

PG – 50. 120 – 159

Interview with Liza Chapnik.

01.01.00.

I was born in Grodno in 1922. My parents had 4 kids and I was the youngest. My family was religious and we always celebrated Jewish holidays. Although my family was not rich, all kids got an education. As I was the youngest, I just finished school in 1941.

01.15.00.

Since the first day of the war Grodno was bombarded by German planes. Many people evacuated from the town but my mom did not want to do it and so we tried to leave the town without her. But there were many Germans around the town and so we could not leave town. Many men from the town including my brother were taken as prisoners of war to the German camp that was on the edge of Grodno. For a few days, I lived next to the camp giving water and food to my brother and other prisoners. I spoke Polish and I asked all the time for mercy for my brother and in few days he was allowed leave the camp.

01.24.00.

My brother, sister and I continued our route. We reached the village Direchina where we lived with our relatives. My sister and brother decided to go farther but I stayed with relatives. I lived with them couple of months and then I decided to go to village Slonino that was not too far from Direchina.

01.28.00.

When I reached Slonino I heard ugly screams and soon I knew that there was a German execution in Slonino. That day many women and kids from Slonino were killed. It was August 1941. I lived in Slonino a few days and then I returned to Direchina.

01.33.30.

Soon I returned to Grodno. Since November there was a ghetto in Grodno and there all Jews and my family lived. My parents told me that it was very dangerous for me to stay in the town because the Gestapo was looking for me, although I had no idea why. Probably because I was a Komsomol member, I did not know. So my parents decided to hide me from the Germans in the closet in the attic of our house. Even our neighbours did not know I returned to the town.

01.41.00.

In November 1941 the Germans did a huge execution in Grodno. That day my parents and one of my sisters were taken to the concentration camp. Another of my sisters was not taken by the Germans that day because my sister's husband had a valuable job and the Germans needed him. But despite the fact that my sister with her husband was not hurting the Germans they continued to live in the ghetto together with the other Jews. I survived but I could not stay in the town. Members of the underground organization of our town made an identity card for me with a Polish name. I got name Bpozovskaja Marisha. I began to work as a member of the underground organization and I began to live in Bialystock.

01.48.40.

I got a task to find a few secret apartments in Bialystock that would be good for me and other members of the underground organization. My girlfriend and I worked as kitchen workers for the Germans and at the same time we got secret tasks from the Red Army.

01.52.50.

One day I went to Grodno in order to take the daughter of my sister from Grodno because there was dangerous situation in Grodno and I thought that it would be better if the kid lived with me instead of the ghetto. Of course, I could not imagine that one my neighbours from my secret apartment would write letter to the commandant's office about my niece. But when one day I returned from the job, I discovered that my sister's daughter was taken from my apartment by the Germans to the commandant's office.

02.02.30.

I went to the Gestapo and I asked them to let my niece go with me. I spoke Polish but I was not that I would take my niece with me from the Ghestapo. But I did it and I hid her. Soon I discovered that my sister was taken from Grodno to Bialystock's ghetto with all other Jews. I returned her own daughter to her because she wanted. In a few days all Jews from Bialystock's ghetto including my sister and her daughter died in a gas Chamber.

02.10.00.

There were two ghettos in Grodno. Many people from the ghetto were taken to the concentration camps of Treblinka. Every day many Jews from the ghetto were killed by the German soldiers.

02.17.50.

One day a few young people from Grodno escaped from the ghetto and went to the forest. There they began to work as partisans. My girlfriends and I helped to deliver weapons for people who prepared rising in Bialystock. After the war, an article was written in a newspaper, about women's group that worked during the occupation in Bialystok..

02.52.40.

The partisans had help from people who lived in Grodno but they did not have enough food and medicine. Many of them died but surviving partisans made many tasks during the occupation.

02.56.00.

There were four Germans who worked with members of the underground organization. They were very good persons and they helped us a lot. After the war one of them wrote a book about the occupation time and about his help for Red Army.

03.14.00.

My girlfriends and I delivered secret information about places that were mined by the Germans during the occupation. According to our information Bialystock was freed almost without losses and not many buildings were destroyed.

03.22.00.

There were many groups working against the Germans in Bialystock. One of them was a nationalist group. In 1944, we got an order about intensification of the struggle against the Germans. It meant that we had to unite all separated groups of our town. It was not an easy task because we had two big groups, one of them was a Polish group and another was a partisan group. The Polish group sometimes did not trust the partisans because there were a few accidents in Bialystock when some partisans pretended that they worked for the Red Army but as a matter of fact they were hired by the Germans and so sometimes the Germans killed people involved with those "partisans". So I was scared that the Polish group would not want to speak with me. But they did. I used the Polish language speaking with them and I talked to them about the partisans and they believed me that I was not a traitor. Very soon after our conversation I took some people from the Polish group to the forest where they were introduced to the partisan group and they began to work together.

04.24.30.

There were many people working against the Germans in Bialystock. Some of them worked as housekeepers, other as kitchen workers, some worked in the Gestapo. But they all had tasks from the underground organization to hear German conversations all the time and to deliver value information about them.

04.40.50.

After the war my girlfriends from the underground organization and I had an interview with a journalist and we were asked about our life during the occupation. The journalist was very much interested in why we did our dangerous job being members of the underground organization. She told us we could have had a quiet life because we had Polish passports, looked like Poles and we could speak Polish. We answered that we did not even want to think about another way to live during the war, because what we only wanted was to have a struggle against the Germans. As for me I lost my parents and all my relatives died during the war and I was not afraid to be killed.

04.48.20.

In July 1944, Bialystock and Grodno were freed from the Germans. My girlfriends and I returned to Grodno and there we discovered that Grodno was almost destroyed and 29,000 people were killed during the German occupation.

04.51.00.

In 1945, my girlfriends and I went to Moscow and we entered the institution of the foreign languages and finished it.
I have lived in Israel since 1994.