

Anastasios Michos

Anastasios (Tasos) Michos, born in 1929 in the village of Korisos, 15 klms east of Kastoria, in the north-east corner of Greece, describes his experience as a Greek Christian during the Italian/German occupation and beyond, until about 1947. He had 6 siblings, 5 brothers and 1 sister. He was the youngest. The father had a restaurant/café in Kastoria, where all the sons were working.

In the area around the Café there were a number of Jewish homes and stores, and they had a lot of Jewish customers. He remembers that the Jews never sat around in the café drinking coffee, playing cards and visiting, as the other customers. They preferred their coffee delivered in their stores. Kastoria at the time had a flourishing business in furs. The Jews, however, were not involved in furs, but primarily in textiles. Generally they were well off, but they were some poor Jews, who were porters.

He recalls a few Jews: the town crier, a tall guy with a big beard, the Eliaou family, who had a Singer sewing machine dealership, the Kotsos family, who were dealing in olive oil, and their son Mousikos, who was selling olives (Mousikos was one of the very few who survived the holocaust and returned), the Mizrahi family, and the Kohen family, who had a large store in the central market. Their son, Alvertos (Albert) Kohen was his classmate in High School and sat on the same bench.

At the beginning of the war (late 1940 – mid 1941), during the Italian occupation things were OK. People, including Jews, were free to go about their business. The Italians demanded food from the villages for their army, but they were not overwhelming. They did kill, however, about 10 captured partisans. When the Germans came in 1941, things became tougher for everybody. They were brutal: when two Germans were killed by the partisans, they killed 140 women and children in retaliation. They marked the Jewish homes and stores, and demanded the Jews themselves to wear a yellow star. Two large Jewish homes became the German Headquarters. He remembers going to his friend's, Alvertos Kohen, house when they had packed their clothes and were waiting to be taken away. A German came into the house and, along with other neighbors, led them to the nearby Girls' High School, where other Jewish families were. This is close to where the Jewish Holocaust Memorial is today. They stayed there 2-3 days and then everybody was shipped by train to Thessaloniki (Salonika).

When the Jews left, their houses and stores remained empty. Tasos does not remember exactly what happened to them, but he does not think they were robbed by other Kastoriani. He thinks the Germans may have taken advantage of them.

Tasos remembers Mousikos Kotsos coming back and telling his story in the Concentration Camps. Mousikos eventually went to live in another town, Volos, in Central Greece. He thinks there might be a couple more people who came back, but he does not know their names. He does not believe that anybody saved by hiding away or escaping to the partisans.

Anastasios left Kastoria in 1947, after graduation from High School, to study Agriculture at the University of Thessaloniki. He did not see any Jews there, other than the famous Molhos Bookstore, where he bought all his French and other books. One thing made a big impression on him: that the tombstones and other material from the ancient and very large Jewish cemetery in Thessaloniki was used to reclaim and expand city's waterfront.