

Rozin, Samuel
RG-50.120*0368
Three Video Tapes
Recorded March 2, 2000

Abstract

Samuel Rozin was born in Kovno, Lithuania, in 1926, the youngest of five children. The family was traditional, but not very religious. His father, who owned a merchandise transport business, had earned a medal for heroism as a volunteer firefighter. Samuel recalls Jabotinsky's speech in 1938 in Kovno, when he encouraged all Jews to go to Eretz Israel. Samuel studied art in Kovno. When the Russians entered the city, there was a change in atmosphere, and Samuel learned to speak Russian.

When the war started, Samuel's family left for Vilna, but they were warned to return to Kovno because the Germans were already in Vilna. On the way back to Kovno, they were stopped by the Lithuanians, who saw the father's heroism medal and allowed them to return.

In 1941, the family was transported to the Slobodka ghetto where Samuel's father died of a heart attack. Other family members were killed in the Ninth Fort. Samuel remained in the Kovno ghetto until the spring of 1944, when he got a rifle and joined the partisans. He was trained by Haim Yelin, in Michl Pasternak's basement. The partisans were based in the forest. Their leaders were Russian. They placed explosives under train tracks. Although they were surrounded by Germans, Samuel and others survived.

After the war, Samuel was hospitalized, and then returned to Vilna. He wanted to study art, but was conscripted into the Russian army for five years.

TAPE 1

- 1:01:15 Samuel was born in Kovno, Lithuania, in 1926. He was an artist and remembers the beauty of his city. In Kovno, half of the population was Jewish. Samuel describes Jewish life and institutions there. Samuel's aunt was a guardian in the Jewish cemetery in Kovno, and he spent his childhood visiting there often.
- 08:29 His aunt, uncle and paternal grandfather lived in a house at the cemetery. The grandfather had been in the Tsar's army, as a flutist in a band. The remains of the flute were still in the attic, and Samuel looked at it often during his visits there. The family was traditional, but not very religious.
- 12:13 Samuel describes memories of his grandfather, and his death. In the years 1914-1917, the Russians forced all the inhabitants of Lithuania to go to Poland, so as not to fall under the Germans. They all returned after the Russian Revolution in 1917.
- 13:18 In the family, there were four brothers and an oldest sister (who died young). Samuel was the youngest of all the siblings. The family was transported from the Slobodka ghetto to the Ninth Fort and killed there.
- 14:45 Samuel's father owned horses and his business was the transportation of goods.
- 16:07 His father was also a volunteer fire fighter. He was decorated for heroism, for saving a man who jumped from a tall bridge to a frozen river.

- 17:56 When the war began they wanted to escape. In two days they were close to Vilna (it was 1941) and were warned to go back to Kovno, because the Germans were already in Vilna.
- 20:02 On the way back to Kovno, they were stopped by the Lithuanians (who were already collaborating with the Nazis). When the Lithuanians saw that the father's medal had been given to him officially by Lithuania, they let them go.
- 20:28 In 1935, Samuel's older brother Meir immigrated to Eretz Israel. He was a Zionist. The other two brothers, Mordechai and Avraham, belonged to Beitar. Both were killed during the war. Samuel was too young to join, but often visited them at their club house. Samuel describes Jabotinsky's visit to Kovno in 1938. Samuel remembers his speech and how he encouraged them all to go to Eretz Israel. Jabotinsky spoke in Yiddish. At home, Yiddish was spoken, as well as Lithuanian and German (because of the workers). Russian and Polish were also spoken.
- 27:16 Samuel describes his study of arts in the evening. Some of his teachers were famous artists.
- 2:00:00 He describes the Jewish artists at the school and in the city, and recounts his first steps in art and in poetry.
- 09:50 Samuel describes the Spanish War. Many Jews from Lithuania volunteered to serve.
- 11:31 He remembers Ilya Ehrenburg's trial.
- 12:24 Samuel describes his studies after the Russians entered the city. His art studies were his priority. There was a change in atmosphere in the city. Samuel learned Russian during that year.
- 14:00 He describes Hitler's ascendance to power. He recounts his path as an art student.
- 19:00 He remembers summers at his uncle's house on the shores of the Murnau River.
- 23:29 Samuel describes the exchange of populations in Lithuania during the winter before the war started.
- 24:00 He describes the arrival of Polish refugees.
- 27:01 He remembers the day the war started.
- 28:43 Samuel attempted to flee eastward. There was confusion on the roads, so he returned home.

TAPE 2

- 3:00:00 Samuel tells more about his temporary stay 25 kilometers from home.
- 07:48 On the way home, the family arrived in Slobodka where his father stayed with the wagon and his possessions, because the bridge over the river had been destroyed.
- 17:30 There was an edict forcing the Jews to go to the ghetto in Slobodka.

- 19:43 Samuel describes the slaughter of Jews in Slobodka.
- 21:03 He describes the transfer to the ghetto.
- 24:33 He remembers trading for food, and describes his jobs.
- 26:17 There was a large “Aktion”, two months after they entered the ghetto. Samuel describes the selection for the Aktion.
- 29:27 There were 40,000 Jews gathered in the large square. Lithuanians were the guards. Approximately 8,000 Jews were taken away.
- 34:00 Samuel’s father died suddenly in the ghetto of a heart attack. It was in December, 1941.
- 4:00:00 Before the big Aktion, the Jews chosen for deportation were taken to the small ghetto, and then sent on foot to the Ninth Fort.
- 08:18 Samuel describes his work in the graphic studio of the ghetto. He worked there for about three years.
- 18:42 He was taken to the police station because he was caught in the city, without his Star of David badge. He was turned over to the Gestapo and punished with the officer’s belt. After a month and a half in jail, Samuel was released and sent back to the ghetto.
- 32:16 Samuel stayed in the ghetto until the spring of 1944, when he joined the partisans.
- 32:36 He describes hangings in the ghetto.
- 5:00:00 Samuel describes his relationship with the elders of the Judenrat and the Jewish police.
- 08:00 He describes cultural life in the ghetto.
- 12:06 He describes the underground in the ghetto.
- 14:32 Samuel attained a Mauser rifle by trading one of his father’s suits. Ownership of a weapon guaranteed his acceptance as a partisan.
- 15:43 Haim Yelin’s group accepted Samuel, sent him to training, and prepared him for his life as a partisan.
- 21:42 Samuel describes the children’s Aktion, which was heartbreaking.
- 32:47 He was able to read a lot in the ghetto.
- 6:00:00
- 04:51 Samuel shows his art work and describes more about the children’s Aktion.
- 07:20 Samuel began his attempt to join the underground. Haim Yelin accepted him, and kept his rifle. He sent Samuel to be trained in the basement of Michl Pasternak.
- 10:19 People escaped in small groups to join the partisans in the forest.

- 11:50 He describes the journey through the forest.
- 19:00 The escape attempt failed, so Samuel returned to the ghetto. There, he found out they were searching for him because he didn't show up for work for several days. Samuel looked for a way to leave the ghetto again, to resume his search for the partisans. It was the beginning of April, 1944.
- 7:00:00
- 11:29 Samuel found the partisans from White Russia in Zagarinya (Žagarè?) in Rudnicki (Rüdinkai?).
- 19:00 He describes the first battle, where he saw the refugees from Ponary.
- 23:18 He met a German soldier who defected to the partisans.
- 32:00 He describes life with the partisans.
- 33:09 The partisans placed bombs on the train tracks.
- 8:00:00
- 08:45 The partisans were surrounded by the Germans. Samuel and others survived. He talks about the commanders, who were Russian.
- 16:41 The partisans placed explosives under the train tracks from Vilna to Kovno.
- 24:46 The partisans were ambushed on the way by Germans. Samuel was wounded. He escaped by hiding in the bushes near the river.
- 9:00:00
- 06:00 He returned to the partisan base, and found refuge in a farmer's house. Over a week later, after he recovered, he went to search for the partisans he had been separated from.
- 19:00 Samuel finally made it to his base. It was almost the end of the war.
- 30:00 After the war, Samuel was hospitalized for a month and a half. Then he returned to Vilna.
- 31:03 Samuel's mother was in Stutthof. His older brother died. Samuel saw his mother for the first time in over twenty years, when she came to visit him in 1963.
- After the war, Samuel wanted to go to art school but, at age 18, he was conscripted into the Russian Army for five years. He was never at the front. He was in an Engineering Corps.