

Kostandinos Paschaloudis

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Summary

Kostandinos Paschaloudis, born in 1925 in Pylaia, Thessaloniki (Salonika), Northern Greece, describes his experience as a Greek Christian in Salonika during the German occupation (1941 – 1943). His father worked in the American Farm School from 1931 to 1939 when he died at age 43. Kostandinos had four siblings: Chrisoula, 1927; Christos, 1930; Nikos, 1934, and Apostolos, 1938. When his father died, the then director of the Farm School, Carolos House, hired him with the same salary as his father to secure the family. He stayed until 1941, when the Germans took over the school and turned it into a telephone center. Shortly thereafter, he joined the Hellenic Liberation Front (Ellinico Apeleutheritico Metopo, EAM), and later the Communist Party. Because of his positions in these movements, he describes a lot of their activities. He also witnessed the German behavior against the Jews.

There were no Jews in Pylaia, but, nevertheless, there was some anti-Semitism, especially by the older population. There were rumors that the Jews use Christian blood for some of their Holidays. He did not have any Jewish schoolmates in Elementary School and only a couple in the Farm School. In 1941, he started frequenting a Jewish coffee shop/dance hall, where he met a number of young Jews. This establishment was at the intersection of Markou Botsari and Papanastasiou streets, close to Jewish settlement 151, where a lot of poor Jews lived. He tried to recruit for the EAM and, when the situation became pretty bad for the Jews, offered to help young Jews escape to the mountains and join EAM. Only two joined him: Nissim and Antzel. They both became very active in the Resistance movement; they survived, and eventually went to Israel. Antzel also became active in the Communist Party and in 1945 was jailed for a period of time.

During the German occupation there was a lot of hunger and misery in Salonika; there were horse-drawn carriages come around every day to gather the dead (Christians and Jews) lying on the streets. Oil, salt, sugar, and wheat flour were nonexistent. The only flour was from corn, grinded with the husk. The very little food was obtained with restricted coupons. Money had not value, and bartering was the only way to obtain goods. People would barter their jewelry, furniture, cloths, etc, to get some fresh vegetables or regular bread. Vendors sold toasted bird seed for snacks. The villages fared much better than the town because they cultivated their food. Kostandinos was a guidance/propaganda officer for EAM and traveling from village to village, so he did not suffer much. There were a number of people who collaborated with the Germans. The most notables are: the Ekatontarchia (a special group of the Greek Gendarmerie); The

Security Battalions that were dressed and acted like the German, and the Greek National Union (3E)

In about July 1942, Jewish men were gathered by the Germans in Platia Eleutherias (Liberty Square) and were made to “exercise” and stay under the sun from morning to dawn. A number of them passed out. Then, all Jews were forced to wear a yellow Star of David on their left breast, mark their stores, take down the Hebrew signs, and take Christian partners. Also their movements were limited to their neighborhoods. There were Jewish militias established by the Jewish Administration to watch and restrict movements. In March 1943, they were gathered, packed in trains and sent to concentration camps. He recalls the marches from two neighborhoods (Settlement 151, and Agia Triada/Mizrahi Street) to the Train Station. Costantinos questioned why so many, smart, well educated people did not do anything to save themselves. EAM had offered to Arch Rabbi Dr. Zvi Korets and Community Elders their help for the escape of the Jews. They refused, because they were convinced that accepting the Germans promise of resettlement to Krakovia (Poland?) would be safer for the Community. After the Jews were taken away, their houses and stores were looted by Christians, primarily, Kostandinos believes, by the Greek collaborators.