

## RG-50.407.0190

### Summary

Eva Slonim (née Weiss) was born August 29, 1931 in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia. Her mother came from Mattersburg, Austria and her father from Trnava, Slovakia. Her father owned a textile factory. Eva attended an orthodox Jewish day school; she described her family as religious, Zionist and affluent. Her family lived across from the President's palace, in a building with her paternal grandparents and her uncle's family. She had many non-Jewish friends as they did not live in the Jewish Quarter, but experienced little anti-Semitism. She had an older brother, Kurty, and younger sisters: Eva, Naomi, Martha and Judith. In 1941, her mother bore Rinata, in 1942 Ruth, 1944 Roseanna, and after the war, Hannah.

Her family was familiar with Hitler's Jewish policies, yet felt it would not affect them. But, as Nazi encroachment increased in 1939, her brother began getting bullied by local Slovak boys, and the subsequent German takeover of the country. Three days later, officials broke in, beat her grandfather, warning them to obey. Her father was arrested and held for ransom, which they paid. After a series of further financial confiscations, the Germans began deporting Jews, starting with younger boys; then they gathered young girls; then young parents without children. The authorities allowed business confiscations and Joseph Krumpel took over her father's company, keeping him on a meager retainer.

They were moved to the ghetto in 1943, living in just two rooms. Almost 180 members of her father's extended family had already been deported, most perished. They were visited by two Auschwitz escapees, one named Rothstein, who told them of the fate of the deportees. Her father eventually sent the family to her mother's relatives in Hungary, except for Eva, whom he needed for various clandestine tasks. She came down with rheumatic fever aggravated by bad tonsils. A doctor offered to perform the surgery despite prohibitions. During the procedure, SS men broke into the operating theater and took him away, never again to be seen. The Catholic nuns threw her out for her parents to take home without any medical aid.

When Germany invaded Hungary in 1944, her father reunited his family, but then paired and dispersed them to increase the prospects for some in the family to survive. Eva assumed the false name of a sister to family nurse, Maria Wolfschlager, posing as a 16 year old, instead of her age 12; she was joined by her sister Martha in Nitra, posing as Catholics. Her father remained in the ghetto but she received no guidance from him, other than to never admit that she was a Jew. Her cover story was frequently tested through often brutal interrogations, while detained in a local camp. She learned from an SS officer that was soon all the remaining Jews in Bratislava would be deported. Eva managed to warn her father by phone, who then warned others and hid at Wolfschlager's apartment. Eventually Wolfschlager was arrested and revealed their true identities, resulting in the arrest of Eva and Martha, and consigned to Auschwitz.

Arriving on November 3, 1944, they were sent to “family camp.” On disembarkation, Martha, 10 years old, was pushed by an SS officer into an open sewer pit, and barely rescued by other prisoners. She and Martha, for reasons unknown, were taken to the Birkenau so-called Barracks of Twins along with other genetically different children. She witnessed frequent atrocities on the children, witnessed many executions, and experienced multiple humiliations. Dr. Josef Mengele gave her some unknown injections, which exacerbated her various ailments, such as dysentery and TB. She also believes that she was given a drug in her daily coffee ration that stopped women’s menstruation. Later in life, Eva had three miscarriages before successfully bearing children.

On January 18, 1945, most prisoners were selected for a long march eastward. But, Eva and Martha were left behind, placed with other prisoners behind electrified barbed wire in barracks that were then set on fire. However, a heavy wind and rain/snow storm extinguished the flames. The Russians appeared but could only stay for a few days before the Germans drove them back and resumed control. The Nazis brutally marched them from Birkenau to Auschwitz where the Russians then liberated them. She had to disguise herself as an old woman to avoid rape. She learned that her sister, Judith, had been executed as soon as she arrived at the camp.

From her growing knowledge of Slavic languages, in March Amy overheard that the Russians planned to take all the rescued children back to Russia, compelling her and Martha to escape that night for Czechoslovakia. She saw violent pogroms against some surviving Jews at the Polish/Czech border. But, they were rescued by Jewish volunteers with the British Army, the Jewish Brigade. During their journey from the border to Poprad and later, a doctor placed them in a TB sanatorium in the Tatra Mountains. Upon the liberation of Bratislava, their parents located them, encouraging them to hitchhike home.

Their return home was made problematic due to the large number of refugees staying at their home that hindered re-establishing emotional bonds. They returned to the Tatra sanatorium for their TB treatment. Upon return to Bratislava, Eva resumed her education but had early difficulties due to lingering traumatic memories, though ultimately achieved academic success. She never spoke of her camp experiences until she was in Australia 50 years after liberation.

In 1948, shortly after Eva returned from her Swiss school, her father learned that the Russian NKVD was about to arrest him, forcing him to flee to Switzerland; Eva and her family followed shortly, finding by chance 100,000 crowns secreted in a pillow which matched what traffickers were demanding. However, Eva lacked a transit visa through Hungary and was forced to return, ultimately reaching Switzerland after numerous attempts. The family waited at a flat in Lugano until the Australian visa arrived. Eva wanted to go to Israel, but her father didn’t want to put the family in any precarious situations. She married at 21.

Eva stated frequently that she never desired vengeance, even as she was imprisoned, but just the opportunity to re-build the humanity that the war had destroyed. She had five children.