

This is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Chava Frajhof conducted by Gail Schwartz on September 6, 1996, in Chevy Chase, Maryland. The interpreters are Pearl [? Sydman ?] and Sarah [? Geister. ?] This is tape number 2, side A.

You are now in Krasnik, and we were talking about what the conditions were like in that place. And you said you didn't know anybody beforehand. Where did you stay?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

In a block. [SPEAKING GERMAN] In a block.

Where doctors used to stay. And she was the dressmaker. She stood in a block-- it's--

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

That's where you worked?

The professional people, where they stood. They had a place.

To work?

To work. Yes, to work.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Outside from the lager, they had a place.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

This is in Krasnik?

In Krasnik.

In Krasnik, yes. Yes, yeah. What was it like to leave your brother when you had to leave Budzyn?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

She did not have no say in the matter. She didn't see him.

So you were not able to say goodbye?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

No, no, no.

So, again, what was a day like in this new work camp?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

She doesn't remember.

She doesn't remember. But like any other day, she said.

Were you aware now of what was happening in the rest of Europe?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

If they weren't in Budzyn, they weren't living anymore. They were dead.

Now she's in Krasnik--

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Europe.

In Europe.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

--gas chambers?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

No.

They did not know.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Was there a difference in your life in Krasnik as compared to Budzyn?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

This was a better camp.

In what way?

In what way? The other was like a killing camp, the other one.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

A small-- a small camp.

Krasnik was a small--

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Small lager.

About how many people were there?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Were there many women there? Were there many women?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Nein. Nein.

No.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

She does not know. Nobody had contact with anybody.

Did she stay with other women? Did she stay in a barrack with other women?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Just a dentist's wife and--

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

--and a doctor's. Three people stood together.

And where did they sleep? Where did you all sleep?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

In a barrack?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

In the block where she was working, it was like--

Rooms.

Yeah.

Rooms.

So there were three of you in a room? Sleeping in a bed?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

She does not remember.

OK. OK. Was there enough food?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Ja.

What kind of food did they give you?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

The food-- they had enough food, but they were depressed. They couldn't eat.

Did anybody talk of trying to leave there?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

They could not escape. If somebody left, they shot him right away. So they knew what's happening, so they didn't take any chances, I guess.

[? Conscience. ?]

Was there a fence around, or barbed wire?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Ja. Ja.

A fence?

It was a fence.

Fence.

A wooden fence?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

--metal.

Metal.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Like the--

A wire? Barbed wire?

Oh. [SPEAKING GERMAN] Electric fence.

Mm-hmm. OK. Did you have any contact with other work-- any prisoners there?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Just the ones, the few what they worked together.

On the same block.

On the same block.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

So did you meet any other of the male prisoners?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Yes, with the people she worked with. They had different--

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Huh?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Ah. In the block, they met after work.

And who were some of the other people that you met?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Just the ones where they worked from-- on the block.

Did you have any contact with people back in Budzyn?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

She had contact--

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Once a week, she had contact with the people she worked for. And she sent-- from Budzyn?

From Budzyn.

Yeah.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

How did she have-- what kind of contact was it?

She sent a letter. And they came that she should sew for them.

People from Budzyn came to Krasnik so [? Hava ?] could-- to make dresses for them. And that was once a week. And then she would send letters back with them.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

But they hid-- ah. But they hid letters for her to take back to Budzyn.

Little.

Very small--

Notes.

Anything that was sent back was very, very small to avoid detection.

Right. And so who did you have contact with in Budzyn?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Just with her brother she had contact with.

With her brother?

With her brother.

Mm-hmm. And then did you have any other contact again with any other prisoners in Krasnik?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

One person from her city what-- one person from her city, which he was in [INAUDIBLE].

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Did you not have contact with Israel? When did you start having contact with Israel?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

No, she did not have any contact with. He was in Krasnik.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Oh. She lived outside of the lager. But when she went into the lager in Krasnik, that's when she saw Israel, her future husband.

So she did have contact with other persons-- prisoners.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Can you translate what she's saying?

When she went out from wherever she was, she saw a few people.

And?

What's a "fa-ta"?

A "fe-ta" is like-- let's say-- how do you say a "fe-ta"?

[PHONE RINGS]

All right, so--

Uncle, uncle.

Uncle.

Uncle.

OK.

So--

So you saw an uncle of yours? OK.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

OK, so you had contact with-- you met Israel. Did you know him before, or you met him in the--

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Oh, when she got mail from him, so she had contact with him.

No, the first contact that she had with him was when he asked her to deliver a letter to his father to a camp in Budzyn. That was the first time that she had contact with him.

OK, OK. And then what kind of things did you talk about with Israel?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Just from their lager, they was talking. From their lager.

They didn't talk about other things?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Did you talk about life after the war?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

No plans. No planning at all.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

No.

Nobody--

Just friends.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

[LAUGHS]

Nobody realized that they'll--

Survive.

Survive.

So they didn't talk-- they didn't make plans, and they didn't talk about romantic-- the way they felt about each other. But mostly just talking as friends.

OK. All right. And then what was the next change?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Because [? Hava ?] didn't know very many other people, Israel had said to her, you can come with me since you're-- since you don't know other people. And they went together when they left Krasnik.

How did you know it was time to leave?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

When they left, [INAUDIBLE] said if they should-- they should go together, either they'll live or they'll kill him. So they left [? together, ?] the war together.

How did you know that it was time to leave Krasnik?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Somebody had the radio. And, like, his--

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

They knew they heard that they have to leave.

So people left on their own? They didn't go with any German soldiers? They left on their own?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

The soldiers took her from--

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

But wait, wait--

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

The Germans took them out of Krasnik. And it was at nighttime. And they were marching out. And because the person that she was with, Israel, was also native to Krasnik, he knew where to go and where there were holes to hide and places to run away to. So they made the decision to run away, whether they-- if they get shot, they get shot, but it was better than going marching with the Germans.

So where did you go then, and who did you go with?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

They went to the forest.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

And then they lost--

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Then they separated. Then they went in different directions.

Why did you separate?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

When they went-- OK. When they went to make their escape, a group of people went to make their escape, the German soldiers started firing. And at that point, people ran off and scattered in different directions.



And who did you end up with?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Nein, nein, nein. Initially.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

--remembers their names?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

No, no.

And where did you go?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Anybody that they escaped, and they got together later on. And--

Everybody that ran into the woods and wasn't shot eventually met up again. And then--

And then what happened?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Because [? Hava ?] was light, was blonde, and because-- and she had long hair and she looked like a Christian--

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

And very thin. Very thin.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

And small.

Small.

A small girl.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

They started shooting and actually bombing. The--

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

They started running because they were bombing.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

--from airplanes. They started shooting from airplanes. And the Germans started scattering.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

She saw Russians and Russian women with--

With scarves.

With scarves on their heads.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

They were eating. The Russians were eating.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

The ones what they here from far, they came together. And she went to make food for them.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Oh, she went-- OK. There was one spoon. And with the food that she brought back, everybody took a spoonful of food. And then--

Where did the food come from?

She brought it.

No, but--

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Oh, they took potatoes from the garden, from one of the gardens. And they went into a place, and they cooked it. And then she brought it back for everybody to eat.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

When they finished eating, so she told them the Russians came in.

And then-- and then?

And then?

Then, [SPEAKING GERMAN]

People went back to Krasnik.

Krasnik.

Who were you with then when you went back to Krasnik?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

10 men and one. She just was one lady.

You were the only woman?

Yes.

Was Israel with you?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Yes.

When did you see him again? When did you meet him before?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

She saw him again in the forest. She met him.

OK. And then you went back to Krasnik? And what happened when you got there?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

One from her town, he had money. And he helped them all to survive.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

In Krasnik?

Yeah.

And how long did you stay in Krasnik?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

From her town, she went--

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

From her town, she went to--

Lublin.

Lublin.

Where she had family.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

A big [INAUDIBLE].

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

She went to the people that her parents hide some things. So she went to them to collect it from them.

This is where? In--

This is in--

Lublin.

In Lublin.

Oh, in Lublin?

In Lublin.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

People congregated back to-- a lot of people that were coming back from the war, Jews, came back to Lublin.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

They wanted to come together as Jews, and they were afraid to be alone.

How long did you stay in Lublin?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

She remained in-- she remained over there. Afterwards, she remained in Lublin.

In Lublin.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

[? '45? ?]

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

[? That ?] [? is ?] [? '44. ?]

[SPEAKING GERMAN] [? '44 ?] [? too? ?]

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Did you see Israel? Were you with Israel in Lublin?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

They traveled together to Lublin.

And then did you continue to see him in Lublin?

Ja. Ja.

And then what happened?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Then they married, and they start a life.

So you got married in Lublin? Can you tell me about your wedding?

Ja, wedding. [LAUGHTER] We had a wedding.

Can you describe it to me?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

[LAUGHS]

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

They borrowed a ring from a friend. And the uncle gave her-- dishes?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

The dishes, they-- pronounced them man and wife.

Oh, the uncle.

The uncle, yeah.

The uncle pronounced them man and wife.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

The uncle- had come back from the war as well. And he made the marriage ceremony.

Mm-hmm. OK. And then when you left Lublin, where did you go?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Yeah, yes.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

OK. OK. Did your husband work in Lublin at all?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Ja. Ja.

What kind of work did he do?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

The war-- the war wasn't finished, so he had to-- he was in the army. He went to the army.

Yeah. [SPEAKING GERMAN]

[PHONE RINGING]

Oh.

[? Carol. ?]

Oh.

We were talking about whether Israel worked in Lublin and what did he do.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

He worked in the polizei.

In the polizei.

Yeah.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

He worked for the police?

He was--

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

He--

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

This is tape 2, side B. And you were saying how your husband worked in the office of the police in Lublin?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Three months.

For three months. And then what happened?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Then they started a life for themselves.

OK. And you moved to Frankfurt?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Frankfurt, Berlin--

How long were you in Frankfurt?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

For a long time?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

One year.

One year.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Did you have any children when you were there?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

The youngest son was born in Frankfort.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

The youngest son?

I mean the oldest son was born in--

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Your older son was born in Poland, in Lublin?

In Lublin.

OK. And your younger son-- yes, OK. What was it like to give birth at that time? Did you go to a hospital? What was it like?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

In the house.

The house.

You gave birth in Lublin in your house. Was there a doctor there?

No. Doctor, no. [SPEAKING GERMAN]

It was no doctor. It's somebody that they take, like sometimes here also.

A midwife.

A midwife, right.

And did you have a bris? Did the little boy have a bris?

Ja. No. [SPEAKING GERMAN]

Three years later. They didn't have anybody, like a mohel or anything like that.

So he was three years old when he had his circumcision?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

When he was born-- he was born in January of 1945. And the war didn't end until May 8, 1945. So they couldn't have a bris then because of the war, so they waited three years before his bris.

Was your health good enough? Did you have any problems with the pregnancy or the delivery?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Ja. [SPEAKING GERMAN]

Yes.

Yes.

So there was no problems in the pregnancy or the delivery?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

[LAUGHTER]

She does not remember. She doesn't remember.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Oh, the first-- not--

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Oh, oh. He was born after nine months and one day.

No.

Nein?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Oh, eight months and nine days.

OK. Eight months and nine days, OK.

Yes.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Nein.

Ja. OK. He was born early, before 9 months.

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. What was it like to have a fresh life after the war, have a new little life born?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

It was no choices. They start the life from the beginning. It was hard. It wasn't easy.

OK. OK. And-- OK, and now you're in-- you've left Lublin. You've been to Frankfurt. Now you're in Berlin? And how long did you stay in Berlin?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

1953.



But--

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Probably about two years that she stayed in Berlin.

And what did your husband do in Berlin while you were living there?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

He sold fabrics, textiles.

And then you moved to Brazil?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Yeah, I know.

They went to Brazil because her husband knew people in Brazil.

Family.

Family.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Did you want to leave Europe?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Ja.

Why?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

She afraid for another war.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

She didn't want to remain in Germany because she was afraid that the sons might marry the German girls.

What was it like to come to a country where you didn't know the language?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

The old-- the old life was very hard, so it's again a little hard. It was hard.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

All right. And you've lived in Brazil ever since?

[SPEAKING GERMAN] Brazil since then?

Yeah. Yeah.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

She's stayed in Brazil, and she doesn't want to go any place else because it's very hard to be an immigrant.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Without language. Without any-- to start over with a new language, with new friends.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

OK, and now I want to ask you some other questions. Do you think about the war all the time?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

She doesn't let herself think about it.

No.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

When somebody asks her about the war, she changes the subject. She doesn't want to talk about--

No like.

She doesn't want to talk about it.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

It's hidden. It's hidden deep.

No like.

She doesn't like to be reminded of because she went through a lot, more than--

No like, no.

Did you talk about it with your children when they were growing up?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Not too much.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Not too much.

It's hard to come out.

She got it, like, buried.

It's hard to bring out.

And also, are there things today that remind you of that time? When you see something, or hear some sounds, or--

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

She puts it out. She puts it-- she wants to put it out from her as much as possible.

How do you feel about being Jewish? Because what you went through, you went through because you were Jewish.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

She feels good about being Jewish, and she couldn't be anything else.

Is there anything else you wanted to add before we finish?

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

It stays locked up. All the incidents are very buried and, [GERMAN], is locked.

OK. Well, again, thank you very much for doing this interview.

Thank you too.

I appreciate it very much.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Oh, she says sorry for--

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

--confusing your head.

For she took the time.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

She doesn't like to speak about the war.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

She said it's locked up.

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

Well, thank you for doing it today. Thank you very much.

Thank you.

Thank you.

This concludes the interview of [? Hava ?] [? Freihoff. ?]