

Karp, Sara
RG-50.120*0363
Two video tapes
In Hebrew
Recorded January 6, 2000

Abstract

Sara Karp was born in Bedzin, Poland in 1923. She was the oldest of six children; her father had a shoe store and a bakery. She went to school until she was fifteen, then began an apprenticeship as a seamstress. Her family was not Orthodox. She describes anti-Semitism before the war and when, in 1939, German refugees came and told them what was happening. When the Germans entered her town, they burned the synagogue, and Poles robbed Jewish homes. Her family escaped, returning to find her father's store had been burned. Her father died after being sent for a medical exam by the Judenrat in preparation for being sent to a work camp in Germany. Her family lived by gradually selling their belongings.

In 1940, Sara's oldest brother was sent to Buchenwald. In 1941, the Judenrat sent her to a clothing factory, which was near Auschwitz. Sara talks about Zionist Youth activities before and during the war. In 1941, her family was separated, one brother and one sister were sent to one place, her mother and youngest brother to another. She bribed Germans to let her young brother remain with her. The other family members were sent to Auschwitz. Sara went back to work, her sister and young brother stayed at home, and her older brother hid. In 1942, the Jewish police took their house to force the oldest brother out of hiding, but relatives bribed the police. Sara describes fear, friends, relatives, and the resistance movement.

After the death of Sara's father, in an effort to save the family, Sara's mother changed their last name to Zemer, her maiden name. In 1942, they went into a ghetto and she describes the living quarters, hardship, work, hunger, and food stamps from the Judenrat. After hearing about the liquidation, they hid in a bunker, but the Germans discovered them. They were taken to Birkenau. She speaks of the train ride, initiation, and the crematoria. She speaks of selections in the showers by Mengele and Tauber. In the camp, Sara had a group of four friends who protected her when she was sick.

At the end of 1944, while Sara was at work in the crematoria sorting clothing, an explosion took place. A woman who was involved was hanged. Sara also had heard of an underground movement in Auschwitz, involving five men who tried to escape and died. In 1945, Sara was taken on a Death March to Ravensbruck and then Malchow. She worked in a weapons factory until it was bombed.

The Red Cross came to the camp and took 300 Polish nationals to Sweden. They lived in a school building, where they were taken care of and fed. Later Sara was taken to Doverstock (?) to recuperate, and then Israeli Hechalutz took them to Jungsbrav (?), where she worked in a chocolate factory. In Sweden, Sara received letters from France from surviving relatives. Sara chose to go to Israel and went to Kibbutz Dror in Sweden in preparation for Aliyah. The British army stopped the boat to Israel, and Sara spent the next year in Cyprus where she met her husband. She went to Israel in April 1948.

Oral History

Video I

- 00:01:00 Sara Karp was born in 1923 in Bedzin, Poland. She was the oldest of six children. Her father owned a shoe store and a bakery. They lived in a Jewish neighborhood. She went to a regular school and finished it at the age of fifteen. After that she apprenticed as a seamstress. She described her childhood.
- 00:01:13 Her family was traditional but not Orthodox. Her father died shortly after the war started. She and a brother were in Hashomer Hatzair.
- 00:01:21 Sara describes anti-Semitism before the war. In September 1939, many refugees from Germany came and told her family what was happening. When the Germans entered the town they burned the synagogue. The Poles broke into Jewish houses and robbed them. Her family first escaped the town but then returned home. Their store had been burned.
- 00:01:28 She describes the curfews and food shortages. Her father hid her at a peasant's home, but she later returned home.
- 00:02:00 In 1940, her father was sent by the Judenrat for a medical exam in preparation for being sent to a work camp in Germany. He died upon his return.
- 00:02:07 The family managed to live by gradually selling their belongings. In 1940, her oldest brother was sent to Buchenwald. Another brother hid.
- 00:02:10 In 1941, Sara was sent by the Judenrat to a clothing factory where she worked sewing clothes to be sent to Germany. It was not far from Auschwitz and they heard about what was happening there.
- 00:02:12 Sara describes Zionist youth activities before and during the war.
- 00:02:25 In the summer of 1941, all the Jews had to assemble. The family was separated; she and a brother and sister were sent to one place and her mother and youngest brother to another. She bribed a German to let her young brother join her. All the others were sent to Auschwitz.
- 00:03:00 Her mother and sister were taken, and she remained with another sister and two brothers. She went back to work. Her sister and little brother stayed home and her older brother hid. In the summer of 1942, the Jewish police locked up their house to force their older brother to come out of hiding. Relatives bribed the Jewish police and their house was returned to them.
- 00:03:14 She describes her work in the factory and the atmosphere of fear. They were able to send packages to the brother in Buchenwald until the middle of 1942. He died at the end of the war.
- 00:03:24 Sara describes friends and relatives. They heard about a resistance movement.

- 00:04:01 At the end of 1941, after her father's death, Sara's mother changed their last name to Zemer, which was her maiden name, in an effort to save the family.
- 00:04:07 They went into the ghetto at the end of the summer of 1942. Sara describes their living quarters, their hardships, and their work.
- 00:04:11 She describes assembly of people in the ghetto. Her brother and sister were taken to the crematoria. She and her younger brother remained in the ghetto.
- 00:04:18 Sara describes food restrictions and hunger. The Judenrat distributed food stamps. There was an area outside the ghetto where the youth were allowed to grow food. This ended later.
- 00:04:28 She describes living accommodations and social relations in the ghetto.
- 00:04:31 When they heard that the ghetto would be liquidated they hid in a bunker that their uncle had prepared for them. He and his son left the ghetto with false papers that they had purchased.
- 00:05:00 Sara describes the underground bunker. The Germans discovered them and they were loaded on cattle trains and taken to Birkenau. She describes the train ride and the initiation at the camp.
- 00:05:12 She was sent to Lager B, block 24/25 across from the crematoria. She worked digging large holes.
- 00:05:17 Sara describes a selection in the showers in the presence of Mengele and Tauber.
- 00:05:22 She was in a group of four friends who vowed to help one another. She became very ill in 1944 and stayed in the block. The Block leader took her to Camp A, Block 8 which was destined for the crematoria. A girlfriend smuggled her out to a different block. A doctor took her and twenty other women to a different block and took care of her until she was better. She then returned to Camp B.

Video II

- 00:06:00 Back in Camp B, Sara was reunited with her four friends who told her that her two cousins had been taken away during a selection. She talks about the Blockalteste, who was a Czech Jew and who was cruel at times and later was okay.
- 00:06:17 At the end of 1944, the women were taken to sort out belongings left at the crematoria. They were told that something was planned to happen at the crematoria.
- 00:06:25 Sara describes an explosion at one of the crematoria, and the hanging of a woman who was involved.
- 00:06:29 She heard about the underground in Auschwitz and the five men who tried to escape and were killed.

- 00:07:00 After the explosion, the crematoria did not operate anymore.
- 00:07:05 Sara describes her relationship with her four friends.
- 00:07:10 In January 1945, she was taken on a Death March. People who tried to escape were shot. Her friends helped her survive the march. On the third day they arrived at a train station and were taken to Ravensbruck and then to camp Malchow. She describes the camp.
- 00:07:19 Sara and her friends were sent to work in a weapons factory located underground in a forest. When the factory was bombed, they were not sent back to work.
- 00:07:25 The Red Cross came to the camp and asked for a list of Polish nationals. After a few days, they took 300 women and told them they were being taken to Sweden.
- 00:07:31 The women were taken to a village and offered food. The German officers did not interfere.
- 00:08:00 They were then taken by train and boat to Malmö (Malmed) in Sweden. The Polish consul welcomed them and they were then taken to a school building and housed there. They were well taken care of.
- 00:08:06 After two weeks they were taken to Doverstock(?) to recuperate. Sara describes how they spent their time. After two months, the Israeli Hechalutz took them to the village of Jungsbrav(?). They worked in a chocolate factory and were very well taken care of. She describes her work and life there.
- 00:08:16 Sara describes her work at camp Malchow filling bullets and explosives. Describes her daily routine, and fair treatment by the Germans.
- 00:09:00 In April 1945, they were taken from Malchow to Sweden. There was a list of survivors in Sweden and she received letters from France from surviving relatives.
- 00:09:10 Most of the girls in her group chose to go to the USA. Only she and a friend chose to go to Israel. She went to Kibbutz Dror(?) in Sweden in preparation for Aliyah. Ben Gurion visited there.
- 00:09:19 They went on the boat *Arlozoroff* to Israel. They picked up more people in Italy.
- 00:09:25 They were stopped by the British Army and taken to Cyprus where she stayed for a year. She met her husband and got married in Cyprus. She describes her wedding.
- 00:10:01 In April 1948, they went to Israel; first to Tel Aviv and then to Negba. She describes the bombings during the war.
- 00:10:12 They joined Kibbutz Ha'Maapil and settled there. She has two children and grandchildren.

00:10:14 She did not tell much about her experiences to her children, but she shares more with her grandchildren. She felt that Israelis in general did not want to hear about her experiences.