

## David Kohen In The Forced Labor Camp In Smyadovo



This is a picture of the forced labor camp in Smyadovo, August 1944. The river was our bath then. I'm on the right. The other man is Raul and he used to play the accordion very well. He was from Sofia, but I lost track of him later.

In 1944 I got mobilized in Smyadovo for the construction of the Smyadovo-Veselinovo road. I was in the fourth group of workers out of nine that were building the section. We were accommodated in bungalows and the food was very bad. Our supervisor was an extremely wicked man and he didn't allow anybody to get detached from work. There were people with malaria among us. A friend of

mine suffered from malaria tertiana. The supervisor knew very well when my friend was expected to lose consciousness. Once he asked me to see him to the toilet because he was about to faint. And in fact, we hadn't taken fifteen steps when he lost consciousness. Even these sick people didn't get released from work.

The situation was similar in all other work groups. There were a lot of Jewish forced labor groups working on the bank of the Danube. Malaria was raging there. Three thirds of the people there were ill. Only few of them, however, were released. For example, around five ill men were released out of 100; the others had to continue working despite the cruel conditions. In my group there was an engineer named Gesharov, who was a tormentor. He used to drag a gun and threaten to shoot us because we couldn't fulfill the daily target. He worked us until late in the evening and left us without food, so that we could possibly fulfill those four cubic meters of soil.