Egon ŠTAJNER

LIVING TO SEE THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Egon Štajner was born on May 30, 1926, in Subotica, to father Mavro and mother Frida, née Bencion. He was the youngest of three children. Seven close family members perished in the Holocaust, including his father Mavro and grandfather Markus Štajner, as well as a number of members of his extended family.

After the war he resumed his education in Novi Sad and Belgrade. He worked in Srboteks and later at Radio Belgrade and Radio Yugoslavia, where he was responsible for the Hungarian-language program. He was then transferred to the Institute for International Politics and Economics in Novi Sad. As a senior professional officer he worked in the Eastern European Countries Division. After graduating in economics, he worked in the Serbian Chamber of Commerce and was subsequently an advisor in both the republic and federal departments for economic programming. He was also director for foreign tourism in the Globus agency in Belgrade.

He married Vera Vajs in 1948 and they had two children, a daughter Judita, a professional translator, and a son Zvonko, a mathematician with a master's degree in statistical science. He has two granddaughters. After the death of his wife Vera, he remarried and now lives with his wife Emilija, née Kostić.

I lived in Subotica until my eighth year, when my father, who was the Vojvodina representative of the JUREIFI hat factory in Sisak, had to move to Novi Sad on business in 1934. This is how I came to be in Novi Sad in 1941 when the war broke out.

CHILDHOOD

I grew up with my sister Alisa and brother Miroslav in a middle-class Jewish family. We were not religious although my parents observed all the major Jewish festivals. I received religious instruction in the Jewish primary school I attended and, after detailed preparations under the supervision of Rabbi Šilber, I sang an appropriate prayer in the synagogue for my Bar Mitzvah.

The most important memory of my childhood is my grandmother, Henrietta, who came from the Viennese Jewish family of Rosenzweig. While we lived in Subotica I grew up with her, speaking German, which she taught me to read and write. She left us and moved to Belgrade in 1933, taking me with her and enrolling me in the third grade of the primary school in Dušanova Street. I endured it for only one semester. My school friends laughed at my strong Hungarian accent and I could not endure this so I returned to my parents in Subotica.

The second thing I remember is my enrolment in Hashomer Hatzair. In this Jewish youth movement, in Subotica as well as Novi Sad, I made wonderful friends, both girls and boys, and acquired a left-wing education. I was gradually formulating my first goal in life – to move out with an *aliyah* to what was then Palestine and take an active part in building a Judaeo-Arab state. In the *ken* we learnt and sang Jewish *halutz* songs and learnt comradeship, how to share both good and bad, endurance and persistence.

The third thing was having to interrupt my education in the Novi Sad high school because of the *Numerus Clausus*, the Jewish quota. My father decided that I should learn a trade and so I was taught leatherwork by the Novi Sad master Đorđević and the tradesman Milosavljević (both of whom moved to Belgrade after the war broke out). This enabled me to survive the early years of the war.

I remained in good and friendly relations with my Serb peers and never felt any particular attitude towards me as a Jew.

The fourth thing I remember from my childhood was my sporting activities. I was a member of the Maccabi Sports Club in Novi Sad and

regularly attended gymnastics classes run by our coach, Mr Gutman. I also played table tennis there and, at the Vojvodina championships in 1939, I won third place after Harangozo and Blažon of Zemun. If there had been a play-off for third and fourth place I would most probably have come fourth, because Deža Rajh from the Hashomer Hatzair was a better table tennis player than me at the time.

WARTIME, 1941–1944

The war hit me very hard, suddenly changing everything in my life. When the Hungarian troops entered Novi Sad in April, 1941, there was a short skirmish. Two days later, when the shooting stopped, I went to the *ken* along Futoška Street. In that street, where the tramway ran, there were two human bodies hanging on each street pole, every fifteen metres. Hashomer Hatzair was banned. I could no longer meet my *haverim* and *haverot*. The Maccabi club was no longer working so I didn't go to my gymnastics classes and nor could I play table tennis.

Đorđević, my boss, left Novi Sad and I took a job as an apprentice with Šandor Tot who made suitcases.

I had to find my feet in these new circumstances. We were distressed by what was happening to us and began to organise ourselves. Almost ninety per cent of the former Hashomer Hatzair members joined the resistance movement during 1941 and 1942. I joined SKOJ in the autumn of 1941 through the elder brother of Jakov Rip, my *haver* from the Mišmar *kvuca*. My group included Jakov Rip, Bruno Hofman and Šlomo, whose surname I don't remember. Our assignment was to distribute leaflets to houses and throw nails on the roads to puncture the tyres of the military trucks which passed along them. We also collected Red Aid. Bruno Hofman and Jakov Rip were also involved in setting fire to the wheat at Rumenka, near Novi Sad.

At the end of 1941 the Hungarian police discovered the illegal resistance organisation and arrested the members. I don't know whether we were the only SKOJ group or if there were others, but they did not discover us. It was only at the end of the 1970s that I found out how our group remained safe. Our secretary, Mordo Rip, was a friend of Ljubica Bimbika-Mandel who, at that time, was a candidate for Communist Party membership. She was Mordo's connection and she herself was connected to Lederer, a member of the local Communist Party committee. Ljubica Mandel didn't betray her friend or Lederer

(who was hanged in the Novi Sad military barracks in January, 1942) and nor did she say a word about our SKOJ group. So, at a time when more than two hundred members of the resistance movement in Novi Sad were arrested and given long prison sentences, I and the other members of this group were spared.

JANUARY, 1942

About fifty members the Hashomer Hatzair were caught up in the wave of arrests in 1941 when Jewish men between the ages of 20 and 50 in Novi Sad were abducted and forced into labour. We heard that they were made to pull rusty nails from planks with their bare hands and endure other humiliations. This nightmare was still with us on January 21, 1942, when the Hungarian Army began its notorious raid in Novi Sad. The Great Raid also swept through Žabalj, Čurug, Nadalj and other places around Novi Sad. The massacre was carried out methodically. On the first two days of the raid the soldiers attacked the houses of the wealthiest people. First they demanded that all jewellery and cash be handed over. After they collected all that they killed everyone, entire families: men, women and children. Wherever they went they left behind them death and devastation. There were firing squads operating in yards, in front of houses and at the sports grounds of the Novi Sad Athletic Club. On the second and, especially, on the third day, the Hungarian troops went from house to house looking for Jews. On the third and last day they rang the bell of our house. This was about 10.30 in the morning. The seven of us, my father, mother, sister, brother, uncle and aunt with a year-old baby and I, came out of the house. There were just a dozen or so people in the street. They took us from Zrinyi Ilona (now Petra Zrinjskog) Street towards the Novi Sad Post Office, then along Železnička Street to the Bristol Hotel, where we turned off into the Strand road. It was very cold, 26° Celsius below zero. We were moving very slowly, stopping in front of each building and the soldiers would ask the doormen and householders about Jews. If they discovered there were any there, they would drive them out into the street. The column grew and grew. Soon there were eighty or ninety of us walking down the Strand road. After we passed what had been a road underpass and arrived at about 200 metres from the entrance to the Strand, we were passed by two army trucks laden with corpses. Many of the people in our column were horrified, some of them

screaming and weeping. At about 2.30 in the afternoon our column stopped about 250 metres from the entrance to the Strand. A column of about forty Jews came walking towards us from the opposite direction. In the first rank we recognised a friend of my mother, Lilika Paunc. The soldiers ordered us to turn around and follow this column. They took us to the former SOKOL House where we were ordered to sit on the floor. They kept us there until about 8.30 p.m., checked our identities, told us that if we "behaved ourselves, everything would be all right" and then allowed us to go home.

While we were in SOKOL House we learnt that the soldiers had led off five people at a time from the column at the entrance to the Strand. They interrupted the killing while they were unloading the corpses from the truck. Later, after the raid, we found out that the people who were taken to the Strand were ordered to undress to their underwear then to kneel on a plank in front of a hole in the ice. They then fired bullets into the back of their heads and threw them into the water. In the spring, when the ice thawed, there were hundreds of corpses floating down the Danube towards Belgrade.

My brother and I calculated that if the raid had gone on for just another hour or so we would no longer be alive. There were nearly a hundred and fifty people in the column of survivors. I'm not sure about this but I think that there are now no more than a dozen of the Jews from that column still alive.

At that time the Jews were taken to forced labour. Those of military age or older were taken to the eastern front for military service. There they dug trenches and did various kinds of dirty work. In general, all trace of them was lost. The law on wearing yellow armbands in Vojvodina was not adopted in Hungary until March, 1944, when the Nazis occupied the country and the government was taken over by the Arrow Cross, headed by Ferenc Szalasi, the Hungarian Nazi. As well as having to wear this sign, Jews were forbidden to enter public institutions, restaurants and so on. The deportations soon began. Jews were taken to assembly centres (the Sloboda Hotel in Novi Sad, the Mill in Subotica, the camp at Bačka Topola and other places) and from these to Auschwitz. My brother, Miroslav-Fric, was at that time in a Hungarian prison in Vac, condemned to several years imprisonment, while my sister, Alis, was hiding in Budapest with forged documents. Of my immediate family, only my father and mother were sent to Auschwitz, but very many more of my extended family met the same fate.

Immediately after the Great Raid, my father sent me to Budapest all on my own. I was barely 16 years of age. My Uncle Albert, who lived in Budapest, rented a maid's room for me near the Western railway station and found me work as an apprentice with a handbag maker. After that I hardly saw him and was left to my own devices. At first I had very little money, just enough to survive. My wages were so low that I was unable to both pay my rent and feed myself. In the beginning I reduced my food intake to baked pumpkin which I bought in a bakery on my way to work. I had learnt almost everything in my trade while I was still working for Đorđević, so I decided to give up my apprenticeship and began working as an unqualified tradesman for several handbag makers in Budapest. By working day and night I could earn more money. I remember that, as an apprentice, my wages were about 320 pengoes a month but, from the beginning of 1943, I earned 720 pengoes per week, which was a pretty considerable amount. By way of comparison, my father made 1,000 pengoes per month for keeping the books in a Novi Sad company owned by a Jew.

During this period I spent a lot of time with my brother Miroslav who moved to Budapest shortly before me and found employment as a messenger in an exclusive shop for fashionable off-the-hook clothes. I loved him a great deal and he influenced my work until he was arrested in November 1942.

In August 1943 I returned from Budapest to Novi Sad where, with the financial support of my parents, I set up my own handbag business. All the master tradesman in Novi Sad, knowing that I was reliable and skilled at my trade, gave me work. I also got jobs from the German Majer, the Czech Šmolka, and the Hungarians Boros and Sandor Tot with whom I worked for a short time as an apprentice. Buying materials with my own resources, I manufactured wallets, briefcases, ladies' handbags and so on for myself and sold them to the owner of the department store in the main street of Novi Sad, making excellent money. From one day's earnings I could afford to buy custom-made boots. I also helped my parents out.

In the autumn of 1943 I again joined the resistance movement. I was secretary of a group whose members included Marta Štark, a Jew and the sister of Egon Štark, who was serving a prison sentence. There was also Mirko Šenberger, who had been jailed once and released a

few months later. He was also a former member of Hashomer Hatzair. Also with us were Miša Šenk, who had been imprisoned in 1941 and already served his sentence, and Karlo Feldšer, known as Felo, both former members of Hashomer Hatzair. My connection was Jozsef Fistes, a Hungarian printer. Our job was to collect the Red Aid, to study Marxist literature and to prepare for joining the Partisans. In March, 1944, after my father was deported, I began looking for opportunities to join the Partisans. I didn't sleep at home. Early in April I established a connection with Smilja Aćimović, who was a member of the Novi Sad city committee of SKOJ, and settled the day for my departure with her. About four days before the scheduled date I met Miša Šenk who told me that he was leaving to join the Partisans in a couple of days and suggested that I go with him. Because I had already set the date for my own departure I told him, and perhaps this was a little pretentious and vain, that I had my own connection and my own arrangements to leave.

Two days after this meeting, Mirko Šenberger asked to meet me. Without thinking much about it I went to see him. It was a brief meeting. He told me that it would be a good idea to sleep at home that night, that "Verica Vla, who is being persecuted" would come and spend the night with me "because I was not compromised". I did as he asked me. Verica Vla didn't arrive, but the Hungarian agents did. At 3.30 a.m. they broke into my apartment and arrested me. They took me to the Great Hall of the former Officers' Club in Novi Sad, on the bank of the Danube. The hall was full of people they had arrested. They were sitting about two metres apart from one another. Among the detainees I saw my connection, Jozsef Fistes, Mirko Šenberger, Marta Štark and other people I knew as friends of Fistes.

The Hungarian agents interrogated me three times. The last interrogation included a confrontation with Šenberger. They asked me to confirm one of his accusations about a woman professor of Hungarian nationality. During the interrogation I was beaten and tortured. They beat me with batons and tortured me with electricity. They wanted me to corroborate the allegations made by my friends who had been arrested and interrogated. I didn't betray anybody. Later, in September 1944, I was sentenced to four years in prison by a tribunal which sat at Bačka Topola.

During my time in the Officers Club the agents didn't interrogate the detainees on Sundays. One Sunday the Hungarians whose job it

was, under the supervision of a sergeant, to see that we didn't talk to one another, began collecting donations from us for the Hungarian soldiers who were fighting on the eastern front. They appointed Marta Štark and two of her comrades to take up the collection. They were followed around by a Hungarian soldier. When they came to me I stood up and, from a small pocket in my trousers, took out a two filler coin and handed it to her. Marta laughed out loud. When the sergeant asked why she was laughing she answered loudly "Because he gave two fillers". Hearing this many of the detainees joined in the laughter. The sergeant punished me with "catching flies". This meant I had to stand beside the wall on one foot, hold both my hands above my head and continually open and close them. At every sign of fatigue a rifle butt was smashed into my back. I caught flies for a long time until eventually someone else who needed disciplining replaced me. Barely two minutes after I was replaced the agent in charge came into the hall. He asked the sergeant why my replacement was being punished and was told that he was undisciplined. When he heard this explanation, the agent took the detainee with him and beat him so badly that he was returned to the hall wrapped in a blanket.

Early in May, after the enquiry was finished and the report signed, the Hungarian police transferred us to an SS concentration camp near Bačka Topola. There, in a large room reserved for men, I found three mattresses with my father's name and surname on them. This was how I knew that my father, together with other Jews from Vojvodina, had been in this camp before me and that from this camp he had been taken to Auschwitz where he was suffocated in a gas chamber.

DACHAU

As the Soviet Army and the Yugoslav National Liberation Army began approaching Bačka Topola, the camp was evacuated and the inmates transported to Komarom, a small border town in Western Hungary which looked out over what was then Czechoslovakia. The Hungarians brought inmates from other prisons here to the dungeons of the nearby fortress. There I encountered a number of comrades who had been arrested and sentenced as early as 1941. The Hungarians handed all the prisoners from Komarom over to the Gestapo at the beginning of November, 1944.

We travelled for two full days in cattle wagons, with no food or drink. The men were sent to the Dachau concentration camp, while the women were first held in a place called Alah, then transported to Bergen-Belsen. Of our group of about two hundred men, only about twenty survived. There were more survivors from the women, about fifty of them.

A Dismal Task. *From a collection of drawings by France Audoul, a French prisoner, No. 27933 in the Ravensbrück camp, which she made on paper stolen from the SS*

As soon as we arrived in the camp we were forced to stand on the *Appellplatz*, the assembly ground, for three or four hours. It was cold and drizzling. After two days of being transported in cattle wagons this was easier to endure. We approached the camp administration in groups of five. They confiscated anything we had which was valuable, in my case a gold ring which my grandmother had given me for my bar mitzvah and a gold chain. We were recorded in the prison register. By an extraordinary coincidence, Dr Eva Čavčić (nee Cuker) once

brought me from Yad Vashem a paper containing our names. Hers as she was giving information about women at Alah and mine when I was registered at Dachau.

After registration we were taken to the showers where they shaved our heads and then drew a line down the middle of our scalps to make us more easily recognisable. Then we were sprayed with jets of hot water. They then disinfected us with a solution (perhaps chlorine or lime). This burnt us terribly, in the armpits, around our genitals and anus. Finally we were given our prison uniforms: trousers, a shirt and cap. Every prisoner was given the number with which he was registered in the administration. Under the number they sewed the identification of the group. A red triangle showed that we were political prisoners and a narrow yellow ribbon above it identified us as Jews. From this moment, as far as the prison authorities were concerned, we ceased to be human beings and became numbers. The only personal belongings we were allowed to keep were our shoes. Mine were stolen that same evening because I left them under the bed where I slept. Until the liberation I wore wooden prison clogs.

The camp consisted of two rows of thirty barracks. Each was divided into four two-room sections with a washroom which had several toilet seats and washbasins. In each room there were three tiers of beds. When we arrived in Dachau our group of prisoners was packed into two rooms of a barracks section. There was a blanket on each bed. We weren't cold. We slept close together, body to body. We rose very early, perhaps at 3.30 a.m., I don't remember exactly. Then we stood in front of our barracks, ten or more in a row, while the *kapo* kept counting and recounting us. Some time later we were given our first meal, what they called "Hitler coffee". The morning roll calls and standing in line were what passed for daily exercise. Our food consisted of a litre of soup with bones at midday and half a litre of soup without bones for dinner. In addition we also had a daily ration of bread which kept getting smaller and smaller until, by April, it completely vanished, along with the evening soup.

MY FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH THE HOSPITAL

The German criminal who was *kapo* of our section drew up the first list for what they called the *Arbeitskommandos*, the labour par-

ties. My name was on it. But there was a rule in Dachau that, to protect the camp against epidemics, any prisoner with a temperature above 38° Centigrade was to be sent for an examination at the hospital. This consisted of a number of barracks in which the rooms were all wards for various illness. Each had beds in two tiers. The medical personnel were inmates, doctors from the occupied countries of Europe. These doctors had to treat patients, especially those who were admitted to the hospital, according to the rules of the German authorities, which had been drawn up by German SS doctors.

It was thanks to this regime in Dachau that I survived the Holocaust. I arrived in the camp with tonsillitis and a high temperature. I was immediately sent to the hospital and thus avoided going out with the *Arbeitskommando* to which I had been assigned. Nobody from that group returned alive! When I returned to the barracks after, I think, four or five days in the hospital, I did everything to give myself a high temperature. I ran around the small space in front of the barracks, sat sweating in the snow and on the cold concrete. I came out of the baths all wet in the cold wind and so on. I succeeded and, a few days later, probably in early December, was admitted to hospital again with pneumonia and with a temperature over 40° C. They treated me with great care. When they discovered that I spoke German, they brought me a book to read, B. Traven's *Das Tottenschiff*, (The Death Ship). I read it during my second, three-week stay in hospital.

MY HEROIC DAY

I returned to the block at the end of December 1944 or early in January 1945. I think that Dachau was then under quarantine. The *Arbeitskommandos* were no longer being sent out. The hems of our clothes crawled with lice. Twice a day we had to undergo stringent delousing as they attempted to exterminate the vermin. The food was more meagre, and the elderly and exhausted prisoners were dying in the block. Theire bodies would then be washed and a label with their number attached to the big toe of the right foot. They were collected and taken away every day. Again I made every effort to return to the hospital and again I succeeded. The doctors found that I had a middle ear inflammation and needed an operation. The doctor who examined me was a well-known surgeon from Budapest. When he discovered that I spoke Hungarian, he addressed me as "son". I prepared for my oper-

ation by asking another inmate who had already had surgery what kind of pain I would have to endure. He described the operating procedure to me. I was too weak to be given general anaesthesia, so the doctor trepanned my skull with an inadequate local anaesthetic, talking to me during the operation, asking me to hold my head still. I managed not to cry out once during the procedure. Afterwards the doctor congratulated me: "I've never had a patient like you before!" As soon as he said this I burst into tears. I wept for about ten minutes, all the time saying through my tears:

"Doctor, I don't want to cry, I don't even feel any pain, but I can't stop."

"Never mind, son, you just cry to your heart's content."

After the surgery my temperature fell. The doctor was pleased with my recovery. However I had problems with the male nurse, a Pole. When I asked for a bedpan he refused to bring me one, saying: "I'm not going to wait on a Jew. If you want a bedpan, go and get one yourself". I didn't reply. Two days after the operation, still very weak, I got up and helped myself. It was very cold, January 1945. Again my temperature soared. The next morning when the doctor visited and saw that I had a high temperature he asked me what was going on. I told him about the way the nurse had behaved. He made no comment, but summoned the nurse to the doctors' room and beat him. The whole ward heard his screams. A few minutes later the nurses from the laboratory came and took my sputum for analysis. Then, after an hour, I was taken from the section for ear problems to the ward for tubercular patients. This time, instead of three weeks, I stayed in hospital for a month and a half. Even better, I was put on a "fortified diet" and no longer lost weight. Most important of all was the fact that I was lying in hospital during the period when typhoid fever raged through the Dachau barracks.

I left the hospital on March 1, 1945. I was returned to the block and, when I arrived, I could hardly believe my eyes. There were barely thirty inmates in my section. There were no more morning roll calls, no more *Arbeitskommandos* and no more regular food. Most of the men in the block were French and Belgians who received parcels from the International Red Cross. I remember one of my companions in the barracks who was a very obese Czech. The others looked at him as a marvel and would feel his belly. A few Russian officers and I were in the most difficult position. We received no parcels and, as the days

went by, we were given less and less food. From April we no longer received bread and the daily food was reduced to half a litre or a litre of soup. Every night we would hear heavy artillery. We felt that the end of our suffering was near and in this way it was easier for us to endure the hunger which tormented us more and more. By the middle of April our barracks shook from the artillery fire.

LIBERATION

On April 22 or 23, the SS men took us outside the walls of Dachau. Each prisoner was given a paper sleeping bag and a food parcel the size of a shoebox from the International Red Cross. First they put us into passenger coaches and then, when we arrived in Munich, they moved us to the freight and cattle wagons.

We had no idea where they were taking us or why. It was only in 1998, 53 years later, that I found out (after a visit from an associate of a Munich institute which was researching the history of Dachau) that, on Himmler's orders, they were taking us to be shot. Luckily this transport, with about 2,500 people (according to the researcher there were 5,000 of us) didn't reach its destination. It was blocked by the advance of the Allied armies. The power lines had been cut and the electric locomotive of our train stopped near the river Isar. On the right bank of the river was the village of Seefeld and on the left, Mittenwald. The troops escorting us weren't SS, or at least they didn't wear SS uniforms. First they drove us to Seefeld, then returned us to the bank of the Isar. A number of prisoners, myself included, tried to get away from the transport. We planned to climb a hill about 150 metres high and hide in the forest to wait for the liberation. The guards shot after us. Exhausted as we were, one Pole and I managed to climb the hill and took shelter in a wooden hut.

It wasn't easy staying alive through the following day and night. First our hut was visited by German officers and soldiers with pistols and rifles aimed at us, as they fled before the rapidly advancing Allies. Every ten or fifteen minutes there would be new German officers and soldiers. They saw us, they could have killed us, but they didn't. Secondly, the Allied army swept the terrain before them with mortar fire, which kept getting closer and closer. The grenades whistled and fell close about us. Only when the mortars moved away from the hut did we realise that we had also survived this danger.

We waited for the dawn to break. Then in the morning we came down from the hut to the road along the river. There, on one side of the road we found white, and on the other side black American soldiers. Reaching the group of white soldiers I said the only thing I could think of in English: "How do you do?" One of them muttered something and went to the trailer of his jeep, took out a tin of ham and eggs and pushed it into my hands. I looked at him and gestured that I was thirsty. Again he turned around, went to the trailer, took out another tin, poured hot water into the contents and handed me a tin full of hot cocoa.

FIRST DAYS OF FREEDOM AND HOMECOMING

The American military authorities sent the camp inmates to a barracks not far from Mittenwald. There I again met my comrades from Komarom and stayed with them in one of the rooms. In the attic we found German military uniforms which we put on, throwing our camp clothing away. We moved around freely in and out of the barracks, as much as our strength permitted. We were also given tobacco rations, a packet or two of cigarettes each week. We had some problems with the food. The Americans allowed us to take our meals in the army canteen. The starved camp survivors threw themselves on the strong and greasy food but their exhausted bodies were not able to cope with it. Only three or four of us out of the total eighteen didn't end up in the hospital. Half of the group died after the liberation, just because of the food. I have to admit it wasn't my intelligence, my moderation or any other virtue which saved me. I went to the canteen along with my comrades but, at the very entrance, was sick from the smell of the food. I couldn't go in.

We resolved our food problem in our own way. In the barracks compound we found pits where potatoes were stored. In the room where we slept we had a stove and we found spices in the attic. We exchanged our cigarette rations with the Mittenwald locals for large tins of beef. Willy Gross from Budapest and I cooked potato and beef soups.

On my second day in barracks, when I weighed barely 42 kilos and was still wearing my prison clothes, I was walking around the yard and saw Karlo Feldšer, one of my companions from the Novi Sad Hashomer Hatzair. He was well dressed and looked exactly as he did

when we used to spend time together. I approached him, happy to see him and addressed him by the nickname which only his close friends knew: "Felo! Felo!"

He stopped, stared long and hard at me and finally asked "And who are you?"

"But don't you recognise me? I'm Jehuda!" I replied, tears running down my face. With that, he also broke down. We embraced and talked for a long time. Among other things, he told me that he had been in the army barracks at Garmischpartenkirchen and that Eli Ordentlih and his younger brother were also there. They were also from the Novi Sad *ken*. He told me that in the barracks there were many liberated Partisans from various camps. They formed "Tito's Company". Motivated by this news, I left the barracks outside Mittenwald a month later, when I had gained some strength, and went myself to Garmischpartenkirchen to join the company.

I returned to Yugoslavia, to Novi Sad, together with Feldšer, Eli Ordentlih and the members of Tito's Company in the middle of August, 1945.