

Interviewee: Rodolfo Haymann

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Interviewer: XIMENA HINZPETER

Rodolfo Hayman was born in Berlin, Germany, in 1921. Mother converted to Judaism before she married Rodolfo's father. Family was well-to-do. They were assimilated. Father was a pharmaceutical chemist. Rodolfo's quiet and pleasant childhood came to an end when, at the age of 11, Hitler came to power. Gradual changes. Trying to make sense of the persecution against Jews, and to fight the isolation he was subject to as a Jew, Rodolfo tried to expand his social group with other Jews; he joined a Zionist Youth movement and learned about Zionism. He developed sympathy to other persecuted groups, like the Communist and the Socialist. This meshed very well with the content of his Zionist youth movement, the German version of the *Hashomer Hatzair*.

Group is caught by the SS while learning about Socialism. Rodolfo is put under surveillance. Parents decide to send him away. He is accepted to go to Eretz Israel, with another 26 youth. They take the train to Italy. (All this takes place before Kristalnacht.)

Rodolfo departed from Italy to Palestine, bound for a kibbutz, with a group of 400-500 youth. They all had immigration certificates. They worked in drying the swamps. The weather was harsh. and malaria and typhus were prevalent. It took 7 years to accomplish! In addition to the back-breaking work, upon finishing the day of work, the group had to study for two hours. They had four courses: Agriculture, Judaism, Socialism and Security. Rodolfo was found to have a knack for military organization, thus he was sent to a military training course, after which he was sent to the elite force: the Palmach.

War begins. Parents had a visa to leave Germany to Chile, but the ships were full. War affected Palestine because Rommel was already in the Suez Canal. British military requested help from the Palestinian Army. Ben Gurion agreed with the condition that the Jewish volunteers, in the Infantry, will be under one unit called the Jewish Brigade. British Army agreed. Ben Gurion asked for volunteers: 25,000 Jewish men voted to go. and 3,000 women. The British were successful: it took them 7 months, from El Alamein to Egypt to vanquish the German Army. Impressed by how the Jewish soldiers performed, 150 (among them Rodolfo) were inducted in the Information Service of Eretz Israel. He was 21. He was sent to training courses. (One of the groups was the paratroopers in which Hanna Szenesh and Aviva Reich gave their lives. Rodolfo was appointed as "front line interrogator".

Pride as having been, in the words of his British commander, a "witness to History".-

Entering Rome with the British Army. After completing his intelligence work Rodolfo pursued his private work: to find Jews. Very emotional encounter with the Jews in front of the grand synagogue.

While doing his intelligence work, they were not informed of the extermination camps.

It was hard for the Jews to celebrate the end of the war, as the true dimension of the tragedy became known. News arrived in father's house that the uncle had survived Terezin. Visiting his mother's family

and finding out they were Nazi sympathizers, and spies for the USSR. Almost at the end of the war, in Trieste, Rodolfo is sent on another intelligence mission. Encountering many Jewish refugees, he helped them to cross the border in order to be able to return to their own countries, although many of the young ones chose to go to Palestine.

At the end of the war, Rodolfo wants to return home to Palestine but he doesn't have enough points to be sent there. He decides to use his vacation to go to Palestine, and visit his people. While there, he is assigned the mission of accompanying thousands of German prisoners in Africa (who had been taken near Suez) back to Germany. He was in charge of only two Yugoslavian SS sympathizers who wanted to escape. In their attempt, the jeep turned over, the driver died, and Rodolfo and the other two were severely injured. Rodolfo spent 89 days in a British hospital in Lebanon after which he was discharged by the British army. Return to the kibbutz. The Hagana commander put him in charge to infiltrate the British cartography section in order to obtain maps, which Palestine did not have. He did that for 14 months, until the visa to Chile arrived to reunite with his parents. The voyage.

Tape 3

Rodolfo spoke Italian. The captain of the ship told him he had taken Jewish survivors to Palestine, and had managed to avoid the British blockade.

Under suspicion for having a visa to Chile, but being in a ship destined to Buenos Aires. He was put under surveillance by the Argentinean authorities. On the train to Santiago, Chile, he encounters his family!

