

GHETTO ■ GIZELLA IN THE LUTSK GHETTO

Gizella Gross was born in Tarnopol, Poland, in 1928. She was 11 when World War II broke out and 13 when the Nazis took over her region of the country, soon beginning their persecution of the Jews.

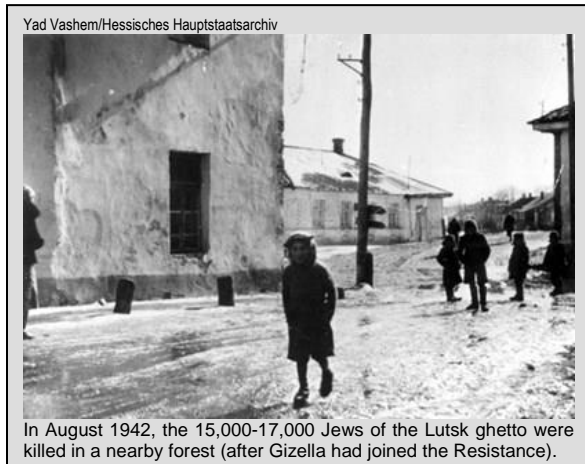
My family was very unusual because they owned land, and not many Jews owned land. My memories are of the house and of the soil, and how the house smelled on Shabbat [the Jewish Sabbath]. It was scrubbed clean and I remember the smell of the Sabbath dinner. The candles were on the table. Later when times were bad and I felt lonely, so alone and hungry, I always thought of the candles and of the family. And I always hoped that I would be able to experience this feeling once again.



Gizella, age 9 (left), with her cousin Bella and younger brother Zenon, 1937

Gizella's family was forced to move to a small apartment in a nearby city. Her parents sent her to stay with an aunt and uncle in the city of Lutsk, hoping she would be safer—but they were soon forced into a ghetto.

They created a ghetto at the edge of town and moved all the Jews into shacks. All of us had to wear yellow patches on our chests and on our backs. There was only one water pump, and it was padlocked except for one hour a day. There was no food, no sanitation. There was typhoid and starvation everywhere. There were random killings every day. One day I watched a work detail coming back into the ghetto. All at once the Germans started shooting for no reason and cut half of them down. Each day trucks came and took people away, and every day the line at the water pump was smaller and smaller. You could hear the sound of screaming and moaning every night. The Germans said they were relocating people to safety where they could work with honor; a Jewish committee was forced to select who was to go. They forced the deported people to write postcards back to the ghetto so the people would not panic.



Yad Vashem/Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv

In August 1942, the 15,000-17,000 Jews of the Lutsk ghetto were killed in a nearby forest (after Gizella had joined the Resistance).

[Read "Gizella Joins the Resistance" in Ch. 5 (Resistance).]

ONLINE RESOURCES

- *Witnesses to the Horror: North Carolinians Remember the Holocaust*, by Cecile Holmes White in cooperation with the N.C. Council on the Holocaust, 1987 archive.org/details/witnessestohorro00whit
- The Lutsk Ghetto (Yad Vashem) www.yadvashem.org/untoldstories/database/index.asp?cid=815

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