



By Jake Borinsky



Oral History Project  
Fay Rosenberg



# Early Life and Educ

- Born in Poland.
- One of four sisters.
- Four children in total.
- Mother worked at home.
- Father was in business during the Great Depression.
- Fay called it "A home".
- Family was close.
- Fay and her sisters only spoke Polish while her father spoke Polish and other languages.
- Went to a small school.



Polish  
Flag



House in Poland



School in  
Poland

# Anti-Semitism before the War

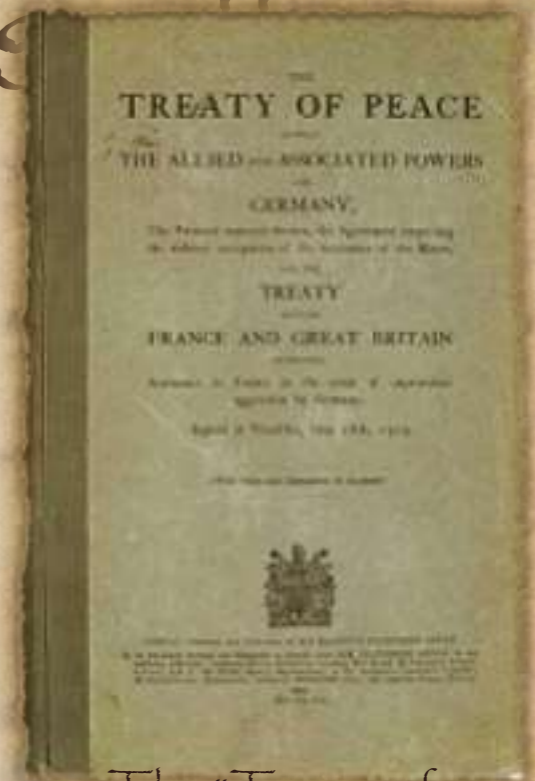
- Fay remembers much anti-Semitism before the war.
- She remembers verbal discrimination from other children.
- She describes Poland as a very anti-Semitic country.
- It was very anti-Semitic because of Hitler, during his rise to power, and because old reasons such as the one about how Jews killed Christ.
- She described one scenario: One day a kid asked her if she knew that Jews had no heart. The kid asked her this in another language so Fay had no idea what she meant by a heart. After a long time of thinking of what the girl meant by a heart she asked her father. Confused, he asked where she got the idea. After telling him he told her it was a lie.
- Even though her family and her went through so much discrimination Fay said that they got through it.



Jewish Star of  
David

# The Treaty of Versailles

- After World War One, Germany had been crippled by the Treaty of Versailles.
- First of all, the treaty diminished Germany's population.
- Second of all it made Germany pay for all damages done to France and Belgium.
- Next, it prevented Germany from manufacturing any armored vehicles or other military vehicles.
- Then it put restrictions on weapons and prevented Germany from using poison gas.
- Then, it greatly lowered Germany's military and restricted it from being larger than a certain number of troops and vehicles in all military fields.
- Finally, it reduced Germany's size as a country and made it give back all places taken during the war back to their countries.
- For Germany, this was a nightmare.
- It crippled Germany's economy, making their Mark nearly worthless.



The "Treaty of Versailles"



German burning currency notes

# Hitler's Rise to Power

- Fay and her family were aware of Hitler's rise to power but didn't think that he would start the catastrophe
- After WW1, Hitler and many other Germans felt betrayed by the government. Many also felt the Treaty of Versailles was completely unfair
- He started the Nazi party from the German Workers Party with other people who had the same views.
- First, Hitler tried to take the government by force.
- This is now known as the Beer Hall Putsch.
- This failed and Hitler was put on trial for treason, punishable by death.
- Luckily for Hitler, the judge was a Nazi so he got a small term of only 7 years.



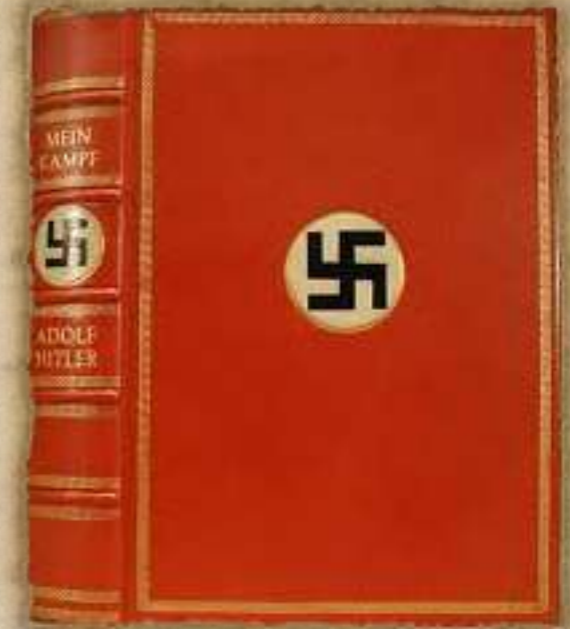
Nazi Flag with Swastika



Adolf  
Hitler

# Hitler's rise to Power (continued)

- In jail he wrote "Mein Kampf", which translates to "My Struggle" in English.
- In it he said his opinion of where people stood on the social pyramid. At the top he said there were the Aryan race, pure bred people from Germany. At the bottom were Jews, homosexuals and disabled people. In his opinion, it was survival of the fittest. The strong would survive and the weak would die.
- In prison he used a lot of propaganda.
- After only 1 year, he was let out early.
- Hitler went into politics. His political opposition, Hindenburg, felt that he was some nobody that had no chance of winning the election.
- To win the election in a majority he used major conventions. There he would talk using large words, talking powerfully using his hands while he spoke.
- He promised to return Germany to its former glory, destroy the "Treaty of Versailles", start mass production of armored vehicles, create a powerful German army, unite the German people and to expand across Europe.
- That election he won. He then dismantled the German government and started a dictatorship.



Mein Kampf



Burning of the Reichstag  
(German government building)

# The German Blitzkrieg into Poland

- On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland.
- They used the Blitzkrieg war style, in which they quickly invaded places before they had a chance to defend
- Fay remembers the invasion. She remembers seeing them riding in on motorcycles and other vehicles.
- Fay says everyone Jewish was in the synagogues praying at that time as it was a Jewish holy day. She said that she looked at her parents to make sure everything was going to be ok but they were scared too.
- She remembers the screams of people watching as Germans took over where they lived and as they tried to get out.



German Blitzkrieg

# Jews in Poland

- Once under Nazi control, Jews lost most of their rights and freedoms.
- Jews were forced to wear a Yellow star of David at all times so the Nazis knew they were Jews.
- Jews had to be in their houses by 5-6pm.
- Jews weren't allowed to ride public transportation.
- Jews weren't allowed in certain shops and in markets.
- Jewish children were not allowed to contribute in school lessons and would be bullied constantly in school.
- Jews were not allowed to visit recreational places such as parks and cinemas.
- Jews were not allowed to own businesses.
- Jewish men were forced to work in labour camps so Fay's father ran away.
- Eventually, Jews were forced out of their houses.
- Fay and her family were forced out of their house in Poland.



Jewish star (yellow)



# A close call with the Nazis

- Since Nazis had control of Poland, they could do what they wanted.
- One day, a Nazi came into Fay's house and asked for some coffee milk.
- As her parents were not around, she gave him buttermilk in his pot.
- He reminded her he wanted coffee milk but Fay didn't want to put the milk back in her pot so she gave him her pot with the milk. The Nazi told her to come with him to pick up the pot.
- When her mom got back she asked Fay's sister where Fay was. Fay's sister said she went to the train station with the Nazi. Her mom thought she was going to be killed.
- At the train station, the Nazi had just transferred the milk to another container. He then told Fay she could go.
- Fay told him that she wanted the pot back. She got it back.
- Fay says she now realizes how unknowing she was about the Nazis and what they were doing.



Nazi train station

# The Nazi-Soviet Pact

- On October 6, 1939, Germany and the USSR signed a peace treaty.
- It surprised many people as Hitler hated communism and Stalin hated Nazism.
  - Both sides knew it was only going to be temporary.
- Stalin wanted it so during the peace the USSR could build up a strong enough army to defeat Germany.
  - Hitler wanted it because he didn't want a two-front war.
- This treaty also split Poland in half. One half belonging to Germany, the other half belonging to the USSR.
  - Without a home, Fay and her family moved into the USSR.
- Soon after their arrival, a law was passed that people from Poland had to become citizens but Fay's father refused because if they became citizens, they couldn't return to Poland.
  - Suspecting them as spies, the government sent them to Siberia.

# Conditions in Siberia

- Conditions in Siberia were horrible.
- When Fay and her family got there she saw many others she knew in Poland.
- Living conditions were cramped as the rooms were very small and many people were in one room.
- There wasn't much food but more than in the death camps.
- It was extremely cold and winters would be unforgiving.
- There were no rules except not to go off too far as the Russian government still thought they could be spies.
- Even though the conditions were very bad, Fay says they got through it.



Tundra in  
Siberia



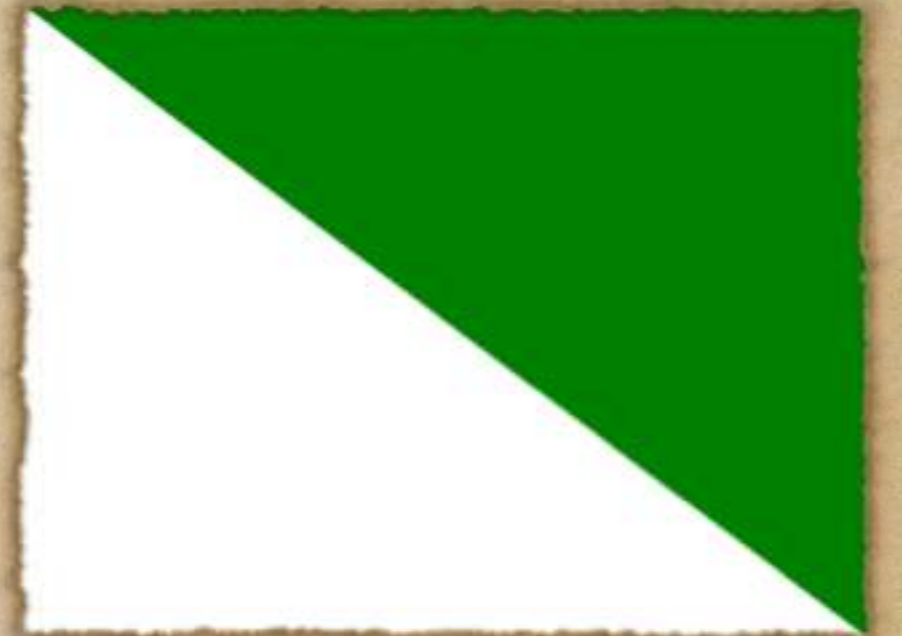
Jewish family in Siberia

# Siberia

- Siberia is part of the country Russia (or the USSR during WW2).
- Siberia is 13.1 squared km, making up about 77% of Russia. This makes Siberia cover nearly 10% of the Earth!
- The very most northern part of Siberia is the coldest place on earth.
- Temperatures in Siberia can reach a low of lower than  $-60^{\circ}\text{C}$ .
- Temperatures in Siberia can reach a high of about  $25^{\circ}\text{C}$ .
- Siberia is very rich in minerals such as Zinc and is also mined for oil and natural gas.
- Agriculture is very poor in Siberia as the growing season is very short.
- Parts of Siberia are unreachable by car so train is the primary transportation there.



Map of Russia



Siberian  
Flag

# Siberia (continued)

- In Siberia, people ate vegetables, greens and dairy products more in the summer.
- In the winter, people ate more meat and pickles.
- Because of temperatures always being cold, trees ins Siberia are almost all coniferous.
- During the winter, people wore a variety different clothing in Siberia. This includes Parkas, fur coats, and dear skin clothing.
- During the summer in Siberia, people wore lighter clothing.



A Siberian



Siberian vegetables

# The Red Army

- During World War 2 when Russia was a communist country, the military force was known as the Red Army.
- Soldiers of the Red Army had many different outfits and ways of transport. For example during the summer they might wear a normal army outfit to camouflage them with their green surroundings while in the winter, they would wear warm parkas that camouflaged soldiers with the snow.
- For transportation during the summer, they might use army jeeps and trucks. However during the winter they could use skis or snowshoes as seen in the picture to the right.
- Before the war started the Red Army was composed of 4.8 million soldiers. However, in total over 6.5 million Soviet soldiers fought.
- In total, 6,829,437 Soviet forces died during World War 2. Including other forces that fought alongside the USSR, the death toll comes up to 10,651,000.



Wintertime  
Warfare



Nazis being checked by Russian troops

# A deal between Poland and the USSR

- After being in Siberia for nine months, a deal was made between the Russian and Polish government.
- This deal let Jews and others deported to the USSR have the freedom of where they would like to live instead of having to live in bad conditions.
- Most families left but some stayed.
- Fay says that her family stayed because of her father who was too sick to travel.
- Because of her father being sick, they waited out the rest of the war in the USSR.



The Russian flag during  
WW2



The Polish  
flag

# The War Ends

- On April 30, 1945, after losing the battle to prevent the W. Allies from crossing the Rhine river, Hitler committed suicide
- Command was then handed over to Adm. Doenitz
- After just over a week, on May 8, 1945, Germany surrendered.
- This day came to be known as VE-Day (Victory in Europe Day).
- People crowded in the streets of the W. Allies, after the surrender had been announced, to celebrate.
- Fay remembers that day.
- She says it was a happy day and that she couldn't already believe that it was over.



VE-Day newspaper



VE-Day



# The move to Canada

- After the war Fay went onto a kibbutz.
- There she met her future husband who she married at 16.
- One year later they had a son.
- They wanted to move.
- Fay wanted to move to Israel because her mother was there.
- Her husband wanted to move to Canada because he had family there.
- They decided to move to Canada.



Siberian  
Flag



The Canadian  
flag

# A comparison between holocaust survivors

- Unlike other holocaust survivors, Fay never went to a death camp.
- She was never on the run from the Nazis and none of her family was killed as a result of torture or cruelty.
- She was deported to Siberia.
- She was never treated with anti-Semitism.
- She was allowed to wear whatever she wanted.
- None of her family went off to fight.
- She was from Poland



Polish flag

# A comparison between holocaust survivors (part 2)

- Esther Bem is another person who survived the holocaust.
- For most of the war, her family and her were on the run from the Nazis.
- She had to change identities.
- Her family and her almost got sent to a death camp.
- Her family and her made their way from Zagareb, Croatia to Italy on their own decision.
- They were never free until the very end of the war.
- Both survivors went through "close calls" where they could easily have been killed.



Esther  
Bem

# Fay's feelings on the Holocaust

- Felt the Holocaust was "indescribable" and said that you couldn't describe something like that.
- Says that her mother had a huge family, until they all became victims of the holocaust.
- She feels that it couldn't happen again because we would fight back.
- "Those days nobody fought back," she said, "I think everybody would fight back."
- An example of this is in Israel where they have always been fighting back no matter how strong the enemy.
- She blamed everyone for the Holocaust.
- She said that everyone knew what was happening but didn't help.
- She says that her religious views didn't change and that she continued being Jewish after the war.

# The importance of Oral History

In our lives, it's very important to learn about history. History tells us about the world before we were born, hardships that we go through and how we got to how we are today. Even though being taught history normally in class can teach you a lot, it's not first hand. Therefore, you can't learn what people felt or thought about that time. Oral history does all this. By listening to a person telling you their opinions or feelings on the history you can more thoroughly understand that history. When I interviewed Fay Rosenberg, I learned so many things that I never would have know or had guessed had happened. One "impact moment" is when she told me that her part of Poland was taken over by the Russians. This was truly interesting as up until then I had heard very little about peoples' experiences in Poland when the USSR took their part of Poland. Another "impact moment" was when she told me that her family and her were deported to Siberia. This was very interesting as I never knew that Poles were deported to Siberia or even Russia! One more "impact moment" was when she told me that the Russian and Polish governments signed a deal that freed Jews, and other Poles, deported in Siberia. I had never known this had happened. It wasn't in the textbook or even on a lot of websites! This piece of information was not only important but rare and valuable knowledge that I am glad I learned. All together, this Oral history has given me something I could never get anywhere else, first hand knowledge.

Thank You

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