

RG-50.120*0054

Gurevitch, Tova

Tape 1 of 3

- 1.01 Born in Vilna, Poland and was the youngest of five children. The family was middle-class (in the textile business). They were religious and observant – the children attended Jewish schools and later “Tarbut” Hebrew seminar. Her older brother went to Palestine and the younger siblings were involved with Zionist youth movements. Describes the rich, cultural Jewish life in Vilna, and that she had a good childhood.
- 1.17 Outbreak of war - describes where they lived and the Vilna neighborhoods on September 1, 1939. Vilna was occupied by the Russians who turned the city to Lithuanian rule. She says this was a relatively good period. Learned both languages. Continued Hebrew studies. Food was adequate. Refugees from elsewhere came to Vilna. Life remained this way until June 1941.
- 1.38 The German bombardment started as well as restrictions (yellow star, forced labor). Father and brother were kidnapped to “work,” but they were sent to Ponari and shot (did not know until later). Germans prepared ghetto #1 and ghetto #2. Many Jews were transferred while others were taken to Ponari, after provocation in early September. Lithuanians guarded the gates.
- 1.50 Describes own condition – she worked (had a permit and spoke other languages). One brother, one sister and sister’s husband were the only ones left. Describes their move into the ghetto (“Jewish Street” where 10,000 residents had left and 60,000 had entered). Describes the 1 & ½ room apartment shared by three families. Talks about the families, daily living conditions, food, and how the Germans and Lithuanians controlled them and took their documents.
- 2.13 Describes how she left the ghetto, dug out father’s hidden money, went to Svir???, lived with relatives, worked, was caught and returned to the Vilna ghetto.
- 2.25 Describes changes she found in the ghetto and its organization – the Judenrat (names people), the local police, ghetto commanders, Murer and Kaetel??. Traded things for food. Describes, in detail, her work with children with special problems. Describes how they celebrated holidays with the children, choir and plays. She taught Hebrew. There was no understanding, then, about the impending end. Describes her daily schedule as a teacher in detail.
- 2.52 Refers to having all of Vilna’s ghetto’s songs – written.
- 2.56 Discusses the extent of knowing what happened outside the ghetto; rumors; contact with partisans (F.P.O.); Glassman. This period is winter 1942.
- 3.04 Elaborates further about life and activities in the ghetto, especially cultural. Talks more about Katel, persecutions, and Ponari. People were sent to labor camps in

Estonia-Vivori; there were fewer and fewer children; the mental state of the residents, no suicides, drive for survival.

- 3.36 Describes another escape from the ghetto (August 1943) to surrounding farms – “Malina” crowded and surrounded by women – kidnapping Lithuanians; harrowing escape with sister through sewers, eventually returned to ghetto by Lithuanian police. Brother (who carried money) never returned.

Tape 2 of 3

- 4.06 Describes the final period at the ghetto, disintegration of command (Gens, Dessler?). Left ghetto in September 1943, a few days before its end, with neighbors, hiding in various places, aided by partisans or peasants who were paid.
- 4.25 Eventually spent 8 continuous months hiding in a hole dug under a pigs’ stall with ten others. Describes, in details, the cramped, dark and freezing life in the hole, the food, relationship with the peasant family (who was paid) how they occupied themselves, her writing diary, the risks. They left in the spring of 1944, and spent two more months at another hiding place.
- 5.07 After Vilna, she was captured by the Russians. She returned at the end of July 1944. Describes the town and people she found, Russian Jews and those in Lithuanian brigade. She worked, but prepared to immigrate to Palestine. Met Masha, the “Anne Frank of Vilna.”
- 5.40 Traveled 16 days to Lodz, where she met survivors and individuals in Zionist groups. She was recruited to teach children Hebrew. Met soldiers of the “Jewish Brigade” who took Jewish children back from the Christian homes where they had been placed.
- 5.48 She was sent, with groups of children (destined to immigrate to Palestine) to Germany and then Prague and back to Germany – where she was reunited with her sister and brother-in-law. The children continued to their destinations through other arrangements, but she describes traveling with individual children. She was married in Munich and continued to teach children and others in preparation for immigration. She and her sister were invited to visit relatives in England for 5 months. She returned to Paris where she worked with “liberated” and “displaced” children. She describes their special characteristics and problems and how she taught them. They were in part children from the ship, Exodus. She also refers to the many Zionist emissaries she met in Paris. They celebrated holidays and Zionist events. She continued to write in her diary. Because of her work with children and the legal immigration difficulties, their departure for Palestine was repeatedly delayed.

Tape 3 of 3

- 7.10 They finally arrived in January 1948, with a youngster named Moshelle, who subsequently went to a kibbutz. She met her oldest brother and eventually settled

in Tel Aviv and Natanya. She describes the tense pre-state conditions of the country, but mostly her attempts and experiences in becoming a teacher in the Israeli school system. She met several survivors as well as relatives of people she had met during the Holocaust years. She emphasizes how much help and goodwill she encountered in her professional and personal adaptation to the country. Tells about her family, children and grandchildren and what she shares with them about her past experiences. She also talks about how meaningful, albeit difficult, this interview is for her.