

SHIMEL, Lucia (née Pinchuk)

RG-50.120*142

5 Tapes (no indication of TAPE III, where it begins and ends)

Abstract

Lucia Shimel, née Pinchuk, was born in Minsk. Her family fled from the Bolsheviks to Vilnius, where she grew up in a Jewish middle class neighborhood. She studied pharmacology at university there, and experienced anti-Semitism as early as 1938.

When the Russian Army entered Vilnius, they ordered middle-class Jews to Siberia. Lucia's family got an exemption but the father's store was confiscated.

Lucia describes the Germans' invasion, anti-Jewish laws, the atmosphere during German occupation, and Poles and Lithuanians persecuting Jews during the summer of 1943.

In September 1943, Germans ordered Jews into the ghetto. She describes her family's entry into ghetto 1, organization of life in the ghetto; working outside the ghetto.

She and her family left the ghetto and hid. She joined the underground, and met with leaders including Abba Kovner. She discusses the Ponary massacre. She talks of Wilhelm Keitel and the killing 400 young people.

On Sept. 23, 1943, the ghetto was ordered closed, and the Gestapo selected people to be killed or transported. She was sent to Camp Kaiserwald in Riga, and was among 500 people marched to a weapons repair factory.

At the beginning of 1944, she was taken by train to Shawli (Siauliai, Lithuania) and other places, and eventually marched to Stutthof (Sztutowo, Poland). She describes gynecological exams, treatment by Stubenalteste, psychological effect of the tattoos. However, a group of friends helps her morale.

At the beginning of January 1945, she was marched for six weeks. A Pole pulled her out of the march, and took her to a Polish woman who hid her.

After the war, Lucia eventually went to Palestine. British troops caught her, but later she settled in a kibbutz. She talks of Israelis' constant questioning about Jews' lack of resistance. She describes survivor's guilt, nightmares, righteous Poles who saved Jews, resentment about the world not helping save Jews. Her mission is to give testimony.

TAPE I

- 1:03 Lucia Shimel, née Pinchuk, was born in Minsk. Her parents fled from the Bolsheviks to Vilnius, where she grew up in a Jewish middle class neighborhood. She describes her childhood, education in Jewish and gentile Polish schools.
- 1:23 Lucia describes her family life. Her parents had a conflict about religion. She talks about her father's haberdashery business.
- 1:38 She discusses youth organizations and her friends.
- 1:47 She studies pharmacology at university, and experiences anti-Semitism there in 1938.
- 2:16 In 1939, Jews began arriving from Germany. She describes pogroms and the general atmosphere in the summer of 1939.
- 2:20 Lucia talks about Jewish life in Vilnius and anti-Semitism.
- 2:29 She describes the outbreak of war and helplessness of Polish army.
- 2:34 With the Russian army's arrival in Vilnius, Polish anti-Semitism intensified because of leftist Jews.
- 2:38 Russians ordered Jewish middle class people to go to Siberia. Her family got an exemption but the father's store was confiscated.
- 2:42 Jewish Zionist youth groups, who had escaped from Poland, arrive and hope to get to Palestine.
- 2:49 She describes her contact with Akiba youth group, and seven of them stayed in her apartment.
- 3:10 She moves with the pharmacology department to Kovno and then back to Vilnius. She describes Lithuanian anti-Semitism.
- 3:16 She talks about the Russian army's departure and the Germans' bombardment.
- 3:30 She describes Lithuanian attacks on Jews.
- 3:35 The German army enters, and laws against Jews are enacted.
- 3:42 Germans used Poles and Lithuanians against Jews. Men and boys were rounded up for work.

- 3:50 She talks about her friendship with two sisters, Toshia and Ida, with whom she spent the war years.
- 3:59 She describes Germans arresting people and asking Jewish communists for ransom.

TAPE II

- 4:02 She describes the atmosphere in July 1943 during German occupation and cooperation of Poles and Lithuanians in persecution of Jews.
- 4:21 In September 1943, Germans order Jews into the ghetto.
- 4:33 She describes her family's entry in ghetto 1.
- 4:40 She talks about organization of life in the ghetto. Genz.
- 4:48 Lucia works with a group in Porobanek.
- 4:56 She works outside the ghetto in Bielowaka, and describes the work and the life. About 500 people lived and worked in Bielowaka.
- 5:09 She heard rumors about the ghetto and went back to bring food to her family. Lucia describes the ghetto, and going with her family to a hideout.
- 5:21 She talks about a Jewish informant who disclosed hiding places.
- 5:23 They heard about Ponar. Beginning of thinking about resistance. Talks about Gent and Deckler.
- 5:29 She arranged for her family to go to Bielowaka.
- 5:33 Genz ordered 5000 Jews to go to Estonia.
- 5:35 Lucia talks about the ghetto's cultural life.
- 5:38 She works underground in the ghetto. Describes meetings with Abba Kovner and other leaders.
- 5:43 Describes Dessler and what happened to those who were taken to Ponar.
- 5:57 She went to hospital in the ghetto for a tonsillectomy. She hears about fate of her mother.
- 6:15 She returned to Bielowaka, but was later transferred to another village to help clean up Ponar.

- 6:18 Describes life in Bielowaka.
- 6:21 Describes Keitel's activities, killing 400 young people.
- 6:26 She returns from the village of Zawalna to the ghetto, and describes the last days in the ghetto, and the fate of Yitzak Wittenberg. People knew about the Resistance.
- 6:30 She describes how the Germans fooled people into not resisting.
- 6:32 On Sept. 23, 1943, they were ordered to assemble and leave the ghetto. Genz was shot and Dessler was caught escaping.
- 6:37 She describes being marched up a hill. Four people who tried to escape through sewers were hanged.
- 6:48 Toshia headed a "group" of friends in the crowd. Lucia describes selection by the Gestapo, to death or to a cattle train.
- 6:59 She Describes train ride.
- 7:08 Corrects mistakes from previous tape. Describes lasting feelings and nightmares.
- 7:18 Describes life in Bielowaka.
- 7:34 Medical treatment in Bielowaka.
- 7:42 Bielowaka was closed one month before liquidation of ghetto. She returned to Vilnius.
- 7:44 She describes her train ride, arrival at Camp Kaiserwald in Riga, the camp, incidents of cruelty, and other treatment.
- 8:16 Kramer selected 500 people who were marched to Diener [?] Werke, a factory for weapons repair. She remained there nine months. Describes living conditions, guards, Russian and Dutch prisoners.
- 8:36 Cultural life at the camp. Ida the poet of the camp.
- 8:51 Describes Kramer, the German commander of the Jewish camp who was humane.
- 8:58 At the beginning of 1944, at the time the ghetto was liquidated, they were taken by train to Shawli (Siauliai, Lithuania). She describes mood of remaining Jews.

- 9:05 They were taken to Ponerez (not found) to build an airfield, and after one month, to the Baltic coast in boats and then marched to Stutthof (Sztutowo, Poland). Describes camp, including mountains of shoes and eyeglasses. Other prisons told them that it was a death camp.
- 9:23 Describes the cruelty of Ukrainian and German guards and the appels.
- 9:24 Camp hierarchy. Capos and Camp Alteste.
- 9:35 They were taken to Krumau and had to dig anti-tank trenches. Describes conditions and punishments.
- 9:54 What she knew about the gas chambers.
- 10:05 Fight for food. Discord between Eastern European and German Jews.

TAPE IV

- 10:13 Disclaims some of her stories about Stutthof and previous tape.
- 10:15 Describes a day in Stutthof. Arrival. Gynecological examinations, barracks, treatment by Stubenalteste, appels, psychological effect of number tattoos, dehumanizing behavior.
- 10:38 The "group" of friends she was in and how it affected morale.
- 10:47 Punishments.
- 10:49 Describes the march of 100 women to Krumau, in the fall, to dig trenches.
- 11:00 At the beginning of January 1945, they were marched for six weeks. She described the conditions during the march. Many died.
- 11:38 She is pulled out of the march by a Pole, who rescues her and hides her.
- 11:48 She is taken to the house of a Polish woman, Monika, who takes care of her.
- 12:01 Ukrainians were sent to hunt and kill those who escaped from the march.
- 12:08 Describes the generosity of the Polish woman who took her in.
- 12:10 Describes the entry of Russian tanks. Treatment by Russian soldiers.
- 12:33 She leaves Monika and goes to Kartuzi, Poland, where she works in the mayor's office. She meets one of her Vilnius friends who tells her of the fate of

other “group” members.

- 12:54 She leaves Kartuzi and travels by train to Lodz, where she finds friends at the youth center.
- 12:59 She goes by train to Italy with a group of 80 to 100 people pretending to be Greeks.
- 13:05 She describes Regio Emilia, where they waited for a boat *Sereni* to take them to Palestine.
- 13:09 Describes boat ride. The British caught them and brought them to Haifa.
- 13:18 She spends a week in transit camp Atlit and is then taken to kibbutz Beit Yehoshua.

TAPE V

- 13:21 Additions and corrections to previous tape.
- 13:35 Describes getting information about relatives.
- 13:39 Describes adjustment to Israel, meeting a man whom she wed, and getting married.
- 13:43 Survivor guilt and ongoing nightmares. Lack of understanding by Israelis, the constant question about lack of resistance. Her mission is to testify to what had happened.
- 14:00 Stories about righteous Poles who saved Jews.
- 14: 08 Extermination at Klooga and her feelings about the world that stood by and didn't help.