

**Kaufman-Bumaz, Leah**  
**RG-50.120\*0367**  
**1 of 2 tapes**

**Abstract**

Leah Kaufman-Bumaz was born in Hertza, a town founded by Jews in Bukovina (the Czech Republic). Her mother was a midwife and her father owned a clothing shop. They spoke Yiddish at home, and she attended Hebrew school. The father had two sons in Bucharest.

When the Russians occupied her town, she was forced to attend a Russian school. The children beat her up and called her a "Christ-killer". At age nine, in 1940, she taught others in a peer teaching program, and was beaten by the teacher when her 11 students failed.

When the Russians left, the Romanians entered, and bombings began. Romanians were about to shoot Jews including her family when a soldier recognized her mother and saved the family.

In 1941, they were forced on a death march, during which her father was murdered, her mother and three sisters died, and a brother disappeared. So she was alone at age 10 or 11.

In the fall of 1941, she arrived in Edinet (Moldava). She was told that all the Jews in her village had been killed. Dogs mauled her during her search for her aunt, whom she found in the Mogilev ghetto. The aunt took her to an orphanage with terrible conditions. She escaped, and an innkeeper took her in.

Leah passed as non-Jewish until a Jewish couple denounced her for a pack of cigarettes. She did not want to be a Jew anymore because of the Jewish couple who had denounced her.

She was put on a train to Camp Pechora. She witnessed cannibalism there, and escaped after three days. She was taken in by a peasant who thought she was Russian. She stayed at various peasants' houses during her many-week journey back to Mogilev, where she was taken in by an acquaintance, Mrs. Bukowska.

In 1944, Leah was taken by train to Dorochovia (?) to a Jewish orphanage that also had terrible conditions. From there, she went to Bucharest. First, she was helped by a dressmaker, then her step-brother and his wife in Bucharest took her to their home, and then to an orphanage that prepared children to go to Palestine. But when departure time came, she could not leave because she was in a coma from appendicitis. The children's boat was blown up en route to Palestine.

Another step-brother and his Polish wife came from Russia. They got Polish identification papers and left Romania.

## Tape 1

- 1:00** Leah Kaufman-Bumaz was born in Hertza, Bukovina. She was one of seven children. Her mother was a midwife, and her father had a clothing shop. She tells the history of Hertza, which was founded by Jews. She went to a Hebrew school and spoke Yiddish at home. She describes a happy childhood and school life, although she was often sick. Her father had two sons in Bucharest. [The 2 sons seem to be included in her count of 7 children. See 3:00, where she says 3 sisters died and one brother disappeared. Counting her gives a total of 5. That would leave 2 siblings unaccounted for, unless her count of 7 includes the Bucharest sons who were in Bucharest, not on the death march from Hertza.]
- 1:11** She describes mother's involvement in the community and life at home, how they celebrated holidays, and what they ate.
- 1:21** When Russians entered her town, she was forced to go to a Russian school. She was beaten up by children who called her "Christ-killer". Romania was anti-Semitic and had pogroms before Hitler.
- 1:33** Leah was 9 years old in 1940 when the Russians took over her town. She was put in charge of teaching other children in a peer teaching program. When her 11 students failed, the teacher beat her.
- 2:00** She wrote poetry in Romanian and Russian and got many awards in school. Life was normalized during the Russian period. She went to a mixed school and also attended classes for Jewish children.
- 2:08** She describes the Russians leaving and Romanians entering her town, and the bombings of the town. Her parents once joined a crowd walking to the nearby town where they found everyone dead. When the crowd returned home, the Romanians were lining people up to be shot. The family was saved when the Romanian soldier recognized her mother, who had helped at his birth.
- 2:14** She describes the assembly place and the start of the death march. One of the SS Einsatz helped her because she looked Aryan.
- 2:23** They arrived in Edinet (Moldavia), in the fall of 1941. She slept in a stable in the village and got food from a village girl, whom she helped with school work.
- 2:27** The march continued. Her father was murdered and her brother disappeared. Her mother and the girls crossed the Dniester in a barge, and many people drowned. They arrived in Mogilev, stayed there for one night, and saw many people killed in the streets.
- 3:00** They were driven to Shargorod (Ukraine), where they stayed in a stable. One of her sisters died there. They continued to Kopaygorod (Ukraine). Leah asked some peasants for help and got some food for her family. She describes the hunger, fear

and death around her. Both her twin sisters died, and only she and her mother remained. [No mention of the fate of two other siblings: 3 sisters died, 1 brother disappeared, she survived, totaling five, but she said there were seven children. Perhaps she was including her father's two sons in Bucharest.]

**3:06** Her mother died and Leah left the ghetto to find her aunt. She was taken in by an Aryan woman who took care of her. She was told that all the Jews in her village had been killed. She left again to search for her aunt in the Mogilev Ghetto. The aunt took her to an orphanage, where conditions were terrible. She escaped from the orphanage and hid outside the ghetto. An innkeeper took her in. She survived by passing as non-Jewish, crossing herself and attending church. A Jewish couple betrayed her for a pack of cigarettes, and she was put on a train to Camp Pechora. There was no food, and she witnessed cannibalism. She hid near the entrance gates and escaped after three days. She was taken in by a peasant woman who thought that she was Russian. She went from one peasant house to another on her way to Mogilev. The peasants treated her decently. After many weeks, she got back to Mogilev.

She went back to Mrs. Bukowska, who had taken her in before and had been kind to her. She did not want to be a Jew anymore because of the Jewish couple who had denounced her. She says she lived like a *shiksa*.

**4:11** In 1944, she was taken by train to Dorochovia (?) (Dorogov, Ukraine) to a Jewish orphanage. She describes its terrible conditions.

**4:15** From there, she went by train to Bucharest. She describes the fields covered with bodies of Germans and Russians. A dressmaker took her in. One of her step-brothers, who lived with his wife in Bucharest, took her to his house. Then, she went to an orphanage that prepared children to go to Palestine. But when the departure time came, she could not leave because she was in a coma due to appendicitis. The children's boat was blown up en route to Palestine.

**4:23** Her step-brother came from Russia. [This seems to be the other half-brother, one of two who had been living in Bucharest; not the brother who disappeared on the death march.] with his Polish wife. They got Polish identification cards and got out of Romania.