

RG-50.146.0007

Oral history interview with Henri Broder

Summary

Henri Broder, born 18 January 1929 in Paris to Polish parents; describes the declaration of war in 1939; his family lived in the 14th arrondissement; he and his family took refuge in Vendée; they returned to Paris in 1940; his parents presented themselves as Jews to the police; Henri had no contact with Judaism; at 17, he leaves Paris to go past the demarcation line; he would arrive at Nîmes where he had family and pretended to continue his studies; for 6 months, he was lodged and fed in Nîmes; he stayed until 1941 in Nîmes where he became aware of the Belgian Jewish refugees in the area; he studied to become a skilled-laborer; describes going to the Préfecture to the bureau of Jewish question in Paris to get a certificat for his director of studies as his first contact with the word "Jew" (Juif); he describes his second contact was watching the French police round-up the foreign Jews; at the end of 1941 and beginning of 1942, he went to the Camp des Milles (next to Marseille) where his Belgian friend and her mother were interned; both were deported and never came back; describes interactions and friendships with members of l'Armée Juive and O.J.C. ('organisation juive de combat') whose goal was to help create a country for the Jews; describes joining the 'Chantiers de jeunesse' at age of 20 which replaced the army; in 1943, Broder travelled back to Paris with a friend from les Chantiers only to learn that his father had died in 1941; he went back to Lyon; meets with the O.J.C. and they tell him to go to Toulouse where he meets Jacques Lazarus in January 1944; describes returning to the 'maquis dans l'Armée juif' and the 'Brigade juif', both working to help aid the resistance and Allied forces landing in France on D-Day; describes liberating Deauville on July 17th 1944; the force was about 600 men in total; describes a bomb attack by the Germans on July 20th 1944 which killed many of his comrades; money for their efforts came from England; describes ambushing and attacking Germans forces; they took many German prisoners who were serving in the Wehrmacht, many were already in their 40s; they (the 'Chantiers de jeunesse') ignored all the concentration camps; describes the role of Colonel Buckmaster, who was responsible for all of the information provided to French resistance efforts; women were not included in this resistance group; Broder learned of the concentration camps in '42 as a result of the roundups; describes joining the Haganah in France and helping organize their efforts; they created a training camp near Lyon in the Kibboutz style; they trained younger Jews for the army in Palestine; finally, describes joining l'association de France Israel.

English summary provided by Ethan T. Ashley