
Aleksandar MOŠIĆ

JEWS ON KORČULA



Aleksandar Mošić was born in May, 1919, in Zurich, Switzerland, the only son of Max and Elza Mošić (née Neuwelt). His mother was killed in the Holocaust in Belgrade in May 1942. His father died in Israel in 1978. Mošić fought in the National War of Liberation and later graduated from the Technical Faculty of Belgrade University in June, 1947. He began his working life in the Military-Technical Laboratory in Belgrade. His first technical papers were published while he was head of the laboratory of a caustic factory in Lukavac, near

Tuzla. From May, 1952, until May, 1964, he was involved in the modernisation of the Sisak Oil Refinery and from then until 1973 worked on the construction and commissioning of the Pančevo Oil Refinery. From 1960 until 1973 he was an honorary lecturer on industrial oil processing at the Technological Faculties of the universities of Zagreb and Sisak. He was engaged by the UN as a consultant on personnel training in the Indian petrochemical industry in Vadodara (Baroda), Gudzarat, between 1973 and 1976. He is the author of three textbooks on oil processing and petrochemistry and a large number of papers published in specialist and scientific periodicals and presented at conferences. He is a member with merit of the Serbian Chemistry Society and the Yugoslav Oil and Gas Association.

Aleksandar Mošić is a member of the main board of the World Federation of Jewish Fighters, Partisans and Camp Inmates and a

former member of the Executive Committee of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Yugoslavia. His name is entered in the Keren Kayemet Golden Book.

He is married to Jugica (née Križanac) from Split. His son Andro (born 1946) is an electrical engineer and his daughter Elza (born 1948) a linguist and interpreter in French and Spanish. He has two grandchildren.

I am the only child of a mixed Sephardic and Ashkenazi family and all my life I have been proud of the self-reliance I derived from this. I feel that in the home of my parents and my family circles I acquired a sunny Sephardic optimism and the Ashkenazi respect for hard work and order as the unconditional rules of behaviour. My studies were interrupted by the war which, at the same time, broadened my knowledge of foreign languages. I even wrote part of my graduation examination in Italian.

I left Belgrade after the April bombing, and never saw my mother again. She was killed on May 9, 1942, as a prisoner in the Banjica concentration camp in Belgrade.

My father left Belgrade for the first time in the summer of 1941, hiding for some time in Banja Koviljača. He left the city permanently in December, 1941, with a false identity card. He travelled through southern Serbia and arrived on the island of Korčula on January 16, 1942. From then until the capitulation of Italy, my father and I lived in the home of the Sesa family in the Korčula township near the beginning of the road to Žrnovo.

I arrived on Korčula in the months after the April war, after encountering many problems.

As a fourth year student, my obligation to serve in the army was deferred. All the same, on April 6, 1941, I reported to the Belgrade military call-up centre to enlist. The chaos prevalent at the time rendered this attempt useless. Together with my schoolmate, Moša Koen, known as Titkus, I set off for Sarajevo on military orders. In Sarajevo we met another four friends Rafajlo Talvi (Rafce) and Josif Alkalaj (Bubi) from Belgrade together with Pavle Furht and Rudi Marton from Sarajevo. All six of us registered at the military barracks on the evening of Thursday, April 10. About midnight we were approached by the duty sergeant who, after a brief but friendly conversation told us "Get out of here

before dawn! In this army you'll only end up in captivity and a concentration camp."

Friday afternoon found us at the railway station. Titkus took us to his uncle in Mostar. At the station we met Colonel Gašić, two of whose daughters were our fellow students. He commanded a large unit of the Royal Guards. He knew us because his daughters had invited us to the family home in Vojvode Milenka Street a number of times and now he took us with him. We were unable to leave the train in Mostar because the Ustashas were shooting at the station from the surrounding hills. Colonel Gašić unloaded us at noon on Saturday in Herceg Novi and wished us luck before leaving with his unit for Cetinje. We stayed in the *Hotel na Plaži*, the Hotel on the Beach. There we found a friend, Bojana Jakovljević and her family. There were already a lot of Jewish refugees there and our group wandered around the Boka Kotorska villages looking for somewhere to stay.

On Tuesday, April 15, we heard about the truce and the following morning about the capitulation of Yugoslavia. At noon we headed off for Risan and then overnight for Perast, hoping we would find a ship bound for Alexandria. Our hopes were in vain. We returned to Risan and drove the abandoned car of the Ljubljana British Consulate to Herceg Novi. The Italians arrived in Herceg Novi at noon on April 17 and later in the afternoon so did the driver from the British Consulate. We gave him back the car keys without much chit-chat.

On the afternoon of Tuesday, April 22, my cousin Andra, the son of David and Klara Mošić (née Tajtacak) appeared at the hotel. He was in his final year at the Mathematics and Natural Sciences High School. Two days later we left by bus for Dubrovnik. We found a furnished room at 45 Frana Supila Road, near the Ekselzior Hotel and the Villa Argentina. On the last day of April I received a telegram from my father warning me not to return to Belgrade under any circumstances. Immediately after this, in the first week of May, I came down with malaria.

In Dubrovnik I met a childhood friend, Albert Koen, with his sister Helena Puci and their parents. Helena was a young bride who had already had her share of misfortune. She had married Gavra Zunan, from Kralja Petra Street, in the last wedding celebrated at the Bet Jisrael Synagogue. Gavra was already in a detention camp. A few days later Titkus went to his uncle in Mostar and Andra returned to Belgrade via Zemun. After being warned that the Ustashas would begin arresting

Jews, I returned to Herceg Novi. There I found my father's cousins, Avramče and Solomon Buki with their families.

Solomon Mošić was a well-known figure and also an amateur conductor and leader of the Serbian Jewish Choir. He managed to enter Switzerland via Italy in 1943. After returning to Belgrade in 1945, he emigrated to Israel in 1949 with his daughter and two sons and their spouses.

At the end of May I finally set off from Herceg Novi for Split. Andra was there as well: his parents had sent him back to Dalmatia from Zemun. Together we rented a furnished room in Plinarska Street, behind the theatre. Andra was restless however and on June 11 he set off again by train to Zemun. When he reached Belgrade he completed his matriculation exams, but lost his life as one of the first hundred Jews rounded up at Tašmajdan on July 28, 1941, a victim of revenge and the Holocaust. I discovered later that his stubborn determination to return to Belgrade against my advice and that of his parents grew out of his feelings for Elica Štumes, who lived in Strahinjića Bana Street. He had been silent about this, instead insisting that it was immoral for a man to desert his friends when times were hard and I have no doubt that this was his sincere belief.

At the beginning of July I was naive enough to send a registered letter to the Swiss Consulate in Milan applying for an entry visa for Switzerland on the grounds that I had been born in Zurich. The letter of refusal arrived two weeks later, with typical Swiss efficiency. July, August and September passed more or less peacefully in Split. My mother and I wrote to each other via Zemun. I also received two letters in the same way, this time via Petrovaradin, from Mira, the elder daughter of Ljudevit Lev Korodi from Ustavaska Street. He was the president of the Novi Sad Zionists and his family remained in their house until the Fascist Nyilas, or Arrow Cross, seized power in Hungary in March, 1944. The family was deported to a concentration camp but survived as part of a group of Jewish prisoners exchanged for English trucks in a deal struck in Istanbul in the summer of 1944.

There were now a large number of Jewish refugees from all over the Kingdom of Yugoslavia gathered in Split. We tried to stay calm, doing our best to create the illusion of a normal life. When a touring Italian opera company arrived in Split, I saw *Turandot* and *Rigoletto* on the Botičeva field. When the local Black Shirts put up anti-Semitic posters in restaurants all over town and at the Bačvice beach, we began

swimming instead at the Jadranska Straža beach in the neighbouring Firula Inlet, where I met the Križanec sisters. Four years later I was to marry Jugica who, at my age, was the younger of the two. In Firula I also came across Aca and Nada Vinterštajn, two rather younger friends of mine from Belgrade. They were the children of my parents' friends, Elza and Pavle Vinterštajn. He was a respected lawyer and a member of the board of B'nai B'rith. They would often invite me for lunch in Firule at the house of the Pavlović family where they lived. I continued seeing the Pavlović family in Split even after the war. The Vinterštajns managed to reach New York via Switzerland and I met them there in 1960 and again later.

In the meantime, Titkus had returned from Mostar. In the last days of August, he, Žak Pinto and Josif Alkalaj were ordered into confinement on the island of Korčula by the Split Questura. Isak "Kučo" Alkalaj, together with his wife Zafira and daughter Bianka were also sent to Korčula. Kučo Alkalaj was a member of the Belgrade Stock Exchange and lived in the same building on King's Square, now Students' Square, which housed the exchange. The building is now the Ethnographic Museum.

On September 4, it was my turn to be informed by the Questura that I would also be confined on Korčula. I sailed on the morning of September 9 on the former Dedinje, now renamed the Dubrovnik. Jugica threw a red rose to me over the railing as the ship slowly sailed away from the coast.

The beautiful white passenger ships of the Jadranska Plovidba line were now painted in the miserable dull grey of wartime. I too was miserable as I sat on the upper deck and tried to comprehend the unknown future into which I was sailing.

Altogether the Split Questura dispatched about seven hundred Jewish refugees to Korčula during August and September of 1941. All of us had the status of "free confinees" which meant that we were responsible for finding our own accommodation and enjoyed freedom of movement. The Jewish community was determined to take care of its own and support those members who were without assets, together with a number of Austrian and German anti-Fascist émigrés.

It was a Korčula hotel proprietor named Andreis who had the idea of making the island a place of confinement. He proposed to the Split Questura that they send to Korčula some of the three thousand or so Jews from German-occupied parts of Yugoslavia who had taken refuge in Split

and elsewhere in Dalmatia. Andreis secured the cooperation of the occupying force's municipal administration and included in his proposal provision for the payment of the residence tax which was customary in tourist destinations. So well was Andreis' proposal received by the Questura that the large fishing village of Vela Luka was also designated to receive involuntary residents. There was already a *hachsharah*, a Jewish school for fishermen in Vela Luka whose trainees were still there in April when the Yugoslav Royal Army was defeated and the Italian occupation began. By November, the four-hundred-odd Jews on Korčula had still not properly organised themselves either socially or economically. The only form of organisation was selection of representatives to deal with the Italian government's local representative, Lieutenant Roncoroni. The Jewish delegate was a linguist, Anđelko Farhi, whose excellent Italian, personal integrity, good intentions and conscientiousness made him an excellent choice. He would meet each ship from Split at the Korčula coast, greeting each new detainee and telling them where to go. This welcome for new members of the Jewish community brought an encouraging, if momentary, relief from the insecurity they felt.

The first economic initiative was finally created in mid-November, a kind of cooperative in the Bon Repos Hotel in Luka Bay, east of the Old Town. It was established and managed by cousins Isak Kučo from Belgrade and Jozef Alkalaj from Sarajevo. About ten of us younger people with little or no money were accommodated there, working for our board in the hotel kitchen and restaurant. About a hundred detainees were staying in the Bon Repos Hotel and about another three hundred in smaller hotels and private apartments.

After the first raids by the Split patriots on the Italian occupiers, *copri fuoco*, a curfew, was also introduced on Korčula. This applied from sunset to sunrise for the locals and the whole day for detainees, in other words we were under house arrest. In these circumstances, the only Jew who had freedom of movement during the day was Aleks Joelić from Zagreb. He had lived on Korčula since 1941, convalescing after having the fingers amputated on one hand, and enjoyed the same rights as the local residents. He would bring bread to the Jewish families, especially those with children. This went on for about ten days until Roncoroni informed Farhi that the Jews were to be moved to northern Italy.

The first hundred detainees left by boat in December, 1941, heading for Modena via Trieste. Among them were Farhi and the majority of the people involved in the Bon Repos cooperative.

Now things changed for the Jews remaining on Korčula. The cooperative was disbanded and there were no more ships to Italy. A Sarajevo Jew, Hajnrih Levi, who had been a merchant before the Vienna *Anschluss*, was appointed as the community's new representative. Levi was a good organiser and spoke Italian so, in addition to being our representative, he acted as president of the Jewish community on the island although this temporary organisation had not yet been formally established.

Visiting Split, he set up permanent links between the Split Jewish Community and the Jews on Korčula. The Split Jews were already connected with Delasem, the *Delegazione per l'assistenza agli emigranti* in Genoa. From then on they sent regular financial assistance. In January, 1942, Levi organised a youth canteen in the house of Ivelj, where he lived with his wife and daughter, at the far end of the St Nikola coast. Not long afterwards, following the example of Professor Šteg and Professor Kalderon at the Jewish School in Split, he established a school for the children of detainees in two rooms on the first floor of a house in Borak, across the road from the home of Ante Jeričević's family.

Jewish students, myself included, worked as teachers. We instructed the children in the Yugoslav syllabus for the junior high schools of the day.

Life in Vela Luka during the autumn of 1941 was much the same as the general situation in the town of Korčula itself, although, through a combination of circumstances, it was rather more difficult financially. Jozef Maestro, a former director of the Melaha Bank in Sarajevo was now detained in Vela Luka and, together with two associates, he represented the three hundred Jews in the town in dealings with the Italian government, liaising with a Carabinieri sergeant who was under the command of Lieutenant Roncoroni in Korčula. In September about twenty young people without money, most of them from Sarajevo, were given accommodation on the premises of the Jewish fishing school where there were already another five or six students. The hachsharah was no long functioning either as a school or a fishing cooperative, serving only as a shelter for young Jews being cared for by the Split Jewish Community. Before leaving Split for Vela Luka they were given a health examination

by Dr Silvio Altaras. In the hachsharah they set up a canteen which was managed by Avram Papo. In late autumn, 1941, when the Italians ordered that all fishing boats be moved off the island to prevent the Partisans on the island making connection with those on the mainland, the hachsharah's boat was exempted, on condition that it didn't leave the Vela Luka bay. This allowed the young people to earn a little extra money by taking passengers from one side of the bay to the other. They also took on manual labour in the village until the Partisans destroyed the road between Blato and Vela Luka and were unwilling to repair it.

There were other detainees billeted in private homes in Vela Luka. The restrictions on their freedom were alleviated by the friendly relations between the locals and the refugees. This mood was strong enough to survive even occasional regrettable behaviour by some individuals.

The Njemirovski brothers, Fedor and Boris, from Zagreb lived with a family whose conceited son had left home to become a military pilot for the Independent State of Croatia. While at home on leave in autumn, 1942, he planted five rubber stamps with the five-pointed star on them in the Njemirovski's room, without the knowledge of his parents, and then falsely denounced Fedor and Boris. After he left, the Carabinieri searched the house and arrested the brothers. They were taken to Šibenik where they remained in prison until the capitulation of Italy. Fedor later died as a result of the abuse he suffered in prison.

Together with the development of the National Liberation Movement during 1942, there was a group of activists organised with the Vela Luka hachsharah, which was supposed to be taken over by the Korčula Partisan unit in October. Because of the Italian blockade and the armed seizure of the Sitnica camp, our release from confinement was delayed until the end of January, 1943.

When fifteen men from the hachsharah and a number of the other young people finally left "for the woods" as we used to say at the time, not without truth because Korčula was covered with pine trees, the Vela Luka group had to secretly return to their homes because there was little chance of moving Jews to the island of Hvar and then on to Biokovo via Podgora.

Before they left, the fifteen young Jews were given certificates of candidacy for Communist Party membership by the local committee. The group included Santo Kabiljo, Jakov "Jakile" Kabiljo, Jozef "Jusule" Romano, Salamon Romano, David "Česi" Altarac, David

“Dado” Danon, David Katan, Jozef “Čiči” Papo, Miša Štajner, Silvio Maestro, Jakov Sekelji and another three, Ašer, Karli and Moša, whose surnames I don’t know. There were another fifteen whose names I don’t know at all. Ašer, Karli and Moša were students from the fishing school while the other twelve were detainees. Of the entire group only three survived the National Liberation War, Santo Kabiljo and Miša Štajner, who are now in Israel, and Silvio Maestro who lives in Belgrade.

When the Italians discovered in March that these young people had joined the Partisans, the Fascists arrested a group of young men and sometime later, probably in June, they shot thirteen, the majority of them from Vela Luka. Among those shot were three Jews, Leon Romano, Isak Kabiljo and Avram Roman, known as Momak. The Italian occupiers declared all of them collaborators with the National Liberation Movement when, in fact, they were hostages and were shot as revenge.

Đuro Enđl Pavlović, a Jewish clerk from Zagreb and a captain first class in the reserve, was actively collaborating with the National Liberation Struggle on the island. Because of the danger that the Italians might discover his activities, he joined the Korčula unit that summer. Pavlović was later recognised as a fighter from 1941, although he was not awarded the Commemorative Medal of the Partisan forces.

The other unmarried detainees under thirty years of age were chained by the Carabinieri and put on a ship which sailed for Korčula late in the evening. The ship was fired on by the Partisans and then later a fire broke out on board which the crew managed to extinguish. The arrested men remained in chains the whole time. They arrived at the port of Korčula at dawn and were immediately thrown into prison.

Before the group from Vela Luka arrived, the canteen had outgrown its original premises in the Ivelj house and had moved to another empty house inside the western wall of the old town, near the home of the Arnerić family. The canteen members chose Majer Altarac as their member of the committee, which also included Hajnrih Levi as canteen officer and Edo Piliš from Zagreb. While the Vela Luka hachsharists were still in the Carabinieri prison, Roncoroni, who was now a captain, asked Hajnrih Levi to nominate three of the canteen members as hostages, in an effort to prevent any more defections to the Partisans. The members refused resolutely, saying that Roncoroni would have to choose his own hostages. Levi made several trips back and forward between the canteen, where the members were assembled, and Roncoroni, delivering messages accurately and without putting any

pressure on the canteen members. This dispelled the unvoiced suspicion that he was being supported by Roncoroni in his activities. This suspicion had arisen because of his authoritative management of the day-to-day affairs of the small Jewish community in Korčula. The hostage problem was solved by Roncoroni declaring all the canteen members hostages, about twenty of us. This we saw as political affirmation and for Levi it lifted a burden from him as the others regained full confidence in his integrity.

The young prisoners were released a few days later, but were not returned to Vela Luka. Instead they remained in Korčula and were obliged to report to the Carabinieri station every morning. Most of them joined the canteen.

With its increased strength, both in numbers and ideologically after the successful confrontation with Roncoroni, the canteen now became the headquarters of a small Party organisation headed by Aleks Joelić from Zagreb. The members I can remember were Leon and Albert Alkalaj, Eli Altarac, Majer Altarac and Moca Altarac. There was probably someone else. Joelić was connected with the local organisation in which the main movers were a teacher, Zoran Palčok and young Zvonko Letica, a dentist's son who became a journalist in Zagreb after the war. It was typical of this early period of organised underground anti-Fascist activity that leaflets were printed on a duplicator in the school supervisor's office, immediately adjacent to Roncoroni's room. The young Jews took an active part in this, teaching the inexperienced Korčula activists to make leaflets.

The spring of 1942 saw the beginning of collecting financial contributions for the National Liberation Movement. This continued until September 1943. There was not a lot of money raised, but this activity was mainly important because through it the detainees identified with the National Liberation Movement.

Cultural life was also revived in parallel with the political developments. Every week or two there would be concerts where collections would be taken to help the canteen and families in severe need. Music would be played from records for the introductory presentations, or accordionist Samuel Čaček from Mostar or bass baritone Maks Savin and tenor Zvonko Glika, both from Croatia would perform. Dr Bruno Bjelinski, a composer from Zagreb, also contributed to these.

A number of the detainees attended lectures in art history by writer Teodor Csokor from Vienna. These were rather public events. But after

Csokor's lectures, which he gave in German, the majority of the audience would stay and discreetly discuss the news from the Italian radio or other information whose sources could only be hinted at.

Many of the younger people learned English and Italian. I still have my Italian textbook as a keepsake, but I no longer remember my English textbook or how I obtained it. I didn't manage to learn English pronunciation, only spelling, grammar and some vocabulary.

At that time the secretary of the District Committee for Southern Dalmatia was Marin Cetinić, part of whose role was to remind the local organisation of its failure to take any action against the eight hundred soldiers of the occupation, the Carabinieri and the Black Shirts. Thanks to accurate information collected by Leon Alkalaj when he was buying bread illegally from Italian soldiers to supplement the Jewish families' meagre daily ration of three hundred grams, the Korčula organisation was able to prepare an attack on the navy patrol station above the town.

The station was housed in a round tower, a small local fortress from the Venetian era or the Napoleonic wars. It had a crew of ten and a vast armoury of light weapons and ammunition. A group from the Korčula branch of the League of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia attacked the station late one afternoon. Eli Altarac was among them. The other young members of the canteen were assigned to lolling around the coast as we usually did in the early evenings, monitoring the movements of the Fascist port militia. The Communist Youth members disarmed the signals crew and the sailors at the station without firing a single shot. There was no gunfire heard down in the town. As they started carrying out the weapons and ammunition towards the Partisan camp near Čara, a steamship appeared in the western entrance of the Pelješac channel. When it didn't receive the usual signal from the patrol station, the alarm was raised in the port captain's office, sending the Carabinieri and Black Shirts out to the port immediately. This meant the raiders had to get out fast and, in the rush, Eli Altarac left his leather jacket behind. Realising that he had left a trail leading to the town's League of Communist Youth, he returned in the face of the approaching Italians and grabbed the jacket. Thanks to his bravery the Italians attributed the attack to the Korčula Partisan unit.

But when anti-Fascist slogans appeared on the walls of houses in the town soon after this, the Carabinieri arrested a lot of young men, including two who had been involved in the raid on the navy patrol station. In prison they met Zoran Palčok who impressed on them the need

to remain silent and both endured being beaten without confessing to anything. During the investigation the men were paraded before the sailors from the patrol station. Apparently one of them recognised Zvonko Letica, probably by his unusually long face whose basic features were recognisable even under the soot it had been daubed with for the attack. The sailor, however, remained silent but, despite this, Eli was now in danger, so Zoran's brother, Dr Vedran Palčok issued a medical certificate for him saying that he had an inflamed appendix. He also taught him how to fake the symptoms. On the basis of this, Eli was given a permit to go to Split for surgery. The Carabinieri showed his photograph to the arrested Communist Youth and the patrol station crew, asking whether he had taken part in the attack. Some of them hadn't seen him and the others didn't recognise him. Eli remained in Split until Italy capitulated.



Group of Jews detained on Korčula. (right to left) Front row: Salaman Altarac, Erna Altarac, Klara Altarac, Majer Altarac, Alegreta Albahari, Ema Kamhi and her son Mojse, Maks Mošić. Middle row: Rahamim Baruh, Ladislav Bruner, Eli Altarac, Albert Alkalaj, Branko Šlezinger, Grgur Dojč, (two unknown men), David Gaon, (unknown), Dr Mirko Bruner, (two unknown men), Samuel Čačkes, Menahem Elazar, Moric Danon. Third row (standing): Miroslav Šiler, two unknown men, Alfred Mošić and an unknown expatriate.

No one was taken by surprise by the events of the beginning of September, 1943. Immediately after the Italian army and Carabinieri departed, the National Liberation Committees emerged from the underground. On Korčula and Pelješac, the Thirteenth Brigade of the National Liberation Army of Yugoslavia was formed within the 26th Division. Aleks Joelić was a member of the Korčula committee and also a member of the Kotar National Liberation Committee. Eli Altarac returned from Split and took on the duties of secretary for the League of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia.

At the request of Dr Jozef Tirhofer, the deputy head of the Community in Vela Luka, the Šterfeld brothers, who were born in Koprivnica, travelled to Korčula. They first met Joelić and then, together with him, requested approval from the national authority for the evacuation of the Vela Luka detainees to southern Italy. The approval was signed by Vid Mihičić, the president of the Kotar National Liberation Committee. Thus the Jews from Vela Luka were the first to depart on hired two-masters. Vid came in for criticism from the Partisan military chiefs, concerned that the departure of the Jews would have a bad effect on the morale of the locals. The events that followed clearly proved them wrong. The criticism had been based on ignorance of the real nature of the Holocaust on one hand and, on the other, on the premature belief that the mid-Dalmatian islands had been liberated once and for all.

The departure of the Vela Luka detainees could be seen as part of something implemented rather later throughout the central Dalmatian coast. The civilian population was taken as "Partisan refugees" via the island of Vis and southern Italy to El-Shat on the Sinai Peninsula. There had been no people of fighting age in Vela Luka for more than a year and a half.

Meanwhile, in Korčula itself, there had been a decision that the younger men should join the Thirteenth Brigade, while the women, children and men over thirty would be evacuated. They decided that each person could bring only one piece of hand baggage or one rucksack in order to make the maximum use of space on the only available motor-driven ship. All surplus clothing and food was given to the Korčula hospital.

The ship sailed out in the afternoon but, as it passed Ražnjić, the last eastern cape, near the village of Lumbarda, it received a signal to return to the port of Korčula. The order to return was given by Franko

Telenta, a political commissioner from the Thirteenth Brigade, who had not been told about the evacuation decision and who had the firm opinion that this was a sign of capitulation.

The returnees, now with no independent means of support, were accommodated in the De la Ville hotel on the coast at the expense of the people's authority. In Korčula there was also a small group of Austrians and about a hundred Jewish civilians for whom there had been no room on the ship. Joelić informed Marin Cetinić about the situation when he arrived in Korčula ten days later. Marin knew more about the general situation in Dalmatia and the probable course of events and, after reaching agreement with senior officials, approved a second departure. Eighty-four Jewish civilians and four Austrians remained in Korčula. The younger men were already in the military brigades. They joined various units of the Thirteenth Dalmatian Brigade and later some of them transferred to other parts of the Eighth Corps and the naval force of the Yugoslav National Liberation Army.

I went to Pelješac with the Korčula troop, to a position above Ston. After just a few days I was given command of a battalion with two 80 mm mortars and a pair of mules. I was the only one among the younger fighters with no military training in the newly formed Eighth Brigade who could use protractor sights and charts. Later, I moved to the coastal artillery on Cape Ražnjić on Korčula and from there, at the beginning of 1944, to the technical service of the Partisan naval force.

Zdravko Has was killed in the Knin operation in late 1944. Lieutenant Moco Altarac from Sarajevo committed suicide in a fit of depression in liberated Split towards the end of 1944.

Other former detainees and fighters in the National Liberation War were on Korčula for the liberation of the country. Majer Altarac, Eli Altarac and Iso Levi remained in the Yugoslav Army until they retired.

On October 23, 1943, just two weeks after the civilians departed, the Germans began a local offensive on Pelješac as part of their operation to seize the Adriatic coast. On December 23 they landed on Korčula and occupied the island.

The remaining detainees retreated to Vela Luka with units of the Eighth Dalmatian and First Overseas Brigades and parts of the First Dalmatian Elite Brigade. The group was evacuated from there via Vis to southern Italy together with Dalmatian refugees. Only one of the former detainees was lost during the retreat from Korčula to Vela Luka but, unfortunately, his name has passed into oblivion.

The departure of this last group of Jews on December 28 or 29, 1943, brought the collective sojourn of Jews on Korčula to an end. However the two and a half years which the detainees spent with the people of Korčula left its mark. The sons-in-law and daughters-in-law, the friendships, memories of warmth and hospitality and gatherings of families from Vela Luka and Korčula with Jewish families remain, along with the memory of the cooperation between Korčula and Jewish doctors and of the friendship among units of the National Liberation Army.