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Summary

Bella Leibowitz, born in 1922 in Sirokij Lu, a small town in the Podkarpatska Rus region of Czechoslovakia, describes growing up in family of 7 half siblings and 4 younger siblings, her father's general store which operated as a bar in the evening; being stranded while visiting her half - sister in Nové Zámke, Slovakia when the Hungarians entered and were sending noncitizens to Poland; seeking safety in Budapest where she worked for a Jewish couple who owned a pension, hoping to either go to Israel or back home; returning home after 8-9 months by which time the Hungarians had occupied the town and taken away her father's business license; returning to Budapest to try to obtain papers for her father who had been born in Romania; being caught and jailed in Budapest in 1943 then sent to Topolya labor camp in Hungary where Jews and political prisoners knit goods for the military; in May 1944 being sent by train to Auschwitz; after surviving selection, sent one week later to work at Gleiwitz (Gliwice); in January 1945, as the Russian army approached, being led on a 2-3 day forced march before being loaded on open train cars; jumping off the train after 2-3 weeks eating only snow; walking to a village where she asked for food and water but was reported to the police who incarcerated her and others in Olomouc jail before being transferred to Brunn jail in Bavaria, then Pankrac prison, and eventually Mal Pevnost in Theresienstadt where a political prisoner would sometimes sneak bread in to her cell; being freed by the Red Cross on May 5th and taken to the ghetto to recuperate; attempting to go home with some assistance from Jewish aid organizations; searching lists of survivors in Budapest; finding her brother-in-law who had been a soldier in Russia and who used his military benefits to obtain an apartment for her in Sudeten where she was eventually joined by three of her sisters; marrying a fellow survivor in March 1946; moving to Israel in August 1948; moving to the U.S. in 1957 where her sisters had settled.