

Interviewee:	FRYDMAN, Rachela	Date:	May 7, 1981
Interviewer:	Josey G. Fisher		
Audio tapes:	3 English	Transcript:	1 vol. (unpaged) English
Restrictions:	None		

SUMMARY

Rachela Frydman was born on November 26, 1914 in Zloczew, Poland (near Lodz). She came from a large observant Zionist family. Her father was a wood merchant. Rachela belonged to *Shomer Hatzair*, a Zionist youth movement. One of her brothers was able to get to Palestine in 1928. Before 1930 Rachela had experienced antisemitism in the form of two pogroms and a robbery.

In the 1930s the family moved to Piotrkow, Poland, a mill town. By 1933 the Polish Jews who lived in Germany had been forced back into Poland. Rachela details how the Piotrkow Ghetto was created and describes conditions there, overcrowding, starvation, labor battalions. She describes treatment by the S.S. and many shootings. Rachela and her sister taught Jewish history and culture from their apartment until 1941. Rachela married while in the ghetto. Her husband was sent out for forced labor and did not return. Rachela recounts being terrorized by Ukrainian guards in the ghetto, witnessing murders and contracting typhus. Her mother and one sister died in the typhus epidemic. She was nursed by nuns in a hospital and one offered to hide her in their convent.

From 1942 - 1944 Rachela was in Skarzysko-Kamienna, a forced labor camp which was an ammunition factory. She describes her beatings by guards. In 1944, Rachela and many inmates were sent to Buchenwald's sub-camp, Leipzig-Schoenfeld, in cattle cars. There Rachela along with 600 inmates lived in one large room. Rachela recounts their attempts to observe Jewish holidays by lighting candles with wicks made from stolen rope and saving crumbs for symbolizing matza.

In April 1945 they were marched toward Dresden. They were liberated at the River Elbe by the Soviet army. By then Rachela could no longer walk. She was hospitalized and later sent to a displaced person's camp. There she met and married her second husband and gave birth to a daughter. They came to the United States on April 19, 1951. Rachela states that she's alive because she willed herself to see the defeat of the Germans.

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SUBJECT HEADINGS

Aid by non-Jew (clergy)
Atrocities
Death march
Piotrkow Ghetto
Religious Observance
Resistance – teaching in the ghetto
Skarzysko-Kamienna (forced labor)
Shomer Hatzair