

Jacques Jekel

Wartime Experience: Concentration Camp Survivor

I was born on May 5, 1923 in Boryslav, a former main oil center of Poland, in a family of peasant butchers. After primary school I attended a secondary school (lycée) in the city of Drohobycz. Just before I entered the school my 9-year-old sister died of peritonitis, a very disturbing event in my life. It was a Jewish institution which also welcomed a few Protestant pupils for whom it was difficult to have access to a public secondary school.

On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland, but after the Ribbentrop-Molotov agreement our location became part of the territory taken by the Soviet Union. I went on with my studies when courses were given in Polish language although there were some lessons in Russian. Of course, we had to go through a very heavy propaganda from the part of the Bolshevik system.

At home it was very hard for my mother to find food for us and for my second little sister. My mother had to line up for hours to get the most necessary items. We were witnesses of the deportation of Ukrainian peasants, a fact which did not help to obtain food. On June 22, 1941, Germany attacked the Soviet Union. Eight days later, the German army burst into my native town and there were 360 victims.

Any kind of work had become compulsory. I worked with my father in the Carpates forest and we were regularly beaten by the Ukrainian supervisors. Some weeks later, it became compulsory to sew the Jewish star on our clothes, hunger started to spread everywhere, and people gave away everything to get something to eat. Those who owned nothing just died and the Jewish quarter was soon over-crowded with dead people.

At the end of 1941, the first raid, so-called « action » in Polish took place. Hundreds of Jews were shot in the forest. 1942 a terrible year. In July, I lost all the members of my family who perished in Belzec extermination camp. except my father. Two friends of who succeeded in escaping from the railroad wagon in which they were sent together with my mother to Beizec, told me how she worried about my little sister and me.

My father and I managed to stay in the family house until the fourth raid took place in October 1942. We were hiding for a few days with a Ukrainian family. I was hungry and my father followed me in this family's house. Among its members there was a policeman who gave us up to the Germans. We were locked in the basement of the German police and the next day, a selection took place at the railway station.

My father was put in a railroad car headed for the concentration camp of Janovska in Lwow. He later died there of typhoid fever. As for me, I was kept in Boryslav, and sent to a former barracks where there were between 800 and 1000 men and women. I was sent to work as a fitter in the various oil wells scattered in the area. This job gave us some freedom, allowing us to build bunkers in the woods to hide families, old people, children among whom very few,

unfortunately, survived. Most of them having been killed by Ukrainians as well as by the Germans. Unlike people who, in the barracks had enough to eat, those who had no employment wandered here and there looking for food until they fell of starvation. One day I brought food to the bunker where my cousin and his family were hidden; and the next day the Germans surrounded us. A selection took place in the courtyard, and we were sent to the Plaszov concentration camp. Between 1942 and 1944 there had been a lot of victims among the Jewish population. Most of them came from the neighboring towns, hoping to hide in the Carpates. Alas, all were caught in the forest and were killed In Plaszov, I started to work in a quarry, and thanks to a friend, I could get an easier job as a carpenter outside the camp. I was sent to Mauthausen and Birkenau. I was liberated by the Allies on May 5, 1945.

Des dossiers du Mémorial de la Shoah–Paris

Jacques Jekel

Déporté

Jakob (Jacques) JEKEL né le 5/05/1923 à BORYSLAV (POLOGNE)

Déporté depuis la POLOGNE dans les camps de MAUTHAUSEN et BIRKENAU, rescapé

Issu d'une famille de bouchers – paysans. Etudes au lycée de DROHOBYCZ. En 1939 la POLOGNE est envahie par les Allemands. Notre territoire est en zone soviétique, d'où une propagande bolchévique. Déportations de paysans ukrainiens. Le 22/06/1941 l'Allemagne a attaqué l'UNION SOVIETIQUE. 8 jours plus tard l'armée allemande entre dans ma ville natale. Avec mon père nous avons travaillé dans la forêt des Carpates, sous les coups des surveillants ukrainiens. Fin 1941, 1ère rafle. Quelques centaines de juifs sont fusillés dans la forêt. 1942, année terrible où j'ai perdu tous les membres de ma famille péris à BELZEC, sauf mon père. Octobre 1942, cachés quelques jours dans une famille ukrainienne, nous sommes dénoncés par un policier et arrêtés. Sélection : mon père est conduit au camp de JANOVSKA, moi, resté à BORYSLAV je travaille en tant que monteur dans les puits de pétrole. Transféré à PLASZOV, je travaille dans une carrière. En août 1944, je suis déporté au camp de MAUTHAUSEN puis à BIRKENAU en septembre même année. En janvier 1945 me voici de nouveau à MAUTHAUSEN où je serai libéré par les alliés le 5/05/1945. Mon père est décédé au camp de JANOVSKA de la typhoïde.