

-TITLE-LEON SENDERS
-I_DATE-
-SOURCE-HOLOCAUST EYEWITNESS PROJECT
-RESTRICTIONS-
-SOUND_QUALITY-GOOD
-IMAGE_QUALITY-GOOD
-DURATION-23 MINUTES
-LANGUAGES-ENGLISH
-KEY_SEGMENT-
-GEOGRAPHIC_NAME-
-PERSONAL_NAME-
-CORPORATE_NAME-
-KEY_WORDS-
-NOTES-
-CONTENTS-

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02 A written review of the historical events leading up to the German attack on Vilna (July 21, 1941) and a brief summary of the partisan movement appears on the screen. It is noted that some 90% of the Partisans died.

03 He was born Lazer Sanderovitch in Vilna, Lithuania, in 1923. He went to schools in Poland, served in the Russian army, was married in Vienna, and his first child was born in Italy. He now lives in the US. As a child he used to like to ski, skate and kayak. His life was similar to the lives his children have here.

04 He had been on an outing one day and returned to find his home had been bombed out. He located his family at his grandmother's house. His father told him to run East to Russia. He was 17 years old and he walked to Russia with other young people. Some were killed along the way.

05 When he returned to Vilna (after the war) his home was occupied by others. He was very upset and speaks of his sense of not having tied up loose ends. He did not see his parents alive again and he has not made peace with their deaths.

06 He lost his family: parents, 4 grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. He was mobilized (by the Russian army) and sent to a special school in Moscow and trained parachute jumping, how to blow up tanks, etc. He was in this special school in Moscow for a year and a half.

07 He was flown in a DC3 one October night and was dropped about 800 kilometers behind the German lines. He was a trained radio operator.

08 He was stuck on a branch and was hanging there until the branch broke and he fell down. He heard some people speaking and thought they were Germans. When he heard them using cuss words he realized they were Jews from Vilna.

09 Leon recognized one of the Partisans from his school in Moscow. The Partisans gave him his mission. He was to meet 4 other people (they worked in groups of 5). They were to give him

information on events in the town of Koningsberg, including railroads, material transports, etc. Koningsberg, in Prussia, was the last stop along the German line before the Russian front.

10 Leon would send the information and then 6 hours later the Russians would bomb the transports. This is how he knew he was doing his job. He was there about 3 months.

11 He was in a very stressful situation. One time he was sitting at a farmer's table when a German walked in. The German grabbed Leon by the ear and threw out and said he would not eat with Lithuanian swine.

12 He sent and received messages. The Partisans fought very hard and attacked railroad lines and police stations, etc. Their goal was to harass the Germans behind their own lines.

13 There had been 300 Partisans (most of them Jewish) at the drop-off point when he arrived. After two days he had to walk to Koningsberg, some 400 miles away. There were fights/encounters with the Germans all the time. 120 Partisans left for Koningsberg but only 12 arrived.

14 Leon tells of the daily life of the Partisans; they lived in the woods, fighting by night and sleeping by day. They took guard duty and had to scavenge from farmers. The Partisans lost everyone and everything and they fought hard to save their lives.

15 Their main job was to blow up railroad lines to disrupt transports. There were thousands of Partisans who fled the ghettos and scattered in the woods. In the winter they slept huddled together and those at the ends were always the coldest.

16 After a rain it might take a week for them to dry out. His was a small band without living houses, etc.

17 When he was dropped into the woods they had 11 bags of weapons and ammunition. They got additional weapons and explosives by stealing from the Germans, especially from the police stations.

18 They fought daily. Some Lithuanians fought against the Partisans and got help from the Germans. In White Russia there were larger Partisan groups with doctors, medicine, and even planes to evacuate the wounded.

19 To send a plane (to his group) with medicine would have been risky. After he was dropped, the plane that had transported him was shot down at the front. In the Ukraine there were thousands of Partisans.

20 After starting in a group of over 100 Partisans, he was one of 12 survivors. There weren't many Partisans in Lithuania. Some Partisan groups had non-combatant support personnel.

21 Leon was near Koningsberg when the war ended and he was in contact with the Russians so he knew what was happening. He

went home but did not find his family. He decided to leave Vilna and go look for family of friends. The Partisans had collected gold and German money but he turned his in to his commander and just wanted to leave that area and go to the US or Israel. (Eastern) Europe was now a cemetery for him.

22 One sister survived Bergen-Belsen. After the war some man saw Leon and said that Leon looked familiar. What the man saw as familiar was a family resemblance between Leon and his sister Devorah. The man had been in Bergen Belsen with Devorah and told Leon that she had survived.

23 Leon wants to speak about the Holocaust. Now that he can speak English, and he is retired and has the time, He wants to speak out. Talking about things that happened makes him feel better. He and other survivors speak out so things like this will never happen again.
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