

Interviewee:	<u>HARMELIN</u> , Rita	Date:	April 26, 1992
Interviewer:	Edith Millman		
Audio tapes:	3 English	Transcript:	1 vol. (unpaged) English
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Restrictions:	None		

### SUMMARY

Rita Harmelin, nee Brauner, was born June 17, 1925 in Bucharest, Romania to Polish-born parents who returned to Poland in 1931. The family moved to Boryslaw an oil town. She describes her secular and religious education and interactions with local Poles and Ukrainians. Rita describes life under Russian occupation September 1939.

Rita's memories of the German invasion of Boryslaw, June 1941 include efforts of local Ukrainians to save Jews. She focuses on successive waves of pogroms encouraged by Germans and carried out by local Poles and Ukrainians. A Jewish quarter or ghetto was established in Boryslaw. There were periodic roundups leading to deportation. Bertold Beitz, a director in the local petrol industry and Mr. Siegemund rescued many Jews, including Rita from the deportations several times. Restrictions increased gradually. Many Jews worked in the Boryslaw petrol industry. A forced labor camp was established in 1943 for the Jewish workers guarded by Ukrainian volunteers. She mentions escape attempts by workers. Rita, her future husband Rolek, and 11 other people went into hiding in the home of a local Ukrainian from March to August 7, 1944 when Russian troops arrived and re-occupied Boryslaw. Her parents were deported before they could accept an offer to hide in a Polish woman's house. Her mother was killed in Auschwitz, her father survived. Jews from Boryslaw were transported to Plaszow, Poland but the final transport, July 1944 went directly to Auschwitz.

Rita explains why resistance was difficult; the attitude of the Polish underground (*Armia Krajowa*) and most Ukrainians toward Jews. Her post-war experiences include return to Poland; search for and reunion with her father in Austria in 1945; smuggling herself in and out of Poland. Rita and her father joined her husband (whom she married in Austria) in Australia on January 9, 1949. Rita mentions her guilt as a survivor and how she told her children about her past. She describes life as a Jew in Australia. She gives examples of acts of humanity and compassion by individual non-Jews (Polish, Ukrainian and German).

<sup>1</sup> See also her March 2000 interview GC00204b.

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### SUBJECT HEADINGS

Holocaust, Jewish: (1939-1945) -Personal narratives, women  
Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945 - survivors guilt  
World War, 1939-1945 - Boryslaw, Poland - occupation - Russian  
World War, 1939-1945 - Boryslaw, Poland -occupation - German  
World War, 1939 - 1945 - Deportations from Boryslaw, Poland  
Forced labor  
Aid by non-Jews  
Postwar experiences