

Interview of Bella Meylikh (Garfinkel) RG 50.407*18
12/06/1995 Melbourne Holocaust Centre

Synopsis:

Bella was born August 1925 in Benderi, Besarabia (Romania). At the time Benderi had a population of 50-60,000 inhabitants, of which approximately half were Jewish. Both her parents were medical doctors. Her father died when she was 5 years old. Bella grew up in a non-religious environment, but with a feeling of Jewish belonging. In 1930 her family moved to Kishinev, which is today in Moldavia.

She remembers Jabotinsky speaking there about the coming dangers for the Jewish people. Bella talks about the political upheavals in Romania with the Iron Guard coming to power. In 1940 Besarabia was taken over by the Soviets and when war broke out in 1941 Bella and her mother were able to escape into Russia. Eventually they wound up in a small village in Kazakhstan, living under extremely primitive conditions. Bella's mother continued to practice medicine there. Bella entered the University in Tashkent in 1942. In 1944 they received permission to return to Kishinev. Bella finished her college training there and studied medicine in Leningrad where she settled. She describes the nightmarish antisemitism of Stalin's final days.

In 1970 she received permission to leave the Soviet Union and settled in Australia.