

סאנסקי מוסט

SANSKI MOST

DERVENTA דרוונטה

TRAVNIK טראוויניק

BIJELJINA ביילינה

BRČKO זאווידוביצי' ברוציקו

DOBOJ דובוי

ZAVIDOVIC

ואגרב

TUZLA טוזלה

ZAGRE

VLASENICA ולאסניצה

ZENICA זניצה

VISOKO ויסוקו

ŽEPČE ז'פצ'ה

SARAJEVO

VIŠEGRAD

בלגראד

וישגראד

BEOGRAD

WE MOSTAR מוסטאר

SURVIVED...4

YUGOSLAV JEWS ON THE HOLOCAUST

סקופייה

SKOPLJE

Samuilo ALKALAJ

DIARY
Recorded during World War Two

– Excerpts –

Samuilo Alkalaj was born on 21 February 1887 in Smederevo, of father Avram, teacher and priest, and mother Berta. He had five brothers – Aron, David, Isak, Moša and Nisim, and two brothers who died after birth. The brothers were born in Belgrade.

From his marriage to Lepa (Ermoza), née Afar, he has a son Albert and daughter Buena (Berta), who live in the USA. Albert is a renowned painter.

The author kept a diary during the years in which the key challenge was to preserve one's life and the lives of family members.

Belgrade, 6/4/41. The alarm goes on at 3 AM. We are sitting in our apartment owned by landlord Isak Tuvi and talking. At 5 AM the alarm goes on. We return to our apartment and get undressed; it is Sunday, we can sleep all morning. Randomly I turn the radio on. I listen to the announcement to the German people. A war had been declared against Yugoslavia. I tell the news to my wife and daughter. But, being tired, they fell asleep. Awake, I wait. Around 6:30 AM the alarm is on again: this time accompanied by shooting. Belgrade is attacked by German planes. I wake my wife and daughter. We quickly go down to the basement, where neighbors are already gathering. Numerous blasts can be heard. Wounded people are getting in, and the first wave is over. Some acquaintances are walking the streets and telling us the names of casualties. The theatre building is on fire.

The second wave of bombing comes, even stronger than the first one. Buildings around us are hit. Women scream and faint, my

daughter among them. People go pale. The janitor and the worker of Tuvi, both Germans, comfort us by saying that there will be no more bombing: the bombing came from the need to punish Belgrade for the demonstrations of 27 March.

A little bit of bread for lunch. No water. The toilets are already clogged and the stench is spreading. Gendarmes are preventing the plundering of shops. At about 2 PM I go to the bank, escorted by the maid. The streets are deserted, the „Srpski kralj“ hotel and a number of shops hit along the Kralja Petra street, mostly Jewish shops and are now on fire. I stand helpless in front of the bank treasury. We go back. Now, we must think about where we will spend the night, there is no room for all in the basement. Suddenly, a car comes to pick up our neighbor, Mrs. Štajner. Everyone is begging the driver to take them, but he agrees to take only us. We have to go right away, without taking anything. I wanted to take at least the packed suitcase from the basement. But, in the hurry, I could not find it – someone was sitting on it. Women grabbed my hand, not letting me go. „Take me with you, I want to go along!“ I hardly managed to get out of their grip, promising that I would send the same car back. So, we left the house full of everything. While the car is racing along the Kralja Aleksandra street towards Grocka, we hear shots resounding.

In Grocka we see Mirko Polak with his family, on a wagon used to transport wood. They are all dusty and black with soot. Their house had collapsed on them, they hardly got out alive through the basement window. After a brief hesitation, Mirko agrees to spend the night in Grocka, provided that we move on in the morning together to Aranđelovac. A local farmer offers overnight accommodation. From his yard we watch Belgrade on fire during the night.

7/4/41. Grocka. The farmer wakes us up in the morning, as there is an alarm on. On the Danube, near the pier, a ship is sunk. We start across the hill with many other refugees, trying to get as far from the Danube as possible. All day long we move on along country roads avoiding the main road. German planes above our heads. The rain comes as a surprise. Completely soaked we arrive before evening in Dubona, where we spend the night with a local farmer.

8/4/41. We continue our journey through mud. As we pass Mladenovac, deserted, we see that it is not too badly affected by the bombing. Further on, on the way to Aranđelovac, comes the wind accompanied by a mixture of rain and snow. Half frozen we arrive and barely manage to find accommodation in the spa.

- 10–12/4/41. A rest in Arandelovac, the war is felt around us. No foodstuffs, all the shops are closed, the inns are full of troops, the streets full of refugees. On the first day of Passover, our lunch consists of a piece of sugar with bread that our friend Mariška Koen forced us to take.
- 12/4. Before dark rumors spread that the Germans are getting in. Fear everywhere. We spend the night – three families together, dressed, awake.
- 13/4/41. We are relieved this morning to see our soldiers getting ready to go. I advise a friend of mine Nisim Koen and brother in law Avram de Majo that we should go with our families to Bosnia. They refuse. We manage to get to the military train for Lajkovac. Some soldiers tell us that the German troops entered Belgrade from the south.
- 14/4/41. Travelling towards Užice in order to move on to Sarajevo. The train is getting longer and slower. Alarms going on all the time, as German planes are flying above.
- During the night we get to Pale, where we are told that Sarajevo was bombed. So, we decide to get off. Finding overnight accommodation was not easy at all. As we were knocking on the door of a vacation lodge where Mrs. Polak stayed the previous summer, I hear someone calling my name. Out of the dark came a head of a local villager who asked: „Who among you is Alkalaj?“ My wife told him. „I would want to do something for you, because dr Bukus Alkalaj (my eldest brother) saved me in the Military hospital while I was serving my military term“.
- 15/4/41. Only after much trouble we find some food. The colonel who is living next to our room advises us to go to Sarajevo: „Go and blend in among your own folk. I advise you as a friend“. We part with Mrs. Polak, who tells us that her husband arrived by truck, that they are going to Užice and that it is only us that they can take with them. Begged by Simona Romano not to leave her, we decided to go with them to Sarajevo and we are off for the railway station right away. In the distance I see a group of officers. I thought – maybe David* is among them. I met the old dr Kujundžić from Belgrade, and hearing his advice we turn around and, instead of going to Sarajevo, we return towards Užice.
- We get off the train at Ustiprača. In the darkness we see nothing. We despair. Suddenly an officer comes close to me and asks me what we are doing in the dark. „Waiting for the train to Užice“. „Užice is

*Brother David Alkalaj, reserve officer, spent World War Two in Germany as prisoner of war.

held by the enemy“, he replied. „What should we do now!?,“ I cried in despair. „Do you want to come with me to Montenegro?“ „We would be glad to“. Officer Bojović issued an order to some soldiers with guns to push an empty wagon, which quickly filled up. Soon the train started in the direction of Pljevlja, but came to a stop at Rudo.

16/4/41. Early in the morning, captain Bojović sent his armed men to the road and they managed to bring three empty trucks. Numerous refugees quickly filled them up. I had never dreamed that I would see the huge mountains Komovi and go along the valley of the river Lim.

In an inn along the road and old Montenegrin told me: „Have you seen, dear sir, there has been no such tragedy since the battle of Kosovo!“ Very tired, in pitch dark, we arrived to Kolašin.

17/4/41. I meet a German Jew. He recommends that we stay in Kolašin and wait for the Italians. Ergas, who travelled with us, wanted to move on to Peć, but captain Bojović told us that there is heavy snow in the Čakor gorge and that it is impossible to pass through. He lets us have one truck and advises us to go towards the Italian troops. At parting, we kiss like brothers, exchange addresses, hoping to meet soon again. We moved on to Podgorica, and in front of it we saw an Italian troops' camp. We did not dare enter the town, but took a turn for Nikšić. We meet our army, completely disorganized.

Before night, we arrived to Nikšić, full of our army and refugees, still not occupied. We are advised to keep moving on, because otherwise our truck would be seized. So, we moved on towards Trebinje, where a young man travelling with us, Armand Amodaj, had a relative, dr Levi. During the night we are on a muddy road.

18/4/41. Arrival to Trebinje; the town is occupied since yesterday. In front of dr Levi's apartment a huge crowd. An Italian soldier asked: „Who are you, do you have any weapons?“ Stuttering I replied: „We are poor refugees from Belgrade“. „Do not get off, move on, here is a revolution“. I asked a man there what it was about, and he explained that the people gathered to look for flour from the military warehouse. I explained our situation as best I could to the soldier and he let us get off. Dr Levi found an apartment for us and recommended us to the hotel manager, a German, to give us food.

16/5/41. We stayed in Trebinje for a month. Our troops who were taken prisoners were arriving to the town and sent on towards Albania and Italy. One day at the local inn I saw a great number of our senior officers. Ergas told me that they arrived from Skopje.

Life in Trebinje was monotonous. All our troops were sent away as prisoners of war, and those originating from the regions where the "Independent Croatia" was established were let go to their homes. While in Trebinje, we spent all our time with the Ergas family, with whom we travelled from Arandelovac. With them was a young Jew, who decided to return to Belgrade, to inquire about the Ergas' shop. He came back some days later and brought with him a letter by Albert* written in the prisoners of war camp in Kumanovo. Albert threw the letter across the fence and asked the man to take it to me. The letter came to the hands of Aron's** wife Finika. Albert was also concerned about us, he had lost his belongings. Using the same man as messenger we sent to Albert some money, clothes and food.

17/5/41. I went to Dubrovnik and there I saw many Belgraders. In the morning the town gates had exhibited swastikas. Without thinking, we take a car and move from Dubrovnik to Herceg Novi. There we found a great number of acquaintances and our friend Mošić. We take an apartment in Topla, outside of the town. A beautiful room and an even more beautiful garden. Our landlady is a kind, elderly lady Nasta Špirtović, with her unmarried daughter Mika and another daughter Milena, married to a Croat, but a good Yugoslav, named Martin Sager. The beach is close to the house which is on the road itself.

22/6/41. Sunday. I went to the open market in Herceg Novi, but found nothing. On my way back, a lawyer from Zagreb told me that Germany and Italy had declared war on Russia. Initially, I could not believe it. „If this is true, the victory will be ours“ – I said.

21/7/41. The refugees keep arriving all the time and they tell us that the Jews in Belgrade have to do forced labor. I learn that my cousin Alfred Hason junior was hanged; his brother was a doctor in Herceg Novi. I begged people not to tell him anything. A rebellion broke out in Montenegro. There is mistrust felt in Herceg Novi against the Jews because we "make life expensive", by paying the prices for food-stuffs that they are selling.

22/7/41. Suddenly, at night, we are arrested. All our money is seized.

23/7/41. We are taken in big trucks, escorted by a great number of carabinieri, to Kotor, where we are told that our money would be returned. However, instead of getting to Kotor, we are boarded on a ship „Aleksandar“ with many Montenegrins, women and children

*Son of Samuilo Alkalaj, famous painter, living in the USA.

**Brother of Samuilo Alkalaj, Aron Alkalaj, also survived the World War Two as German prisoner of war.

- and some youth from Herceg Novi. They were all considered communists. We sleep on the dining room floor.
- 24/7/41. We move on to the ship „Kumanovo“, which stops in front of Tivat. The ship staff treats us much better. We are given boots. The Kotor municipality or the humanitarian organization “Kolo srpskih sestara” delivers food for us.
- 26/7/41. We suffer from excessive heat: it is impossible to sleep in the boots, so we sleep on tables in ship halls. Finally, the ship started. Once again we see Herceg Novi.
- 27/7/41. We were unloaded in Durres, loaded onto big and comfortable buses and headed for Kavaje. There we are packed into a big stable with beds in it, three of us on top of each other. Garbage is everywhere. The women are weeping, the children crying, especially those who believed that we were going to Italy. No water or toilets. The huge flees bother us so badly that one cannot either stand or sit down.
- 28/7/41. The overall cleaning of the camp begins, especially of the stables. Italian officers and soldiers who were so strict yesterday are much kinder and more cooperative today. They are complaining that they have to live in Albania under such abominable conditions. We take out a wagon full of garbage, including rats and frogs. So, somehow, we settle down: men separated from women and children. Flies everywhere.
- 2/8/41. The rain turns the camp into a mud. Food: macaroni soup, cans, and surrogate coffee in the morning. It all tastes quite good. At our request, they let one man go out of the camp to buy some fresh foodstuffs.
- 5/8/41. The cleaning of the camp continues, but we are suffocated by the dust caused by passing trucks. A separate covered toilet for women was put up. Many Montenegrins arrived today, and they are accommodated separately from us. They say that the rebellion in Montenegro had been silenced.
- 9/8/41. Today afternoon, I was learning Italian with dr Bauer. My daughter comes back from a walk and invites me to join her. „Go out for a walk, father, do it“, she was persistent. A thought strikes me that possibly Albert had come. I asked dr Bauer to excuse me, and as soon as I met my daughter, I asked her: „Where is he?“ „Where is who?“ „Albert“. „How did you know?“ „A foreboding, why else would you be calling me?“ „I saw him in front of the camp“. „Alone?“ „Yes“.

We approach the camp gate. An officer was talking with an intern, Rafo Konfortij, and then he came closer and asked: „You are Alkalaj?“ „Yes“. Then he orders a soldier to escort me and attend the meeting. Rafo joined as well. As soon as we were there Albert came out of hiding; he was hiding behind a thick tree. „Do not say that I am your son“, he said. We shook hands. I asked him why he came. Hastily, he told me that Germans in Belgrade executed 101 Jews, including Mikica B. Aron. Albert fled the following day with his friend Šalom.

As if out of spite, Lepa did not stop talking to others around us.

Then suddenly Avram Aladžem came, approached my wife and said: „Lepa, you are not telling me that your son has come“. „My son, what do you mean?“, my wife choked and fainted. We strived to bring her back and crying she criticized me for keeping her son's coming from her. I calmed down the people saying that tomorrow I will be seeing my son again if I manage to go out with Ergas to go to the green market, replacing Haler who was ill with malaria.

10/8/41. I managed to get out with Ergas, escorted by a soldier. I needed to think of an excuse to get away from them, while Ergas is shopping for vegetables. I asked them to let me go urinate. I ran along the main street. I go into a tailor's shop, but the young man does not speak Italian. I met two carabinieri, and asked them where the toilets were. They showed me a place more than 200 meters away. I went there, but I could not spot the business of Samuel Hajim, a tailor. I was almost out of the town. I asked another passerby. He had no idea. Finally I asked a third passerby, in Serbian: „Is there a tailor in this direction?“. He could speak some „Macedonian“, but did not understand the word tailor. Somehow we understand each other and I move on. There were no more houses by the road. In the distance I saw a rundown mosque. The thought of the guard escorting us to the market place crossed my mind. Ahead of me was a field. I went back. Ergas told me that the guard was asking about me all the time. I apologized.

11/8/41. Rafa Konforti, who was doing the tasks of a clerk, told the guard to take me to the tailor Samuel Hajim, to choose fabric for trousers to be made for Rafo. We went into the shop and Ergas, upon hearing that he was from Corfu, started a conversation with him in Greek, to buy time, hoping that my son would show up. They left me alone, at that time the tailor told me that Albert was in Durres and that he was sure to come.

- 12/8/41. We are forbidden from entering the town. Gloomy faces of officers. A commanding mayor came and ordered us to gather together. He made a speech, stating that he had evidence that we tried to make contact with the world outside.
- 13/8/41. Albert managed to come to the camp and talk to us.
- 26/8/41. Due to the heat, dirt, the stench of the latrines, and the uncertainty of our position, everyone is increasingly edgy. Conflicts happen over any tiny detail. As advised by the commander, everyone is writing applications for transfer to Italy. Initially, I refuse to do so, thinking that this place in the back of beyond in Kavaje is the best place for us Jews at that time. Ergas told me that Albert had arrived to Split, as is visible from a postcard that a Jewish company in Durres received from Nisim Ruso.
- 30/9/41. September is over and our position is still unchanged. When it rains, the situation in the camp is awful. One cannot go outside, while inside there is not enough room for everybody. The sick are sent to the hospital in Tirana or temporarily to the infirmary. A cable arrived and was read aloud to us under the condition that we listen in peace, without approval or protest: „Duce has granted the requests of Jews to be transferred to Italy, to a place which is yet to be determined“. There followed general joy, but a few days later it was substituted by despair. My son Albert arrived to Padua. He wrote that in Split he did not get any money.
- 5/10/41. Everyone is waiting to leave, but the leaving is put off all the time due to the fact that „there are no ships or convoys“.
- 6–8/10/41. We are leaving Kavaje and boarding a ship. Via Bari we arrived to the camp Ferramonti di Tarsia, in Calabria, where we are welcomed by the camp manager and a group of Yugoslavs, predominantly Jews. The families were given separate rooms; the single people went into rooms housing 25 to 30 men, or women, separately. The camp is built on a dried up wetland location. It is big, but it is being extended by constructing new buildings. There is plenty of water. Electricity is limited. Everywhere around is barbed wire and guards.
- 10/11/41. My money is gone, and one can do nothing in a camp without money. You pay for every favor or service right away. It is not like in Kavaje, where there was solidarity, a sense of a community. There are more than 1,000 inmates from different countries. Any language can be heard spoken, mostly German. German Jews decide most things around the camp. There are two synagogues; one for the Orthodox. There is also a school for children, German

being the language of instruction. Craftsmen pursue their crafts and work. Our arrival led to increased prices for everything, and we are constantly blamed for this. Conflicts are very frequent, but everything calms down and ends well. There is also a court, so that disputes are not addressed before Italian authorities. We found there a great number of Yugoslavs, but not a single family.

25/11/41. Albert wrote to me that in Milan he bought a winter coat and a suit and that he is living well in Padua. Then he went silent, he is writing no more ...

25/12/41. Although we are in the south, it is cold. We are each given an additional blanket. In the meantime, some people from our group managed to go to „confino libero“. The first to do so was Dača Azriel with his family, then both Bauer brothers. My son Albert is in prison in Vicenza. A friend of his from Padua wrote to me: allegedly Albert came to Italy to look for us, and when he found out that we were in Ferramonti he went and reported to the Questura in Vicenza asking to come and join us. Nobody knows what is happening with our relatives in Belgrade.

30/1/42. From dr Leon Koen, who managed to flee Belgrade, I received a postcard from Abacia, saying that my brothers Bukus and Nisim are at the „Topovske šupe“ camp in Belgrade. Nisim had an ulcer surgery and is now healthy. Nothing is known of Rafailo.

2/2/42. Albert arrived today before dark, to our great joy. We hear from him how much he suffered as German prisoner, how he saved himself and arrived to Belgrade, worked there and finally fled to Albania.

1/4/42. Our life has changed. We have established correspondence with friends who came out of camps and those who are interned in Italy. And with the arrested brothers, of course. Brothers are receiving packages from Belgrade and news from their families. Bukus is a doctor at the women's camp Old Fairgrounds (Sajmište). Nisim is a doctor of the hospital* within the Jewish Women's Society in the Belgrade neighborhood of Dorćol.

In our camp there is a famous German painter Fingestein. Albert becomes his student. The camp grew with the arrival of refugees from Rhodes. These are Jews from Slovakia,** who traveled by ship along the Danube past Belgrade going to Palestine. In the Aegean Sea they suffered shipwreck, were saved by getting to a desert island and days later were discovered by an Italian airplane. Italian authorities sent a

*That was the Jewish hospital. Jews were not admitted to other hospitals.

**See the testimony by Frida Mel in „We Survived 2“.

ship which took them to the island Rhodes and interned them there. The authorities treated them well. There were also two groups of Greeks: from Tripoli and from the ancient Greece. There were also interned Chinese, mostly staff from commercial or passenger ships. They developed laundry within the camp.

30/6/42. My two applications for „confino libero“ were rejected. By now almost a half of the group of Kavaje has left the camp to go to different small towns across Italy. An industrialist, a Jew from Milan, who often comes to the Ferramonti camp and helps certain inmates, gives his advice not to leave the camp, because inside it there is a Jewish environment and Jewish life. Mirko Davičo was sought by the Gestapo. The authorities first put him in the infirmary and subsequently transferred him to the hospital in Cosenza, but the carabinieri got him and took him to the Germans.

30/11/42. Months are going by. We got the „confino libero“ for the province Pesaro, by the Adriatic. There are some of our friends there: dr Gruen and Geza Gedalja. Very few of our group are still in the camp, mostly in the IX barrack. Many managed to go to Spain. Arrival of Himler to Rome. Many were fearful that he came to demand the deportation of Jews from Italy. The camp priest travelled to Rome to inquire, and said later that a prayer to God should be held, as the danger for the Jews was out of the way.

20/12/42. We left Ferramonti on 17 December and went to Pesaro. Trains terribly crowded. We were escorted by a police officer. Without him, we would not be able to get on the train. The place of our confinement is Macerata Feltria.

In Macerata Feltria we found Geza Gedalja, who helped us settle at the hotel „Feltria“, the only one in that small mountain place. Soon we met the other interns: dr Majeron, an attorney from Ljubljana, and dr Levi, an attorney from Genoa, and also some women, one of which was a Jew from Trieste.

1/1/43. Last night we celebrated the New Year. The parents of dr Levi came from Genoa to visit their son, they treated us to cake, and the hotel manager got some sparkling wine. We sang „Hatikva“, as wished by dr Levi's father. We all felt encouraged by the UK-US successes in Africa.

11/1/43. A new inmate arrived, a count from Florence. A very intelligent old man, but frightened. His wife, and Englishwoman, came to visit him, she is hard of hearing. Dr Majeron is giving us English lessons. Brothers are sending me money since October although I wrote and told them not to.

- 28/2/43. An inspector from Pesaro came and promised a transfer to Pergola. My wife and I went there and found an apartment. Secretary of the municipality was very kind. He said he was surprised that the Jews were not converting to Christianity. He thinks that Jews are very intelligent and cannot understand that they are not converting although they are suffering so much.
- 16/3/43. Yesterday we arrived to Pergola. Among the inmates there were two Jews: dr Marco Hantwurz, pharmacist, an acquaintance from Ferramonti, and Leo Birnbaum from Frankfurt am Mein.
- 30/4/43. Everything is turning green. Our key enjoyment is the long walks. The local population is not avoiding us, but it is for us unpleasant to engage in conversation since we are being watched. Luckily, we get some books and we read.
- 31/7/43. There was excitement over the topping of the Mussolini regime, but it subsided quickly. Badoglio continues the war on Italian territory. Air raids give cause to panic among the local population. Everyone is listening to Radio-London.
- All attempts to get news about our sisters in law taken away from Belgrade are unsuccessful. I am thinking of what a young Polish Jew was saying in Ferramonti: that trains were bringing into Poland Jews from France and Belgium who were suffocated on the way.
- 30/9/43. Germany occupied Italy. I advise my family to go, but Lepa won't hear of it.
- 1/12/43. Today I met Miša Adler in the street. He told me he was on the run. An order has arrived to Pesaro to arrest Jews, but he did not know if it referred also to those who were interned already. He has a fake identity card that Geza got for him for 100 Italian lira. He recommends that even without documents we leave right away for Rome, because it is easiest to hide in a big place. We stayed on, confused.
- 2/12/43. In the morning Aldo came and told me that there was a radio announcement ordering arrests of Jews. But, of course, he did not know if it applies to inmates. In the afternoon a lady came to us begging us to flee wherever we can.
- Right away we started getting some things packed. Then came a young man from the post office looking for Marco Hantwurz. A bit later came Marco, telling us that a cable had arrived to arrest all Jews.
- Immediately we leave towards Montesecco. We climbed uphill, and heard steps behind us. We quickly turned into the bushes by the

road thinking that it was carabinieri on bicycles. But someone was shouting: „Alberto, Alberto“. It was Camerini with his two sons in law. They were in Pergola, they found the house closed, so they started for Montesecco. We told them what we heard and advised them to leave Montesecco the same evening since everyone in Pergola knows that he took an apartment there. Camerini did not accept us going with them, since they were already many. He advised us to stay overnight in Sterletto and afterwards move on. We found accommodation in a house by the road.

3/12/43. At dawn we started towards Caudino, a place where Caverni, a trader from Pergola, had a house. I and my wife had to take a rest every hundred meters. Although it was cold we were all in sweat. Albert knew that the house was under the hill Santo Angelo. We come across some boys and they first took Albert to the house, and we followed. A farmer, Santino, did not have the key to the apartment and could not let us in without the boss's permit. A young man, a miller's son, went on his bike to Pergola, carrying Albert's letter to Caverni's son. It was already afternoon when he got the reply that it would be risky to move into the house because an officer, his cousin, was hiding in it.

Then we called the priest Don Domenico Roga, and told him that we were refugees from Yugoslavia. We asked him to recommend some accommodation for us with the local villagers. The very kind young priest told us to go to Bocanero, to a villager whose house was prominent on the hill top like a castle. The owners however refused our begging and could not welcome us since masons were reconstructing the house. They told us to go and check with the Bussi. Off we went across the worked fields, downhill. Albert had to serve as support to his mother so she would not fall into mud. It was already dark by the time we arrived at Bussi house. We told him that the priest was sending us, and he gave us a hearty welcome.

4/12/43. Today is a Catholic holiday. Lepa has bleeding and she stays in bed. I am begging the villager to let us stay for some days.

10/12/43. We are leaving Bucci's. Don Domenico gave us some names of priests in San Giani to help us find an apartment. We stop tired in front of a house by the road and we ask to be taken in. The woman refuses, as there is no empty room. Albert and Marco go to see the priest. The woman finally got some chairs for us outside and later let us inside to warm up. The husband also came by and explained

that they are not refusing us for dishonest reasons but due to lack of room. He offered the stable.

- 20/12/43. We move on to San Stefano. But we met a woman who told us that the Fascists had arrived to kill three Jews who were staying with her cousin. Albert and Marco went searching for an apartment in the vicinity all the way to Don Domenico, in order to look for fake documents. The day before yesterday Don Domenico stopped by to see us. He could not get the documents. Yesterday Albert and Marco came back. The result of their search: Bucci accepted to take us in but only for 10 days, provided that we come into the house when dark and not leave the room during daytime. Lepa cannot walk.
- 21/12/43. As soon as we set off, it started to rain. In the village of Ciamerano we found shelter in a house. They recognized and said they saw us passing by two weeks before. We had to move on. Heavy storm, mud up to our knees. We ask to be let into a stable by a house until the rain stops. The host offered us dinner and gave us overnight welcome.
- 1/1/44. We spent the Christmas together. Last night we celebrated the New Year. I am sleepless. Where to go, it has been ten days and we still have no idea about where to go. Poor Albert is desperate, does not know where to take us. He arranged with the Bussi's son to take us to the top of the hill San Angelo, to look for accommodation. However, overnight heavy snow came down, more than one meter high. Now they cannot send us away, at least not before the snow melts.
- 5/1/44. North wind melted the snow. The roads are changed into snow ponds, and across these ponds Don Domenico went to Costa but did not manage to find an apartment: the priest's niece was against us moving in. Then, Don Domenico said that we move into the house Caverni. He gave Albert the key and Albert and Marco went there at night to see how it is.
- 30/3/44. We stayed in the Caverni house for full three months. Closed shutters, closed door, but still careless enough to light a fire the first two days. Many people saw the smoke and asked the villager who was there. He said that the smoke goes from his chimney into the chimney of his boss if there is no wind. There is plenty of fuel wood and coal. At daytime we sit with our winter coats on and we warm ourselves on the embers that the villager's wife and the miller's wife bring for us. Their families are the only ones aware of our being there. We wait for darkness to come and for the villager's signal of three knocks against the ceiling and only then we light the fire. Albert and Marco then go down to the villager to take some water

ready for us and to hear the news. Don Domenico comes to visit once a week. He brings books, tells us the news that he hears on the radio, and buys for us food and medicines. Caverni send food through the villager: bacon, pasta, etc. We buy ham via the villager and the priest. We also bought quite a quantity of potatoes. Caverni said we can use up all the food and wine in the storage. In the dark, I get out with my daughter and we walk in the darkness behind the house. While snow lasts, nobody comes except a person here and there to the mill to have flour milled. We walk around the house in slippers and talk by whispering in order not to make audible noise. Months go by. The priest suggests that we need to move. There are Partisans in the hills. Once again Mario came and said that we need to leave the house, since German raids will start soon. We ask: where to? The priest suggests that we occupy an empty house, later a mill, and finally join the Partisans on top of the San Angelo hill.

- 11/4/44. Exactly at the time when we were to leave the mill and the villager, the villager tells us that in a nearby little house, on the other side of the hill, there used to be a room for rent. So, Albert and I go off, and after much talk we managed to make arrangements for us to move in the following day, and to bring also some things from the Caverni house. The house is under the hill, lonely, hidden behind green trees.
- 3/5/44. It is now almost a month since we have been with the Atili family, and we have become friends with the family. The estate is not theirs, but of their relative who lives with his daughter in Cabernarda. Both are miners. They are all very kind to us and curious about who we are.
- 31/5/44. The whole of May has been miserable for us. Armed Fascists often came from Cabernardi to our region, to take eggs, chicken, rabbits, and sometimes arrest someone. I and daughter Bojana keep guard all day long. As soon as we see one of the timber workers walk by the house we all hide.
- 6/6/44. Last night I asked a villager: is it true that Rome has fallen. He confirmed but told me in confidence that the following day the Germans and Fascists will make raids looking for conscripts. This he tells me because of my son. I tell him that my son had gone off to Milan, to the University.
- 16/8/44. Albert and I decide to see the priest. He was not at home, he was with the villagers building a wooden bridge, under supervision by Partisans. In the priest's house we talked to two soldiers. They told

us about the devastation the Germans left behind them in Abrucca. They encouraged us and comforted us that our misery shall end soon.

- 17/8/44. This morning we were alarmed by the news that Vilma told us about the Allies leaving Palazzo. Atilio was working on repairing the bridges on the road in front of the house, Albert wanted to flee across the hills to Arcevia. At that moment the sexton of the church in Palazzo passed by and said that the English were still there this morning. Then Atilio came and said that he heard nothing about Palazzo being abandoned. It was Sunday. We decided to go to Palazzo and see the doctor. The Doctor told us that the Allies had broken through the front in Betagna and that the Russians are making rapid progress.
- 19/8/44. We can still hear the cannons. The Allies had taken over Sterletto and Pergola. Scandelari is back. With him and his wife I went to Arcevia because a governor had arrived there.
- 20/8/44. The Governor welcomed us kindly. I read to him in English who we were and what we want. He ordered that our whole family be transferred by car from Palazzo to Arcevia, that we be given the best food and accommodation in the local inn, all at the expense of the Allied Military Government. There was no one happier than us. Today in Arcevia we experienced the first disappointment. The Governor is smiling, but there was an American who would not hear of municipality covering the costs for us. But that was nothing compared to the scene that we were watching all the time. Countless cannons and military vehicles passing through Arcevia. It was only then that we could understand the force with which the Allies were making progress.
- 10/9/44. We moved into a private apartment, we have two rooms and a kitchen. Albert went to Pergola to find some things and see what is going on with his girlfriend Victoria. Life is rather monotonous. Almost all the troops went through and Arcevia was once again a small provincial mountain place on the top of the hill. A doctor of the American Red Cross came today. He told us to go right away to Rome, where we will have an apartment, food and pay. He agreed to take us to Pergola, and we explained that we have to pick up our things and take our son. We packed hastily and went to Fabriano in a hospital vehicle. We went into a hospital which was without doors or windows. We were freezing at night on the floor made of stone plates.

- 12/9/44. Around noon there came that Italian, working for the American Red Cross, and asked: „Are you ready to go?“ „No“. „Then you will stay in Pergola“.
- 20/9/44. Soldiers from Polish legion came and blew up all the bridges that the army had fixed. Pergola became cut off from the rest of the world. We receive news from the front by means of a radio installed in a nearby mill. There is no water or electricity supply in town.
- 31/10/44. Anytime anyone from the army comes to Pergola, we ask them for transportation. They all make promises, but no one is actually helping. We still have money enough for a couple of months. Through private links I sent a letter to the Yugoslav office in the Vatican – no reply. Lepa is sick; Bojana had appendicitis and had to have a surgery. We wrote two times to the A.M.G. (Allied Military Government) in Urbino, asking for monetary assistance for refugees and transport costs to Rome.
- 30/11/44. Mayor of Pergola managed to get for us a small truck which belonged to a green grocer to take us to Ancona, so that we could continue by train to Rome. Aldo and Marco went first and took with them the pass for the trip. The grocer refused to drive further... The Governor then finally left Pergola, and we stayed on to spend the winter there.
- 31/12/44. Dr Angelo Anav wrote to us saying that the staff of the Yugoslav consular office has been replaced and that my wife and I will be receiving monetary assistance, but not the children, as they need to report for military service and that he would come personally to explain everything to us. And he actually came before Christmas and explained that there was nothing in fact in terms of assistance. I gave him letters for „Delasem“.
- 21/1/45. The whole month we were starving, waiting to be given half a pig that our advisor Camerini promised to sell to us. We had difficulties with Mrs. Ginevri, whose son is requesting that we should pay rent for four months since they gave the apartment to us for free, thinking that it will last three or four weeks. Of course, now that there is no danger of military requisition, please leave or pay.
- 28/2/45. We also had a conflict with Mrs. Barbanti. She came with her son, daughter and maid from Rome and requested that we move into some humid rooms, in which she was keeping food. There was a hassle. The municipality also interfered, and we stayed there sharing the kitchen and the bathroom. Soon we became friends, after they realized that we had nowhere to go and that we did not bite.

- 31/3/45. I was desperate over lack of money. We were trying to sell our watches, to be able to pay Camerini, but this failed. One day in March, while I was taking a worried walk, Bojana came to me and told me that a long letter had arrived from dr Amodaj. Camerini brought it. He was writing in response to the letter sent actually to Avram Mošić, saying that ever since the armistice he was in Rome, that Ergas is there as well as many other friends; that they had thought that we had perished; that some friends are now in America, and some already in Belgrade. At the same time he wrote that he had sent 5,000 Italian lira to us and that his son Armand will come for us to pick us up and take us to Rome. We agreed with Mrs. Barbanati that we should go together. Now we are all hopeful again.
- 22/4/45. When God gives, he gives abundantly. Some American officers came to Pergola. Albert met them and they came to us and purchased paintings worth 30,500 Italian lira. Now, we had good capital. Amodaj wrote again to say that we should not waste any more time and should hurry up and get there. It was difficult to find transport. Somehow we managed to get the permit from the military authorities. Again, it was our good fortune: a vehicle came to the grocer and unloaded oranges, and the same car was returning to Rome. At 6 PM we made the deal and in the morning at 5 AM we were ready to go. We travelled all day. The drivers passed all check points smoothly saying that they were transporting Allies. So, here we are in Rome. Amodaj informed us by phone that my brother David had arrived to Belgrade. Is Rome going to be the end of suffering or are there new challenges ahead?