

Isak Danon



Born 1929, Split, Yugoslavia

Isak was born in Split, a small town on the Adriatic coast of Yugoslavia with a pre-War population of about 50,000 and an active Jewish life. Isak's father owned a small dry goods store, and Isak helped run the family business along with his mother and three sisters.

Shortly after the war came to Yugoslavia in early 1941, Italian forces took over parts of the country. The Italian occupation proved to be relatively benign with only limited instances of anti-Semitic behavior. As a result, many other Jews fled from more hostile parts of Europe to take refuge in Split and surrounding areas causing the town's Jewish population to swell from about 200 to nearly 7,000. Worried over the massive influx in the Jewish population, Italian authorities began asking the Jewish community to disperse and eventually began taking Jews to internment camps.

**First Person
Today at 1:00pm**



In 1943, after the fall of Mussolini, Isak and his father were forced to flee Split, travelling with the Partisans through the mountains, as the German troops advanced. In Italy, after months of travel and a series of relocations, Isak and his father were reunited with his mother and two of his sisters, who had gone into hiding. (Isak's other sister had earlier joined the Partisan fighting unit). In 1944, Isak and his family were invited by the United States government to be a part of a group of one thousand displaced persons to come to the United States. Isak's group landed in New York and spent the next year and a half at Fort Ontario Army base in Oswego, New York under the control of the U.S. War Relocation Authority. At the conclusion of the War, Isak's family was pressured by the United States to go back to Europe because they were only expected to reside in America for the duration of the war. After a series of political negotiations with the United States government, Isak and his family were allowed to remain. The family settled in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania where Isak and his sisters continued their education.

Hear the words of Isak and other Holocaust survivors in the First Person podcast series:
<http://www.ushmm.org/learnfromsurvivors>