

## HVT-259

B., Salomon 1923-

Salomon B. Holocaust video testimony (HVT-259) interviewed by Elsa Kisber, March 24, and March 27, 1997.

6 copies: 1 SVHS first camera, part one; 1 SHVS first camera, part two; 1 SVHS second camera, part one; 1 SVHS second camera, part two; 1 VHS copy, part one; 1 VHS copy, part two.

**Summary:** Salomon Herman was born on May 1, 1923, in Paris, France. His family lived in a three room apartment in a quarter inhabited mainly by Jewish immigrants. Salomon's father made handbags at home for an employer. As he had left religious life (formerly Hasidic) and joined the Labour Bund, the five children were raised in a secular home. Salomon was very close to his father and joined him at political meetings. He attended public school until he was twelve years old. In 1936, he joined the Socialistischer Kinder Farband or SKIF, a Jewish Socialist children's organization. They held weekly meetings, went on camping trips and collected money for the children of Spanish Socialists during the Spanish Civil War. Salomon and his sisters had both Jewish and non-Jewish friends. The family spoke Yiddish at home and French in public.

After 1936, Salomon and his father began to work in a handbag factory. Both knew about Hitler and the situation of the Jews through newspapers. Salomon also witnessed the riots of French Fascists trying to destabilize the left wing, anti-fascist Front Populaire. Salomon's father enlisted in the Foreign Legion and was called up in 1939, but sent back home because he had five children.

When the Wehrmacht invaded France, the French government told all men to leave Paris. Salomon and his father journeyed to Bordeaux, but they worried about their family so they returned to Paris. In September and October 1940, the French Vichy government issued anti-Jewish laws and, in 1941, Jewish owned businesses were taken over by French administrators. On May 14, 1941, Salomon's father was arrested by the French police and sent to Beaune-la-Rolande camp. The inmates were given little food, but they were not physically abused. From June 7, 1942 on, Jews had to wear yellow stars and were only allowed to use the last car of the metro. Salomon remembers many French non-Jews as sympathetic to the Jews. Many Jews left Paris illegally, but Salomon stayed because of a lack of money.

Salomon's father advised him to leave Paris. He took off the yellow badge and tried to reach the non-occupied "Free Zone", but was caught and arrested by the French Gendarmes. After three weeks, he found a job, got his papers back and on July 14, 1942, he arrived by train in Lyon. Two days later, the French police rounded up Jewish women in Paris. Salomon's eldest sister, Denise, was released because she was over sixteen years old and a French citizen. She sent Salomon a letter telling him of the deportation of his mother and three sisters to the Vélodrome d'Hiver and then to Beaune-la-Rolande and Pithiviers. All the men had already been deported to Auschwitz. The women were later sent to Auschwitz. His two youngest sisters were sent to Drancy and then to Auschwitz. Salomon's mother and sisters were gassed immediately and his father in October 1942.

Denise joined her brother in Lyon on October 6, 1942. They lived in an attic in a small suburb and worked in the city in a handbag factory. In November 1942, the Germans occupied all of France, and Salomon and his sister required false papers to hide their Jewish identity. Everyone knew that they were Jews with false papers, but no one reported them, and some French authorities even helped them to obtain false papers. They became involved in the Comité d'action et de défense de la jeunesse juive, or the CADJ, a Jewish underground

youth movement composed of Zionists, Communists, and Bundists. In February 1944, a fighting unit was created and they learnt how to use guns. During an uprising in August 1944, Salomon guarded German soldiers.

On August 25, 1944, Lyon was liberated. Two months later, Salomon and Denise moved back to Paris. After some problems, Salomon finally got their former apartment back. He was conscripted one month later. He became an occupation soldier in Austria and returned to Paris in 1946. On January 3, 1949, Salomon married. He and his wife had a daughter. The family applied for visas to the United States, but his in-laws were rejected, so they all went to Canada instead. The Jewish Labour Committee helped the family acquire Canadian papers. They arrived by boat in Halifax in September 1952 and took a train to Montreal. Three months later, Denise arrived with her husband. Salomon learned English at night and took an accounting course at Outremont College. He got a job as an accountant in a furniture company and then a construction company. He helped some friends to come to Canada, as well. He and his wife had a son and another daughter in Montreal. They have five grandchildren.

Salomon criticizes France for its policies during the war years and for never having recognized its responsibility in the deportations of French Jews.