

-TITLE-SHOSHANA ROSCYNKI
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-SOURCE-CHRISTIAN RESCUERS PROJECT
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00:00 General introduction about the Christian Rescuers, these are people who were trying to save Jews-Hitler trying to eliminate them not by way of war but wherever they were.

01:00 The tasks of saving the Jews was even more difficult because it went against the general plans of eliminating all the Jews and anyone saving the Jewish persons was prosecuted.

03:00 In spite of this, there were Christians who saved the Jews in many different ways, by giving them a home, clothing, or papers.

04:00 In some places the war went on for longer, such as Poland. For four years they saved Jews they did not know, people did not necessarily know the people they saved.

05:00 The war was longest in Poland and most of the Jews were brought there to the camps, it was a harder rescuing job there than anywhere else.

07:00 Shoshana does not have the precise number, but she believes that 60%-80% of the rescuers to be Polish.

08:00 According to Shoshana there about 4,000 recognized rescuers, however the number varies because this number may include the families of the people.

09:00 Of rescuers in Israel - 60% are Polish and 80% over the world are Polish.

10:00 Interviewer says "The reason I'm writing a children's book about the Holocaust is because I think it is important that children know. It is the second obligation of the rescuer to tell about the experience so that the rest of the world can know.

11:00 Shoshana says that she translated children's poetry from Polish to Hebrew that is why she is interested.

12:00 Q: Do you know what it means to be recognized as a Christian rescuer?

13:00 A: The motivation was either humanitarian or religious but never personal because it was very rare to find a mixed couple at that time in Poland at least.

14:00 Q: Asks about rescuer situation in Israel

15: Thanks to Danny "Ragofsky" (ph) the rescuers are now in contact with each other in Israel.

16:00 Up until a year and half ago the State of Israel did nothing to bring them together - they weren't helping them or bringing them together but just starting to recognize them. Now they are being helped.

(Danny comes and sits down in front of camera- speaks in broken English).

17:00 Q: What is Danny's part in this?

19:00 No one had helped these people financially only in recognition.

20:00 A reporter from the newspaper Davar blew up this situation for the first time in October or December 1985 (he can't remember which month). The nation was astonished because of the tragic situation of the bachelor's and widow's that people who saw it wanted to help.

21:00 Danny did not know that there were such people in Israel: he learned about it on T.V. and then met the Rocynski's later. People knew about the Holocaust but no one knew about rescuer's situation. Danny and his colleagues are from the Nature Society. They decided to collect the rescuers together and give them a week-end together. They invited all of them.

22:00 Not all of them were able to come (b/c of illness etc.) After forty years they met each other. The amazing story about this meeting is that two women from Warsaw met here in Warsaw. They lived in the same building: one on the first floor, the other on the third floor. They both were saving Jews, but neither of them knew until they met in Israel.

23:00 This meeting was a symbol that nobody in the country did anything to help these people. Except now some wanted to help. In February they reorganized the meeting.

24:00 After that their monthly financial compensation was greatly augmented (from 200 to 1,000 "something" a month). Before because they were not Jews they were getting much less than Jews.

25:00 Now because of what they did they are getting much more than Jews. Also now getting medical insurance. After program one of the Israeli Jews began to fix the Christians teeth and give them

glasses; he still does this.

26:00 This is an example of what one person did for them. Still now however they get but little recognition. They are still looking for rescuers.

27:00 They asked for a list of rescuers in Israel, but didn't get it, then some woman from Jerusalem stole the list and photographed it and sent it to the Nature Society. It was out of date by 17 years. Took them three months to find these people.

28:00 Worked like detectives. <it was difficult> maybe because they are Christians and Christians not allowed to bury Christians in Jewish cemeteries. These people don't want money they are very modest.

29:00 Shoshana is chairman of these people in Israel. She met these people through this committee of men who searched for these people before the Nature Society she knew only a few years.

Break-

33:00 Shoshana talking: The battle took a year and half because before they went on the T.V. program, they tried to avoid doing that because they realized it was a scandal and offensive to the nation of Israel. But they had a journalist working on it, his name was "Natanoi," (from Davar newspaper). It was his life mission.

34:00 Shoshana says: the reason that this didn't work was because they (i.e. the Kneset members) regarded these people as social problems financially. Not as a national Jewish problem that these people should be honored. Shoshana's battle is all about clarifying this point.

35:00 Danny has two concluding points: 1) Children-" one of the most important things that we thought was write a book for the children in school of the Holocaust day, because in Israel when I was a little boy, I visited 4x "Yad Vashem". But his children in the educational program haven't visited it yet.

36:00 The Holocaust is very vague, people want to forget it. We sent a letter to the Minister of Education to print a little book for children. He didn't answer but his secretary sent a letter saying they can't afford it, but if the Society can than that's fine. 2) Six months ago the Bulgarians had a meeting at "Halatabut" Many of them saved Jews. "they don't think about the three Bulgarians in Israel so we sent a letter.

37:00 The letter said: "you should send an invitation to these people. So the Bulgarians sent a letter. Then Poland had a meeting in "Halatabut" two months ago. They forgot about the Polish rescuers in Israel (about 25-30 people). We sent a letter to Polish meeting and after bargaining they still only sent three invitations.

38:00 So he didn't give them to anybody. He's not talking about money, he's only talking about recognition. "Attention isn't so much. A nation that hasn't got a past, hasn't got a future. "This is his motivation."

39:00 Talks about a program dedicated to the problem about the old Jewish people in Israel. Says:"If we can't care about them how can we care about these people?"

40:00 Stop passing the message along - somebody has to help these people. <Dan is a bus driver>

41:00 Nature Society regards these people as flowers that is how they got involved "you have to guard those flowers" This is the connection between Nature Society and these people. Shoshana starts talking "you needed the background story so that you understand now how these people think and feel, and operate. These people are not looking for publicity."

42:00 They are modest, not looking for honor or anything in return for what they did. The two reasons the <rescuers have> for being there (i.e. Israel) are: 1) they married someone they rescued.

43:00 2) or the people were invited by their rescuers to come and stay there. The people had high hopes about the new state of Israel and life there. Through they would have a good life there. The let down is the hopes.

44:00 Both these groups of people had 2 major problems: 1) language 2) finding a job and a home. The state didn't help these people. People who part of their family was Jewish had less problems.
Break

50:00 It's just been a year that they started receiving honor pension and it is a little late in her opinion. Some of the old are in very terrible condition.

Q: Could the survivor help them?

A: (it wasn't really answered) Shoshana said that some still have contact.

51:00 Q: Did these people really have to leave Poland?

52:00 There are a few individual cases in which people had to leave Poland for social problems (i.e. Anti-semitism). People found out that they had saved Jews.

53:00 But the opposite problem is here in Israel: Some people suffered from Anti-gentilism.Q: What about the Christian community?
A: There are two priests and one nun who visit or call these people once in a while....

54:00 And there is a group of people who converted to Judaism: especially because of the children (if the mother is not Jewish the children are not considered Jewish).

Break - Stefan joins Shoshana

56:00 Q: Where were you born?

A: In his house on a farm. He has two brothers and sisters.

57:00 They were farmers. He was the oldest child Q: Were you rich or poor.

A: They were o.k.

58:00 Were your parents altruistic? A: Six people always live together and help each other.

59:00 There were no Jews in the village.

Q: Was one parent more important than the other?

A: He was the most active because he was the oldest --- (repeat question).

60:00 A: The motivation came not from his parents, but it was natural instinct as when you see a cat hungry on the street

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you give him food... so when he saw the first Jews coming from the forest - of course he gave them food.

61:00 Q: Were those the first Jews that you had seen?

A: They commuted a lot to the nearest town and used to buy from the Jews ... Stefan was born in 1921.

Q: What was his mother like to him before the war?

62:00 A: Mother treated them all equally.. Jews and Gentiles alike... if didn't want tho have milk and meat together they didn't have to - it was an open house - it wasn't anything special.. (repeat question).

63:00 A: He's going back to his mother and the Jews .. I guess he doesn't want to answer this question - Q: well what did he just say?

64:00 She never hit him... the whole contact with the Jews concerned itself with their survivance (food, helping them hide etc...)

Now Shoshana answering:

66:00 She first met Stefan's mother in 1942. Although the family was under tension because of what they were doing .. no one ever raised their voice .. all the father had to do was look at someone and they knew their place.

67:00 Q: How did Shoshana and Stefan meet?

A: Shoshana was in the Vilmar ghetto - she escaped after her parents were killed there - she was twenty years old.

68:00 She got to a village nearby and Stefan found Shoshana in the village while she was nursing an old woman - this woman had tuberculosis and she died one day...

69:00 Stefan's mother invited Shoshana to come and stay with them and once she was there, she met a lot of Jews there in 1942.

70:00 Q: How did the first Jews get there?

71:00 Stefan wanders: 7km away there was a forest in which they assembled all the Jews and then shot them.

72:00 (Shoshana speaking) .. nearby there was a small town ("Nemenchini") that was populated mostly by Jews - and in 1941 on Yom Kippur they assembled all the Jews in the ... of the synagogue.

73:00 .. eventually they took them into the forest which was 7km away and they killed them all -- some people managed to escape and they knew about the farm and that the owners were good people. The first Jew was a (twenty year old man escaped from his house -- he never got to the forest. And some people who were shot but not killed made it to the farm.

75:00 Q: Who was living on the farm (at this time)?

A: The whole family

Q: And was it his mother's idea to take these people in?

A: Nobody threw them out

76:00 Q: Did they just show up at the door or did they know this was happening and go find them?

A: They came to the home.

77:00 The first person was friends with Stefan who was twenty at this time. Q: How did Stefan help - did he do something special?

78:00 Stefan guarded all night to make sure no one would be outside he would pick up the information from the environment about what was happening (i.e.. when the police were around).

79:00 Break .. Stefan having a hard time answering ... very modest ..

Q: Did the Jews work on the farm? What did they do?

A: Just one worked for a neighboring farm and slept there.

Stefan talking now.

81:00 There was a religious Jew who prayed aloud - and who could be heard from two km away -- and if there was a child crying he could be heard as well ... the neighbors heard everything; they knew all about it.

82:00 Three religious people were there and they only ate dairy - and Stefan's family brought them special dishes. They also gave them their clothes after a year - and after the war they never saw him again. (switched into talking about an old man they rescued).

83:00 Q: How many people all together were there?

a: He was taken by the Russians-Shoshana has a record that he died in Israel (this old man that they rescued) - when the Russians took over twenty of these people were drafted - some of them went to America.

84:00 Q: How many?

A: Altogether there were about 30 people - 4 or 10 at the time - and the neighbors had four - they were also saving (giving them places to work). Shoshana says that when she was there - there were plenty of people there all at the same time.

85:00 Stefan's mother had a dinner for them. There were Catholics and Jews at the dinner - it was a very memorable dinner.

86:00 MASS confusion .. (in the household).

87:00 Stefan speaking: Nobody believed that so many people were killed in Poland - the State of Israel sent only two people and there were 6 million killed.

88:00 (all of this is coming in small spurts of memory).. Shoshana is telling about a big dinner that Stefan's mother made for all of the Jews at the very tail end of the war. It was a very special dinner - they all sang songs - dinner was meant to bring their spirits up. There was a wonderful feeling of togetherness.

89:00 The second issue they talked about was the "Hannasen Issue"

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Stefan was upset because he saw all of these Jews being persecuted and anyone who was outside in Israel or in the U.S. didn't help. Stefan says that whatever was the Israeli State then did send parachutes, but it was so minimal in comparison to what was happening - two parachutes for 6 million Jews - Q: What was it like daily - where did these people hide?

90:00 Stefan answers:Everybody was in a terrible anxiety that cannot be described - they were scared that the Nazi's would come and kill them and burn them.

91:00 It was hard for them to believe that would not happen - everybody was scared in the same way that Israel's are scared of terrorists.

92:00 Q: Where were the Jews?

A: Stefan was o guard all the time and the minute he felt the

soldiers were coming he kept the Jews 10 meters away from the house... there was a forest around the house and Stefan knew the Germans were too scared to go further than that in the forest..

Q: Where did they hide in the forest?

93:00 A: They built bunkers and dug: every single day in daylight they went to their place that they dug for themselves - each one found their own place... a hole or a bunker and stayed there until the night when they were free to go back to the farm.

Q: And the Germans never came at night?

94:00 A: They never came at night .. if they reached the farm before sunrise they waited until sunrise and only then, they surrounded the farm .. They looked around a little bit in the forest with their guns and then they came in the house and ate and drank with them and they went.

95:00 The Jews guarded each other - there was a Lithuanian police man who used to give them information sometimes... They found a trick afterwards..

96:00 They found this Lith. police man and he spoke Polish.. He had found out that Stefan and his parents were hiding Jews and found Stefan's father and told him that if he were to be caught he would be killed... The father bribed him by giving him a home to live in a nearby town.

97:00 He didn't have to pay anymore to live there - they paid for the officer to live there - the house belonged to an uncle and they paid his rent and then used to tell them every time the Germans were coming.

98:00 He was scared too - but he told Stefan's father every time the Germans were supposed to come.

99:00 One time Stefan was caught in town and taken to the police - he only had his brother's papers on him - he got home eventually but almost ended up in Germany ... After that they felt a little fear because they knew when 16-18 of the soldiers were coming and the soldiers were not so much interested in finding Jews as sitting and drinking with them.

100:00 Shoshana telling a story: One person just left his son child at the farm and he himself didn't live there but he used to come and visit periodically - and he came to visit one time unfortunately and the Gestapo was there...

101:00 Unfortunately he was seen and he and Stefan's father were taken - Stefan's father came back but don't know what happened to this person.

102:00 They took Stefan's father to Gestapo in Vilna and put him in jail. So his mother went to Lith. officer to ask him what he could do for them -- so he said the only way to release his father was to

pay 1 kilo in gold or 10,000 dollars...

103:00 They went to look for this person who escaped and they never found him (i.e. the person who had left his son in the home) ... They paid his father's way out and after a week he came home.. Stefan's father told them about the interrogation.

104:00 They tortured his father trying to get information out of him - they say this a place that no one comes back from, but because of this Lith. officer - a phone call came in just as they were torturing him.

105:00 No one knows exactly who saved him - but they got him out.

106:00 His brothers and sisters were never bothered - the police after (the episode with his father) let them live quietly for one year...

107:00 Stefan thought that they must have thought that only one Jew was hiding there... Shoshana at that point was transferred to a different place - to Stefan's teacher because it was around the time when Stefan's father was caught and they were very scared..

108:00 Stefan says that there is too much to tell for four years - it would take years to write it dow - this consumed them for four years of their lives - it was life - threatening.

109:00 Stefan says the world was crazy, it was like a comedy.. there was a lot of humor involved - they didn't let themselves thing - it was like a game.

110:00 They were trying to do everything in spite of the Germans... Shoshana says they did this because they couldn't agree with the world being run that way: the harder the Germans worked the harder they worked .. They couldn't accept that way of living.

111:00 Stefan says it was like gambling for them, risking their lives... they would only live till tomorrow... Shoshana says they ended up being addicted to it... Stefan says they were all together on it.

112:00 (Both crying... they go off on a tangent..) a child grew up there on the farm from age 3-7, and they ran into him one time at a University in Israel, he is in the Army now. The kid came to Israel with mother and grandfather who did there.. They have no contact with him at all.

114:00 There are three families that they know of living in Israel.. Two of them died .. They drink Vodka together - there is contact between them.

115:00 In order to be recognized they need testimonies from rescuers... Three from the USA wrote and Israel people wrote also. Interpreter says: They feel sorry that they have no contact with him that is why they are talking about them...

116:00 Stefan says that maybe because the student is angry at the whole world he has no contact...

117:00 Shoshana thinks the student has become apathetic because that whole period when he was not free to do what he wanted affected him for the rest of his life (...having to hide in the bunkers all day...)

118:00 These people did not want to have any contact with the Gentiles after that..

Q: When did you get married?

A: (Shoshana answered) Right after the war - when the Russians occupied Poland - (they considered it the end of the war)...

119:00 1944 - once there was a civil office in town to arrange marriages - they got married.

Q: Why did you come to Israel?

120:00 A: Shoshana came because she was always a Zionist and she had one brother left and he was living in Israel... (Shoshana says) - and Stefan was running away from Russian ... he did not care if he lived in Germany or Israel.

121:00 They stayed in Russia for 16 years and then they moved to Poland for two years and there was an agreement between Russia and Poland that whoever had been a Polish resident before the war could leave Russia and go back to Poland... this happened twice - one in 1948 and once in 1958.

122:00 They left Russia in 1958 and for two years they lived in Poland until they got permission to leave for Israel... this was difficult because of Stefan who was not Jewish.. it was only because of Shoshana's brother that he got into Israel...

123:00 Stefan remarks at this point that Jews have lived in Poland for 1,000 years but that Poles were not allowed into Israel for even a peek..

124:00 In his passport it says that he is a Jew, but then he hired a lawyer to change it because he did not want to lie...

125:00 Now his family (the rest of it) spends winters in Vilna and summers at the farm - his father is dead and his mother is very old - just Shoshana and Stefan are left...

126:00 When the Russians came they worked in a factory-after one year 100,000 people were all taken to Siberia.. (confusion sets in -
the interpreter does not know if they are talking about before of

after the war)... they think that Shoshana and Stefan are talking about the Poles being taken to Russia during the war...

TAPE 2 - Rocyncki

1:00 Q: Where was your first child born?

1:26 A: The doctors were Germans and Lithuanians .. They believe the doctors .. (trails off)..- after the war a lot of children died...

2:27 Later they caught on to what was happening .. they say they (these doctors) caused the children to catch (meningitis?).. They threw out all these doctors.

2:47 1948 - the first living child was born - a girl
1950 - a boy was born

2:56 Q: Does your son know about what you did during the war?

3:10 The son always knew - they lived in Russia for 12 years.

3:32 Q: But he knows his father was a hero?

4:14 A: His son is a chopper pilot - Stefan is saying that his son is embarrassed that his father is not Jewish; that he is Polish.

4:51 Q: Does the son have altruistic qualities?

5:16 Stefan is a cynic, in case you didn't notice.

5:29 What about the other child?

6:43 A: Shoshana wants to tell a story that happened back in the war, when she was hidden in an alternative place with the teacher -
this teacher's husband joined the partisans and at that time a bunch of Lithuanians got together to help the Germans find the Jews and the Poles who were hiding the Jews.

7:45 At 4:00 o'clock in the morning Stefan came knocking on the door because he felt something was happening.

8:43 After they left and went to the neighboring village - they turned and saw the house being burned and the whole farm being burnt- that was one of the times they were saved.

9:15 Then there was another period when they were staying with Stefan's aunt and Polish partisans came and they were also looking for Jews to kill - and they knew about Shoshana. so the aunt went and got the priest.

9:32 and he testified that Shoshana was from Stefan's family - that she was not Jewish and that is how she stayed alive.

9:49 Then they escaped from there but they came looking for them again

10:00 They came again, but by then Stefan and Shoshana had escaped.

10:17 Q: Ask them what they think about these years...

10:36 a: When you see the pictures and all of what is hanging on the wall, you can't help thinking about it - They will never forget it.

10:51 Q: In your whole life now, what time could you say was the best time?

11:15 A: The whole time they were in Russia, Stefan spent a few times in jail - so after they escaped from Russia they felt free and now this is a good time for them.

11:36 Q: Was the war the worst time?

12:10 A: Their son is a pilot and he fought in two wars and that was also a very bad time. (Lebanon and the Yom Kippur War).

12:23 They talk about one son what about the daughter? - (Stefan is now pointing out to the son who is a pilot and a teacher now of pilots - he served in the Army for 13 years).

12:53 Q: And the daughter does she have altruistic qualities?

13:06 The daughter is married, her husband also flew in three wars, the daughter has three children and their grandson is already in the Army.

13:59 The interpreter says: every time I ask about (altruistic qualities) they say the need is not immediate as it was in their times - they are just normal people.

15:58 (Showing family pictures) .. It is a picture showing Shoshana standing next to a tree planted in honor of Stefan - he was recognized in 1967.

16:19 Q: And for Stefan does he feel that coming to Israel was a good thing?

16:42 A: He says everywhere else is no good, so here it's good.

17:16 (Photographs of Stefan's medals.

Break and end of tape ... From this point on they are eating and making idle conversation. This tape was recorded in 1987.

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