

**BAUER, Tema Posalska**  
**RG 50.031\*0004**  
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**Holocaust Foundation of Illinois Collection**  
**One tape**

**Abstract**

Tema Posalska was born May 5, 1916, the youngest in a very religious family of six daughters and four sons. She grew up in Lodz, and when Nazis took over in 1939, they sent away Tema's parents. In 1940, Tema went into the Lodz ghetto, where she lived with three families in a beautiful three-bedroom apartment. She worked in a ghetto kitchen for children until 1942, when the children were sent to concentration camps.

Ghetto life became very difficult due to hunger and diseases including typhus and tuberculosis. "The worst experience was the hunger and cold," Tema says. She adds that the *Judenrat* as well as the Polish people were very bad. Tema says, "We felt very alone. Even the United States did not help us."

Tema was sent to Leipzig, where she worked in an ammunition factory making bullets. She lost an arm when the factory was bombed. She begged to die.

In April 1945, as the Russians approached, she was sent on death march from Leipzig to Chernovtsky (Chernivtsi, Ukraine), and then marched twice to Elbe and back. Thousands of people were killed, or were left to die along the way. "Our food was dirty grass from the fields. It was cold and rainy, and we just had a blanket and wooden shoes," she says.

When they were free suddenly, "we didn't know what to do." She was with 40 women, and they finally found a Red Cross center where they were treated. "It was a miracle."

She returned to Lodz but found no family members, who had disappeared in 1942, or any information about them. Again, she did not want to survive.

Tema left Poland in the beginning of 1946 and went to a DP camp in Germany, where she married and had a child. From there, they went to Chicago in 1948.

She doesn't believe that people will understand her war experiences, and thinks that "the same thing is happening." Throughout the war, "We kept our humanity."

### **Tape 1 of 1**

- 1:21** Tema Posalska was born May 5, 1916. Her family moved to Lodz when she was very young. She was the youngest in family of four brothers and five sisters. Her father bought and then sold cows to the butchers and brought agricultural products to the market. Lodz had a Jewish population of one quarter million people.
- 2:40** Home life. Family was very religious and kept kosher. Relatives lived very close to one another and always came together for holidays. Mother always lit Friday night candles.
- 3:38** Tema went to a Polish public school. Her close friends were mostly Jewish. She belonged to Mizrachi, a religious Zionist organization. Some anti-Semitism on holidays, especially Easter.
- 5:22** In 1933, Polish Jews who lived in Germany were forced to return to Poland. In 1939, Nazis came to Lodz. Tema's parents were sent out of Lodz, but she was left in Lodz. In 1940, she went into the ghetto where she lived in a beautiful three-bedroom apartment with three families. She worked in a ghetto kitchen for children until 1942 when children of all ages were transported out of ghetto to their deaths.
- 9:03** Life became very difficult in the ghetto. Everyone was hungry, cold, and sick, and many died. After Tema lost her job in the kitchen in 1942, she worked in a shoe factory. She was given one small loaf of bread for a week, a few potatoes, and a little oil. They had no medical care. People had typhus, tuberculosis, and were malnourished.
- 10:56** The *Judenrat* were very bad, headed by a man named Rumkowski. Some policemen were very mean. No schools for children. Most children had been transported to concentration camps. Some parents were able to hide their children.
- 12:16** A bridge split the Lodz ghetto, and Tema had to cross it to get to work. Her hours were 7:30 A.M. to 7 P.M. "The worst experience was the hunger and cold, and we had to stand in line to cook. We had just a little potato and water."
- 13:40** "The Polish people were very bad. We could see them on streetcars. They did nothing to help the Jews. Nobody cared for us. We felt very alone. Even the United States did not help us."
- 15:22** Tema never knew what happened to her family. They disappeared in 1942. She had no chance to say goodbye. After the war, she went back to Poland to see if anyone in her family had come back. But no one had returned. She could never find out where her family had died or were buried. She did not want to survive.

**16:18** During the war, Tema was sent to Leipzig where she worked in an ammunition factory making bullets. She lost her arm when the factory was bombed. When she was taken to a hospital, she begged to die, but they helped her survive.

**17:21** In April 1945, she was sent on death march from Leipzig to Chernovtsy. Thousands of people were killed, or were left to die along the way. "Our food was dirty grass from the fields. It was cold and rainy, and we just had a blanket and wooden shoes. We had no medicine."

They were marched to Elbe twice and then taken back. Bombs killed many people.

As the Russians advanced, German soldiers camouflaged themselves with civilian coats.

"When Nazis left and we were suddenly free, we didn't know what to do."

**22:20** Tema was with 40 women, and they tried to avoid the Russians. "We were afraid and went to the fields and small German hill towns." They finally came to a place where the Red Cross had a center and treated the women. "It was a miracle."

Tema went back to Lodz to see if anyone in her family had survived. But no one had returned.

She left Poland in the beginning of 1946 and went to a DP camp in Germany. From there, she went to Chicago in 1948 with her husband and one child. They lived in one room. Her husband started working, and then borrowed money to start his own business. They paid back every penny.

**26:13** "It is impossible to explain to young people or any people what it was like. I don't believe people will understand. We did not kill a German or anyone. We kept our humanity. I hope that my children and grandchildren never have to go through anything like this, but I think the same thing is happening."

**28:27** Tema's son Michael adds to the interview. "My mother is the most remarkable person I have ever known in my life. To go through such a nightmare experience and come out of it as such a loving and gentle person is remarkable. I am very proud of what she did today."