

Dotan, Yosef  
RG-50.120\*0343  
Two Videotapes  
In Hebrew

- Abstract:** Yosef Dotan was born in 1923 in Veľký Meder, Slovakia, which was re-annexed by Hungary at the start of the war. He came from an upper middle class family and had three siblings. Yosef left his hometown for school and then later moved to Budapest to look for work. He learned the trade of carpentry, which helped save him from going to Auschwitz (where his parents were killed). Yosef worked in several work camps during the war: aluminum, aircraft and iron. In 1944, he worked with the underground and Zionist organization called the Glass House in Budapest. Yosef had some interaction with Raoul Wallenberg and mentions the Kastner trial in his interview. After the war, he organized refugees to go to Palestine, eventually settling there himself. He joined the Hagganah. Yosef married in 1948.
- 1:00 Yosef Dotan was born in 1923 in Veľký Meder, Slovakia. His parents were Hungarians. After WWI their area of Hungary became part of Slovakia. They were an upper middle class family. He was one of four children. His father was a regional supervisor. In 1938, their area again became part of Hungary.
- 1:05 Yosef describes his childhood and friends. He went to elementary school in the village and to a high school in Bratislava. There were ten Jewish families in the village. He describes Jewish life in the village.
- 1:16 In 1939 his oldest sister went to Palestine to study at the Hebrew University. He studied in a technical school until the Germans went into the Sudeten and then he returned home.
- 1:24 Yosef talks about the entrance of the Germans into the Sudeten. They took charge of the large arms industry. Jewish students were expelled from school. He went to Hungary. He describes the difficult journey there.
- 2:00 Yosef returned home and started to do odd jobs for work. He eventually went to Budapest. He worked there in a large iron factory. Nobody knew he was Jewish. He describes his work in the factory. Later they found out that he was Jewish and he returned home.
- 2:11 He trained for two years as a carpenter but then ended up working in agriculture, where there was a great demand.

- 2:22 Yosef was conscripted into the army and in 1944 went to Komárno. When the Germans entered Hungary, they were sent to forced labor camps. He was sent to Nagykáta, a village in the center of Hungary, where the Germans built a large airfield.
- 2:28 He describes the hard work at the airfield and the terrible living conditions there.
- 2:32 He was sent to a professional unit to build a factory. Yosef worked as a carpenter and living conditions were much better.
- 3:00 In April 1944, the Jews in his village were ordered into a ghetto. In June they were sent to Auschwitz, where his parents were killed. His sister worked in a factory near Leipzig and escaped. His brother died in Mauthausen during an Allied air attack.
- 3:07 Yosef later worked in an aluminum factory that was bombed first by the British and then by the Americans. Yosef and the other workers had to clean up the destruction.
- 3:16 The head of Yosef's work unit treated them decently and allowed them to go on home visits. He let them know that the plan was to march them to Germany. They bribed a man in the Wehrmacht who took them to Budapest in a truck.
- 3:31 In Budapest, he went to the Glass House, which was the home of Zionist organizations. When thousands of refugees from Poland arrived, they organized an underground system. One of the main activities was to provide forged papers. These papers were the means of saving thousands of Jewish lives. They were in contact with Carl Lutz and Wallenberg helped them. Also mentioned were Rafi Ben Shalom and Artur Weiss.
- 4:00 He was known by the name Dawei. They were in contact with a communist group that helped them. David Gur produced forged papers using Swiss and Swedish authorities' forged signatures.
- 4:12 Yosef describes how they used false papers to rescue groups from the Gestapo.
- 4:18 In November 1944 he joined the underground and met his future wife. He organized the group to defend against a possible attack of the Glass House. They had guns and Yosef trained men to use them.
- 4:31 He mentions the Kastner trial, which in his opinion was very unjust. Kastner saved more than 200,000 Jews.

- 5:04 Yosef describes liberation by the Russians. Their advance groups were hoodlums who killed, plundered and raped. He talks about some incidents with Russians. The regular Russian units were O.K.
- 5:13 The Russians took regular citizens prisoners and sent them to work in Russia.
- 5:18 He was called to organize gathering abandoned Jewish children. They were to be organized by the Youth Aliya and taken to Palestine.
- 5:22 He also organized the transportation of food supplies from Romania to Budapest.
- 5:30 Yosef talks about how they organized the children and returned them to their parents when possible.
- 6:00 He describes how he saved 80-90 children.
- 6:07 The refugees from Poland and other places came through Budapest with the aim of crossing the border into Romania. From there, they went to Odessa and then onto Palestine by boat. His job was to smuggle refugees across the border.
- 6:12 He tells the story a Jewish Russian officer who insisted on going to Palestine.
- 6:16 Yosef went the same route and went by boat to Haifa. He went first to a kibbutz and then joined the Hagganah. He organized the arms industry and also participated in many battles.
- 6:20 Yosef married in 1948 and lived seven years in a kibbutz. He talks about his children and grandchildren.