

Summary of Oral History: Rebecca Fried

RG#: RG-50.030.0664

This Summary was written by a USHMM Volunteer on [03/2022]

Rebecca Weiss Fried, who was born May 1, 1928 in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia, is interviewed regarding her experience on the Exodus. She previously had a full Steven Spielberg interview. When she was 15 (?), Rebecca lived in a Kibbutz in Hamburg, Germany, where she made friends and met with members of the Haganah who invited her to join 4,500 people on the Exodus to immigrate to Palestine. She was in a group of 200 who wanted to emigrate. They were going to Haifa and were concerned the ship might be stopped and all passengers would be required to go to Cyprus, like previous groups. They were given barracks on the ship and had minimal space so she would sit on the deck. When the ship arrived in Haifa, British on board three ships shot at them and they threw cans of food and tomatoes in return as they had no ammunition on board. While they were forced onto a British ship, Rebecca's clothes fell into the water. The British spoke English and the passengers spoke Yiddish, so there was a translator for them. The British took three months to return them to Hamburg, feeding them biscuits with worms and water. They remained in Hamburg for two months being trained to fight for Palestine, including such activities as climbing on ropes and learning a trade. Rebecca learned kitchen work and returned by ship to Palestine in 1948. Her brothers in Czechoslovakia sent her new clothes. One brother went to the US and the other to Israel. Her parents had been murdered in a concentration camp. Upon arrival in Palestine, she was expected to fight in the war but was told she would get pregnant so refused to go. Instead, she did varied work on the Kibbutz and got married in 1950 and had two children. At times, Rebecca suffered from convulsions due to getting hit in the head when she was in a concentration camp. After eleven years in Israel, she came to the US as a friend suggested they would earn a better living, but now she is sorry she came here. Her grandson is interested in her experience on the Exodus and she would like to have contact with other Exodus passengers.