

1 Subject : Bessie Glinkiewies

2 Transcriber: Philippa Benson

3 Q First thing I need on the tape is your name, address and  
4 phone number.

5 A My name is Bessie Glinkiewies and I am from Baltimore.  
6 My telephone number is 358-3695.

7 I am a witness of my ghetto -- of our ghetto in Poland  
8 and the name of the city <sup>was</sup> Ohrhoff (phonetic) I am a witness  
9 of women who was - were asked from the Nazis in the time of  
10 the ghetto -- were asked from the Nazis - from the Ukranian  
11 Nazis, from the German Nazis to dry out a river from our city  
12 Ohrhoff -- which was impossible -- with pails of water from  
13 one side of the river to the other side of the river - were  
14 spilled --it was no use. That's the way they were punished  
15 and this kind of women were only pregnant women and women  
16 with babies -- for all the babies were put out in one place  
17 --for all of the babies was chosen one mother breast feeding  
18 for all of them in exchange with <sup>other</sup> kind of mothers doing the  
19 same breast feeding the other babies - that's what I witnessed  
20 about women in Ohrhoff ghetto.

21 Q Did they -- why did they

22 A The crying of the babies was the reason to feed them -  
23 only one mother was allowed to feed all the babies this time.  
24 They were not killed - were punished and hard labor work to  
25 dry up a river - this was impossible and the public of the  
city

1 city was laughing at all these people - what they working -  
2 was no use - there was -- one of my niece who was with -  
3 pregnant this time and later when she had the baby she gave  
4 birth to the baby she also goes in the same river to dry up  
5 river! The river never was dry! (laughing) It was just  
6 coming from one side to the other - it was impossible. But  
7 at the end everybody was killed in this -- in that ghetto.  
8 The name of the ghetto was the dead ghetto. <sup>In</sup> Ohrhoff.

9 Q And you were cook there --

10 A I was a cook -- a year I was working labor outside -  
11 very hard work digging, digging ~~grease~~ <sup>trees</sup> (?) and digging stones  
12 from bombed houses <sup>from</sup> - destroyed houses - with men and women,  
13 doesn't matter - was no different. Every day. For one year  
14 and walking to this -- to this -- any job, any outside work.  
15 We had to go on the side streets - not <sup>by</sup> on the center street.  
16 Jews were not allowed to go in the center street - just  
17 through the side streets. Were no people that goed there.  
18 This is what I witness from my city Ohrhoff, Poland and  
19 starting from 1941 to -- from the first day they made a  
20 ghetto to the end of the ghetto in 1943 I was there.

21 Q How did the area change in appearance when they started  
22 turning it into a ghetto? What did they immediately do?

23 A They made a Jewish committee - a Judenrat - and they  
24 put the Jewish police to -- they ruled with the Jews too --  
25 they had a list which want to go to work -- the Jewish Judenrat

1 in the ghetto -- they rule the ghetto through the Germans -  
2 the Germans gave them the order and the Jews gave us the  
3 order to the people - they carried the order to the people to  
4 the ghetto. That's the way we went every day - counting each  
5 person near the Judenrat that's nobody should be missed to go  
6 to work. I never missed -- I must go, if I don't go I may be  
7 persecuted - it was impossible to say no. The next year was  
8 brought over working people from other cities -- came in  
9 about 850 people and they made a kitchen -- supposed to be  
10 for this people a kitchen-for 850 people. They choose me out  
11 of the Judenrat - choose me as a cook and I became a cook. A  
12 helper in the kitchen because before the war I was also in a  
13 kitchen - a camp - I was also a helper with the same cook so  
14 she choose me - the cook from before the war -- the cook from  
15 the camp before the war she only know me as a helper in the  
16 kitchen so when the Germans start a kitchen they choosed us a  
17 cook and I became the helper. And then the cook's husband  
18 died and she left a few kids at home - she's supposed to go  
19 home and they choosed another cook and I became a little  
20 bigger than a helper -- became to serve - to serve food. I  
21 used to serve food in the kitchen up to the day when they  
22 destroyed the ghetto - <sup>one year</sup> ~~24~~ - little bit more-every day I was in  
23 the kitchen.

24 Q What kind of food were they serving?

25 A About the food is -- very, very bad to describe - it was

1 not food. It was only potatoes and water and I was lucky I  
2 had a little black flour to make macaronis to put in the  
3 water. That was my -- at the end was no potatoes, was no  
4 macaroni, was just starvation -- was nothing to cook. Was  
5 -- and I had a feeling that something is going to happen to  
6 these people but while I was serving the food to the 850  
7 people what they came from out of cities -- <sup>as</sup> workers, <sup>for</sup> labor  
8 workers sending from the Nazis, from the German Nazis and  
9 being guarded from the Ukranian Nazis - so I, in the same  
10 line of this people are giving food -- I served most of the  
11 time. The same time it was people from our city, from  
12 Ohrhoff city, who were hungry, starving and they stand in the  
13 same line and I took a chance to give them a little bit of <sup>soup</sup>  
14 I gave them soup. I made a little bit more soup to have  
15 everybody enough but never was enough - that what I remember,  
16 what I did by myself in the time of the German occupation  
17 and Nazi occupation in our city Ohrhoff.

18 Q Were there other people that did things like that that  
19 got caught, that got punished or did you have any punishment  
20 happen to you for doing things like that?

21 A Uh -- I could be punished, but I had the Jewish policemen  
22 what watched me and the Jewish policeman wouldn't say a word  
23 to what. He was quiet and then if he came in a Ukranian  
24 policeman or a German policeman he didn't know the different.  
25 They didn't know the different ' cause the list was on the

1 wall. They didn't look on the wall. 850 people they gonna  
2 know the different? So I did serve as much as I have soup  
3 there. The first time I served twice I cooked twice a  
4 day - lunch and dinner - and the German gebitschemsau  
5 used to gave us one meal for one day - used to give us some  
6 chickens to put in -- ducks -- in the soups so little pieces  
7 came in to each of the soup like crumbs in each of a pot of  
8 soup - of a quart of soup. But every day was worse, every day  
9 and then they start -- they didn't want to give us the chickens  
10 -- they didn't give us the chickens. They only had to give us  
11 a permit to go out of the ghetto and to buy a chicken from the  
12 gentiles. But in a few weeks just later they didn't give us  
13 the permit to buy the chicken or the tur -- or the duck to put  
14 in a little piece of flavor in this soup so the only thing was  
15 next was oil - to permit us to having a little bit oil and  
16 that was only for a few weeks and then was nothing. No permit  
17 just -- and the food -- what the cooking itself -- I could  
18 made a soup -- was not even from - without a permit it was  
19 brought over from all around the cities different Jewish  
20 people from the farms - they were allowed to take one wagon of  
21 food with them to the ghetto. They brought all the Jews  
22 around the area from the farms in our ghetto and they were  
23 allowed to have one wagon of food. This wagon of food was  
24 taken away to the -- for the kitchen - not everything -- but *they*  
25 allow them the people alone -- those farmers didn't have a

1 place to put it -- they alone gave it to the kitchen for the  
2 hungry people. So up to the last day of destroying this  
3 ghetto I used slowly out these potatoes and that's the way it  
4 was in the ghetto me being a cook at that time.

5 Q How long did people stand around waiting to get like a  
6 meal?

7 A They been standing -- the working people they didn't have  
8 a chance -- they were coming with police in the daytime.  
9 The police who took them to work brought them to the kitchen.  
10 But other people from the ghetto standing and waiting - old  
11 people, younger people were waiting up to the soup is ready.  
12 And I have to serve only when they came<sup>in</sup> - the working people  
13 and the police had opened the door.

14 Q But how much --

15 A <sup>You</sup> Believe this?

16 Q I cannot believe it.

17 A Can you take it? Can you take it?

18 Q I talked to one man earlier upstairs and I was crying  
19 with his -- it upset me so much --

20 A It was -- it was terrible. There was nothing to eat.  
21 People were dying like -- was nothing to eat -- and they were  
22 forced to work.

23 Q And how can you work when you're starving to death?

24 A Yeah. That's is a question. They were better - a lot of  
25 people were happy to die - naturally. It was impossible.

1 There was no question -- no-of life, of living. Somebody is  
2 going to survive because we heard the news that Hitler is in  
3 Moscow - around Moscow already - how far can it be if he's  
4 going to take Moscow and he's winning the war. Nobody's going  
5 to be alive because -- and it is, our ghetto was destroyed.  
6 Everybody's dead. On a Saturday - the end of the -- before  
7 they destroyed the ghetto -- was a black Saturday -- there  
8 were bodies, suicides and screaming and crying and if somebody  
9 fainted they let them die because something goes on -- they  
10 heard news that the SS is coming and what they going to do is  
11 catch people and they never come back so everybody was trying  
12 to go into shelters. At this time -- something was different  
13 with the shelters. Everytime the SS made a action -- called  
14 "accion" -- so it wasn't such a black day like this Saturday.  
15 This Saturday was something different and I didn't like it.  
16 So I went to the Judenrat - the Jewish Judenrat - Jewish  
17 community-to find out what happened -- what is it -- do I have  
18 to go back to work? To cook? Because I work there -- the  
19 kitchen was near the Judenrat. I belong to the Judenrat. I  
20 was the cook. The Judenrat was working together with this  
21 kitchen. They supplied us the food for cooking. And I heard  
22 that news -- heard that something like they gonna kill the  
23 Jews - nobody could believe it. Nobody would believe this.  
24 But I was -- I thought maybe it's true - or not -- why do I  
25 have to sit and wait and I -- they kept calling out the people

1 and they never came back -- they shot them and -- they never  
2 came back. And then they called in the same day - before I  
3 left -- they called <sup>the president</sup> of the Judenrat -- the Jewish community -  
4 and they killed him. I find out he is dead. His family was  
5 my -- the president and <sup>his</sup> family was our neighbors - near the  
6 Judenrat and my father was my father's best -- excuse me -- my  
7 brother's best friend -- my older brother's best friend. So  
8 he went to find out what happened to the president -- all of  
9 the president's family suicide. They took poison. His wife,  
10 his daughter and his two sons took poison together to be  
11 killed. Because they heard their father's killed -- from the  
12 Germans, from the Nazis. When I heard such a news I was  
13 trying to look which way to escape and I find a ride to the  
14 river and successfully I did go to with other 235 Jews - but  
15 they didn't survive. It was impossible. We went to the woods  
16 - on the third -- on the next three days from that Saturday -  
17 from that black Saturday -- I heard with my ears shooting all  
18 of the Jews -- all city - the <sup>last</sup> of the ghetto was 5,000 Jews -  
19 they were all killed - shot-and I heard the noise and the  
20 screaming and the shooting which I know this - it made me to  
21 cry hysterically all 235 Jews who escaped over the river - we  
22 all were crying unconsciously and then was no more tears to  
23 cry and that went through the end of the year and then there  
24 was -- I was freed from the Russian - Russian partisans they  
25 brought me out. They gave me freedom.

1 Q How old were you - - -

2 A I was in '43 -- I was 22 years old.

3 Q Were most of the people that were with you around your  
4 age or were -- that escaped over - - -

5 A They -- the other one who escaped with me -- to this  
6 river -- nobody -- I know that's alive. They made -- they  
7 escaped through other ways -- people are survivors from the  
8 whole city -- but I know eight has survived. Being in the  
9 woods - not the one who escaped with me to the river - nobody  
10 what I know is alive. Only me.

11 Q How does that make you feel?

12 A Sad.

13 Q Sad.

14 A Not happy. I never gonna be happy. It's not a happiness.  
15 It's very, very sad. Can't see it - it's inside feeling.

16 Q Are there times when you can even forget about it or - -

17 A No. Not a second. ---?? my eyes and in my dreams -  
18 never, never gonna forget it. Each person I gotta remember.  
19 I cook for them. I work -- I don't even have a witness to  
20 show that I was a cook -- not one witness up to <sup>to</sup> day -- it's  
21 been so many years later - I don't have a witness. I can say  
22 "yes" I was a cook and I can say "no, it's not true," nobody  
23 knows. Nobody survived. Do you believe this?

24 Q These are amazing stories; I really appreciate you.

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