

Interviewee: LEIBOWITZ, Suzanne Langer

Date: April 18, 1981

Interviewer: Josey G. Fisher

Audio tapes 2 English

Transcript: 1 vol. (unpaged) English

Restrictions: No restrictions

SUMMARY

Suzanne Leibowitz, née Langer, was born May 27, 1928 in Prague and later lived in Novy Jičín, Moldavia. She and her parents were totally assimilated, patriotic Czechs. After the German occupation in 1938, the family fled to the Protectorate of Bohemia where Suzanne first experienced antisemitism. She mentions how the Nuremberg laws affected her. She was forced to quit school and had to work on a farm until 1942.

Suzanne and her parents were sent to Theresienstadt in 1942. She describes conditions in Theresienstadt in great detail. She mentions friction between Jews from different countries and that many Jews when they first arrived believed they were going to a rest home. Warnings about death camps scratched on many of the cattle cars were not believed. She managed to work outside the ghetto on a farm, to help people on the transports, and to trade for food. A Czech policeman - who also saved Suzanne and her parents from being sent to Birkenau - helped her do this.

Suzanne witnessed the charade Germans put on for the Red Cross in 1944. She explains how the concentration camp was transformed. She recalls how a baby born in the camp was hidden and kept alive for one year. She briefly refers to a Catholic prayer group, attempts to educate Jewish children, and plays and concerts performed by the prisoners. In October 1944, the Germans tricked all the men and later the women – including her parents – into going on a transport to Auschwitz, so that only young girls and children remained, to prevent an uprising. Suzanne never saw her parents again. Suzanne describes survivors from these transports, who returned in January 1945, as walking skeletons who had become cannibals.

Suzanne relates her post-liberation experiences. She was involved in a campaign to rid the town of Teplitz Schöna of Germans. She got married in 1947 and came to the United States in October 1948.

Note: Collateral Material available through the Gratz College Tuttleman Library:

Photocopy of first person memoir from Terezin survivor, "Making Moving Pictures" Jewish Exponent, Nov 21, 1988.

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SUBJECT HEADINGS

World War, 1939-1945—Personal narratives, Jewish Czech
Nuremberg racial laws (1935) Czechoslovakia
Terezín (Czech Republic: Concentration camp)
Aid by non-Jews
Post liberation experiences