

Interviewee:	<u>BLAIR</u> , Tonia	Date:	April 22, 1985 ¹
Interviewer:	Luci Stroyman		
Audio tapes:	1 English	Transcript:	1 vol. (unpaged) English
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SUMMARY

Tonia Blair, nee Rothkoff, was born September 18, 1925 in Lodz, Poland to a Bundist Jewish family. She gives a very detailed description of pre-war Lodz including her Jewish schooling and awareness of antisemitism. She describes good relations with the Gentiles and details the change in atmosphere in 1937-38, the prohibition against kosher slaughter and the Polish Jewish citizens being expelled from Germany and returning to Poland ('38), and the change in status of the *Volksdeutsche* (Ethnic Germans living in Poland).

Ms. Blair describes the German Occupation and stories of the brutality of German soldiers, the constant abductions of Jews from the street or their houses, random forced labor and the creation of the ghetto. She describes watching her family being deported from Lodz in 1940 and being beaten away so she could not jump in line with them. She mentions a few instances of kindness from Gentiles, like being cared for by a farmer and his wife after she was struck. She worked as a nurse at the age of 14 in a children's home in the Lodz Ghetto, where she stayed until August 1944. She relates several experiences when she was helped by others, being hidden by other nurses when she had typhus, being given extra soup rations. Ms. Blair also states that her position kept her relatively safe from deportation. She was finally deported to Auschwitz in August 1944 and describes being selected by Mengele for forced labor. She attributes her survival to her young age. She did forced labor at Freiburg in an airplane factory until April 1945. She and other prisoners were then deported to Mauthausen in open cattle cars and describes begging the guard to kill them. When they arrived, there were no SS guards and the Americans liberated them soon after.²

¹This was recorded at the American Gathering of Holocaust Survivors in Philadelphia, PA, 1985.

²Though Ms. Blair does not discuss it in her interview, her personal history sheet indicates that she was in Mauthausen post-liberation until Sept. 1945, returned to Lodz Sept.–Nov. 1945 and was in Landsberg Displaced Persons camp until March 1947. She emigrated to the United States in 1949.

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SUBJECT HEADINGS

Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945), personal narratives

Holocaust survivors, female

Lodz, Poland

Lodz Ghetto

Concentration camps - Poland - Auschwitz

Labor camps – Germany - Freiburg