

-TITLE- STERN EMILIA
-I_DATE- JANUARY 29, 1984
-SOURCE- UCLA HOLOCAUST DOCUMENTATION ARCHIVES
-RESTRICTIONS-
-SOUND_QUALITY- EXCELLENT
-IMAGE_QUALITY- EXCELLENT
-DURATION-
-LANGUAGES-
-KEY_SEGMENT-
-GEOGRAPHIC_NAME-
-PERSONAL_NAME-
-CORPORATE_NAME-
-KEY_WORDS-
-NOTES-
-CONTENTS-

1:00 Emilia's maiden name was Minkotischer (ph.). She was born in Strie (ph.) Poland. 30,000 Jews lived there. She was married in 1939 after going with her husband for seven years.

2:00 They were married on March 12, 1939. They were happy for 6 months then the war started. Their town was occupied by the Russians until 1941.

3:00 Everyone was forced to work under the Russians. In 1941 the Russians entered the war against the Germans, and soon the Germans occupied their town. They started liquidation immediately.

4:00 Her family and her husbands family totaled over 80 people before the war. Her daughter Antonia was born in 1940.

5:00 At the beginning of the war they wanted to hide their daughter but didn't do so until she was 2 1/2 yrs. old. They taught her to think that she was Christian and not Jewish. They taught her prayers, etc.

6:00 They found a woman to put her into a convent but the convents had all been liquidated so the woman found a family for her.

7:00 She was left in the snow with a piece of bread and papers saying that she was Catholic and that her father was in a labor camp and that her mother was unable to care for her.

8:00 (Antonia) I had just started to talk and my parents had prepared me to say the things that they expected I would be asked. I knew how to cross myself.

9:00 I was confused. My parents had dropped me and I came to resent them. A priest found me and didn't know what to do with me. Finally a family took me in.

10:00 It was hard to leave them after the war. (Emilia) She and husband discovered that daughter was in good hands. The woman hiding them found out for them and was able to get some things to Antonia without anyone finding out she was a Jewish child.

11:00 She found out that her parents were in the ghetto.

12:00 Her sister went to join them. They were the last Jews left in the ghetto in the bunker.

13:00 She found out that her father kept people's spirits up in the bunker. They were shot when they were discovered. She and her husband hid for 24 months in a bunker underground behind a sofa and covered by a carpet.

14:00 It was too narrow to sit - about 8ft. long and 5ft. high. They mostly laid down while they were in it. They had a pipe for air. The people hiding them had a dog that would bark and warn them when people were coming.

15:00 In the daytime they stayed in the bunker, usually for 10-12 hours. At night they could usually come out.

16:00 They stayed there until the Russians came. The people who were hiding them belonged to Aka (ph.) which was an underground resistance organization. They had guns and hand grenades.

17:00 The man hiding them said that if they were caught that they should all kill themselves instead of being shot by the Germans.

18:00 The people hiding them had 3 children. One of the girls sometimes brought home German soldiers, and when she did, they couldn't even breathe.

19:00 When they started liquidating the Jews they could hear every shot from their bunker. This was happening around Passover, 1943.

20:00 She knows of 2 people who escaped the liquidation. Only 65 out of 13,000 survived.

21:00 They often heard about people getting caught who were hidden.

22:00 In August 1944 the Russians were coming and the Germans were backing up, so they would come and occupy the houses in the town.

23:00 The woman who was hiding them took in all of their neighbors so that the Germans could live in their houses and wouldn't want to live in hers. The town was bombed. Through the window you could see the American fliers fighting.

24:00 When the bombs fell it was like everyone was in the same boat. Then some soldiers actually came and slept in the room above them.

25:00 They finally left. The front moved up and the Russians came. They were liberated. They heard one woman say that the one thing that the Germans did for them was to get rid of the Jews.

26:00 Their protector's names were Mr. and Mrs. Zarifsky. (ph.) They maintained contact with them after the war.

27:00 (Antonia) After my parents were liberated, they wanted to get me back.

28:00 The Russians tried to get me for my parents, but they couldn't. The woman I had been staying with refused to give me up. She ran off with me and we hid in a mausoleum.

29:00 My parents knew that she wouldn't have taken me if she would have known that I was Jewish - everyone thought that I was the priest's bastard daughter.

30:00 That's what kept me alive. None suspected me of being a Jewish child because they all thought that I was the priest's illegal child. At the time the priest found me Jewish children were being thrown from trains that were on their way to concentration camps. Parents thought that maybe they could save their children this way.

31:00 When Emilia and her husband first came out of the bunker they were unnaturally pale from all the months spent underground. She was dressed like a peasant and none recognized her. They told the Russians that they were Jews.

32:00 They took her husband to work.

33:00 She discovered that her parents had died and that her sister had been shot while trying to hide from the Germans on the roof of an apartment building. The Gestapo shot her but didn't kill her at first, then they finally shot her to death.

34:00 Her husband wanted her to go to Sarnow (ph.) and wait for him there while he tried to get Antonia back. She stayed their for 3 weeks waiting for him.

35:00 He finally got Antonia back by kidnapping her. She was screaming and crying.

36:00 She finally recognized him. She was in poor condition and her hair was lice-ridden.

37:00 She was sent to Emilia and recognized her right away.

38:00 (Antonia) I had wanted to stay with the woman who took care of me for so long. We had a primitive existence we lived in a shack with a cow. There were rats and mice.; The woman loved me.

39:00 The people who took care of me loved me but the man drank too much.

40:00 The man left after a while, and just the woman stayed.

41:00 Emilia's husband tried to get the woman to go with them but she didn't want to leave her cow. Emilia's husband worked in a flour mill at that time.

42:00 The priest who had found Antonia was thankful that her parents had found her because it cleared his name.

43:00 At the end of the war (1945) Kraków was liberated. They stayed there for a while, but the anti-semitism started up again and there was a pogrom. They decided to leave and go to Czechoslovakia.

44:00 Her husband sent her first with Antonia. They first went to Czechoslovakia, then to Vienna to Roches (ph.) Hospital.

45:00 Then they went to Bachstein (ph.) in Austria and stayed in a beautiful hotel. Emilia waited for her husband there but he had gone straight to Berlin.

46:00 She and Antonia joined him in Berlin where he already had an apartment. They stayed there for a short while.

47:00 Antonia's original name before the war was Utuscha (ph.) and then on her false papers it was Eduardia. After the war it became Antonia because it was still dangerous to have a Jewish name.

48:00 Emilia's original name was Minka.

49:00 In Poland after the war Jews were still murdered - whole families of them. Sometimes people survived Hitler only to be murdered by Poles.

50:00 The different names that Antonia had as a child caused her a lot of confusion as a child.

51:00 Emilia feels that she survived because she was full of power to fight for her life. She had a strong will to live .

52:00 She reassured her husband that they would live when he had lost hope. He was a Zionist before the war.

53:00 He had lost hope even before the war really started because his whole family had already been killed.

54:00 He felt that Hitler had really taken his life, and that the years he was alive after the war were merely a present and that he could go at any time.

55:00 They had a son in Berlin in 1947.

56:00 Antonia believes that every Jew who lived proves Hitler wrong.

57:00 She believes that life is a gift and a responsibility. In 1950 Emilia went to Israel to see her brother.

58:00 She loved Israel and wanted to stay, but they couldn't. They went to the United States.

59:00 They didn't know the language and had no family there, but they survived. They went to the United States for their children.

.END.