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Oral history interview with Leon Tsevery

Summary

Leon Tsevery, born in 1926 in Paris to a family of laborers; his father was a cobbler from Brest Litovsk (Belarus) and came to Paris on foot at the end of the soviet revolution in Brest; his mother came from Poland; they were married in '23; his older brother Jacques was born in '24; Leon also had a younger brother; in September of 1939, Leon was on vacation in Allier; when they returned to Paris, Leon had chosen to attend business school and his brother went to technical school; in '41, their director said that he could no longer protect him and his brother; in 1941, his father had to close his cobbler boutique; Leon began to work; they lived on 50 rue de la Chapelle in Paris; where they lived, there were about 7 Jewish families; his father was politically engaged on the left; in his family, was the tradition of Judaism but not the religion; in 1942, at age 16, Leon became aware that he was Jewish when he received his card with the stamp "Jew" ("Juif") on it; his mother sewed the yellow star of David for their clothing; the day before the Vel d'Hiv in '42, an inspector of the police came to tell his father that all the Jewish men will be stopped tomorrow; Leon and his two brothers decided to hide in their apartment; when his mother opened the door to the police and told them that her husband had left with both children, the police arrested his mother; Leon went to visit his mother in a hangar where they re-grouped everyone; he visited for an hour and then went back to his apartment where the door was open and there was a policeman; his father was packing his bags and was forced to take Leon's little brother; Leon stayed with his brother; his father was taken to Baune-la-Rolande and his mother to Drancy; both were eventually deported to Auschwitz where they perished; Leon and his brother decided to leave for the Free Zone by train; they were inspected by a German soldier, but able to pass through the line; they went to work in a farm in a village where they went on vacation in 1940; the Priest came and baptized him gave him his papers of baptism; Leon then made a false identity card before returning to Paris where he was able to join the resistance; in 1943, he was taken by the police to the Commissariat but escaped and went back to continue work with the Resistance where he was the liaison for Monsieur Letexier who was responsible for the young Communists; he worked with the group of Manouchian of the "Francs-tireurs et partisans - Main-d'œuvre immigrée" (FTP-MOI), before all of this, in 1941, he met with Marcel Rajman (a famous member of the Resistance); in 1944 he was denounced but was able to continue his resistance work and joined an all Jewish group and conducted small attacks on German tanks in Paris; at the liberation of Paris, he was in the ranks of the 2nd "division blindée" (DB) under General Leclerc; all the while his older brother had worked as a courier for the UGIF; they tried to find their brother at an orphanage in Montreal, but were unsuccessful.

English summary provided by Ethan T. Ashley