

Interviewee: KALTER, Mina
Interviewer: Ellen Rofman

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Audio tapes: 2 English
Restrictions: None

Transcript: 1 vol. (unpaged) English
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SUMMARY

Mina Kalter, née Basseches, was born in 1921 in Przeworsk, Poland, into a religious family. Her father was a traveling merchant and her mother in retail fabrics. Both parents were active in Zionist organizations and charitable endeavors and on good terms with Christian neighbors, until 1939. She describes the extensive work of the *Kehillah* in helping those in need. She provides extensive detail of life after the German invasion of Poland in 1939: bombing and desecration of the synagogue, forced labor, confiscation of Jewish property, ghettoization of all Jews, the lack of any help by former Christian friends, ghetto conditions. She describes smuggling her small brother to the home of a loyal former family housekeeper and later her escape from a work detail in March 1941. She then crossed the River San to Soviet-controlled Poland where she was helped by a Russian Jewish family prior to being resettled in a small town near L'vov. She describes in detail life under Soviet rule in Poland. She was exiled to Siberia because she refused to accept Soviet citizenship. She describes her transport to and life in a labor camp for four years, until May 1945. She also relates her clandestine trip outside the Siberian camp to obtain potatoes for planting.

In March 1945, as a Polish citizen, she received by mail permission to return to Poland. Recently married, she describes working her way across Siberia toward Poland with her husband in June 1945, where she experienced antisemitism. Through the Joint Distribution Committee in Szczecin, she learned of the survival of her two brothers and joined them in a displaced persons camp in Berlin in August 1945. She describes in detail the living conditions with her new born baby. There is a brief mention of her stay at another camp near Landsberg in 1948. She and her family immigrated to the United States in 1950. She describes her adjustment in the U.S., her children's awareness of their parents' background, and their commitment to Judaism. She concludes with the hope that her testimony will remind future generations of the horrors of the Hitler years.