

RG-50.120*124 (7.25.1993)
RAZON SIMAN-TOV

TAPE 1 OF 2

01:01:20 My name is Razon Siman –Tov. I was born in Salonika in 1919. I went to a “Heder” and from age five to a Jewish school. I lived in neighborhood #151. It was an army camp of the Italian soldiers from WWI. From age 15, I went to a Christian school, but then the war broke out, and I had to stop. My father was a shoemaker. We were a traditional family. I had three brothers and a sister. One of my brothers went to Palestine. I had to go too with my uncle, but he broke his leg and we could not go. I went to work in the nearby villages in agriculture.

01:06:00 In 1939 I was recruited to the Greek army. We didn’t hear much about the war, only about the German invasion of Poland and the voyage of the St. Louis ship.

01:10:00 In 1940 I was near the border of Bulgaria. We were in the mountains for 7-8 months. Then Italy had gone to the war. We went to the border of Albania. I was a supplier of food. We heard that the Germans occupied Greece so we dispersed and went back home.

01:16:20 I was with a friend in a barn. We saw lines of soldiers and heard an officer said: “ The war had finished and the war had begun”. He meant that we had finished our duty in the Albanian border and now had to fight the Germans out of Greece.

01:21:20 I told myself: “this is not for you, you have not been at home for a year, you better go home”.

My father told me that my mother had died. He told me to burn all my cloths, because it was full of lice. I worked with a shoemaker.

In 1941 the Partisans bombed some camps of the Germans. The Germans gathered 50.000 people and executed them.

01:28:20 On one Shabbat the Germans gathered all the Jews in Independence Square. They took one Jew and punished him. He had to stand on one leg, to bent up and down, and behind him was a big dog. When I saw it, I told myself: “Simon – run away”!

01:31:20 I told my father that I am going to hide in the villages where I had contacts.

01:38:10 Simon tells about the differences between rich and poor Jews in Salonika.

01:43:00 I didn't have any contact with the Jewish community. I didn't know rabbi Koretz who was the leader of the Jewish community. I worked in the villages for 4 months. One evening I met some partisans. I told them that I am a Jew and someone could inform me, so I wanted to join them. They told me to bring shoes. I joined them in 1942.

01:51:20 I got a false identity card as a Christian. My name was Demandopolis Simon. Our base as partisans was in the caves in the mountains. We got orders to go each night to the villages and to shoot and make impression that we have big forces so that the farmers will be encouraged to join us.

01:57:00 Before the war we had 70.000 Jews in Salonika. In entire Greece lived 120.000. After the war only 10.000 Jews were left. In my partisan division we were 3000 people, among them 10-15 Jews. We got weapons and food from the farmers. They worked as informers and suppliers.

02:03:30 One day we met three German soldiers. We brought them to our headquarters. Two were executed and the third one said he wanted to join us as a fighter. His name was Alferd, and he stayed with us till the end of the war.

02:13:20 We had women among us. They served in the clinic, in the kitchen. We sabotaged the railroad stations. If we caught informers we brought them to a court and we punished them.

02:22:50 Among the partisans we had Russian, American, Israeli and Sudan prisoners of war that escaped and joined us. We also had English but they didn't fight. We got food, weapons and cloths from the British Army.

02:28:10 The Communist party organized us as partisans. We didn't have discrimination between men and women, Jews or Christians, Moslems or Gypsies. We didn't have many casualties. Medicine and salt we had to bring from the city. So we made a big loaf of bread with money inside and one of us went to the city to meet some Communist student to get the supply.

02:50:00 "The Small Eagle" were youth about 15 years old who helped the partisans in their struggle against the Germans. When I heard that the Germans planned to take all the Jews to Poland, I went back home. I met my father and my brothers and sister. I asked them not to go and to join me. My brother told me: "You can stick to your Communist ideas, we will listen to the rabbi".

02:56:30 Some partisans tried to convince Jews to join them. Those who went had survived.

03:09:25 In January 1943, the Germans attacked us. It was a very bad winter with a lot of snow. We succeeded to run away.

03:15:05 Once I was wounded in my legs. I went to Yaniza (small town) for three months.

03:33:30 If we damaged property that we got from the farmers we got punishments. Like: to be tied to a tree, or not to join one of the actions.

03:42:20 We hurt or caused damage only to those whom we knew were informers. We didn't hurt their families.

Siman-Tov, said he couldn't recall specific terrorist actions they did.

03:48:50 The first time I got into despair and I cried about my family and the other Jews who went to their death without thinking of what they were doing, was in Kibbutz Allumot, in Pesach. When I said it to my wife, she said: "The hunger told us to go". But I say why didn't you think. How could you go to a place where you don't know anybody there? You don't know the language.

TAPE 2 OF 2 (8.2.1993)

04:01:30 The partisan organization was established to protect the country, but the Communist took it over. We had contact with other groups of partisans in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. They helped us and we helped them.

04:11:30 Seven months after the liberation I met friends from the Jewish Agency. I worked in a kitchen for the refugees. Every day I checked the list of the survivors to see if someone from my family had come back. No one did.

People blamed Rabbi Koretz for what had happened and wanted to take revenge.

04:21:50 A friend of mine and I got British uniform and we went on a Greek ship to Pyres. I arrived to Palestine after 5-6 days of sailing to Herzeliyah beach. I was taken to Kibbutz Allumot. I felt good there, as a king.

04:33:10 I met Yvonne (my wife) in Salonika at a friend's home. She came to Palestine a year after me. We had different fates during the war. I had a gun and I could fight back and defended myself. I was free and she was a prisoner.

04:43:40 I moved to Tel-Aviv and worked as a shoemaker. Then I worked for 12 years in Sdom and then as a carrier.

04:52:20 He blames the Israeli government that took all the money that he and others deserved as compensation money for what they had been through.

He and his wife are getting what he called "crumbs".