

RG-50.120 #0229 2 Tapes  
EPSHTEIN, LIBI

- 1.00 Libiena Haikowa was born on 2/25/23 in a small town in Czechoslovakia: Mova Paka. She had 2 brothers, older than she, and 4 years apart from each other.
- 1.01 After Libi's father's business floundered, they were forced to move to another town, Pardubice, where Libi began attending school.
- 5.15 The family moved to Prague.
- 5.49 News from Germany started to trickle in, and everyone understood that things would not be pleasant anymore. They counted on the fact that Czechoslovakia was a democratic country, and that it would be able to preserve its independence, Swiss-style. Libi's family was more informed than others because her maternal uncle was one of the closest advisors of Masaryk.
- 9.18 The family was very assimilated. The children didn't even know, until 1939, that they were Jews.
- 10.38 The clouds were approaching after the annexation of the Sudetes to Germany.
- 12.09 Libi's brothers were Izi Hayek, who was born in 1914; the other, Vlastimil, was born in 1918. His nickname was Mila. Izi wanted to continue his assimilationist ways whereas Mike wanted to become a Jew in the total sense of the word. He joined a youth group called El-Al.
- 12.52 The very talented Mila was in the 2nd year of his philosophy studies at the university. He began learning Hebrew, and mastered it. He could also write prose and poetry. Mila became a Zionist.
- 13.25 On March 15, 1939, Germans arrived in Czechoslovakia and the family knew that their good life had come to an end.

- 14.12 Libi's maternal uncle, D.r Beitter, was in the nazi's block list, and they came looking for him on the first day. They had, supposedly, gone on vacation to the south, and Libi's father went to warn him he was being hunted.
- 15.00 The uncle had a plan, to flee Europe and go to New York, where he had been appointed professor of philosophy already... but the next day the uncle's entire family showed up in Prague! It turned out that his wife, who was a gentile, had refused to go ahead with the plan. The uncle was arrested immediately, and his tracks disappeared completely. They later found out that he had been sent to Buchenwald, where he was killed in 1945.
- 18.25 The anti-Jewish laws included the ban go to to school.
- 22.00 Libi was bored at home and looked for something to do.
- 24.31 Libi began to manage a small office, which was a front for a black market in gasoline and other products. One day, a friend of the owner suggested to Libi to save herself from an uncertain future by taking the last place on a last plane that the company was sending to Switzerland. They needed an immediate answer from her. Libi wanted a day to talk to her parents. They refused to wait. When Libi told her mother, she was very upset that Libi did not accept the offer. Libi didn't want to leave her parents alone. The older brother had already married - a gentile girl; the second brother had already been sent to the hachshara by his youth movement.
- 39.42 Transports from Prague began. The only one registered as Jew in Libi's family was Mila, her brother.
- 40.34 To the family's surprise, they were invited to report to the gestapo on the eve of the 5th transport. They had 3 days to get ready. The family managed to get Mila back home, where he begged to be included in the transport list - but to no avail. In the meantime, the married Izi came to live in his parents' home, with his wife and thier

twins, who had been born in the interim.

- 50.23 Mila stayed home, and on the day of his family's departure he stood at the door, bidding them farewell. It was the last time they saw him. It was Libi's duty to say good-bye to their relatives. On the eve of their deportation she went to visit her maternal aunt in a mining town 30 km from Prague. She was married to a gentile, and owned a pharmacy which did a brisk business. Libi's uncle took her aside and gave her something to keep, on herself, for the trip. It was 3 portions of cyanide, which Libi had to give her parents and take herself if the situation became dire. [Libi's mother, a very intelligent woman, had contemplated already a family suicide at the time that Libi refused to go to Switzerland.]
- 2.01 Day of entrance of Germans into Prague, in March 1939. Libi's recollection of that day.
- 14.57 The transport to the east. After 3 days, one of the German officers came over to tell them they were almost at the end of the journey [didn't say where]. They were told they had arrived in Lodz, Poland.
- 21.45 Conditions of the ghetto.
- 30.21 In 1942, the Lodz ghetto was too full.
- 32.58 First rumors about death camps.
- 36.12 Libi managed to convince the cook to give her the kitchen keys so that Libi and her parents could sleep there and not be taken to another transport. This went on for 3 days, and it was not an easy feat. they were covered with lice. Move to a different place.
- 40.07 Libi and her father managed to find work.
- 43.37 Libi's father passed away in the ghetto.

- 46.13 Libi's mother became ill.
- 48.02 Rumors about transports to a certain death reached Lodz.
- 59.11 Libi's mother died 6 weeks after her father. The funeral in the ghetto. Shortly after, Libi contracted typhoid fever herself.
- 3.01.20 Libi is sent to the 'sick barrack'.
- 2.30 The rumors about death camps are accepted as truth, and confirmed by the Poles.
- 5.00 Libi went to study principles of electronics, in order to be able to work in the phone repair shop. The man in charge of the shop [and the course] was the Jewish engineer Dawidow. They 'adopted' Libi, and sometimes she helped the gentile lover of Dawidow, Stella, in her housework.
- 19.38 When Stella became jealous of Libi - for no apparent reason - and make Libi's life stressful. She wanted to use the cyanide her uncle had given her, but the poison had disappeared. This was not the first time that Libi entertained suicidal thoughts. At the time of her mother's illness, she wanted to die too. Then, she decided she needed to survive for who can bear witness to that tragic period if everyone was gone?
- 25.09 Engineer Dawidow's guests.
- 26.58 End of 1942. Libi stole some 40-50 pills from another worker, hoping to die. She was unconscious for several days and Stella took care of her.
- 30.00 Libi gets married. The wedding. She went to work in a textile shop.
- 46.41 The children's transports

## TAPE II

- 4.05.00 The ghetto routine.
- 13.29 15 of July, 1944.
- 14.55 The role of the ghetto Jewish police.
- 16.20 Description of the ghetto.
- 20.00 Concerts at the ghetto.
- 30.23 About Rumkovsky. Libi's opinion.
- 33.02 Transportation within the ghetto.
- 37.10 About Bibau, one of the ghetto commanders.
- 39.00 July 15, 1944, Rumkovsky announced they ghetto will be liquidated. The transports became very frequent.
- 40.32 Marishin was unknown to Libi.
- 43.00 Mail service at the ghetto was discontinued early on. It was possible to obtain money. Libi received 10 marks from her older brother. When she signed the return receipt, she signed with her mother's name, and in parenthesis she wrote 'widow'. She received 20 marks later, from her younger brother. She signed the receipt with her own name and in parenthesis she added 'orphan'. That was the only way to communicate the death of her parents to her siblings.
- 56.46 Envy of those who had the werewithal to move to the Warsaw ghetto. News of the uprising arrived in Lodz.
- 5.06.14 Recollection of Rumkovsky announcing the liquidation of the ghetto.
- 4.42 Autumn 1944. Libi and a selected group managed to get housing in the empty hospital. From there they were sent to different

jobs, including closing the houses from where people had been deported.

- 24.17 In October, the select group Libi belonged to was also deported, on cargo trains. They were promised to be taken together to a family camp in Sachsenhausen, but after a 'strange' trip only the men were told to get off. The place was Oranienburg. The rest were taken out of the train at Ravensbreik, where a sign welcomed them: 'arbet macht frei'.
- 33.15 Procesing into camp. Marching into the showers and wondering whether water or gas would spew forth. They were also given the striped robes with a patch. Their's was red, which stood for 'political prisoners'. [Jews received the yellow patches.]
- 35.26 They worked forced outdoor labor. Beginning of 1945.
- 35.34 Characters in the camp: SS women [more cruel then men]; kapos.
- 39.54 Next selection occured after a few weeks there. Libi and the other healthy women were sent to work in Germany, in Wittengerg, where there was a huge airplane factory, near Leipzig [?]There were many different campwithin it, with thousands of prisoners.
- 43.25 Libi and her two sister-in-law were in the same camp. One of them, at the beginning of her pregancy, became the kapo's assistant.
- 46.39 The schedule at Wittenberg.
- 51.14 First news begin ti trickle about the impending defeat of Germany.
- 6.01.27 More recollections from the Lodz ghetto.
- 4.44 About the Jewish doctor Sawkoff, at the Lodz ghetto killed by Beevow.

7.31 Arrival of a group of gypsy women from Czeckoslovakia. Libi had met one there. The newly arrived were also sent to work.

11.56 The Allies advanced.

15.59 Beginning of April 1945. Rumors spread that the Germans had fled, and that it was possible to flee. The gradual developments in the camp. Terrible encounter with Ukranian prisoners.

22.00 The end of the war.