctor who needs some people able bodies for work. He would come one day and look us over, naked, and see who would be of any use to him. I was there with my mother, having a premonition that this is the last time I see her. She stood there, with a whip, we were on line, I said mother go ahead of me. I'll never forget the words she said to me, "You are young, you are strong, you will survive it, I have no chance" When _____ came to her, he was known for his finger, there was a right and left. There was one side to go to the death chamber and the other side hopefully for work. My mother was taken one way and I the other. I was screaming after her "I want to go with her" at that point I didn't care whether I survived or not. (Tears) Excuse me for breaking down. She was taken away and I never saw her again. I and a couple hundred other young girls were taken to a site and we were told that we would be sent to another place for work. At this point we did not believe them. We thought they are taking us away to another death camp. The good fortune was that at this point they needed 500 young girls to work in an ammunition factory which was located in chekoslovacia (sp?). I was among them. From a distance I saw a building. I could not believe that we are going to live there. We meaning I and the others. They took to a place which was not too bad in comparison to what we had before. There was hot water. Showers, waiting for us. They told us to take a shower, they gave us something clean to wear. I was full of lice at the time. But this was not because I was dirty. This was from being mal-nourished. We were given beds, not mattresses, straw mattresses and a meager blanket. This was paradise and for the first time we realized that they told us the truth, that they need us for work. I was surrounded by people my age, more or less and we settled down to a new way of life. This was the first day. We went to bed happy because we knew that this was a camp but not a concentration camp where they are killing people. The following morning they briefed us a little bit about the factory that what kind of work we will be doing. It was, they gave us something to eat. We are barefooted. We had no shoes. It was bitterly cold. As far as I can recollect it might have been in the 20's farinheit. The following morning we got up and started the walk to this factory. The walk was about a mile. I was shivering, barefooted. I had frostbite after a couple of days.

Q: What kind of clothing were you wearing?

A: One thin dress, nothing else. Along side the road to this factory there were Germans and Cheks and polish people because I heard several languages. We were passing by a garden with benches. There were normal people sitting with babies in the carriages attending to them, looking at us, passing by like animals. We did not look normal at this point. After about a mile's walk we were taken to a building and shortly we realized that it was an ammunition factory.

A: We were assigned to our places, we were told what to do, we were told to work very fast and efficient, if we will do so we will get our bread, soup, every day and if we do otherwise they have good ways and means of reckoning with us accordingly. We did exactly what they told us, we were happy to be there, but inside us there was like a rebellion, for all this time that we decided to us when we when to bed we were conspiring to do something against them. Within our means, we couldn't do much but what we could have done was not to produce, to sabotage, so how could we do it. It was not very feasible they were on top of us at all times, when I went to the bathroom I took some ammunition parts that were not assembled yet, they were small parts, took them to the bathroom, flushed them down the toilet. Many of our people did the same, of course we had to do it within certain limits cause once if I was found out I was killed on the spot. Not only I but several hundreds like me. So we had to be very careful with what we were doing. This was the most we could do. In retrospect this factory and this way of life we had was much better than many others in different places as we found out after the war. After a couple of months of this life in so-called luxury we started to have a ray of hope that the war would not last forever. It's been more than 5 years and we were hoping that someday it will come to an end. There was a lot of hearsay, a lot of rumors but we really wanted to belong to believe in these rumors, that they are not merely rumors. One day we heard that the Russian army is nearby and our liberation would come soon (Tears) One day we got up and we heard the trucks and we looked out the window and we saw Russian people looking so hard (Tears) and that's how we were liberated. A couple of miles from us there was also another outfit of Jews but only men within a couple of miles from us. We were reunited and we had many stories to tell. In the meantime the German people that were supervising us, mostly women, were panicky, this disappeared over night, we didn't see a German within our sight any more and this was very indicative of the situation that developed. They threw us food, bread from the trunks and they were singing to us and we threw kisses (Tears) Some of them stopped in front of the building and came in. They were very nice. They sang songs and played balilikas and other instruments to us just to make us happy. Some of them, on the other hand, came to take advantage of us. We were young girls, we were pretty, although we didn't have hair, I was a very beautiful girl. (Tears) and they tried to get advances. Some people did not mind it. It was a welcome change. Others did not believe in this kind of thing. What can I tell you, I was virgin. (Laughter) And I stayed a long time until I met my husband. Thank you. That's how the beginning of the end started.

Our next thing on the agenda was to find out whether any of our people families survived. We decided, I decided, and many others like me, to go to Poland and to see whether there are any remainders of my family. The trip was incredible. We were elated, we were happy, the trains were so full of our people that we went through the windows of the train just to get through, just to get in and to reach our next destination. I reached Poland, I went to Lodg. I, my birthplace, went to my apartment knocked at the door. There was Polish family living there. They were not very polite. They did not welcome us. "You are still alive?" they said to me. I thought all you people are all exterminated. Little did I know how anti-semitic they were. How resentful, how hateful of us, even though they took

over our apartments, our furniture, our belongings, they still hated us because we were Jews. The word "Jew" meant evil to many of them. Somehow the Polish people grew up with the idea and information that was rooted in them from their childhood, that the Jew is an evil person. You should kill him, you should fight with him, you should disregard him, he's no good. Many children grew up with this idea. Even now I have a hard time to distinguish who is worse, had the Poles had the opportunity and the clout to exterminate us, they would probably have done the same thing as the Germans did. I left my apartment house as fast as I could and I went to a Jewish organization to find out whether there are any survivors.

Q: You mean from your family?

A: From my family. And whether there is any correspondence that came from abroad from relatives. I knew I had some relatives in U.S.A. but I was very unclear on the subject. There were some letters coming before the war to us, to our parents, to our grandparents from the U.S.A. I never paid any attention. We had some relatives in the United States before the war. I never knew their names. I knew there was some correspondence between some relatives in the U.S. and our family. I wanted to find out whether my sister is alive. Whether they have any whereabouts in conjunction with her being alive. They didn't have any information for me, at this particular day. They told me that there is a lot of mail coming in every day from Russia and occupied territories. One day after many trips I came in and I found out that my sister is alive in Russia, and she married there and had a child. I was trying to contact her but to no avail. It took me a long time, eventually she wrote a letter to this Jewish organization and when I came in and asked for her name she was there on the list. I was given her address and we started to correspond. I encouraged her to come back to Poland and to start a new life the best we know how. Some how I realized that my life in Poland is of no purpose. I'm not welcome as a Jew after the holocaust, I'm not wanted. I decided to move on. It was not easy. I had no money, no means, no profession, no relatives, no moral or financial support (Tears) I forgot to mention that when I went to Poland, a friend of mine joined me. She was (tape II, side 1, #50) We both decided to leave Poland. I wouldn't go into detail how we left the country., but eventually we did after a couple of months staying there. Our destination was Germany because we were told that there are refugee camps of survivors and we wanted to join them. Sure enough, we arrived for a change we were surrounded by all Jews who had so much in common. We rejoiced, we discussed, we exchanged impressions and our existence at the time was such that we were given temporary apartments in Germany. Those were the apartments that the Germans for a change had to be relocated to give room to us. It was all sponsored by the U.S. Government. We were given food, jobs, also we were given clothing. Bare essentials. I was given a job. We had a central office. We had the president with a secretary. We had a treasurer and other people that worked for the cause. We had to be orderly, we had to be decent, and we had to start from scratch. There were many people who got married there during this temporary stay. Others did not. We knew that eventually our final destination would be either ISRAEL

A: or the United States of America. This was a time when Palestine became Israel and since it became a state our incentive and zest for life was of so much more value. I for one, decided to go to the United States and it was very difficult. I had no means. I didn't know anybody who could help me. I befriended somebody.

Q: Why did you decide on the United States?

A: This is a very legitimate question. I will try to give a very good answer. Life in Israel was very tough at the time. Jews in Palestine had it very tough at the time, they were struggling to survive, the economy was very poor, they could not absorb so many refugees, they didn't have the economical means but on the other hand they never turned anybody away. Whoever had the opportunity to join them, they were surrounded by enemies, so many arab countries who were out to push them into the sea. It was like a continuation from thousands of years. There was just no ceasing to being hated.

Q: I'm sorry I interrupted you before. Could you continue what you were saying about.

A: So since the circumstances were so difficult in Israel and since I lived through so much, I did not have the stamina to start struggling again. I was told that in the U.S. my chances are better of building my life and starting anew. Therefore, I decided to go to the United States. After a lot of hussle and red tape, and a lot of time elapsed and with the help of a good friend of mine, who volunteered to help me

Q: Who was it? Do I know him?

A: He happened to be very fond of me and he thought that we would make a life together, so he had a relative who was a lawyer in Brooklyn. He had written to him telling him that he has a girlfriend, that he would like to come with his girlfriend and he asked his uncle to make an affidavit for both of us, which he did. It took some time, and effort, and I promised as soon as, and this was very costly, and he had to put the money forward, for my airfare and other expenses, and I promised as soon as I'm settled, my first earnings would go towards repaying. I kept my promise. In order to leave Germany, and I was born in Poland, the Polish court was very slow, it might take me years, of coming here. So I had to fool the German government, the German quota was excellent. If I registered today in a couple of months I would be out of the country. So I had the right channels, my boyfriend at the time took care of all the paper work and in due time, I left German and came to the United States. I must mention here that he came a couple months ahead of me and prepared a room for me in the Bronx.

Q: Since this may be in the Holocaust Library is there one message that you might want to leave for children or other people who might listen to this.

A: At this point I like to end by bringing the message to the American Jewry especially to the children, who know very little about it, that the Jewish people should never, never forget what happened 40 years ago because history tells us that such holocaust could repeat itself. As a matter of fact we have many symptoms now, that show us how the 1933 started. Nobody believed that

(Tape ran out here, did not continue on the other side)