

## **RG-50.030.1099**

### **Summary**

Mano Orel (born Emmanuel Ostrow) was born April 24, 1925 in Athens, Greece. His father, Aron Ostrow, born in Odessa, and emigrated, Mano believes, as he was an anti-Communist. His mother, Liza (née Machoro), was born Sephardic Jewish in Istanbul. Mano had a younger brother, Rudy (born Rafael exactly four years later). Greek was the primary language at home, though Mano's first language was German. His father was multilingual as was his mother, who also spoke Ladino.

Aron had a successful, small factory making men's hats. Early in Mano's life, the family moved into living quarters built within the factory. He describes his home life and its religiously mixed neighborhood. His family was not very religious, mostly attending only high holiday services, though Mano did have a Bar Mitzvah. Mano started at a German school for two years before transferring to a Jewish school to escape harassment. Mano remembers being aware of the political developments in Germany.

His father died suddenly shortly before the war started. His mother took over the factory, but sold it after the Nazis invaded. For two years after occupying Athens, the Nazis did not round up Jews and actually provided food to them through the synagogues. His family was then in hiding with the Kazanski (?) family.

Mano obtained false papers from the Greek government in the name of Yanis Tranoris, which hid his Jewish identity. He describes how he and his friends were influenced by local Communist cells, which included joining the resistance in Thebes. He also related his experiences with the black market, which led to closer interaction with Germans, ultimately leading to him becoming an interpreter for the German military police. In this he was encouraged by the resistance, despite his own reservations. He also describes how, in his view, the German army treated the population with respect, unlike the Gestapo and special units.

Mano used his access to food through the police to send provisions to his mother and brother in Athens. In 1944, he learned that the Nazis exploited the trust they had created amongst the Jews in Athens through their feeding program to suddenly round them up. Mano's mother and brother were caught this way and sent to Auschwitz where they perished.

He continued working with the Germans until, fearing that he might be brought back to Germany by the military police, he arranged with the resistance to join the guerrillas in the nearby mountains. Some Italian and German defectors were among the guerrillas.

As the war ended, Mano returned to Athens as he didn't want to join in resisting the return of the Greek king. He immigrated to Israel where he became an Air Force radar technician. He

worked for the Israeli government in New York City where he obtained his green card, got married and became a citizen. He wrote a book about his experiences, *Under the Enemy's Nose* (also titled *My World War II memoirs*. This book is available in the USHMM library, see <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/bib114519>).