

RG-50.120 #0051 2 Tapes
PNINA GRINSHPAN

I

- 1.01 Born in Nowy Dwor near Warsaw. Pnina Papler was from a large, warm family - 5 brothers, 2 sisters. Father was a Zionist. Brothers belonged to Bund, one brother was Revisionist. Home was full of friends, relatives, lots of music. Very close family. Pnina was the youngest. Also belonged to a Zionist youth movement. Rather pampered - 'a little princess' of the family. In Noridvor were several Jewish schools. 10,000 inhabitants, half of them Jews. Anti-semitism always present. High schools were only in Warsaw. Family was reluctant to send her to the big city. When war broke out Germans entered the town, young people were sent immediately to labor camps. Jews did not believe at the start of the war, that it would last long. Never imagined the turn of events. Family moved to Warsaw to join older brother. Believed in Warsaw they would be safer - safety in numbers... The fortress in Modlin near Nowy Dwor was the first to fall. Warsaw came next.
- 1.23 City was very crowded with Jews from other towns who took refuge there. Part of the family decided to return to Nowy Dwor.
- 1.26 Wealthy Jews had every valuable confiscated. Warsaw ghetto was created. End of 1940 ghetto was sealed off. Conditions in ghetto worsened daily. Unemployment, lack of food, sanitation. Few Jewish stores - factories were taken over by Germans and jobs were distributed. The unemployed were sent to labor camps and later to concentration camps. Pnina got a job in a Jewish furniture factory and learned carpentry.
- 1.46 Describes conditions in ghetto - poverty, hunger, filth and diseases. People expired on the streets, including young children, many of typhus. Pnina's parent returned to the ghetto - Nowy Dwor. Her older brother kept her in Warsaw at first. Later she went to join parents and Nowy Dwor. Ghetto there was less crowded. More employment available.
- 2.00 There were Jews who decided to try and escape across the border to the Soviet Union. Pnina's family decided against the move. Describes daily life - organizing to take care of the children. Different building organized day care centers. Pnina took charge of physical education.
- 2.15 Describes her own bout with typhus - lack of medicine, quarantine by Germans. Jewish Joint established a few soup kitchens. Misery and hunger resulted in gangs of young Jews who attacked and robbed and terrorized the neighborhoods.
- 2.27 Describes her return to Nowy Dwor to join parents. Germans ordered all Jewish families in the small ghetto [approximately 400 people] to empty their homes and go to the river Visla 'to bathe'. Pnina escaped to a nearby village. Germans then shot to death all elderly Jews and most children. Pnina's family survived and later returned back to the Warsaw ghetto to join her older brother. This is when Pnina got her job in the Landau furniture factory, mentioned earlier.

- 2.40 Summer 1942 - first Selections of Jews and transports to death camps. One of her brothers with his wife and two children were sent to one of the camps. Jews began to hear news from escapees and understand that the 'labor camps' were actually death camp.
- 2.44 Periodic Selections continue. P describes the helplessness, fear, acceptance and lack of resistance among the group of Jewish men. The Selections were conducted by a handful of Germans and she was struck by the fact that scores of strong, young Jewish men did not even try to disarm them or resist and were led to their death like 'sheep to the slaughter'.
- 2.50 P started contacts with a group of young Jews who were organizing resistance. The slaughter of one of the Landau Brothers, owner of the factory was one of them. Another of the resistance leaders, Hirsch Berlinsky approached her. Also Joseph Farber.
- 3.00 After her older brother - his family were taken to Auschwitz, P is determined to join in resistance movement. Describes the difficulty in joining three cells - had to keep utmost secrecy.
- 3.10 Worsening conditions in the ghetto - curfews and executions daily.
- 3.12 Preparations for first uprising. January 10 1942 P belongs to a small group of five fighters - the 'quintet' - including one of her brothers and a cousin. Waiting for weapons and training after escaping one of the Selections. Determined to fall fighting the Germans and not to be sent to the death camps.
- 3.27 Describes loading of the trains - the screams, the shootings and horror. Determined to escape, hide and prepare to fight.
- 3.40 Training with the few weapons - Molotov cocktails and grenades, using destroyed and abandoned buildings. Distributed posters warning Jews of the death camps, labor camps as the Germans described them. Preparation of a bunker in one of the cellars - to hide about 50 fighters.
- 3.54 P's mood is upbeat - happy to belong to a fighting group. Knew that one ghetto after another was liquidated all over Poland.
- 4.02 Central commanders like Antek [Izhak] Zuckerman and Mordechai Anielewicz will give order to start the uprising as soon as the Germans would enter the ghetto.

II

Rumors of cases of cannibalism in the ghetto. Had to force wealthy Jews to give money in order to buy weapons. Relations with members of the Judenrat [Jewish council] from initial suspicions and bitterness to later cooperation.

April 18, 1943 Germans enter the ghetto and prepare to liquidate entirely. P's group as well as others started resistance actions - throwing grenades etc. Germans retaliate with heavy artillery. Blow up most buildings. Resisting groups decide to unite - the central

ghetto and continue the battle together. Keep contact with Anielewicz in Mila 18 - waiting for orders for general uprising. Bunker in Mila 18 was the headquarters of the Central uprising. Describes Jews hiding in different bunkers - all scared and some are hostile to resistance fighters. Ghetto is burning.

- 5.00 Several fighters escape through the sewers to join Zuckerman who is fighting outside the ghetto walls, in the 'Aryan' side. P is with them - they plan to join the partisans in the forests. Mentions Kazhik as contact. They find out that Mordechai Anielewicz and the fighters in Mila 18 had all perished in the battle.
- 5.30 Joining with the Polish resistance in the forests. Encounters with Soviet soldiers, escaped war prisoners, local farmers. Polish rural population.
- 5.35 Harsh winter conditions in the forests: sickness and hunger. P had a pistol with one bullet only - and decided to save it for killing herself in case she would ever fall in Germans' hands. Kazhik [one of the original central ghetto uprising] keeps visiting in the forest - he is in and out of Warsaw.
- 5.50 Germans indeed arrived. P and comrades escaped deeper into the woods. P refused to return to Warsaw to hide with Polish families. She never trusted the Poles. She preferred to stay with partisans in the forests, continued with 'jobs' consisting mainly of sabotage. In her group she names Chaim Freeman, Joseph Latma, who was killed in the forests, Dov Shnifer, two doctors in group: Dr. Yurek Kiryat-Sefer and Zigmund Gurny. These physicians also helped Polish and Russian partisans. A week before uprising P is forced to return to Warsaw to join Polish resistance. with her is Hannah Frishhuff - eight months pregnant.
- 6.01 Meets with Itzhak Zuckerman who gave her some money and food. P asks him to be returned to the forests but then the Polish uprising started. Describes joining Polish crowds in the streets of Warsaw, being led to the Gestapo headquarters. The men were separated from women and almost all were executed. Her comrade [and leader] Dr. Shnifer put up resistance and was shot to death. Four women, 3 Poles and P were taken to Gestapo headquarters and assigned a job as Red Cross nurses to tend to German dead or wounded soldiers. P managed to escape across the lines to the Polish resistance forces. There she was interrogated and since she confessed to being Jewish was accused of being a spy and collaborator with the Germans. Was saved by high ranking Polish officer who had remembered her brothers from Novodvor. Ironically, the Jewish family suspected her of spying on behalf of the Polish National Army....An old commander vouched for her - she joined the Polish National Army - Russians already surrounded Warsaw - the Polish revolt is still raging on.
- 6.30 Meets with her pregnant friend, Hannah Frushthoff and helps her through the delivery. A boy was born - he is today a professor in the U.S. P was considered his 'second mother'...
- 6.36 The Polish uprising is crushed by the Germans [Soviet army never made a move to enter Warsaw and help them]. P is again hiding - in different bunkers for around 4 months, never trusting the Poles. January 23, 1945 Warsaw was liberated. Describes the hatred of the Poles for the Jews, even during the uprising. They blamed the Jews for being communists and influencing the Red army to stop in its tracks at the outskirts

of Warsaw [Praga]. Warsaw was completely demolished by the Germans just before the capitulation. P does not hide her satisfaction.. Polish atrocities against her fellow Jews were never forgotten.

- 10.52 P tells about her husband Chaim Grinshpan, also a ghetto fighter. 1945 - immigrated to Palestine via Bucharest. 1946 - got married. He died in 1972 in Tel Aviv. P has a son and daughter and grandchildren.