

Prusak, Tzila  
RG - 50.120\* 0322  
One Video Cassette  
In Hebrew

- Abstract:** Tzila Prusak was born in Lithuania near the German border. She had one sister who moved to Palestine in 1937. During the war she worked to provide food for her parents. After her father died, she and her mother were sent to Guthof. Her mother died prior to liberation. After the war, Tzila wandered through parts of Russia, Poland, and Germany in Berlin and Munich bartering and trading assorted merchandise for survival. Eventually she reached a refugee center and emigrated to Israel.
- 1:00:** Tzila Prusak was born in Lithuania in a town very close to the German border. She went to German schools and her family kept kosher but they were not orthodox. When they moved to Kovno she learned office work. Her father was an accountant and her mother was a housewife. Her sister moved to Palestine in 1937 and they had family in the United States. Before the war they had minimal contact with the Lithuanian population in their town because everything social, educational and professional was available within their Jewish community. She worked in a bank and was considered by the Lithuanians as a competent Jew.
- 1:17:** When the war broke out and the Germans entered Poland, her plans to join her sister in Palestine could not be realized. During the Russian occupation of Lithuania the Germans deported most of the bourgeois and Zionists who included her husband whom she had married in 1938. She never saw her husband again. She moved with her mother and father to smaller quarters. She described the changing relationships among the Russians, Jews and Lithuanians and how the latter turned against the Jews. When the Russians left, the Jews initially preferred the German Wehrmacht over the Lithuanians, but not over the SS.
- 2:00:** After moving to the ghetto, she describes how they moved repeatedly to smaller quarters near the village of Slobodka. She describes the difficulty of moving stored household items such as their piano. As the ghetto was being decreased and reshaped, they moved repeatedly. They were preoccupied with physical chores and were unaware of the German deeds until they heard about the first "Aktzia." Her weak father was frequently sick. She discusses what she knew about the Judenrat and Dr. Elkes, and how she was reluctant to blame or pass judgment on them. She describes life in the ghetto and her work outside the ghetto which allowed her to provide food for her parents. Her mother took care of her bedridden father. She describes how she smuggled food and fuel into the ghetto. Occasionally a 'good' German spared her. She describes how she avoided

being taken in an “Aktzia,” which meant a sure death. She tells how her father was taken into a hospital and how he never returned.

3:00: She describes life in the ghetto in more detail. She discusses how there were different groups and how the ‘middle’ groups suffered the most and how some were more privileged, e.g. “Judenrat Brides.”

Tzila describes her mother’s cooking and how they lived on entire meals made out of only potato peels.

3:07: She describes a train trip from Stutthof with her mother in the extreme cold, to Guthof (near Danzig) and how that was her worse recollection. She describes their living conditions, such as their tent, food, constant diarrhea and lice. Their work was to provide soldiers with equipment. She compares the Germans with the Lithuanians and she talks about a ‘good German’ who “was not against the Jews.” Tzila describes how their life conditions deteriorated and how her mother became very sick.

Throughout her testimony she states that her priority was always to stay with her parents and try to provide for them, even in situations when she could have improved her own situation if she had left them.

4:00: Right before liberation Tzila’s mother died. On January 19th, the remaining inmates were made to march near the front. They were liberated by Russian soldiers and distributed among different homes in the village. Former prisoners who ate too much food, too fast, died. She had to completely shave her head to get rid of the lice, which was her biggest health problem. They were all inoculated against Typhoid. She had a slow recovery and barely saved her inflamed injected arm. After she recovered, she spent many months wandering around Russia, Poland, and in Germany in Munich and Berlin, bartering and trading assorted merchandise for her survival. Tzila eventually reached a refugee center and emigrated to Israel.

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Translated and summarized by  
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