**Macedonia videotaping session no. 1, May 2012**

**Summaries**

**1. Gorgi Hadzinikolov born in 1931 in Stip**

Witness remembers that before 1943 there were a lot of Jews in Stip, they were living in very good relations with other Stips inhabitants. They were very good people, often lending money to others, and never demanding the money back when it was time to return the money.

When the occupation started Jews were forced to wear yellow signs. Deportation of the Jews came as a surprise, nobody expected that. On 11 III 1943 witness could hear the noise and sounds of the deportation of the Jews, he could not see it. Gorgi was living close to Jewish quarter, on that day his whole street was blocked by Bulgarian soldiers, who were standing from 5 am at his gate, and didn’t allow anybody to leave the house. He was at home with his mother and father.

Witness knows that one Jew managed to survive, cause he went before to Partisans, and another one hide and also survived.

Jewish belongings were sold on the market, selling was done in the form of auction; special commission from municipality was selling Jewish belongings (members of the commission, Macedonians were: MitkoGejderdziski, MijalceKangalov, KoceDrmov). Members of the commission hired locals to carry belongings to marketplace in the city center. Bulgarian police was watching how selling was done. They were selling almost everything from furniture to small things. Belonging was given to those who offered the highest price. Jewish house were later destroyed, only one house was left, witness thinks that house is still standing.

**Additional information:**

* In Stip, before WW2 there were a lot of different nations living: Macedonians, Turks, Romans, Serbs, Jews, all of them were living in peace.
* Some of locals Macedonians were saying “don’t go to Jewish quarter” Jews will catch you, kill you and take your eyes out “ – Gorgi never listened to such rumors.
* Stip was bombarded before Germans entered the city. He escaped to village close to Stip. On 7 IV Germans entered Stip. They stayed in Stip till 18 April 1941, and then went towards Greece. Bulgarians soldiers came and took Stip.
* When Germans were in Stip locals robbed all Jewish shops. This robbing lasted for 2 days, Jews couldn’t do anything. Witness saw how all belongings from one Jewish bookstore were taken; he also took one small pencil for himself.
* Mijance Kangalov – witness heard from Jewish tailor Zana, that Mijance Kangalov was putting yellow signs on Jews, he and some other people were doing that, Mijance was sometimes hurting Jews trying to put a sign on their heads.
* Jew who survived from Stip, was called Mois, his wife was Macedonian.

**2. Kiro Donski born in 1923 in Stip**

Already before the beginning of WW2 witness was inventing different machines for agriculture. In 1939 he came back to Stip from Vrnjacka Banja and established a mill, he received a building for his mill from 2 Jewish friends.

Before the war Stip had some 12 000 inhabitants: 20% Turks, 10% Vlahos, 8%Jews and rest of them were Macedonians. Jews were very calm, peaceful nation.

When Bulgarians occupied Macedonia Jews knew that they will be arrested, witness talked to Jews very often about that, they knew that something is going to happen, they just didn’t know when. In Stip Jews were forced to wear yellow star, police hour was starting for them earlier.

Before Jews were deported witness was in Bitola, where he was working. He knew a lot of Bitola Jews, especially different sales man and owners of the shops, he was collaborating with them. He brought one Bitola Jew called Saib, opium from Stip, and this Jew, as a thank you present, had sent him Jewish girl to spend the night with. The girl told him that she is very poor, had little siblings and has to sell her body to have something to eat. Witness gave her 200 levs and his watch and sent her home.

All Bitola Jews were wearing yellow star. They knew that they would be deported, just they didn’t know when. On the day of the deportation of Bitola Jews, he was watching (from 3m distance), from the window, how Bulgarian soldiers were escorting Jewish families (women, men, children) towards train station. Bulgarians soldiers were pushing Jews with rifles. Jews weren’t carrying suitcases, they had only some small packages with belongings. Witness was trying to go outside the house, but in front of the gate there was a Bulgarian soldier standing, and pushing him back to the garden.

Witness didn’t recognize anybody in the line; he saw only one line, on that day Jews were taken to train station in 3 lines, in 3 different streets.

After some time, when Jews passed through, he called 3 of his friends and they went together to trainstation to see what was going on. They bought 3 breads on the way. On train station there was a lot of Bulgarian soldiers and some civilians, Jews were in the cattle wagons, there was a lot if wagons, line was going through the whole train station. Wagons were opened; he could see that in each wagon there were around 40 Jews, and that therewere 2 barrels inside (one probably for water, and one for needs). Witness and his friends throw the bread into one wagon.

He does not remember names of the Jews.

Jewish belongings – first were robbed by Bulgarian soldiers and some locals, probably they were looking for gold, then the Jewish belongings were sold on the market, municipality was organizing this selling, Macedonians who were working in the municipality were selling these things.

Shortly after Jews were deported from Bitola, he received call to join Bulgarian Army, he travelled to Sofija through Stip – there were no more Jews in Stip.

He established an antifascist union among Macedonian who were in Bulgarian army, and later after Bulgaria capitulated whole union had joined Partisans, and was fighting for the liberation of Yugoslavia f.ex. in so called “Sremski front”.

**Additional information:**

* Names of his Jewish friends from school were Moso and Salomon, they used to play football together.
* His father was a hunter and was selling to Jews animals he hunt.
* Saw how German soldiers entered Stip in 1941, they stayed in the city for 10 days, 4 soldiers slept at his house.
* On the day of the deportation of Bitola Jews, Bitola was blocked from 8 till 10 am.
* On the way to Sofia he stopped in Stip at his family for about 10h, and he saw how Jewish belongings were robbed by locals, how they were entering Jewish houses and shops and taking Jewish properties.
* With Partisans he was fighting in Macedonia, Croatia, Slovenia against German, Ustasha, Chetniks. In Bosnia he saw a lot of burnt villages that probably Chetniks had put on fire.
* In Slavonska Pozega he saw a lot of captives taken by Partisans, in one huge tent he saw a lot of gold and precious object – it was all taken from captives.

**Changes:**

* Witness didn’t tell episode about Jewish girl from Bitola, sent to him by Jewish men (after witness brought him opium). Witness was asked about this episode and denied it – wasn’t feeling comfortable during the interview due to bad health condition, he wanted to finish interview asap
* In Bitola witness didn’t go to train station and he didn’t see wagons and Jews in train station. It turns out that in the pre-interview he told what he was told about (he heard it from some friend)

**3. Kole Rakatkov born in 1922 in Novo Selo / Stip**

Before the war Stip had around 11 000 inhabitants, and a big Jewish community. Kole had a lot of Jewish friends.

In one morning of March 1943 Kole woke up around 3 am cause he heard noise. On place close to his house (called “Jawor”) he saw a lot of Bulgarian soldiers. He heard from others that Bulgarians were taking Jews to train station (he didn’t see taking Jews from their houses). Few hours later he went to trainstation were he saw Jews in cattle wagons and Bulgarian soldiers surrounding wagons. One of his Jewish friends called MosoSekirco saw him, and called him from the wagon. Kole couldn’t come close to this wagon; cause Bulgarian soldiers were pushing him off. He saw 5 or 6 wagons. He spent some 10 minutes on trainstation that Bulgarians kicked him out. He didn’t see any Jewish luggage. He does not know what happened to Jewish belongings. After that day there were no more Jews in Stip. He knows that one Jew saved himself cause was taken to camp before as a Yugoslavian soldier.

**Additional information:**

* His father was a shoemaker, one Jew called Sekirko was working with him.
* Witness had a lot of Jewish friends in school like Mose, Isaak and others; they were all very good friends.
* Witness was often going to Jewish houses and to synagogue (Saturday) during Jewish holidays like Pesach, he enjoyed those visits very much, although some Macedonians were telling him not to go cause Jews were supposed to catch Christian children, stabbing them and taking their blood.
* He saw how Germans entered Stip, they stayed in the city only for few days, than Bulgarians soldiers came.
* Bulgarian occupation – it was very hard for everybody, Bulgarians introduced coupons for food, witness father had to close his shop, cause there was no money in town, Jews were trying to sell anything – children and old Jews were selling this special snack called “evrejske semki” on streets.
* In 1943, so shortly before the deportation Jews were forced to wear yellow signs.
* Jewish belongings and shops were robbed by Bulgarian soldiers and locals from Stip, witness saw how people were walking on the streets carrying some belongings, entering Jewish shops in Jewish quarter
* In 1944 he was taken to Bulgarian army, than he joined Partisans, fighting in Macedonia, Bosnia, Croatia, Slovenia, fighting against Ustasha and Chetniks.

**Changes:**

- Witness couldn’t remember that Moso Sekirko called him from the wagon

**4. Natalija Ivanova 2.01.1927 in Stip.**

Before the WW2, Stip was small city, had around 8000 inhabitants, mostly poor people. In the city Macedonians, Turks and Jews were living. Relationships were good, there were no conflicts, Stip inhabitants were peaceful people, Jews were avoiding any conflicts. Witness had Jewish friends in the class, witness does not remember names. Jews were not very close to Macedonians, somehow they all seems like they were very afraid.

Natalija’s husband was working at Jewish (Sion Levi) bookstore and print store, he learnt his profession there, later he opened his own bookstore. Best tailor was Zana, Jew lady, very nice, Natalija was going to her home, she was sewing for Natalija and her mother.

Witness wasn’t living in Jewish quarter but she was crossing this part of the city while going to school. Her mother said “don’t go to Jewish part of the city while they have holidays, cause Jews were catching Christian children, putting them to pots and stabbing with knifes, taking the children blood”. Then she believed her mother and she was going straight home. Witness knew one Jew who was sellingsnacks, he always was offering her this snack (salt seeds “evrejski semski”) for free, especially during Jewish holidays. She wasn’t taking “semki” from him, she was afraid that he might do something wrong to her. The Jews were very clean nation; all of them had running water in their houses.

Before the war witness had Jews in school (somehow they always seemed afraid, they weren’t very close to Natalija and other children), they stopped going to school when the occupation started.

Bulgarian occupation – Turks and Jews were afraid of Bulgarians, lost trust in Macedonians, cause some of the Macedonians were collaborating with Bulgarians, and perhaps they were using this situation (heard that from the adults). Jews were forced to wear yellow star. Their shops were open during the Bulgarian occupation.

Witness knew that something might happen to Stip Jews, cause she knew that Bulgarians are collaborating with Germans, and Germans were deporting Jews all over Europe. Natalija heard that some Jews were asking their Macedonians friends to take their precious thing and keep for them until they will be back (cause they perhaps will be taken somewhere).

2 of Stip’s Jews managed to hide somehow and survive the war (names: Mose and IsakSijon).

Shortly before deportation Natalija stopped going to Zena. After deportation Jews property was given by the Bulgarians to Macedonians, and witness’s mother went there and took material that belong to her.

On 10 February Natalija came from Kumanovo to Stip ( her father was working in Kumanovo). Family came to witness’s aunt Rajna Todorova house (Borko Talev street). On 11 III 1943 Natalija was at her aunt place, she saw how Bulgarians (in Bulgarians uniforms, yellow tea color) were running on the street and took 2 Jewish families and put them to the truck. It was around 300 m far away, witness could not hear the soldiers talking. There were 5 or 6 Bulgarian soldiers. She didn’t know those families. She knew that in this house Jews were living. Her aunt knew those Jews. Her aunt was shouting, “they are talking Jews”. She couldn’t see if Jews took some luggage with them. It happened early in the morning, when she went outside, trucks were already there. Natalija saw how the truck was leaving the street, after Jews climbed on it.

Jews quarter was destroyed - it was done by Bulgarian police and soldiers and Macedonians civilians (some of them she knew). Synagogue was destroyed. Jews' belongings were sold on auction. It took place on small market in front of the synagogue. Macedonians were collecting belongings, bringing those belongings to market and selling, but it was done on Bulgarian order, and there were some Bulgarians soldiers standing. She didn’t see this process, her mother told her how it happened. After the deportation there were no Jews left in the city.

**Additional information:**

* 1941 in April. She was in Stip, she saw how German army entered Stip, how locals were greetings Germans soldiers with “Heil Hitler” regards
* Almost 90% of Stip citizens were collaborating with Bulgarians, that is why Jews didn’t trust local Macedonians, almost nobody was punished for that collaboration after the war (most of those people became communist, some of them left to Bulgaria)
* Witness does not want to say names of those who were robbing Jewish belongings, cause those families are still living in Stip and her children might have problems cause of that. At her cousin's best men house she saw Jewish pillows.
* Name of her Jewish friend from school was Sara
* From 1941 till 1942 she was in Kumanovo at school, she came back to Stip one night before the deportation of the Jews.
* Her father was killed at Partisans.

**Changes:**

* Instead of names Mose and IsaakSijon (2 Jews who survived the war) she said Sion Levi, she didn’t remember name of the second person.

**5. Aleksandar Hadzi Andov born 1934 in Stip**

He was young when the war started but he remembers Jews very well cause his father had business relations with Jews. His father best friend was a Jew, his name was Chaim, but Aleksandar was calling him “uncle Chaim” and others werecalling him “Zutatabradicka” (eng.“Yellow beard”). Their families were often visiting each other, his father and Chaim were often singing in ladino language.

When occupation started Chaim and other Jews had to wear yellow sign, which made them feel very uncomfortable and ashamed.

1934, on the day of the deportation – witness house was blocked with Bulgarian soldier who told him that they cannot go outside. In the street were the line of Jews, who were going to trainstation, which was under witnesses’ house, they could not see it, but they heard crying and screaming, noise.

There were no more Jews after that day in Stip.

Jewish belongings were carried by locals to market places, he saw how people were carrying this Jewish belongings, he didn’t see selling in the market, rich people and honest people weren’t buying this belongings. He saw how from Jewish books (books with non cyrillic text, local Macedonians were calling it “Jewish language”, probably robbed from Jewish bookshop, but witness didn’t see robbing itself) local snack sells men were taking paper and making box for snack called “leblebija”.

Jewish houses were destroyed, witness didn’t see destroying.

In 1945, after the liberation when he went with his mother to Skopje, they saw a Jewish lady from Stip, famous tailor, she told them that she is planning to go to Palestine, she gave them lunch and talked to his mother.

Few years after liberation, in Rijeka he met another Jew from Stip / Vital, his brother school friend.

**Additional information:**

* Name of Jewish lady that survived the deportation (witness met her in Skopje) was Dona.

**6. Konstantin Mitrev born in Stip, 1935**

Witness was living in the Jewish quarter, his father used to work for Jews, all family knew Jews very well. On the day of the deportation witness’s house and whole street was blocked by Bulgarian policemen. His parents told him that Jews are being deported.

After the deportation Bulgarians organized robbing of Jewish belongings, locals and Bulgarians were robbing, taking everything. People were taking everything; it was very chaotic atmosphere, f.ex. one Muslim shop was robbed also. After few days Bulgarians established special commission who was in charge of checking who robbed and took Jewish belongings, everything was supposed to be given back to Bulgarians and then sold on market. Commission (together with few Bulgarian soldiers) was entering each house (also witness house) looking for Jewish belongings. The head of the commission was Macedonian, called Gejderdziski. First he was going to closest neighbors of rich Jews, than to all others. The same person, Gejderdziski later worked for Partisans for Red Cross.

**Additional information:**

* Konstantin Mitrev was born on 30 April 1935
* In Stip all different nations were living: Macedonians, Turks, Vlahs, Serbs and a lot of Jews. Jews were living in the city center, close to Jewish synagogue.
* Often on his way to school he heard how local Macedonians were saying – don’t go through Jewish quarter cause Jews are catching Christian children and putting them to big pots, stabbing and taking their blood. He was a little bit afraid of that then.
* Jews were mostly owners of different kinds of shops, his father had a good Jewish friend, and also Konstantin had one Jewish friend from school.
* Bulgarian occupation – all Macedonians surnames were turn into Bulgarians, Bulgarian language was introduced in schools and all public places. Konstantin had a Bulgarian teacher in school, this teacher was treating his Jewish friend well, the same as other children (after first class his Jewish friend probably stopped going to school, Konstatin does not remember if he saw him after first class).
* Jews were forced to wear yellow stars on chest and arms.
* Few Stip Jews survive the deportation – f.ex. Isaak who went to Partisans (after the war he left to Israel).
* Selling of Jewish belongings lasted for whole month, mostly poor Macedonians and Turks were buyers.

**7. Ljubica Mitkova born 1921 in Stip**

Jews were very clean, calm people, but somehow there was this hate towards them, Ljubica does not know why. There were some stories that Jews were catching Christian children and killing them, but none of the Christian children was ever missing.

From local Macedonians she knows, that Jews knew about the deportation, and that they were giving their gold and precious things to Macedonians. Some of the Macedonians took Jewish gold and became very rich.

On the day of the deportation she saw how some civilians (Ljubica is saying that perhaps they were employees from municipality) were escorting Jews towards trainstation, she saw it from some 200m distance, Jews were crying, she recognized some of the Jewish faces. Some of the Macedonians were throwing water at Jews – bad jokes done by locals, also before.

After that day there were no more Jews in the city. Witness knows that 2 of Jews managed to survive.

Jewish belongings were taken to market (place called “jama”, and sold almost for free).

**Additional information:**

* One of the Stip Jews had survived, was hiding during the deportation, his name was Mois, he left to Israel after the war.
* Most of the Jews were craftsmen, they had different shops, were very nice and calm people, she knew 2 tailors Jewish ladies: Mija and Roska
* She had one Jewish girl in her school, her name was Roska, she stopped going to school after the beginning of Bulgarian occupation.
* Saturday was holly day for Jews, local Macedonians were doing some work for them on that day, she personally was few times helping in one Jewish house on Saturday – starting the fire in an oven.
* Macedonians often called Jews “Cifuts”, it was bad word for Jew.
* Bulgarian occupation – locals welcomed Bulgarians, Bulgarian were speaking very similar language to Macedonian language, Jews were afraid of Bulgarians.
* Jews were wearing some color signs on their shoulders, but she saw those sings only when they were going to Jewish temple.
* She heard from other people, that local Macedonian called Mito Gjerderdziski took some gold from the Jews, they gave it to him to keep for them, when they will be back. Gjerderdziski became very rich after the war.
* When she was watching the deportation it was around 11 am.
* On the day of the deportation she saw how Jews were walking in the city center, escorted by some civilians, and entering truck, she thinks that there were 2 trucks. Trucks left towards train station.
* She saw how people were robbing Jewish shops, entering to shops and taking Jewish belongings. Those Jewish belongings were later in Macedonians shop, Macedonians were selling them for low prices.

**Changes:**

* She could not see Jewish faces while they were deported cause they were standing too far away, but she could hear them crying.

8. **Gorgi Dimovski Colev born in 1929 in Gorno Srpci / Bitola**

Witness was adopted by Bitola family when he was still a baby (his mother died). He grew up in Bitola. Period between two world wars can be called “Serbian occupation” – all Macedonians in Bitola were treated as Serbs (Serbian language in schools, surnames with suffix –ic).

As he is saying they were all poisoned with anti-Jewish propaganda. There were rumors that Jews were taking Christian children, putting them to pots, stabbing those children, and taking the children's blood for their religious purposes – witness was afraid of that as a child. Jews were also often accused of killing ”our” Jesus Christ. Than he didn’t have any Jews friends, Jews were living in Jewish quarter, which was far away from his house.

Knew one old Jew who was walking on streets and buying old things, he had a big bag, and Gorgi was very afraid of this Jew.

Bitola Jews were mostly very poor, but they never ask for money, they were doing all kinds of jobs.

In first class of gymnasium he had 3 Jewish boys, one of them were called Juse. They were sitting in last desk. There was also one Jewish girl called Stela. He didn’t talk or play with those Jewish children.

In summer 1938 and few summers later, Juse was helping his father in the store, witness was going with him together on the street selling vegetables. Gorgi got to know Juse very well and finally liked him. Every Friday Gorgi was walking and collecting money, which Jews owned his father, they were always paying on time, than Gorgi realized that Jews were actually very nice people, like everybody else. Juse told him curses in ladino language, and Gorgi learnt few words in ladino.

Bulgarian occupation: propaganda that children supposed to join fascist organization called (for children his age- “Orle” (eng. “Eagles”), for older children there was “Branik”(Eng. “Defenders”) organization. Gorgi’s father didn’t allow him to join this organization. Jews had to wear yellow David star (only adults were wearing this sign). Jewish street sellers weren’t supposed to sell snack on the main street of Bitola, but young Jews were anyway selling this snacks (f.ex. “evrejskesemki”)

11 III 1943 whole Bitola was blocked, there was a lot of Bulgarian police and Bulgarian army on the streets, he didn’t know what was going on. He didn’t see anything from his house, just police and soldiers on the street. On the next day in school he heard from friends from another class (in this class were 2 Jews, which weren’t at school at that day) that their Bulgarian teacher Andrea (very strict teacher), was crying when she was reading list of present/absent pupils. In the afternoon when he went to street where Jews used to sell (the same street where his father had his shop), there was very quiet, empty, horrible atmosphere (before Jews were deported this was very vivid street, Jews were loudly talking, singing etc.). He remembers that he found small dog, which belonged to one Jewish boy, assistant in Jewish shop next door.

Jewish belongings – he didn’t see what happened, but he knows that all Jewish things were sold to locals, there was a sentence “there are some nice things to buy, left by Jews”. But his family didn’t buy anything.

Jewish shops – closed, later Gorgi’s father moved his shop to a Jewish shop, witness didn’t know how it was arranged. His father moved to this Jewish shop, because close to their shop was a public toilet and it smells badly.

Deportation surprised him. Before the deportation day Jews often were laughing that they will all be turned to soap – than he didn’t understand that.

Some of the families in Bitola were hiding Jews.

After the war there were public trials for war criminals (Bulgarians agents, policemen) in big hall called “Sokolana”. Some of them were sentenced to death penalty.

**Additional information:**

* Jews had different culture, spoke different language- ladino language – sounded like Spanish. Words he learnt from Juso – Jewish friend were: “fizikija” and a curse “macho tu madre”.
* Next to his father shop, there was a Jewish shop run by man called Muson. He was gone after the deportation.
* Those who were in Branik organization had special uniforms with “B” sign on their hats, and they had some special small knifes. There was also a fascist organization for girls.
* As he remembers, Jews were sure that Bulgarian state will protect them, adults were talking about camps and extermination in Germany, but everybody was thinking that Bulgarians are good and that they are protecting their citizens.
* Jewish belongings were given to Macedonians, witness knows that there was some commission who was in charge of registration and selling Jewish belongings – one of his school friends' father was in this commission, this friend was than wearing nice “Jewish” clothes.

**9. Dimitar Koterski born in Bitola, 1926**

*Short pre-interview due to bad health condition.*

Before the WW2 there were very good relations between Macedonians, Jews, Serbs and all others living in Bitola.Dimitar had a lot of Jewish friends like: SabitaAhtari, Muson, Celebon, Pargo and others. Jews had their culture house where they organized dances – also Macedonians were coming to those parties. There was a complete integration except of mixed marriages.

Bulgarian occupation – Jews started to wear yellow signs, they were very poor, some of them had to close their shops, but they all thought that they were under Bulgarian protection.

Few days before the deportation, communist Party warned Jews that they are going to be deported, some of them escaped to Albania, some of them to Sofia in Bulgaria.

Dimitar wasn’t member of SKOJ (communist youth) but he was pro-communist, and against fascist (there was also fascist organization called BRANIK).

In spite of all warnings deportation came as a surprise. Dimitar was living on IV December Street, through the window he saw a line of Jews (men, women, children) walking on foots towards train station, escorted by Bulgarian police and soldiers, who were pushing them with rifles. They were walking for a long time, Dimitar recognize in the line doctor Medons with his 2 sons. He saw faces of more people he knew than (now he does not remember names). His father recognized a Jew who was renting an apartment from Koterski family. On the next day, at school he found out that all Jews were taken from Bitola. Later he found out that they were all killed in Treblinka.

**Additional information:**

* Poor Jews were living in Bitola of left side of Dragor River, in Jewish quarter, rich Jews were living in city center – on right side of Dragor.
* Bulgarian occupation – Bulgarian language introduced into schools, Macedonian teachers were all sent to Bulgaria, Jews had a police hour and were forced to wear yellow David star – but a big number of them weren’t wearing this sign, in spite of very high fine.
* Deportation day – Dimitar was trying to go out, to go to school, but 2 policemen and 2 soldiers were standing in front of his gate, and pushed him back to house. It was cloudy, sad day. Doctor Mendos was walking proudly, with backpack on his back and holding hands of his son. A Jew who was renting an apartment from Dimitars father was called Mois, he waved to them. Jews were carrying some small backpacks, some belongings put into blankets.
* After the deportation of the Jews he heard that locals and Bulgarians were robbing Jewish houses, taking all the belongings – he didn’t see it.

**10. DimitarDimirtovskiTakec born in 1922 in Bitola**

***Witness is giving 2 hours description of life of Bitola Jews, very detailed.*** *Singing a lot in Ladino, Italian, Spanish, standing up when mentioning Jews.*

Dimitar comes from very musical family. He was collaborating with Macabi Jewish association in Bitola. Jew Rabbi Abram Romano and his family were also very musical. Dimitar’s father was in choir and they had a lot of contacts with Jews. Cause of cultural life Macedonians and Jews were very close.

His Jewish friends were:

- Viktor Sabetaj was his friend Jew from school, they were sitting together in class.

Next school Jewish friend was Albert CasorlaBerto. Later they were together in Partisans.

- Samuel – old Jew, helping in his father shop, and other shops. Carrying heavy things. His son Mois , worker in his father shop gave him his first guitar – old Jewish guitar.

- Zana Faradzi,his Jewish friend, knew his sister very well, had amazing voice, singing on Makabi concerts and dances.

- Jew girlfriend Luna Aroesti – working as fashion designer, her family didn’t agree for their relationship, and sent her to Solun in Greece, where she got married.

Bulgarian occupation: Jews were persona non grata, had to move to left side of Dragor river to Jewish quarter (and there were a lot of Jews on the right side, they had shops there, favorite place-small pedestrian street, Jew establish such pedestrian street also in left side, and culture life moved to left side of Dragor River) .Jaws had to wear yellow stars.

In 1942 in Bitola antifascist fight starting; the head of the first unit was StivNaumov.

One Jew called Moritz Romanov and some other illegals were arrested in 1942 by Bulgarians, cause of illegal work. Moritz was sentenced for 4 years of prison and sent to prison to Varna (which saved him from Treblinka).

1943 beginning of this year – from talks with Jews he found out that they were expecting the deportation. That information was coming from antifascist students associations. They had this code to talk about deportation, people were saying: “are you going to FLY” - FLY meant deportation (or sometimes going to Partisans). A lot of Jews went to Partisans like his friends: EsteraOvadia, ZamilaKolomas, BenoRuso and others. Partisans were open for Jews, but a lot of Jews could not take the decision to join Partisans.

10 March 1943 Partisans commander called BenoRuso, and others Jews who wanted to join Partisans, hid at BoroAltiparmak place, and some others at man called Bogaja. Those Jews hide and later joined Partisans. He found about it later.

At 1 am Bulgarians were entering Jewish houses telling they had 2 h to prepare and that they cannot carry any luggage. He didn’t see that, just knows from others.

Jews were deported in the morning on 11 March 1943. Only few people saw this. From his house he couldn’t see anything.

One day before, he went for walk to small hill (outside of Bitola) where he saw composition of cattle wagons, standing empty (very long composition). On each wagon was written: 40 soldiers with equipment or 12 tons or 6 horses.

Next day he found out that Jews were taken.

Jews belongings and houses – belongings were robbed; those who had keys were looking for Jewish gold (mostly Bulgarians police and agents). Bulgarians put Bitola inhabitants to those houses, especially refugees from Kicevo and other places (those who escaped from Albanian terror).

He was illegal and often was in prison f. ex. II-III 1944.

Interview stopped at Jews deportation on 11 III 1943.

**Additional information:**

* There were rumors in the city that Jews were catching Christian children, putting them to pot, stabbing and taking their blood – he never believed in it.
* At his house Germans and Bulgarians were staying, that is how he was always well informed.

**Changes:**

* Witness didn’t see composition of wagons on hill – later he found out about it.

**Note: the witness was in a worth physical condition than at the pre-interview. Due to his health condition the interview was stopped. It is better to use the pre-interview.**

**11. Tome Micevski born in 1922 in Bitola**

In Bitola lived different nations before the war: Jews, Turks, Russians, Vlahos, Albanians, Macedonians, Serbs, Roma and others. All lived in peace, in good relations, all were visiting each other for different religious holidays.

Tome had a lot of Jewish friends from school, named: Romano, Kamhi and others. Jews were doing everything: tradesmen, street sellers, tailors and others. There was a public Jewish school in Bitola (only for Jews) – Serb Nikola Djurdjevic was a director of this school (he was witness neighbor), others were going to mixed public schools. Jews were mostly leaving on left site of Dragor River – there was a Jewish quarter, quite poor. Richer Jews were living on right side, in the city center (mostly doctors like family Abravanil and family Medonsa). A lot of Jewish children went to gymnasium and faculty like children from families Levi, Abravanil and some others.

Bulgarian occupation: Some Macedonians welcomed the Bulgarians (for example families Starajevski and Kalonovci), but most of the Macedonians wanted to fight against fascist and accepted communist ideology and Communist Party. Bulgarians forbidden Macedonian language and introduce to all school and to public life Bulgarian language. Tomo was a teacher and Bulgarians transferred him to Pernik - city in Bulgaria (he was teaching in Bulgarian school in Bulgarian language), he was there from 1941 till 1943.

In 1943 he had to join Bulgarian Army, he was sent to Kavala, and then was in officer school in Bulgaria. In 1944 his whole unite joined Partisans. In the end of 1944 he was in Tupnica, was commander of artillery unit. There he met Bitola Jew Levi Faradzi - he told him that he wasn’t deported because he escaped to Bulgaria.

With Partisans he was in Western Macedonia. There he saw, in places close to Strumica, TitovVeles, burnt villages and killed civilians.

Tomo saw how one Partisan was executed because he went to visit his family without permission. Partisans who volunteeredhad shot him. They used a machine gun.

He was fighting all around Yugoslavia. So called “Bleiburg episodes” – Germans captives were walking in line towards Belgrade. One German soldier fell down and was asking for water. Tomo ordered one soldier to bring him water. Some other Partisan heard that, came and said, “I will give him water” and kicked this German with his shoe into his head. German soldier was killed on the spot. There were more such cases. He also took part in “cleaning” land from Ustasha, Chetniks and other pro-fascist. Once, in Croatia, close to Vinkovac his unit met big Ustasha unit. Partisans requested that Ustasha surrender them. Ustasha didn’t want to surrender, so Partisans send one Albanian unit to fight with them (Albanian unit, cause from this big Albanian unit some 100 soldiers got killed before and Albanians in their tradition have so called “blood revenge”, which is very important to them, Albanians wanted to revenge their brothers in blood). This Albanian unit killed all Ustasha, around 4000 of them. Tome saw killed Ustasha and Domobrans, as all Partisans went to the battlefield to take shoes and clothes from the killed Ustasha and Domobrans. Most of the Ustasha and Chetniks managed to ran away to Austria. His unit took a lot of captives, but all of them were send to Serbia, he does not know what happened to them.

**Additional information:**

* Local Macedonians were spreading bad rumors about Jews, f.ex. that Jews are catching Christian children, putting them to pots, stabbing and taking their bloods. But no children were ever missing.
* First Germans entered Bitola, they had some small fight with Yugoslavian soldiers, one German soldier was killed. Germans took everything form Bitola shops (it didn't matter who was the owner of the shop) and went towards Greece.
* After Bulgarians occupied Bitola, they introduced police hour for Jews (at 6 pm), Jews had to wear yellow stars.
* A lot of local Macedonians welcomed Bulgarians, were pro-Bulgarian (like witness father and uncle), because they had enough of Serbian terror during the Kingdom of Yugoslavia,they treated the Bulgarians as liberators from the Serbs, and were sure that Bulgarians would treat them better than Serbs authorities.

**12. Miodrag Saurek born in Skopje**

No pre-interview

* He was living in Kumanovo at the beginning of the war, but his house was badly destroyed during bombarding in April 1941 so in May his family moved to Skopje.
* His best friend in Skopje was Jew called Hari – he told Miodrag that he has received passport and that he was supposed to go to Albania. After some time Hari was gone (before the deportation).
* He knew Monopol building very well cause he was often playing football on square close to Monopol – there were two big buildings surrounded with wooden fence (fence had big gaps you can see everything inside).
* Before the deportation Bulgarians put special signs on Jewish houses which were saying “Here Jews are living” (white posters saying in Bulgarian language” Tuka zivea Evreji”)
* One morning when he wanted to go outside there was a Bulgarian soldier standing in front of his house who told him that the city is blocked and that he cannot go out. Police came to his house and was checking who was in the house, they looked suspiciously at his younger brother as he had darker skin. His father showed them house list (list of persons living in the house) and they were gone. After few hours, when the blockade was finished witness went out to play with other children and he heard that whole Monopol is filled with some people. Blockade lasted from 7 am to 2 pm.
* Next day he went to Monopol and saw a lot of Jews there walking in the yard, looking through small windows, they looked very poor so he went home and ask his mother to give him some bread. With bread he came to Monopol fence and was throwing bread trough fence. He saw how some boys were selling water to Jews (for money). On the next day he also brought bread but Bulgarian soldiers who were guarding at the fence were shouting at him so he stop going to Monopol. Jews in Monopol had some Jewish signs on their chest, signs were yellow. They had some belongings with them, some small bags. In two days his friend told him that Jews were gone from Monopol, that Monopol was empty.
* From his cousin he heard that Jews were put to cattle wagons in the evening of previous day.
* He didn’t see robbing of Jewish houses and belongings, but he saw few completely empty Jewish shops. His friend who was living close to Jewish quarter told him that Jewish houses were given to refugees from Western Macedonia.

**13. Cvetan Todorovski born in 1926 in Skopje**

Cvetan was living in the city center; his first neighbors were Jews – family Avram (husband, wife, and 2 children, boy and a girl). His family and Avram family were great friends.

Bulgarian occupation – “Bulgarization“of Macedonia, tickets for food, restrictions, police hours. He received working duty – had to work on train station fixing army trains.

Jewish houses were marked before the deportation with yellow color, before that Jews started to wear yellow star.

One day before the Jews were deported – Bulgarians took his family horse cart, Cvetan and his father didn’t know why. On the next day whole city was blocked, there were Bulgarian policemen and army on the street. 2 Bulgarian policemen came with Cvetan’s father horse cart to pick up the family of Avram. Everybody was crying, Cvetan’s mother wanted to take one of Avram’s children, but the policeman didn’t allow. Avram was crying,Cvetan’s father tried to calm him down. It was very dramatic scene. Policeman closed and stamped Avram’s house, and they went towards Monopol (Cvetan’s father had to drive them to Monopol). Avrams didn’t take any luggage, just some small bags.

Few days later when Cvetan was on the Skopje train station at his work (Skopje train station was next to train stop at Monopol’s factory), he saw how Bulgarian police and soldiers were pushing Jews to cattle wagons (there were around 15 wagons). Entering wagons lasted for about 4 hours. Each wagon had small window with bars. The Jews were crying, it was a big noise. After some time Bulgarian police chased Cvetan away from the station.

He heard from some people that Bulgarians took Jewish belongings from empty Jewish houses to trucks and that trucks went somewhere.

**Additional information:**

* Before the WW2 Skopje had around 40 to 50 thousands inhabitants, among them Macedonians, Turks, Vlahs, Jews, and others, there were no conflicts between nations. Jews mostly had shops or ran some small businesses; they were very calm and friendly people. Witness father owned modern machine for making rakija (home produced alcoholic drink) and also Jews were often coming to his house to make rakijain his machine.
* Only adults Jews were wearing David star sign.
* After the arrest of the Jews 4 or 5 times he went to Monopol to see them, but he couldn’t come close to the fence, cause it was guarded by Bulgarians in black uniforms. He could see Jews inside, walking in the yard, but he couldn’t recognize anybody. He saw that in one place in the yard, there were lot of belongings, suitcases and bags.
* Day of the deportation: train was standing for whole day at the station, there were some 40 to 50 cattle wagons, he was standing around 30 meters from wagons.
* His mother saw how some 30 days after Avrams family was taken Bulgarians (soldiers) came with a truck and took all belongings from Avrams house. House was empty, locked, later the owner of the house rented it to somebody (Avram wasn’t owner of that house, he was just renting it).
* Later he was fighting with Partisans, he was on Kosovo, fighting against Ballist, Partisans were taking captives – if any captive was trying to escape, Partisans were shooting at him (he saw it twice -2 captives who tried to escape were shot).

**14. Tome Nikolovski born in 1931 in Skopje**

He was living among Jewish neighbors. His Jewish neighbors were: family Elja, Sarika children Beni and Dani, family Avram, Behar, Baroh, Kamhi. He had Jewish friends in school like: Solomon Sason, Natanijahu, Matilda Behar, Kamhi and others. There were very good relations among Macedonians and Jews, they visited each other for their holidays.

Some uneducated Macedonians, for example from KiselaVoda were sometimes spreading rumors that Jews killed Jesus etc.

Bulgarian occupation – all Jews lost their jobs in state institutions, they became very poor, had to wear yellow signs (it was introduced at the beginning of 1943), on their houses were signs saying that they were Jews (those signs shown up at the end of 1942, they were in 2 languages – Bulgarian and German, also on Macedonian houses were such signs saying that those were “Bulgarian houses”, but signs on Macedonian houses were put already in 1941).

Already in 1942 half of the Jewish shops were closed, they didn’t have anything to sell. Jewish butchers could not work, but they were dealing somehow (he knew one Jewish butcher called Natanijahu).

Before the deportation some of the Jews manage to ran away from Skoplje: families of NatanjahuNahmjaz and MoniKarijo went to Bulgaria, families Arseo and Aroesti went to Albania, Jew JosipSion had received false papers from his Macedonian friend and stayed alive, family of Iles Shpitz was released from the train going to Treblinka in Nis – his Bulgarians friends insisted of letting him go. One another MoniBeraha went to Belgrade before the deportation and survived the war.

People didn’t know that deportation is going to happen. On that day Tome woke up at 5 am and with his father was supposed to go KiselaVoda to their shop, but in front of their gate there was a Bulgarian soldier standing who didn’t allow them to go out. He saw a lot of Bulgarian police and army on the streets.

From the window he saw how Bulgarian police took out his Jewish neighbors Elija, his wife Sarika and Beni and Dani and put them on horse cart, those Jews took some small bag and some blanket with them, while they were going under Tomo’s window they smile through tears and say “see you!”. Than he saw how Bulgarian police took out family of Solomon Sason, put them also on horse cart, and took them. On that day he saw around 12 horse carts with Jews going towards Monopol. Bulgarians were very strict to Jews, pushing them with the rifles.

Around 9 am blockade was done, and witness went with his father to their shop. On the way they saw Monopol surrounded with Bulgarian soldiers, Molopol was surrounded with wire, on every 10m soldier was standing. Inside in the yard there were a lot of Jews standing, in groups, and they were entering buildings. For 5 days while we was walking to and back from his shop, he was passing by Jews closed in Monopol.

On the 6th day they saw that the Monopol was empty, and train station worker called Nebojsa, told them that all Jews were put to wagons and taken somewhere.

After the deportations there were different roomers in Skopje – one was saying that the Jews were sent to death camp, others were saying that they are on some island in Africa.

Jews belongings – all of the precious belongings were taken by Bulgarians to trucks and taken to Bulgaria, all regular things were closed in synagogue and later given to refugees from Western Macedonia.

**Additional information:**

* Witness is counting all Jewish family heknew and giving details where they were living and what was their occupation (details about 10 Jewish families).
* He was often going to Solomon for Sabbath.
* He heard rumors that Jews were hurting Christian children but he never believed in it.
* First Germans entered city, they bombarded city, stayed for 2 days and left, soon Bulgarians came.
* Bulgarian occupation: Posters on Jewish houses were white, one policeman and one municipality officer were putting them on Jewish doors (witness saw them doing that), they had some list in their hands (witness is thinking that it was list of Jewish houses in the city).
* Jews started to wear David star 3 months before the blockade and deportation.
* Bulgarian occupation – good Jewish shops were given to Bulgarians, Jewish children stopped going to school, there was big propaganda in media against Jews (that they are guilty for everything, because they are using Christians, they had all gold, they are guilty for bad economic situation etc.) – witness father and older brother were reading newspapers and talking about this anti-Jews propaganda.
* Arresting of Jews lasted from 6 am to 9 am.
* Soon after the blockade was over, he was passing by Monopol and he saw a big line of Jews waiting to enter the Monopol, at the gate were tables and Bulgarian policemen were writing something on papers there, like making a registration of those Jews who were entering Monopol.
* Jews in Monopol – at least 4 times per day he was passing by Monopol, he saw closed Jews there, twice he was throwing them apples. After few days he saw how train with cattle wagons came to Monopol – was stopped at the gate of Monopol and some people were entering Monopol (men, women, children) – he heard that those were Jews brought from Stip and Bitola. He saw this situation 4 times in two days – first he saw train with 3 wagons, than with 2 wagons, than with 3 wagons, and then with 4 wagons, every time he saw people entering Monopol. Bulgarian police and Bulgarian soldiers guarded those who were entering Monopol.
* He heard from Macedonians who were living close to Monopol, that some Macedonians were coming with food for the Jews, but they weren’t giving it for free, they were selling it to them for money or gold.
* After perhaps a month, he saw that Monopol was completely empty. He didn’t see how the Jews were taken from Monopol.
* Jews belonging were robbed after the arrest of the Jews – he saw how some civilians were carrying Jewish clothes and running with this on the street. Later there was some commission who was in charge of Jewish belongings and all Jewish belongings were carried to synagogue – which was turned into a storage (he saw how people were carrying some things to the synagogue).

**Changes:**

- On the day of the arrest, he saw 6 horse carts with Jews, not 12.

**15. Jovan Cvetkovski born in 1931 in Skopje**

Jovan saw how Jews were brought to Monopol, they were all put in a yard and than in groups escortedinto 3 buildings. It was all done by Bulgarian police and army. All Jews had yellow stars. Some of them had small bags, boxes, but Bulgarians took away these Jewish belongings and put them into one Monopol’s corner. On Monopol’s gate there was a German soldier standing. Jovan was looking at those Jews trying to find a Jew he knew – Jasar – old Jew who was a street seller, who often was giving him snacks. He could not find him. With other boys, trough fence, he was giving water to Jews, but police and soldiers were always yelling at them, and boys had to run away. For 3 days, every day he was coming to the Monopol to see the Jews, trying to help them, give them water. Some Macedonians were coming to the fence and selling food to Jews in exchange for gold.

On the last day he saw how train with cattle wagons stopped at the Monopol, and Bulgarian police and soldiers were pushing the Jews to the wagons. Jews were entering wagons for about 3 or 4 hours. There were a lot of wagons, witness does not know exactly how many. When the train moved Jovan and his friends jumped on the train – they wanted to see where the Jews were going, but Bulgarian soldier saw them and started shooting, they had to run away. There were no more Jews after that day in Skopje.

Jewish belongings were given to refugees from Western Macedonia.

His mother was a communist and very often Bulgarians were coming at night searching their house. His family was often hiding communist illegals.

**Additional information:**

* Monopol was surrounded with wooden fence, You could see clearly trough gaps in the fence what was going on inside.
* Deportation – there were around 50 wagons on train station, on each was written “Bulgarian railways” (in Bulgarian language “Bulgarske zeleznice”), in each wagon Bulgarians were pushing around 100 Jews, they were treating Jews very bad, as if they were “cattle, not human beings”.
* He never saw Jasar in Monopol or never ever in his life again.

**Changes:**

* He jumped on the train because he wanted to stop it, he had this strong feeling that something wrong is going on.

**16. Rade Burceski born in 1923 in Rudnik Velesko close to Veles**

Immediately after Bulgaria occupied Macedonia witness joined resistance (1941) and was collecting materials and different things for Partisans, fighting against Bulgarian police.

He got arrested on 6 IX 1942, while he was on football match in Veles, there was a big mess, he saw how Bulgarian policemen shot 2 Macedonians (KolePitijev and Trajce Dingov), he was betrayed bya Macedonian woman called Slobodanka (he found out after the war that she betrayed him), arrested and put to Skopje to prison. One day Bulgarians took 9 of the prisoners, among them Rade, to a mountain close to Veles, where they shoot them with rifle. Rade and person on his left side PancePesot were only survivors, they survived the shooting and ran away while Bulgarians were chasing and killing another survivorDusanDimitrijevski.

Witness came back to his village, hid in stable, but was betrayed to Bulgarians by his neighbor DjeleDimovski (Rade had to go out cause Bulgarians were threating his mother), they took him to prison to Veles, where he was hardly beaten, when he was taken to prison to Skopje. Ljubco Jordanov - head of Skopje police, beat him.

He was sentenced to 10 years of prison – war court in Veles, judges were Bulgarians, (he was not sentenced to death because he was under age, 14 others who were older than 18 years old were sentenced to death. He was among 14 people who received sentence between 10 to 15 years in prison).

Before the liberation of Skopje, prisoners and Rade among them, made a deal with “good” guards, that they would let them go when Partisans will come (no need for fight). “Bad” guards ran away before Partisans came. All guards were Bulgarians except of 2 Macedonians, one of them wascalled “Zuti” he personally hang 3 Partisans (witness heard about that).

Rade joined Partisans, he fought against Germans and Balists in Macedonia and Kosovo. When Partisans took captives (Balists – Albanians), then there were people's trials;as the Partisans didn’t have prison, either they were releasing them or shooting them, there was special unit who was doing executions. Witness saw burnt villages and killed civilians – in Kosovo in Pasjanevillage.

**Additional information:**

* He was sentenced in war court of Veles on 2 XII 1942.
* Name of second “bad” Macedonian guard in Skopje prison was Stojan.
* While he was in Skopje prison he heard that in the same prison Pero Naumov (famous Macedonian Partisan) was imprisoned, and that on next day Pero will be hang. On the next day he could hear from his cell some noise, and then somebody shouting “Long live Macedonian Communist Party”. Later he found out that it was Pero Naumov shouting while he was being executed.
* Witness is saying that he took part in “cleaning the field” – talking about killing Balists (Albanians fascist) in Macedonia and Kosovo; he is not telling it directly only by phrase “cleaning the field”.

**Changes:**

* Woman who betrayed him was called Slavka, not Slobodanka.

**17. Trajko Stamatovski born in 1925 in Skopje**

He had a lot of Jewish friends in school, every day on his way to school he was passing through Jewish quarter, his father had Jewish friends and businesspartners Jews. Relations between Macedonians and Jews were good, stable, they were no problems. There were some rumors about Jews, like that one that Jews are taking Christian children on Jewish holidays, putting them to big pots, stabbing and cooking, but no one he knew was taking these rumors seriously.

Bulgarian occupation: “Bulgarisation” of Macedonians, poorness, police hour, tickets for food. Bulgarians printed posters for loyal Macedonians - those “loyal” Macedonians were putting those posters on houses or their shops (posters were saying: “DieseLanden/Hausistbulgarisch” /Eng. “This Shop/House is Bulgarian”)

During the occupation Jews were forced to wear yellow star. They were coming to school until the day of the deportations, their shops were working but they didn’t have much to sale. Bulgarians closed Jewish football club. Some of them managed to ran away before the deportation like rich owner of the pharmacy called AronSulib and his son Leon (witness school friend). Some of them managed to hide before the deportation at their Macedonians friends.

Shortly before the deportation his father’s Jewish friend calledMentes (few years before the war they started shop together) came and asked Trajko’s father to hide gold and some precious things for him. Trajko’s father didn’t agree. Everybody knew that Jews will be deported just nobody knew when exactly.

Day of the deportation: Whole city, all streets were blocked, Bulgarian soldiers didn’t allow witness and his family to go outside of our house, Bulgarians entered witness’s house and searched it, they didn’t say why they were doing it. Witnass didn’t know that they were deporting Jews on that day, he and his family thought that there was some police action against illegals. Blockade started at 7 am and lasted till 7 pm. When the street was empty witness went to see his friends and to see what was going on. Bulgarians soldiers stopped him on the street and took him to the police station,they told him that Jews were being deported. There was a lot of people at police station, there was a machine gun pointed at arrested people. Trajko was released because he had a Bulgarian school hat.

Trajko was a SKOJ (communist youth member) and on the next day, as no Jews came to school, he was talking with his other SKOJ friends about helping the Jews. He heard that Jews were closed in Monopol. Some of his friends went to Monopol, he didn’t go.

One couldn’t see any more Jews in the city after that day.

Jewish belongings – Bulgarians and locals were robbing all Jewish things, but he wasn’t watching.

Jewish houses – refugees from Western Macedonia were moved into those houses (they were escaping from Ballists – Albanian paramilitary army in Western Macedonia).

He joined Partisans in 1944 and took part in fights for liberation of Skopje.

**Additional information:**

* Jewish quarter was located under the Skopje castle – only poor Jews were living there, richer Jews, like Aron Suli (owner of pharmacy) were living in the city center.
* His father didn’t agree for taking Mentes gold, cause he was afraid that in case of any search in his house he would have some problems.
* Witness took part in battle for Skopje, than he stayed in Macedonia.

**18. Trajce Grujovski born 1921 in Rakovo/ Lerin/ Greece**

After witness was born his family moved to Bitola and he grew up in Bitola.

In Bitola were some 3500 Jews, 15% from all inhabitants were Jews, and there was one Jewish community in the city. He had Jew friend in primary school MuricSamic, in high school he had a lot of Jews friends (f.ex. ZamilaKolomonos), in trade schools Jews friends were: Eli Faradzi, Moric Romano, Rosa Kamhi, Ruso and others. Together with Jew, Beno Ruso he was in SKOJ and then in Partisans – Bitola Partisan Unit named JaneSandalski.

Relationship between Jews and non-Jews in Bitola were goods, youngsters were friends, Jews had their sports club, Macedonian theirs, but all were friends in schools and outside schools.

Rumors about Jews – not much, but there were some (mostly out of jealousy), but not among intellectuals.

Bulgarian occupation: Bulgarians had changed all Macedonian surnames to Bulgarian surnames with suffix –ev, they introduced Bulgarian language saying that there is no Macedonian language, they introduce obligatory selling of agricultural products to Bulgarian authorities, they changed money from Yugoslavian Denar to Bulgarian lev (according to very bad rate).

Restrictions for Jews – there were different restrictions, f.ex. Jews couldn’t be butchers any more, had to wear yellow star, all had to move to left side of Dragor river to Jewish quarter.

There was one Macedonian lawyer called Trencev, he was pro Bulgarian, he put on his office a sign where it was written “Forbidden to enter for Jews and dogs”.

Jews didn’t want to escape from Bitola, they believed that they will be under Bulgarian protection.

He joined Partisans in VIII 1942, and was with the Partisans when deportation of the Jews happened. Communist Party sent a letter warning that deportation is going to take place, a letter which was sent 3 days before the deportation, but it came too late to Bitola. He was in touch with Bitola every day. He was in unit together with the Jewish Partisan BenoRuso. Before the deportation some Jews tried to go to Partisans, but Communist Party and Partisans in Bitola were in bad shape and badly organized, and only few of Jews managed to join the Partisans (6 Jewish girls and 2 Jewish boys, among them brother and wife of BenoRuso). He knows that some rich Jewish families were coming to headquarter offering money for transferring whole families to Albania or Bulgaria. It wasn’t possible.

While he was with Partisans he witnessed execution of onePartisan, who was accused to be Bulgarian spy.

His mother died during the war, his father and brother were sent to camp in place called Skocivar close to Bitola, they both survived the war.

**Additional information:**

* Jewish quarter was on left side of river Dragor.
* First Germans entered Bitola, in 3 places there were some small fire conflicts: close to Saint Nikolas church some 10 Yugoslavian soldiers were killed, than 2 Germans were shot while riding a motorcycle in the entrance to Bitola, and on the same day German small plane was shot down – witness saw bodies of killed German and Yugoslavian soldiers.
* Germans stayed only for few days in Bitola, than they left and 10 days later the Bulgarians came.
* On some Macedonians shops were special green posters saying in Bulgarian language “This is a Bulgarian shop”. Some Macedonian civilians were putting those posters.
* He was in charge of Bitola SKOJ (Youth communist association), they held meetings, collecting help for Partisans.
* Bitola communist were doing different action in the city, f. ex. On 2nd VII 1941 Bulgarians held big parade in the city, communist put posters “Long live Macedonian Communist Party and Soviet Union”. A lot of Bitola’s communist were arrested after that and sent to Bulgarians prison.
* Jews who managed to get to Partisans, group of 8 of them (among them Rosa Ruso, Estera Ovadija, Busnik and others), after 11 March (day of the deportation) were hiding for few days at 2 local Macedonians families: one was called Bogoja, the second Boro Altimpark.
* All together 3276 Bitola’s Jews were deported; it was 11% of all Bitola citizens.
* Because he was well known communist he was always hiding, Bulgarians authorities has sentenced him in his absence for prison, and in all locals newspapers were Bulgarian proclamations, that anybody who will see any Partisan has to kill him.
* Because of his political communist action witness’s father and brother were taken to camp. Until the end of the war he didn’t know what was going on with his father and brother. He found out that his mother died in 1942 when he was in forest with Partisans.
* From the end of 1943 he was a communist commissar staying on liberated territory. Once in the village of Pesocan he survived an attack of Ballist. He heard from battalion commander that a lot of people both civilians and Partisans were killed during this attack.
* After the war he took part in few congresses where historians, Partisans, communist were trying to answer the question why so little Jews were saved, and taken to Partisans before the deportation. He heard that there was one theory that Macedonian Jews received a message from Bulgarian Jews, that they don’t have to worry, that they won’t be deported. But he thinks that the main reason why not more Jews were saved, was the bad positions of Partisans units at the beginning of 1943; the units were destroyed, there was no good communication, no help from headquarter in Serbia.

**Changes:**

* His Jewish friend in primary school was called Mois Sami, not Muric Samic.

**19. Vanco Saldjijevski born in 1924 in Veles**

In Veles there were no Jews. On 2 August 1941 he moved with his family to Skopje, because their house in Veles was bombarded. They moved to empty Serbian apartment. In his neighborhood (part of Skopje called “Kiselavoda”), there was a lot of Macedonian refugees from Western Macedonia.

In his school there were no Jews. He had different political organizations in school: SKOJ (communist youth), BRANIK (pro-Bulgarian). He was member of SKOJ and he and his friends had a task to talk to Jews and tell them that they are in danger and that they should join Partisans. He managed to talk to 2 Jews on the street (they were wearing yellow star), but he thinks they didn’t believe him.

He was arrested and put in one cell with Jew BrankoFrickan, who told him that he was hardly beaten. Bulgarian policemen also beat Vanco while he was in the prison. His friend from SKOJ called VasilIvanov was killed in this prison. Vanco was released thanks to privet connections.

When Jews were put to Monopol, he saw them there every day, as he was living around 200m from Monopol. Every building in Monopol was filled with Jews (he could see them trought windows with bars), some of the Jews were walking in the yard, looking very poor,crying. Vanco could see everything trough the wire fence. Bulgarian police and army guarded the fence. Little boys were able to sneak through the guards and they were bringing food and cigarettes to Jews. The Jews stayed a few days in the Monopol, than they were gone.

In April 1944 he joined Partisans. While he was with Partisans he witnessed execution of 2 Partisans – sentenced by Partisans court to death, because they left brigade.

**Additional information:**

* Edin Gasev was head of Branik organization in his school. There was also another fascist organization in his school called “Legionar”.
* His friend Vasil Ivanov was hardly beaten and thrown through a window – he heard about it from other prisoners.
* His friends Jews at partisans were: Beno Ruso, Rosa Kamhi, Zamila. One another Jew (he met him after the war) went to Albania and saved himself – his name was Aron Aroesti.
* Jews in Monopol – all had David star.
* Bulgarian police was around the fence of Monopol trying to scare boys who were bringing food to Monopol.
* Once on the way to school he saw some train (short 3 wagons) standing in Monopol, there was a lot of Bulgarian police on horses around this train, perhaps new Jews were brought in this train to Monopol, but he couldn’t see if there were any people in this train. On that day the Jews were still in Monopol.
* When witness was with Partisans he took part in talks with Macedonian Chetniks – they joined Partisans. Macedonians Chetniks commander was Vojco Sajkovic – after the war he ran to Moscow (was afraid of Tito).
* He was catching and “cleaning “ the region of Western Macedonia from Ballist and Bulgarians – a lot of those Ballist and Bulgarians were closed in prison in Makedonski Brod and later executed (witness is not confirming or denying that he took part in executions, he is just saying that he also was “cleaning the region” (witness wasn’t very open to talk about this episode).

**20. Bistrica Birculovska born in 1930 in Skopje**

No preinterview

* When the WW2 started she was living with her Slovenian parents in Vodno (Skopje) and going to 4 class of primary school. She stopped going to school, because her father didn’t want her to be under Bulgarian fascist influence.
* Before the war, in first class she had 3 Jewish girlfriends: Mirijam Bahar, Sara Sijon, Sara Isaak. They were very good friends but later the contact was broken, she does not know what happened to them, probably they were killed in Treblinka.
* In 1940 her cousin Zora Piculin came from Ljubljana to Skopje, she found a job at Jewish family Gatenio, as a nurse to small Jewish boy – Saul Gatenio.
* German attack on 6 April – her father went to army to Kriva Palanka. Bistrca saw how Germans were escorting captured Yugoslavian soldiers. Her father came back home at the beginning of May.
* Bulgarian occupation – Witness’s father didn’t support any Bulgarian actions or organization, an because of that they were treated as lower category of citizens, f.ex. her family received G coupons for bread (smallest amount of bread per family), later they were taken to working camp for few months (camp was in Macedonia).
* Before the deportation on Jewish houses Bulgarian soldiers put posters saying in Bulgarian language “This house is Jewish” (posters were yellow), on Macedonian houses were posters “This house is Bulgarian”, she saw how soldiers came to put poster on their house but her father was arguing with them, saying that he is Slovenian. They were left in peace, but later were under police observation.
* Jews were forced to wear yellow David star, she saw them walking on streets with this sign. From cousin Zora she heard that Jewish shops and fabrics were closed and taken by Bulgarians. Zora told her that her employees told her that they are not going to run to Albania (like some other rich Jewish families) because they paid somebody, and they have a good protection.
* 11 March 1943 – in the morning she woke up cause she heard noise, through window she saw a lot of Bulgarian soldiers and some civilians, she saw how they took 3 Jewish families (were living in houses at the end of street) put them into horse cart and left towards the center. She saw it from 500 m, she could hear shouting in Bulgarian language. She didn’t leave her house for whole day, father told her that city was blocked and they cannot go out.
* On 12 March, Zora came to witness’s house and told how Bulgarians took whole Jewish family also small boy Saul (Zora was trying to protect him saying that it was her baby, but Bulgarians had him on list of inhabitants of the house). From 13 March to 20 March Zora was going to Monopol everyday and on 20 March she took Saul out with some other children who were sick and were supposed to go to hospital for checking. She stole him from hospital and brought first to Bistrica's house, than to catholic nuns monastery where Zora and the child stayed until the end of the war.
* After the war in 1946 came some Jews from Israel and took Saul (Zora didn’t want to give him, but those Jews had some proves that they were related to Saul). She was in touch with him till she died.