

BUDNICKA, Krystyna
Polish Documentation Project
Polish
RG-50.225*0002
120 min.

SUMMARY

Krystyna Budnicka (real name, **Hena Kutcher[Kuczer]**), born on May 8, 1932 is a lifelong resident of Warsaw. She comes from a religious Jewish family of ten and describes her family life before and during the Second World War. She introduces her family members and talks about their social standing. Her family is not integrated with the Polish population. She recalls the outbreak of the war and the first persecutions of Jews, such as cutting off their beards. The treatment of Jews gradually worsens and the first deportations of Jewish men to labor camps begin. She talks about establishing the large ghetto, where the living conditions are relatively good and her brothers, the carpenters, make a decent living by building secret shelters for the rich Jews. She remembers the forced relocation to the little ghetto and comments on worsening living conditions as well as frequent routine deportations, including the deportation of two of her brothers. She describes the secret shelter that allowed the majority of her family to survive the deportation period. She defines 1942 as an eye opening year when the Jews realized their fate. Her brothers and the influential ghetto Jews start the construction of a long term shelter, a secret underground bunker. She describes her everyday life in the bunker before and after the Ghetto Uprising as well as during the Ghetto fire. Ms. Budnicka talks of the gradually worsening living conditions in the bunker until the extreme sickness of her brother, who was the group leader, makes them reach out for help and establish contacts with Poles. The bunker is eventually discovered and the emaciated refugees seek escape through the sewer canals. It is a journey only the strongest survive, and her parents together with her sister are left behind. She then describes the aid she received from an organized Polish group [*likely Żegota, the Polish Council to Aid Jews*] and talks of being moved to various hiding places due to random German raids or Polish denunciations. In 1943/44 she loses her last two brothers, one dies of sickness and the other is captured and tortured to death by Germans. She survives the Warsaw Uprising alongside the Polish population, and eventually ends up in a Christian orphanage where she is treated kindly. She remains there until she finishes high school after the war. Though acknowledging her Jewish roots, she adopts Christianity as her religion and devotes her life to working with special needs children.