

## RG-50.002.0109

### Summary

Lisbeth Brodie, born in Poznań, Poland, describes her early life in a village outside of Poznań before World War I; her father's role as a cantor in the synagogue; the family's home; her father's decision to send her and her mother to Berlin, Germany in 1916 to be further away from the front lines; returning home to her father six weeks later; the decision of most members of the village's Jewish population to move to Germany after the war's end in 1918 and her father's insistence on staying; her father's Russian background and her mother's German background; her father's attempts to run a store; attending a very good German-language school; starting to teach younger students when she was eleven years old in order to pay for her own schooling; starting an apprenticeship with the *Poznań Tageblatt*, a German-language newspaper, after she finished her education; being let go by the *Poznań Tageblatt* in 1937 because she was Jewish; her father's death in 1928; finding work teaching German and Polish in a small village; how one was always aware that one was Jewish in Poland; her involvement in a Zionist organization; the arrival of many German Jews in Poland in 1938 and her and her mother's efforts to help them; the Reichstag fire in 1933; working as a secretary and translator at a Jewish-owned factory when Poland was invaded on September 1, 1939; how a former colleague at the *Poznań Tageblatt* helped her get this position; receiving permission to immigrate to Palestine before the war, but turning it down because she could not bring her mother; the occupation of Poznań and how life changed; rumors of deportations; how all the Jews of Poznań and its surrounding villages— about 2,000 people total— were gathered together on December 15, 1939 and deported by train to the small village of Ostrów Lubelski, Poland near Lublin, Poland; receiving a postcard from a friend in Warsaw, Poland saying that if she were to come to the city, she would be able to make a living teaching German; removing her armband and traveling to Warsaw in May 1940; settling in Warsaw and writing to her mother to join her in the city; the ghettoization of Warsaw; meeting their former banker from Poznań by chance and his offer to hide her and her mother; her mother's refusal to go into hiding; the closing of the Warsaw Ghetto in October 1940; a man asking her to translate a document from Polish to German, which turned out to be a pamphlet from the Polish Underground; the man, who was a policeman in Hamburg, Germany, drafted into the Gestapo, and his efforts to save Jews; her and her mother's transfer to the Pawiak Prison at the request of this Gestapo officer so that she could continue her translation work for him; their separate status from other prisoners due to her work with confidential information as a *Vertrauensperson* (confidant); her mother's rapid deterioration once they were imprisoned, possibly due to tuberculosis; her lasting guilt over her mother's condition; how people, including herself, became used to seeing such things as bodies in the streets stripped of their clothes because other people in the ghetto needed them; believing that even now this causes her not to feel things as fully as she might have otherwise; Jewish policemen in the ghetto; her mother's death; witnessing executions of Jews from the ghetto; the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943; being in almost complete isolation in the prison until August 1944, when she traveled west as part of a large caravan of German officials, *Volksdeutsche*, other prisoners, and others; the horrible conditions of the march; brief stops in Łódź, Poland and Częstochowa, Poland; how close the Soviet Army stayed to the caravan; having no identification papers and obtaining the

papers of a Czech woman who had died at the suggestion of a Czech Gestapo officer; the caravan's arrival in Berlin; her arrest because of her false papers and the four weeks she spent in a large prison near Alexanderplatz; being sent by train in March 1945 to Buchenwald and then redirected to Theresienstadt; conditions in Theresienstadt; the end of the war; her work registering people who wanted to leave Theresienstadt; her year in a displaced persons camp; sending a telegram to a cousin in England to see if she could travel there; spending three years working in England to save up money to move to the United States; arriving in the United States in May 1950; starting her career as a teacher in 1952; her memories of people's acts of heroism during the war; her memories of the German soldiers' reactions to fighting during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising; how she enjoys traveling to Germany and talking to Germans; talking with a German teenager and sharing her wartime experiences with her; and her Jewish identity now.