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*Jozef BEN CION PAPO*

SALVATION ON THE FRONT LINE



*Jozef Ben Cion Papo was born in Sarajevo on January 5, 1926, to father Mordehaj and mother Hana-Anita Papo, née Salom. He lived there until 1935, when the family moved to Zagreb. There, before the war, he completed the fifth year of secondary school*

*His brother Zadik-Cezo and his father Mordehaj were taken to the Jasenovac concentration camp where they were slaughtered. His mother Anita joined the Partisans, but was captured in a battle with the Germans in 1944, taken to the Sanzaba prison near Trieste and, from there, to Auschwitz.*

*After evading arrest on several occasions, Jozef Ben-Cion (Giuseppe Papo), managed to cross to the Italian zone of occupation. In 1943 he was transferred, along with another thirty or so children, from Split to the small town of Nonantola in Italy, with the help of the DELASEM organisation. Following the capitulation of Italy, he crossed the front with his friend Kurt Šnajder and joined the Allies.*

*He arrived in Palestine on June 6, 1944.*

*After the war he worked until his retirement as a civil aviation inspector with the Israeli Ministry of Traffic. Since then he has focused on computer projects.*

The persecution of Jews started at the beginning of the German occupation. We were required to wear yellow armbands. Jews were taken to compulsory labour, many were sent to death camps. That April, the Ustaša took my father Mordehaj Papo and my elder brother Zadik (Cezi) Papo to Jasenovac, where they both perished.

Our building materials shop, which was at 64 Ozaljska Street, and our apartment at 29 Marovska Street, were seized by the Ustaša. My mother Anita Papo (née Salom) and I hid with the Catholic Vlahović family for a couple of months, giving them money and valuables in return. Because it became dangerous for them to hide and care for both of us, I had to leave. I travelled to a tiny village near Varaždin, where I lived with some local people, the family of our maid. They took me in as though I were a relative – for financial compensation. In July I was forced to leave them. I returned to my mother in Zagreb. There I was caught and sent to Otočac in Lika, a labour camp run by the Ustaša. In October, with the help of a Muslim captain, Ešref Kurjaković, a former tenant in our home, I was released from the labour camp and, posing as his son, I travelled with him back to Mother in Zagreb. Some time after this our family in Dalmatia sent us fake passes to travel to Solin, near Split. In January 1942 we left Zagreb and, after a difficult journey, we arrived in Makarska.

For about two months we hid in various places under Italian occupation until they finally deported us to the island of Brač, to the village of Sumartin, where there was an assembly camp for Jews, under Italian command. I remained there until April 1943.

There were fierce battles being fought between the Partisans and the Fascist occupying forces in this area. It was dangerous to remain there. With another thirty children I was transferred from Split to the town of Nonantola, with the help of DELASEM. There this group of children known as *I Ragazzi di Villa Emma* (The Villa Emma Children) found shelter. Some time after this my mother joined the Partisans. In 1944, during a battle with German troops, she was captured by the Germans. She was taken to the prison of Senzeva, near Trieste, and from there was deported to Auschwitz.

In Nonantola, there were about a hundred of us children from Germany, Austria and Yugoslavia staying in Villa Emma. This was a huge building belonging to a Jew called Grassi di Milano, and was being managed by DELASEM. There were also a few older refugees in it. We were banned from leaving the town. The older children worked

with the farmers in their fields and workshops in order to earn some of the staple foods we needed. The locals were very sympathetic to us and helped us in any way they could and as much as they could, especially the priest, Don Arrigo Beccari and the doctor, Giuseppe Moreali. I worked in the warehouse, packing clothing parcels which DELASEM would send to various concentration camps in Italy. Life in the commune was bearable, but we lived in constant fear that the Fascists or the Nazis could deport us to concentration camps.



*In front of Villa Emma after a sports event: (front) Jozef Papo, (L) Jakov Maestro, Armando Moreno*

my life. On the evening of September 8, our leaders told us that the Germans had begun invading Italy and that we were in danger of falling into their hands. They asked to evacuate Villa Emma urgently and take only some warm clothes and essential toiletries. Because I worked in the warehouse I was lucky to be able to choose good clothes, suitable for a long journey. That night I decided to go towards southern Italy, find the front line and cross it.

In the autumn of 1943, Mussolini fell and the German Army entered Italy. All the Villa Emma children vacated the building during the night of September 8, 1943. Most of them hid in the local monastery, under the supervision of Don Beccari. The following day my friend Kurt Šnajder and I decided to flee towards the south of Italy, so that we could cross the front and reach the Allied troops.

Throughout August and the beginning of September 1943, the Allies continued to bomb northern Italian towns heavily. They had already come ashore in Calabria, in the Salerno area. I then began thinking about how I could get across the front line and rid myself of the German threat to

At dawn a large number of us young people were moved to a hayloft beside a grain warehouse, about half an hour's walk from Nonantola. There I slept for a few hours on a stone bench. Early in the morning I met my friend Kurt Šnajder, and we exchanged opinions on our situation. We concluded that we needed to leave the place where we were hiding as soon as possible, before the Germans reached Nonantola. The plan for our flight was as follows: First we would find our leaders, Joško and Marko, inform them of our decision and get some money for travel. Then we planned to rent two bicycles from the bicycle shop and ride them to the railway station in Modena. There we would send the bicycles back to the owner and take the train to Rimini. In Rimini we would look for a boat sailing south along the Adriatic coast, so that we could get as close to the front line as possible. They agreed with our decision and gave us their blessing to flee and save ourselves. We were each given 3,000 lire and a false identification document. It was some priest who provided the documents.

Late in the morning we picked up our bicycles and promised the owner we would return them the following morning. When we reached the railway station in Modena we discovered that the train had left half an hour earlier, and that there would be no more trains in that direction for the rest of the day. After some hesitation, we decided to go to Bologna on our bicycles. However, after riding for half an hour, we saw a train going in the same direction as we were. It was full of German military vehicles and armed soldiers. When we reached a crossroads, German soldiers sent us off the main road, so we found ourselves on some back road, heading south towards the Apennines. Late in the evening we reached a village called Zocca and found a place to spend the night. The owner was very curious about who we were and where we were from, because we spoke good Italian and knew about current affairs. This was a friendly conversation. We introduced ourselves as students from Modena whose parents live in the Molise region. We had lost contact with them because of the Eighth Army invasion and this was why we were now returning to them. We dined well and were given a pleasant room to sleep in. That night we decided to ride towards Florence, get in touch with the local Jewish Community and ask them for advice on how to get to the south.

Early the following morning we continued our journey through the Apennines. After a few hours it became difficult to ride uphill. For some hours we walked, pushing our bicycles, until we reached the top. Riding

downhill at high speed we came very close to the town of Pistoia. There we heard sporadic rifle and machine gun fire. We approached an army post and met some Italian soldiers who told us we should leave immediately because there were battles being fought between them and the *Camicie Nere* (Black Shirts). We bypassed Pistoia and found a back road to Florence. We arrived in the city late in the evening and found the Jewish Community centre and the synagogue.

We knew some Community members who used to visit us at Villa Emma, and the Centre guard was sure we were two of those young people, *i ragazzi di Villa Emma* (the Villa Emma children). He took us into an office and gave us something to eat and drink, and we spent the night there. In the morning we met a clerk and a few Community members. We told them what had happened at Villa Emma. They decided we should stay in Florence until the situation became clearer. We were each given the address of a family who was prepared to take care of us. We were tired and dirty from the journey and wanted comfortable accommodation. All the same, I didn't want us to separate. Kurt was a tried and true friend, wise and clever, with a great deal of experience in life. For me, to be without him, or to lose him, would mean failing to achieve the goal we had planned together. They took me to a Jewish family whose name I have forgotten, a lawyer about 48 years old with a crippled leg and his 23-year-old daughter. They welcomed me warmly, putting everything in the apartment at my disposal, as though I were family. I told them the story of my life, about my family in Yugoslavia. They listened. After that we had a lengthy discussion about the whole situation, about what would be the right thing to do, how it should be done, where to go. This was like spending a day with my own family, I felt that they were supporting me in every way. They advised me to stay with them until the situation improved, or at least until it was clearer. In their opinion, going towards and crossing the front line was dangerous, they felt it was better to stay as far away from it as possible. It was difficult for me to agree with them. I had seen the Germans successfully uprooting Jews in the occupied parts of Yugoslavia and I knew they would do the same here. I was deeply convinced that I must flee the Germans and join the Allied troops.

The following morning, September 12, Kurt telephoned me, asking me to meet him without delay at the station, to find out whether there were any trains going towards Rome and the south. We also decided to return the bicycles to their owner in Nonantola. First we took

care of everything which needed to be done in order to send the bicycles by train. We put them on the train personally and, having done this, our consciences were clear. There was chaos and confusion at the railway station. Thousand of Italian soldiers, who had been withdrawn from southern France, had gathered at the station, trying to board trains for their homes. When we saw this, we decided to set off the following morning, travelling south. When we sought information on trains leaving the next day, we discovered that there would be a special train for Rome at 2.00 p.m. and that tickets could be purchased in advance. We bought two first-class tickets with reservations and agreed to meet at 1.00 p.m. across the road from the station. I immediately went to inform my hosts of this decision and to organise my departure. Only the daughter was at home. When I told her we were leaving, she was speechless. We were both sad. She called her father to ask him to come home and talk to me. In the evening, we sat at the table, in silence, eating pasta with parmesan. When he finished his dinner, the father asked "Giuseppe, do you know anyone in Rome?" The short answer was no. "All right," he continued, "I shall give you two letters with full addresses, in case you need help." One of the addresses was a friend of his – the Arch-Rabbi of Rome and the other a close relative who lived in the city.

The following morning we were talking and planning my trip from Rome to the front. He showed me on a map the road and the places I needed to pass. He gave me an envelope with a small map of Italy and detailed instructions on the back, the two letters and a lot of money. His daughter prepared me a rucksack with the necessary clothing, food and a written blessing for a good journey. Our parting was sad, with just a few kisses. I was happy to meet Kurt at the station. We went to find the train, which stood on the first platform. This was a train of 32 carriages and two locomotives, one in the front and one at the back. The train was already full of Italian soldiers. We walked along the platform to find first class. When we went up the stairs of the carriage, we were immediately stopped. The carriage was full of Italian officers and a few civilians. They had already been waiting for hours. The train's departure had been postponed for an hour, nobody knew why. A large number of soldiers and other passengers were still trying to get in, but could only find room between the carriages, on the stairs. Many had even climbed onto the roof. There was a screeching sound and the train began to move. After some time it slowed down and then settled down to a steady

speed. It stood for a long time at the larger stations. We finally arrived in Rome at midnight.

There were thousands of Italian soldiers sleeping on the platforms in the station. The passengers were getting off slowly, jumping over the bodies and looking for a place to lie down. Kurt and I saw a group of soldiers walking towards the exit of the station, so we followed them. Then we found ourselves outside the station, still walking behind them through the streets of Rome. Soon each of them had entered a building, using a key. We found ourselves on a street with many *Albergo* signs. The entrances were all closed so we rang and knocked on doors, but nobody would open for us. Occasionally someone would shout, from some distance behind the main door, asking who we were. When we said we were travellers and wanted a bed for the night, there was no reply. Hopelessly, we continued to look for accommodation in other streets.

The night was silent and calm, lifeless. Suddenly we heard the noise of vehicles. One stopped close to us. Two soldiers jumped out towards us and shouted: "Stop! Don't you know that the army has introduced a curfew?" We told them we were travellers from Florence, that we were trying to find accommodation and that we didn't know that a curfew had been introduced in Rome. They demanded that we get into their vehicle. They took us to a military barracks, an enormous building full of armed soldiers. When we climbed to the second floor, we saw that there were machine guns placed at all the windows. They finally took us to a large hall whose floor was covered in straw, especially along the walls. We sat in a corner, covered in straw and waiting in fear to see what would happen. The two soldiers told us that there were street battles being fought with the Germans during the day. One of them called the duty officer who began questioning us. We told him the whole truth. His eyes showed compassion. He told us "You're no longer civilian prisoners, but Jewish refugees and, tomorrow, at your request, I shall turn you over to the Jewish Community centre."

In the morning the officer came for us with a soldier and told us that the soldier would escort us to the bus station. After driving for fifteen minutes, the bus would stop exactly outside the Community building. The soldier would tell the driver to tell us where to get off. He asked us if we had money to pay for the tickets. We assured him we had and thanked him for his help and kindness. We were at the bus station ten minutes late. After some time the bus arrived. We climbed aboard

and the soldier gave the driver instructions about us. Because I had given the driver a large bill, I waited for him to give me my change, with my wallet in my hand. A few stops later he gave me the change which I put in my pocket. At the station the driver pointed us to the Community centre.

When we arrived and introduced ourselves to the staff, I realised that I didn't have my wallet. I was miserable. Everything was lost: my identification card, family photographs, the map of Italy and all the money. A clerk promised to see that it was found. He called the information service and asked whether a wallet had been found in the number 18 trolleybus. We were told that the driver was still working and that it would be best to wait for him at the station. We immediately went to the station and waited for about a quarter of an hour until the trolleybus arrived. I recognised the driver and told him what I had lost. He had my wallet in his hand, ready to give back to me. We were all happy, especially me. At the Community we spoke to a couple of members about what was happening in Rome and about the situation on the front. We talked about the children from Villa Emma in Nonantola.

Kurt and I spent that whole evening planning our journey for the next day in the light of the situation on the front. We now knew that the Eighth Army was advancing successfully to the south, that the city of Potenza had fallen into their hands and that the Germans were withdrawing in this section of the front. However on the Salerno front the Germans had successfully cut off the advance of the Allied Army. We decided to head towards the southern front. We would travel east from Rome, to Abruzzo, and then south to the region of Molise.

We left Rome at 11.00 a.m. on September 15, taking the train to Sulmona. There were many stops along the way on this journey, so we arrived late in the afternoon. We slept in the hallway of the railway station, which was full of Italian soldiers. Early in the morning we were awoken by the sound of a train coming from the north. It was going to Benevento. The train stood at the station for only half an hour. It was packed and many people were getting off to buy something to eat and drink. In this confusion we found ourselves in the corridor of a carriage, standing right next to the toilet, from which a horrible stench was spreading. The soldiers were fighting among themselves over the space, so we stayed where we were. Many soldiers who had just arrived were trying unsuccessfully to get onto the train, and many climbed up onto the roof. The train left the station followed by shouting and whistling. It



was going slowly and making a lot of noise and, after travelling for four hours, it stopped on a plain, close to an apple orchard. Most of the passengers got out and ran towards the garden. As we were already in the corridor, close to the door, we were simply pushed from the carriage and joined the crowd. Twenty minutes later there were no more apples. On the way back, jostled by the crowd, I couldn't find Kurt and missed the car. I couldn't even get in. I was running from one door to another but everywhere was packed. Desperate, I found a place between two carriages, where they join together. I was in panic, holding on to some cables with my hand. My suffering ended when the train stopped out in the open once more. It was about two in the afternoon and we were close to the city of Benevento. The train crew told us that the city had been bombed, that the station and the tracks had been destroyed and that the train would stay where it was for the time being.

In the meantime I found Kurt and was happy that we were together again, but I had lost my rucksack with all my things. We decided to walk to Benevento. Along the way we came across some fruit and we ate, mostly figs and grapes. On a hill we ran into a priest who had fled the city two hours earlier, before the Allies had bombed it. He gave us instructions on how to get through the city from the north to the south so that we could reach the *Autostrada de due mari* (The Highway of Two Seas).

The city of Benevento was completely demolished. There was no one alive, we only came across bodies. It was dangerous to walk through the streets, because large pieces were falling from ruined buildings. Once a whole house collapsed in front of us. It was also dangerous to walk in the middle of the street because of the many fissures and pot-holes, deep holes filled with water, caused by the powerful explosions. When we left the city we saw two German soldiers getting out of a car and entering a house. We stopped for a minute to think about what we should do, but they emerged again. One of them was carrying a large radio. They got into the car and left. I left the city with painful emotions. Throughout the journey I was haunted by the sight of dead bodies, swollen, without legs and arms.

We walked across the fields, moving quickly towards the south, with no idea where we would spend the night. Dark was already falling in the east. We were looking for some kind of shelter but, in this lowlands region, there was no village in sight. Right in the middle of a field we saw a small wooden shelter. We went to see if we could spend the

night there. This was a roughly built shepherd's shelter, about two metres square, with straw spread on the ground and three branches over the top as a roof. The daylight had gone and we found ourselves in the dark. We removed our shoes and lay down. We were hungry and exhausted. We listened to the sounds of nature. It was a quiet night, with a blue sky and lots of stars.

After some time Kurt interrupted the silence, saying that we should change our original plan. He believed the front was more than a hundred kilometres away and said that this was too much for us. But the Salerno front was less than twenty kilometres away and we had a better chance of reaching it. My opinion was that the German counterattack had prevented the entry of the allies into Salerno and that the whole area was blocked. Crossing the front line there would be too dangerous. We talked about this for a long time and couldn't agree. We fell into a deep sleep, with no agreement on how to continue our journey the following day. Three hours later I woke up and began scratching my whole body. I could feel the fleas jumping on my neck. I went out to relieve myself and sat down on the ground, deadly tired, with heavy thoughts about what would happen the following day. It began to get light while we were on our way to the "Highway of Two Seas". Along the way we picked some figs and sat under a tree to eat them. It was out of the question for us to part company but, in some way, we were in a conflict. We finally reached the highway and saw convoys of German and armed vehicles and soldiers going west. This meant towards the Salerno front. We were both scared and speechless. At the crossroads, Kurt said he was going towards Salerno. He continued in that direction. I stood still, confused, watching him leave and not knowing what to do. I looked around to see where I should go then, after all, started following him as he already gone quite some distance. I loved him a great deal and was sad at the thought of losing him. Suddenly it became clear to me that being together also meant a greater chance of saving ourselves. So I followed him. We were both content.

We were walking along the highway. There were German convoys passing quite frequently. We decided to get off the highway and continue on in the direction of the city of Avellino but taking a different road. There were German positions right through the whole area, with tanks and heavy artillery. Again we took a different road and reached the village of Baronissi. Here I discarded all my remaining personal items. When we got close to the village we saw a warning sign. "This is a front

area, unauthorised crossing will be punished.” After we passed Baronissi village we ran into a villager and asked him how far Salerno was and which road we should take to get to it. He told us that he was a smuggler and that he had been to Salerno a couple of times to smuggle goods across the front line. He showed us the road and the villages we needed to pass through without putting ourselves in danger of running into Germans.



*Route to salvation for Jews from Nonantola, from Modeno southwards to Salerno*

Sporadic shooting and the thunder of air battle could be heard ahead of the front. As we passed through a valley between mountains we came across Italian Army deserters camped, waiting for the Germans to withdraw. We were given further directions on how to reach Salerno. There were only two mountains between us and the city.

It was already afternoon, we had a short rest at the foot of the first mountain, eating a few apples and figs. Rested, we began to climb. After two hours of climbing, when we had almost reached the top, we heard the clanging of chains. A German patrol with rifles, machine guns and ammunition belts around their necks intercepted us. "Halt!" they shouted. We stopped. They looked us over carefully and then, speaking in halting German and Italian they asked for directions to a village, pointing with their fingers to a map. We replied, in Italian, that this was a village on the way to the village where we lived. They put us in front of them to lead them to their destination. When we crossed the mountain ridge and began to descend, we saw a plateau and, on it a cabin and a horse. Someone came quickly and took the horse from the cabin. The patrol sergeant issued orders to the soldiers to line up for an attack and said something to the soldier standing next to him. Kurt understood what the sergeant said. When they headed for the cabin, Kurt suddenly signalled me with his hand to follow him and started running off to one side, into some bushes. My immediate reaction was to follow him. And so we ran through thorny bushes, trembling in fear that the German patrol would open fire on us. Running like this for about ten minutes down a hillside through dense forest, we disappeared from their sight and so escaped. We were out of breath, with bleeding wounds, torn clothes and in pain, we were scratching our hands against the thorny bushes. Kurt told me that the Germans had planned to kill us as soon as they finished their shootout with the man from the cabin.

Later, when we reached the foot of the mountain, we saw a tiny village on a plain. We quickly began heading in that direction to find someone to help us. At the entrance of the village we heard the gurgling of a stream. This was running water, coming from a tap about two centimetres in diameter which protruded from a post. We drank and washed the blood and sweat from ourselves. When we looked around, we saw that the village houses were empty. Then a man on a donkey laden with two buckets for water came up behind us. We greeted him with a smile and asked him a lot of questions. He was a village resident, and all the locals had evacuated the village. For the moment they were all in the monastery, and he showed us, pointing with his hand to the white façade of a building near the top of the mountain. He had come to fill his buckets with water for them. He told us that the German defence positions were at a certain distance from the village – one or two kilometres from the Allied firing positions. We decided to cross the front

line. We passed through the village and saw no one. It was only when we came close to an isolated blue house, the last in the village, that a German soldier shouted "Halt! Halt!" He jumped out with a rifle aimed at us. We began speaking in Italian. He ordered us to go into the house. We entered a large room full of crates with weapons. There were German officers and soldiers sitting on them, playing cards and drinking beer. Speaking halting Italian, the duty officer asked us who we were. We told him that we were shepherds and that our village was a few kilometres away to the west. He replied "*Inglese vedere Italianos, sparare*" (When the English see Italians they will shoot). We insisted on doing what we had intended and said that we would continue at our own risk. He found this suspicious and said sharply "*No! Heraus! (out) Fuori! (out)*" We left the place nervously and went back through the village. Right in the centre of the village we sat under a big tree to rest and plan what we should do next. The tiny village was calm and the sky bright. As I was eating an apple, suddenly hundreds and hundreds of rounds from rifles, machine guns and other weapons, a multitude of shells were flying over our heads, some falling quite close to us. Hell on earth! Ten minutes later, everything had quietened down. We decided to join the villagers in the monastery.

As we were leaving the village, we came across a German soldier behind a stone fence with a grenade in his hand, ready to throw. He was angry because we surprised him. He shouted "Get out of here!" We passed him slowly, feeling all the time that he would throw the grenade at us. We finally reached the tap, drank all the water we needed and washed our faces again so we would be ready to climb up to the top of the mountain. On the way to the monastery, we came across the peasant with the donkey, carrying his water buckets. We followed him because he knew the shortest way. Finally we reached the monastery.

We went through the great door at the front of the building and found ourselves in a large cave. There were a lot of people lying or sitting on the ground in no kind of order. Children were running around among them. They were asking angrily for help. Faces with expressions of fear, pain, sadness and anxiety. They immediately introduced us to the village elder and priest. They were very interested to learn about the situation in the country and to hear the latest news from the front. We told them what we knew and they gave us a few boiled potatoes. After this, they offered us an unusual place to spend the night. With the help of a ladder, we climbed up to the highest level of this space, which was

in a corner of the cave. This was a kind of narrow terrace along the façade, overlooking the outside. They brought two wooden benches for us to lie on. As there was still some daylight, we observed the surroundings at sunset. We saw the valley and the familiar village and, in the distance, Salerno Bay. There were hundreds of battle ships and boats in the sea and, on land, we could see the artillery, tanks and machine gun positions of the Allied troops. There were many aircraft in the sky. They sporadically opened fire on the German positions. The Germans were fighting back from the positions behind us, opening fire on the ships with heavy weapons. We watched this battle on the front for an hour as though we were watching a war movie in the cinema.

It was dark when we went in. There were candles burning inside the cave and the main entrance was firmly closed. Because we were tired, we went to the place we had been given to sleep. The bench was only thirty centimetres wide and I was afraid that I would roll off it in my sleep. I lay on my back, looked up at the stars in the sky and slept like a log.

We suddenly awoke to the sound of a bomb exploding and rocks rolling from the top of the mountain. We jumped from the benches and stood against the wall. Several smaller stones fell on our terrace. Some pieces grazed me. It was 1.00 a.m. They told us that a mother with a child had gone out, leaving the door open. A plane flying at the same height saw the light and dropped a bomb. We decided to leave the monastery and sleep outdoors.

We set off, climbing to the top of the mountain where we came across a huge wooden cross with a figure of Jesus Christ, standing on a cement pedestal. We lay down under the cross and fell asleep. At dawn we were woken by two strong explosions. We noticed a huge fire in the distance, where the German positions were. A few minutes later an even louder explosion followed, and this completely demolished a bridge. The German troops were withdrawing and had abandoned their positions in the village.

In the early dawn on September 19, 1943, we returned, taking the same path through the village and approaching that last, blue house with fear. This time we didn't see any soldiers. We kept going a little further and came across a large, square stone. Next to it was a German soldier with a machine gun. We looked in surprise a little longer: he was already dead.

We continued on towards the west, in the direction of Salerno Bay, where we met two British soldiers. We said that we were civilian prisoners. They took us to an officer to whom we told our story. He drove us the same day to their headquarters in Salerno. There we were interrogated by the British intelligence service. They held us there for about two weeks until there was a convoy of ships leaving for Tripoli, in Libya. They got us to the British military camp near Tripoli, it was called Transit Camp 155. We were there for about two months and then they transferred us to Bari in Italy, where we joined the Allied unit AMGOT (Allied Military Government for Occupied Territories) as interpreters. At the beginning of June 1944, I emigrated to Palestine.