

Eric Kestenbaum.

This is why I think-- this is why I wrote this. Maybe it will be much, much better if they would call me, and having a quiet moment, and nobody is in a hurry, and nobody disturbs one another.

Let's try it. Let's try it. And we'll play it back. And we'll see what we can do.

I would prefer, if it's possible, to make it this way better, to call me up, and take me a day, and I'm going away, and I have a very quiet interview, and I can speak what I think is important. And you can ask me questions about what you think is important.

I think, if you want to start, let's see how it goes. And then let's see if we can't do what you want after that.

All right. So my name is Bella Adler. I am born Hamburg. I was born in Lithuania. I grew up in Lithuania. I went to high school there. And then I was a teacher in Kaunas in a Hebrew school, in a Jewish school with Lithuanian language. And when it broke out the war, I got a job in a Jewish school, a Yiddish-- Sholem Aleichem Gymnasium.

But the same year, I met my husband, who was a student in the Yeshiva Mir. But they fled, all of them, and they came to my home place where I was born. And as a matter of fact, it was so that my brother needed a private tutor. He was in the last gymnasium grade, eighth class. And he was very bad in Latin.

I was very good in Latin. And I wanted to help him. Because to get a good teacher, private teacher in Latin was not so easy. And I every day traveled from Kovno to Kedainiai, which is my place where I was born, to teach my brother. It was about March, I think.

And it was as the end of the semester. And in every afternoon, we had teachers' meetings. So I couldn't come to my brother. And he was the last grade. And it was very important, the grades for him. So I called up home. And I said that I'm sorry, but I cannot come today. We have a meeting, a conference of teachers.

And they told me, I don't have to hurry too much because he got a teacher. And these were the words of my brother, who knows 1,000 times more Latin than you. So when I came for Shabbos home, my brother took me in another chamber and very quietly said, my teacher wants to meet you because he never saw a girl who is a Latin teacher. And I says, OK. After 8, let him go.

And my husband came. And this was it. I knew that I'm never going to leave. And after a short time, he asked me if I'm going to marry him. But to marry a girl from a good house with a very good job, gymnasium teacher in Kovno, [INAUDIBLE], who's finished university, it take some [? courage, ?] you know. I was even afraid to tell with my parents.

But happened so that he was also not sure. But he knew that this is it. He wrote to his parents that he met a girl who he wants to marry. And they let him-- to Germany. He was from Germany, from Ansbach, where were living his parents. His father was a teacher in Nuremberg, the Jewish school.

At this time, it was 1940. He was home already with-- the Jewish school was liquidated in Germany. And when-- and he said, we don't know what to do. Maybe we should come back to Germany. And the answer from his father was my dear son, if even you have to go and beg a piece of bread from house to house, you shouldn't dare to come back. We knew what it meant.

And we tried to get permission to leave Lithuania and go to the States. We didn't have a visa to the States. And he decided that he's going to do something to get some visa. He got a visa to Curacao in the Japanese.

And the visa to get in the Curacao was a very plain thing. He-- my husband was an extremely clever man. In my eyes, he was a genius. And I think there are many other people who say the same thing.

And when he went to Curacao, to the consulate, they told him that you don't need a visa to go to Curacao. And he said, OK, this is wonderful. So please, write it down in my passport that I don't need a visa and give me a sign. How do you say [NON-ENGLISH]?

[NON-ENGLISH]

Yeah, that it is so. And he got it. The man did it. And he got it. So he took his passport and went to the Japanese consulate. He was the first one who did it. And the Japanese consulate gave him a visa to go via Japan to Curacao because--

From Latvia to Japan?

From Lithuania.

From Lithuania to Japan to Curacao?

I think it was Curacao, I hope so. Because this is why I wanted now to tell you everything. Because I feel that every day, my mind is getting worse and worse. And I was a teacher at this time, as I told you. It was-- the time was the Russians were already in Lithuania. But they still behaved somewhat.

And I was a teacher, a plain [NON-ENGLISH]-- a plain [YIDDISH] who doesn't know right and left, who knows what is right is right, what is said is right is to be left. And said, how can I go with you if I begin here to teach in school? How can a teacher leave her job? A soldier can't leave his. With a teacher is even 1,000 times more. I was young and I was believing everything was good. And I believed in honesty.

And he began to look for a visa to go out. But he said, but anyway, are you going to marry me? So I said, in such an hour, probably, we have to think that it is possible, that there are certain times what you say. And it happened. So I said, with you is the end of the world-- very romantic, very beautiful.

But it happened that it was so. He got afterwards, with a lot, a lot of difficulties, the permission to leave Lithuania. And he went to Japan. It was the 6th of December, 1940. We married approximately, I think, it was August. And we didn't tell my parents. And he didn't tell the yeshiva because we have been afraid. It was very romantic and beautiful.

And he said, because at least I has to-- we have to be married. So we married. We have been extremely happy. Nobody has such a honeymoon like we because it was-- we went with the car to see my parents. And we have been poor. I had a good job. I had still a little bit money. But he didn't earn anything. And we couldn't get anything from his parents or from his relatives.

And he left for Japan via Vladivostok, Russia. I stayed home. And it was very hard time. And I was still teaching. And I began to see, and very clear to see, the paradise Russian promised is, I think, worse than was the [INAUDIBLE]. It was-- we saw that they are taking with iron trowels, pushing everything down. And there is not even air to breathe.

And everybody gets scared. What it is? It means freedom, freedom. But the freedom was so that you wouldn't dare to say anything. You wouldn't dare to do anything. You wouldn't-- it was something terrible. And you begin already to feel the terrible pressure, like an iron hammer on your head.

Was it mostly to the Jews?

Not only to the Jews. It was the atmosphere in the place. And all of a sudden, I found out that I'm pregnant. My husband said, he's not going any farther. He tried to get a visa to America. He got it. He would have got it, but he said, I'm not going anyplace. I'm waiting for you in Japan. Come immediately.

Of course, he got-- he have only to say, you want to go. And it began a torture, a real torture to get the permission to get

out from Russia. I cannot tell you even now on the tape what I went through with the NKVD to get out from Lithuania. And you don't know that you are getting a permission to get out.

So you have to be very, very careful. Because if you want to leave Lithuania-- we were going to be occupied by the Russians-- it means that you are an enemy of the Volk. You want to-- doesn't want to stay with us. And what that meant already to be an enemy of the people, I knew already very well paragraph 57.

So it was a managing so-and-so and so-and-so how to get the permission to get out. Well, this all things, how I got permission to get out, I would speak someplace else and sometimes else. But I got it, at least, in May. Nobody believed that it's possible. Because then was already the time. So it was May-- no, not May, April, I think-- April, like now, '41.

And I had my ticket. And I was very happy when I came-- went out. And my father came to take me till the border, and my uncle with my cousin, which I am here-- her father too came from another place from near Vilna. He came from Dukstos. And my father, we met. And they brought me till the border.

And my uncle specially, who was a very, very frum Jew was so happy that my husband is a pupil of Mirrer Yeshiva, has his rebbe, his rabbi, et cetera. And he was extremely happy about it. And I'll never forget how he told me, [YIDDISH]. And that means that I have to be-- have a real good Jewish home. And I have to be a Jewish wife and mother. And this was the last time I saw them.

And I came to Moscow, tired and pregnant, and so on, so on. And they-- in a hotel, Novo-Moskovskaya. And the first thing, they asked me to give me my passport because they have to put it in the hotel. I took out a German passport before I left. And it was already Sarah and was a big J. And I got it only through my husband, who was a German citizen.

And I thought, I have a German passport, so the Russian can't do me anything. I never had another document, as only a Lithuanian passport, which I had to give up in the German consulate. And I got this one.

And the next day, I went to ask for my passport because I had to leave for Vladivostok. And they said, I have to go to pick up my passport myself in the NKVD. And without a date, when I came to the NKVD to pick up my passport, and so on, the request, it was a lot of [INAUDIBLE]. Go around.

And the only thing what they told me-- listen, my dear lady, you got the visa to go out from Russia. It's not the real way you have to get. Because you have first to get out from the Russian citizenship. And I began to say, I never was a Russian citizen. And I never had a Russian citizen passport. I was a Lithuanian citizen. I married. And I have a German passport. And I want to go.

It was absolutely impossible to speak to anybody because they don't listen to me. I speak one, and he say something else. I began to-- maybe I can get a lawyer. Maybe I can get somebody-- absolutely impossible. It doesn't exist something like this. And I knew very-- I know till today very well Russian because my stepmother was Russian, from Ukraine, as a matter of fact. She has a cousin of the Agnon-- Agron, who was the first--

Mayor of Jerusalem.

--mayor of Jerusalem. And she was first cousin of him. And she was from Ukraine so far. And she made us children speak Russian and take Russian lessons private, et cetera, et cetera. And a person who didn't know perfectly the Russian literature didn't exist. So it was for me very good because I knew Russian like a real Russian woman.

And I went. I have been so energetic. I used to be energetic once upon a time that I had a rendezvous with Kalinin. And I came to his, old Kalinin shake my hand. And I told him what I want. And he say, I'll try to do everything.

And surely, he didn't do anything. That was not Kalinin, nobody had anything to say if NKVD doesn't want to. And why doesn't-- didn't want NKVD? It was something what they made out with my husband, what I didn't know.

So to make it short, they said, tomorrow. Tomorrow. I was pregnant. It was terrible. And I wanted to go to my husband. It was a terrible time for me. And I was very excited. I called to my uncle, who lived in Leningrad. He came immediately. And he was very happy to see me. He stayed two days with me.

I had till then every day telephone calls from Lithuania, from Kovno, from my sister and so. And when my uncle left for Leningrad back, I was crying very much if can-- you can extend. And you don't know what's going on. It's all dark around. And you don't know anything. And I have been crying so much till I cried myself to sleep.

And I woke up, and I didn't feel good. And I went to wash my hands. And all of a sudden, I see, I'm standing in a lake of water, you could say. And this what young lady who had experience as a teacher about three or four, maybe five years already, who had a diploma from the University of Lithuania, who has all the education, the degrees necessary, the doctorate almost and so, didn't know that if a woman is getting a child, she has to have a water level. It was our education once upon a time.

And I thought, what is it? And I had-- it hurts me, and so bad. What can it be? But it probably-- I knew, I had always a very good appetite. I ate probably something was no good for me. Because I couldn't imagine that my child can be born one day before. Because I was so strong, and sport, and gymnastic, and everything.

You just assumed it had to come on the right day and that was it?

No, it was not time. It had more about two months, I thought. But I felt it worse, and worse, and worse. And all of a sudden, coming a telephone from my sister, from Kovno. And she said-- she spoke to me every day. And how is it? When can you go farther? And I says well, you know our cousin, Rachel Weger from Vilna has her daughter in Moscow. And this is her address.

And she gives me her address. And I'm trying to write it down. And I feel so bad. I'm all perspired. And it's cold I feel. And she gives me and write it down the address of her daughter on the telephone. And it gets worse and worse. And I feel worse and worse. And I don't know what's going on. I don't think even once all the time that's possible that the child is coming. Were alone in-- was Hotel Novo-Moskovskaya in Moscow.

And my father sent me more money. And I knew how hard it is for them because they didn't have it. But they sent it, I should stay there, don't know how long it's going to take. And I feel so bad that I was already-- and I took the number what she gave me.

And now, you're going to have a red thread through all my history, that everything comes at the moment it has to come. And we want to know that we have to think that there is somebody who takes it like-- a hand takes it all over the places. And I call her up.

And I say, Fanya Weger, you are the daughter of Rachel Weger. I am so-and-so. I am Bella. And I am here in Moscow. And I didn't know your address and telephone number. But I now just got it. And I feel very, very bad.

And she heard from my voice, and it was about 12 o'clock in the night. She was in half an hour in my place. And she was older. And she was experienced woman. And the moment she saw me, she knew what's going on. She called the hospital. And they took me to the hospital.

I came to the hospital about 1 o'clock. And about 4 o'clock was born my son. I didn't know. I was very happy. And I tried to let everybody know. And I called to Lithuania. And I gave a telegram, I think, to Lithuania.

And to my husband, I had every day cable from Kobe. He was waiting for me. And I sent him every day to Kobe cables to Japan. And as a matter of fact, I hold them, all of them, all the cables that I sent to my husband. He kept it.

He kept them.

And all the cables what I sent to him, I had it, all of them. And you can see the agony what is going on, only from the

cables. It was a real terrible thing what was. And we didn't know what it going to be. And they said, I should wait. The child was born. And it was born seven months only, not even this. And he was very weak and very small. And I didn't have milk.

And this child saved my life because if he wouldn't be so big, so small, they would send me immediately back to Lithuania. And they told me every day, they are going to send me back. And I said, no, I don't want to go. I want to go to my husband. And they said, no, you have-- you cannot stay in Moscow. It's not permitted. You have to go home.

And the doctor from the hospital gave me a letter that I cannot be moved at all because it's a danger for the child. And this what I have to say. I had the best. I was treated wonderful in the hospital.

And the child, they gave him lots of milk from a certain kitchen. And a nurse used to come to me in the hospital-- in the hotel after the hospital to take care of the child. It is impossible to believe how much attention and care I got.

What was going on in Moscow at this time? Were the Germans-- was before the--

It was the beginning of May. My child was born the 21st of May, 1941. And they said, another week, another week. And he's still getting milk from the kitchen. And it's still coming the nurse every day to me in the hotel. And I'm sitting all the day. And I'm trying to massage my wrist.

And I have still a letter from my parents, from my stepmother, where she writes to me the letter in Russian, please, do everything that you can. Because one drop of mother's milk is better than everything in the world. So I tried to get some white milk. But she was so weak, he didn't have the strength to get it out. But I didn't stop massaging. I didn't stop till I should have some milk for him.

And it was a Saturday. I was very much upset. I used to take out the child a little bit for a walk. It was, Novo-Moskovskaya, not very far from the Kremlin and near the River Moskva. And I'm coming on Friday night and Saturday evening. And I'm getting a cable from my husband, cannot do anything more. Pray to God.

So I decided, he got me crazy. But what is it? He sent a cable with such a thing? I can't do anything for you more. Pray to God. They knew already that the war broke out in Japan. I didn't know in Moscow.

I laid down to sleep. I slept very little. And I hold it, every second, only with the child, looking at him, and how he's going, and how he is. And all of a sudden, I heard the radio. And the radio says-- I think it was-- yes, it was the voice of Molotov. And he said, [RUSSIAN]. It means brothers and sisters, our homeland is in big danger. I understood what was going on.

I tried to get the Lithuanian consulate. I couldn't get anybody. I have been running here, and back, and here, and back, keeping all the time the baby in my arms. Moscow is a city which I don't know, really. And I don't know what to do-- would be glad to go to Lithuania. But there is no possibility. I wouldn't-- otherwise, I don't know what to do. In the night, the whole city was in a terrible tumult. In the evening, we had [NON-ENGLISH].

Sirens.

Sirens. And we have been put in the cellar of the hotel. They took us to in the cellar of the hotel. And they said that had heard bombing. If it was bombs already in Moscow or not, I really don't know. But was a most terrible night, you can imagine. It's a nightgown with a baby always.

The next morning, I was-- didn't go out. I was staying in my place there in the hotel. And all of a sudden, they saying that the hotel has to be cleaned up. We have to go in another place. And so I took my two bags, child, and they took me to another hotel on the Ploschad Dzerzhinskogo.

And you had a German passport?

I didn't have the passport because they didn't give it back to me. And as a matter of fact, to tell you, I have been running to the German consulate to ask the Germans should help me. And they all-- they laughed at me. This was ill.

And I asked the Germans should take-- help me. I couldn't do anything because I have no passport, nothing. And I came to the other hotel, very nice room, staying with the child, trying to get the Lithuanian consulate, trying to get-- absolutely impossible, running here, running there.

I met one Jewish person, whose daughter is now in Tel Aviv. And she was a pupil of mine. But I asked him what he's doing. He said, I don't know what to do. He's got here all stuck out. It was Mr. Amsterdamski. I remember his name from Kovno.

And I'm coming home. All of a sudden comes in a gentleman, very nicely dressed, black. He said, you are Mrs. Adler? Yes. You are a German citizen? I say, yes. It is a very dangerous thing for you to stay here. And we are going to take you in a place where it's more comfortable for you. And you will be much more safe.

Who was this man?

I also didn't know this man. So they take things what you need. And you take everything what you have. And we'll bring you. So I'm running to the phone. And he comes to me, takes my hand-- no phone calls anymore. It was clear for me what it is for a man. And he took me. And he brought me in a place near Butyrki, the famous Russian jail.

And they met-- it was summer. And I could remember, it was June 22, I think, or 23. And they met barracks. And they put me in a place there. And they have there more women. And they says, you are going to stay for a certain time.

This was, I understood, terrible because the woman I saw is it-- woman, they said they're German, but they have not been German. They didn't know a word of German, but they kept the German passport. Probably, the real [NON-ENGLISH], that they called it, Germans who have been supported by the German consulate. But I have that in common with such people-- very, very low class people, with a terrible dictionary and terrible behavior. And they have been like-- I don't know, they would tear me in pieces.

Because they were antisemitic?

I don't know antisemitic, but I only know that they were very, very low in every respect, say. Like you say, [NON-ENGLISH], that's not much better, not much better. I don't know where we stopped.

You were in the jail or the barracks with these Lithuanian women.

Not Lithuanian, from Russian women.

Russian women with German--

German passports. And they couldn't take my soup. How can I take from somebody? It was very hard for me to get used to a situation where all your human dignity is lost. We used to say in Yiddish, [YIDDISH]. It was so terrible, I couldn't do it until the hunger flashed, and the little baby on my arms, and I don't have anything to give him. Until now, he had had a kitchen and everything. And now, we don't give him a drop of milk. And where can I get it? Nothing.

So I tried to give him the milk as much as I could. And he was very hungry. He began to drink a little bit. But I knew it was not enough. I ran to the kitchen. They used to give us rice. And so I tell to the man, he should give me the water, what he's cooking the rice. And I used to put in a bottle. And I used to try to give it to the baby. And he began to eat a little bit better because it was already three and a half weeks old.

From a bris or from something like this, no, nothing. You cannot even-- they only try to tell me that I have to give the name to the baby. So my mother's name was Mariasha Leah and my grandfather's name was Mordechai. And my grandfather, I loved extremely-- very, very much. I lost my mother, was very baby. And I didn't know what kind of

name for the baby.

My dad's husband sent me a telegram. And I heard that the baby's Namen Kalman. It's his grandfather's name who was a teacher in Hamburg. And Kalman Rothschild, everybody from Hamburg who is now is because he was their teacher of the Jewish Talmud Torah from city of Hamburg. And the child's name is Kalman. So I said, Mordechai Kalman.

So what happened is he has no bris. What kind of a name can I give him? So I wrote it down, baby's name, Mark-- Mark. This was what I wrote down, Mark Kalman, that my husband gave to him. But Mark is going to be Mariasha or Mordechai. And when he's going to have his bris, he's going to get his real name.

About this, I have to tell you a story because I'm very much interested to tell you everything what I know about my husband because he passed away not very long ago. He's not able to say what makes himself. Because he was he went through so much that it's hard to imagine. And everything what I know, I would like very much should be recorded here.

Tell us what his name is and what his mother's name is.

His name was Leo Adler. And his mother's name was Miriam Adler, born Rothschild. And his father was Nathan Adler. He was a teacher in Nuremberg, primary school, I think, in Ansbach. My husband was born in Ansbach. And he was a primus of the Nuremberg [INAUDIBLE] gymnasium, where I think all the Nazis would have been there with pupils. He was one of the best students.

And he wanted to study further. He was very much interested in old languages and antiques. But when he finished, he was not anymore accepted to university, although he was the first in his class. So he decided to go to Poland, as a matter of fact, and to study yeshiva.

When they said no, he first-- he went to WÃ¼rzburg and finished the teacher's seminary. This was the only Jewish place where he could still study. And he finished it. But he couldn't study further. And he went to Mir. And he learned from [PERSONAL NAME]. You can say because it was no comparison what the Polish or Lithuanian Jews learned from being very small.

But he was ordained rabbi. He was one of the very best in WÃ¼rzburg. And he got his diploma as a rabbi. And when he got it, it was the war with Russia and-- not Russia, Poland and Germany. And he has to go away.

The way he went out, it was a very, very interesting thing. And one story which he told, and I don't think it's a story because it's something what is hard to believe, that I heard it from him many times-- he was traveling through Poland, I think, from near to Vilna, he wanted to go. And the only thing what he had is his German passport. And he didn't know one word of Polish.

And all of a sudden, the bus stopped by Polish police. And everybody was asked to give his documents. And he was sitting near his-- near the window. He was praying. And he said, he thought the last second of his life came. Because a young man-- and he looked him younger than he was. He was then 24 and a half. And he has a German passport. And the war he already is-- was already began already.

And he was looking through the window and saying [INAUDIBLE]. Because he thought is his last hour. And the Polish police went all over, even an old Lithuanian peasant there was. He looked at his documents. And a woman with chickens was sitting and everybody.

And he, a young man, sitting in the window, they didn't ask him anything. So that my husband brother used to say, you think they forgot you. And I am telling you that they didn't even see you. And afterwards, he came to Lithuania.

Tell us what happened when he-- in Japan with him.

Oh, it was was very terrible. Japan, he had a-- because he said the name of the baby is Kalman, the Japanese thought it is a certain code.

Code?

And they took him to jail. And he was long in jail. And they tortured him and when he should tell him what it meant. Baby's name, Kalman, it was exactly a couple of days before the war broke out. It is a certain code. And they kept him in jail. And to be in jail in Japan, it means they almost a death sentence because they were so dirty and so everything. You can get typhoid. And they are dead. I'm sorry, I thought it's my.

But how he got out from jail, it was also something that he was speaking to somebody during his davening. He was-- another sailor, was another Jew. And they had been arrested. He came out some way. But it was-- because of the war, put baby's name in Kalman made him a lot of trouble. He almost had to pay with his life for this.

And he was there in Japan, who was very much concerned about me because he didn't know what happened to me and what happened to the child. And they all-- and they have been in a terrible situation too. And then they would be placed from Japan, from Kobe, to Shanghai.

He went from--

From Japan--

--Japan to Shanghai how?

They didn't let him stay. The Japanese didn't let him stay.

I see. And they made him go to Shanghai?

They made him go to Shanghai. And then he made the whole yeshiva in Shanghai. And he was studying there or not studying. It was very, very hard for him.

Did you know he was in Shanghai?

I didn't know anything. I knew-- the last thing what I knew about him was Kobe. But that he went to Shanghai, I didn't know. And his life in Shanghai was a very hard one. And the people was living there in very bad conditions.

And there was a committee of Russian Jews who tried also to help the deputies. But he is an Orthodox Jew, didn't want them to have a treyf kitchen. And he tried to-- for the people who are Orthodox to get them a kosher kitchen. And he sold his last suit which he had still made in Mir. And he sold it. And he bought something.

And he organized a Jewish kitchen, fighting very much with the Russian ladies, from Russia, who said that he's not educated ham and so on, whatever, to have something kosher is absurd, it's funny, and it doesn't-- it's very much behind life people.

But he organized a kosher kitchen. There had been Jewish children. And he taught there. And he was a rabbi, I think, between the refugees, who had many from Vienna and so on. They knew him.

How long did he stay in Shanghai?

He stayed in Shanghai to end of '46.

To the end of '46. And you were all this time?

I was all the time-- when they took me to this nice place, and then Moscow was bombarded, and they took us all in cars, in wagons like the cattle, and they sent us from Moscow. It was a terrible journey. This journey alone is impossible to describe, so many people in the wagons, and everybody got very little place.



There was one-- no, there it was still no cattle wagons, but wagons, like passengers going, but so many people in one place that I-- now, I had a kupe, where it was only one bench. And in this bench you were more than 13 people. And I was with the little baby.

And where was the wagon going?

And they sent us, we didn't know. It took us, I think, two weeks or more. And it was already-- began already to be cold. And we came-- no, it was not cold still. It was only hot and very, very little air to breathe. And we didn't have anything to drink. And they gave us the dry fish, salt, and no water, and a little piece of bread. And we almost thought that we are going to starve.

And I have the little baby. And he's crying because he's hungry. And the only thing what I could do-- 24 hours, the kid with me in my breast. And the women around said, oy, eat, if the child would die at least, it would be wonderful so they would know that they have to give us something. You can imagine how I felt when that had. So I was crying so terrible.

All the time, the Russian guard-- and they have special soldiers for this-- should be either absolutely dumb or retarded people, mostly. And I heard how they have been speaking that one or two weeks ago, they have been transporting people from Lithuania to Siberia. And this was how I find out, through these guards.

And this guards had pity on me. And when they had their dinner, what the leftovers, they put it on, and they gave to me. And I really saved me. And I never in my life ate anything better than this, so hungry I was.

And in my group was another woman with twins, a French woman, who married a Russian. And she was also sent. And she was also hungry. So I divided with her and the children with this, what I had, this wonderful meal, the leftovers of the drunk soldiers.

And then we came to a place, which is called Aranki. It is near Nizhniy Novgorod, near Gorky. It was also on a time a monastery. And then we met already other people who have been brought from Estonia and Latvia-- German passport, Austrian passport, which then was the first time met Jews.

The first time I met Jews, so I saw-- I thought, with my knowledge of Litvisher [? cop, ?] that now, I'm saved. It's [NON-ENGLISH]. And now, I found out what it means to be [GERMAN]. The way they treated me, my darling, it is terrible. To tell you, first of all, they decided, a young woman who looks like a child, because I had long hair. And I looked maybe like 15.

But I was already much older, as you can imagine, being a teacher already and so, and speaks perfectly Russian, speaks German, with a baby. And nobody, but nobody knows her. So she is a planted in spy. What can she be?

I didn't know about anything, but only their behavior. I'm talking to everybody what I think he's a Jew. And I am so happy that I found a sister, a brother, father. And they are so reserved to me. And I couldn't understand what the matter is, except a couple of people have been different.

And in this camp, we stayed. I can't tell you how it was in barracks. And the toilets were-- did you read Solzhenitsyn about the parasha? This is what we used to have, the parasha. It is a big--

And you didn't hear anything from your husband all this time? You had no idea?

Nothing, no place, I didn't hear from him.

And family?

Nothing.

Nothing.

Because they had been cut off.

So you had no idea where anybody was?

Nobody. I didn't have idea where they are. And I didn't know what to think. And I didn't know what's going on with me. And probably, most probably, I would have said, it's-- now, it's enough. But I have the little baby. And I knew that I have to do something to keep the baby. And this what people say, that I took my baby through all those things. But I have to tell you, when I know it for sure, that the baby took me.

The baby took you.

Because such a desperate situation, a young woman, the first time in her life, who doesn't know anything what is bad, for only from the books can imagine that there is something bad, everybody is good, and everybody you trust, and everybody is only love, and you're coming in such a situation. And I had to fight for the life of my baby.

So we used to get 400 gram bread a day, twice a day water. It should be soup, but was a couple of pieces of cabbage, but only the green leaves of the cabbage, and one cup, and small cup, of kasha-- [NON-ENGLISH], they used to call it. I don't know how you say.

How long did you stay there?

In this Aranki, we stayed approximately till November.

OK. And then?

And then when the Russian tried to take Moscow, they were afraid that they can come to Aranki too. And one, two, three, they made trains and the wagons. And these were the wagons where already have been cattle wagons. And they took all the people. And they took us farther. It was very cold.

They took everyone, not just Jews?

No, everyone.

And there have been Italians, all kinds. We have been interned by them. And we-- they took us to the trains. And it was a terrible thing the way you had to be on the way with the little baby. And nobody wants to take you. And I don't have even diapers for the child because I didn't expect.

Everything I had, I sent to Vladivostok. Only I was lucky that I have two bags who didn't have a cover. They have to have covers. So they didn't take it to send it away. So I had to have it with me. And this was everything my-- what I had.

So for this child being so cold in the winter, and so hungry, and going with the train days, and days, and days, and days, and nobody wants to help me, and everybody pushes away because the Jews have been not good, not bad, nothing. They didn't care. And they Goyim persecuted me. And I was afraid how I can bring out this child from such a situation, shouldn't get a cold.

So I had a silver foxes with me. And I had a cape for the theater, from angora, something really wonderful, so that I have to take my bags, and I have to carry the child. How can I make it when there is nobody to help me?

So I took the child, who I had with diapers, no diapers, and I put him in the cape, and in the cape, gave the fox, and then a scarf, and I made such a bundle. So I knew that he is warm. And this is the way I have been taking him from one place to another.

And when I was laying there in the wagon, near the wall, in the morning, I was frozen to the wall-- I couldn't move. I had to take off the coat to go out. So it was-- the child all the time kept this way and try to give him a little bit milk. And if there was one woman, she was-- no, she was later, I think.

There was-- everybody tried to push me away. And they have been making a fire in the middle of the wagon and to warm a little from the-- of water. If I used to get something, that was already special.

And then we have been traveling, traveling till we came to Aktyubinsk in Karaganda, in the beginning of Karaganda. And then they put us to barracks, where the floor is from only-- how do you call it-- the earth. There is nothing more on the earth in barracks. So from wood--

Boards.

--boards. And everybody gets only 30 centimeters. You have to wash for a child. I have to do. And it was a terrible thing. And the main thing that I do, you began to drink a little bit. And this I was very happy that I knew that we can't get too much out of it. And the only thing what I could give him was only water. Black bread, you can't give a child till probably a year old. And so was so terrible crying.

And once came a Russian-- Russians in the barracks. And between them was to look how we are. And I began to say that it is impossible, that wouldn't do anybody. It's not human. It's a foreign so far that we don't take-- if you don't have anything to give to food, don't take us. Here is starving a child in my hands and can't do anything.

So it was a Russian-- a guard, an old Russian, but he was probably an old Kazakh, was very, very big and so. But with a real human heart, he said to me, do you have money? I didn't have too much money. What I have, I give you.

So he went to the marketplace, and found woman who have milk, and told them to bring it to him in the vakhta, in the place before you are going in the camp. He used to buy for me the milk and bring me a glass of milk for the child there. I'll never forget it.

A Russian.

I think it was a Kazakh, an old Kazakh-- gray, was gray. And he did it for me. I met so many Russian people who have been really human to me. So I had a little bit milk already for the child. And we have been staying in this the whole winter. I'll never forget it. I had to wash the child diapers, no diapers with pieces what I had.

And they didn't let me hang it up in the barrack with the stove because I'm going to spoil the air. Imagine what kind of air that it was. So I had to hang it up outside. I'll never forget that you took the wet diapers to hang it up outside.

And before I can move, my fingers were already frozen to this. And it all was bloody, torn down. And in a second, it was like a piece of steel. This was-- I remember, this was so terrible because all the fingers was gone bloody.

There, I met some people, interesting people, and interesting because they have been for me something like still-- they let me believe that there are people in the world, old ladies who have been staying-- there was one lady, a professor of English literature. And she was French, married to a Frenchman. But her husband died. And she had-- still had a French passport. And she behaved to me like a real mother.

She was not a Jew?

No.

Why were the Jews so much less nice to you than the non-Jews?

They hadn't been less nice, but afterward, they left me alone. They hadn't been good, they hadn't been bad.

Why? They were afraid you were a plant?

Yes. And they didn't know when I wasn't a German-- and the way the Germans looked at the Ostjuden. And I was so atypical, like you say, that I didn't understand that something-- to say something was not true. I said to them, I must Yiddish, and I said them, I'm Lithuanian. I said all the truth. And this what make them farther, and farther, and farther to go away. And they stayed.

Yes, it's hard for them.

Was an Ostjude. And there was another lady, which I would like to say, she was a Russian princess, furstin. She was a born Kutuzova. And she was married to an old man from Austria, with an Austrian passport.

And this man of hers was some-- she stayed in Latvia, I think. And she was alone, living in Russia with her children. And then she kept her Austrian passport. And her name was Olga Konstantinova Neufneugen-- Drin-- I don't remember. But she was born Kutuzova.

And she took care of me, I would say. She was very, very nice to me. And this life in Aktyubinsk ended very quick because they decided we have to go to another place, where should be-- this was a place, we didn't know. But we know it's going to be big, big preparations, and big preparations took so long. And one day, we have been transported to the station in wagons with straw and hay. And I got a place up with the baby, and have been traveling.

Our food, I don't have to tell you, but it was in comparison what they had in the Germans' camps, it was already good, but it was not much better. Water, we had 300 grams bread, sometimes 400 grams bread, and this was it. Sugar, it was very precious thing. We should have sugar, get a teaspoon a day, but we didn't get it very often sugar. We got sugar once in three months. So it was a little bit more. And after traveling, I think, six or eight weeks in such conditions, what I cannot describe you, we came to a station called Karaganda.

Karaganda.

Karaganda. It was Kazakhstan. And then we went out from the wagons. And men who were a little bit stronger, they had to work. And afterwards, I being very much protege because I had a little child, we have been taken by a [NON-ENGLISH], they call it, a big wagon, a truck, and brought to a place called Spassk. It's 40 kilometers from Karaganda.

And then they had their criminals or other people, maybe even political in barracks, who were-- we saw already that have been many people. And we had to stay there. I got a little place. And near me was this-- what I told you, this countess, Alexandra Nikolaevna-- think I mixed up her name. It is going to come to me. This is why I decided I want to come now because I'm getting worse, and worse, and worse.

And the second or third day, I began to feel so terrible, terrible cramps all over my belly. I think the child was 11 months old. I said-- and I didn't know what to do, to go to the doctor, there was a doctor or somebody, who was from Vienna. He was an intern doctor. And there are the Russian doctors what they used to work there.

But it was impossible to come to the doctor because all the people are sitting and waiting for them. So it was one day and another day. To make a long story short, they sent me to the hospital because I had typhoid. What to do with the baby?

You had typhoid?

Went to the hospital. The hospital is also on the floor was not a floor, but earth.

Earth.

And such from [NON-ENGLISH]. You know what is [NON-ENGLISH], a bed barrack. And then we had a little place to-- on a straw bed, having sleeping there. And it was so that my temperature was constantly 38 and 36, constantly 38

and 36. But we have to eat. It is-- it was from potatoes, which they used to use for the soldiers the shells.

Peels, yeah.

The peels, this was cooked now. I find out that it was not such a bad thing at all because it had the vitamins.

And where was the baby?

The baby, I kept it with me.

All the time?

All the time, he was laying with me. And this was it. And he was drinking. And I says, maybe I could give the baby maybe to bring in Karaganda in a child center. And I said, no, I don't give the baby away from me.