
Armando MORENO

SAVING MYSELF BY SAVING THE CHILDREN



*A*rmando Moreno was born in Vienna in 1920 to Julijus Moreno, a Sephard from Belgrade, and Sabina Silberman, an Ashkenazi from Vienna. His grandfather, Jakov Moreno, was born in Belgrade where he had a tailor's shop in Knez Mihailova Street. He was married to Sabina Ruso from Timisoara. He maintained business contacts with Austria, so the Moreno family often spent time in Vienna. One of Jakov Moreno's sons, Salomon Moreno, was the general secretary of the Rothschild Foundation in Vienna until the Germans entered

Austria in 1938. Armando Moreno's great-grandfather was from Trieste (under Austrian rule at the time) and, as a young tailor, he was brought to the Serbian court after Belgrade's liberation from the Turks. His family was large, on both his mother's and his father's sides, and perished in the Holocaust.

After the second world war, Armando Moreno worked in the Legal Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, from 1945 to 1947, then from 1947 until 1949 he was secretary of the Ministry's Diplomatic School. He was head of the UNICEF mission in Yugoslavia until 1953 when he moved to the Secretariat for Tourism. Then, until his retirement, he worked as an advisor with the Tourist Association of Split. He has a daughter and a son and lives today in Los Angeles.

I lived with my parents in Vienna, where I completed primary school. When anti-Semitism began to spread, the family of Julijus Moreno moved to Belgrade where we joined the family of Samuilo Kon, the husband of my mother's sister Berta. Samuilo and Julijus had been inseparable since their childhood in Belgrade.

I enrolled in the First Boys' Secondary School and became a member of Hashomer Hatzair, along with my cousins, Pajki, Erih and Zaki. Because I wanted to go to Erez Israel, I left school and began working in the Elka factory in Dušanova Street in Dorćol. There I worked with Josif Majer, known as Tarzan, who was hanged in Valjevo as a detachment commissar, and with Rašela Baruh, the older sister of the Baruh brothers who was killed together with her husband by the Germans in 1941 in the Banjica camp.

In 1938 Hashomer Hatzair asked me to go to the *hasharah* in Galenić, near Podravska Slatina. There I met many comrades from Hashomer Hatzair from the whole of Yugoslavia. Among them were my cousins: Valter (Pajki), Erih (Era), Milan Klajn (now in Belgrade), Aca-Šlomo Gutman from Novi Sad (and still living there), Geri Vajs from Zagreb (now living in the Gat kibbutz), Stela Sam from Skopje who married Geri Vajs and also lives in the kibbutz, Mila Koen, now living in Brazil, Mina Rajs, now in Australia, Josif Majer (Tarzan), Lule-Hajim Haravon (killed in 1941 as a Partisan courier), Bibi from Zagreb, now in Israel and many others. I became *sadran ha avoda*, work manager, together with Tarzan. We Yugoslavs were joined by refugees from Lithuania and Germany. At Golenić we learned to be *halutzim*, pioneers, villagers.

In 1941, by arrangement with the Jewish Communities of Belgrade and Zagreb, the Alliance of Jewish Communities of Yugoslavia invited me to go to Zagreb and be the *madrih*, the counsellor for Jewish refugee children from Germany and Austria who were being brought illegally to Yugoslavia, still not under occupation at the time, to await permits to enter Palestine which was still under the English mandate. One of the reasons I was selected was my excellent command of German (having attended school in Austria) and I also spoke Serbo-Croatian, because I was also educated in Belgrade.

I arrived in Zagreb from the *hasharah* and found *haver* Josif Indig from Osijek who, during the summer of 1940, had been at the *hasharah* as a seasonal worker. He was three years older than me. As a *madrih*, he was in charge of these children together with his comrade

haver Zlata (Zehava) Vajner from Vukovar. She was twenty, like me, and had studied singing in Zagreb. The two of them had some command of German.

The children were transferred illegally from Austria to Yugoslavia across the border at Maribor in Slovenia. The *Jugendaliyah* (Youth Immigration) organisation was founded by Recha Freier from Berlin, in collaboration with Henrietta Szold, a member of the Jewish Congress.

Recha Freier crossed the border with her twelve-year-old daughter Maayan and came to Zagreb when about 250 children between the ages of seven and fourteen had already been transferred, accompanied by just a handful of adults. Their fathers were in the camps of Germany and Austria. Recha Freier got an entry visa for Palestine for her daughter and herself and, at the end of 1940, arrived in Jerusalem.

In Zagreb, we three *madrihim* organised work so that Joško, as the eldest, would be the main contact with the Jewish Community of Zagreb and I, as a Belgrader, would be in charge of contacts with Belgrade and take care of the practical issues of the children's accommodation with Zagreb Jewish families who took the children in. We organised social activities for the children in the premises of the Zagreb Jewish Community, (in the basement of 16 Palmotićeva Street), where we also opened a canteen where the children were given three meals a day. It was difficult for us to find accommodation for children who had been raised strictly kosher, because there weren't many strictly kosher Jewish families in Yugoslavia. I organised outings to areas around Zagreb, took them to the cinema and to *sicha* classes, where the children learnt Hebrew in preparation for their departure for Palestine. Through the Zagreb Jewish Community they had teachers who spoke German, teachers of mathematics, history, geography, religious instruction and other subjects, depending on their age.

ON THE ROAD WITH THE CHILDREN

During the summer of 1940-41, the children began getting used to living in Yugoslavia. In fact it was from the children that we learnt what the German Fascists, and the Fascists in general were preparing and so we too made our preparations for what was to come. In the autumn of 1940, a group of children was caught at the border and detained in Maribor but, after the intervention of the Jewish Com-

munity, they were released and brought to Zagreb where they joined our group.

When the Tripartite Pact was signed with the Axis powers on March 25, 1941, the German national anthem was sung publicly in the streets of Zagreb and the Fascist salute, the raising of the right arm was used. The Jewish Community called the *madrihim* to say that we should divide the group in two and that I, as a Belgrader, should immediately take the first group to Belgrade by train. The Jewish Community of Belgrade and the Alliance of Jewish Communities, led by its president, Dr Fridrih Pops, and secretary, Šime Špicer, would work as fast as possible on getting permission from the British for the first group's departure for Palestine. The best thing was for them to head immediately to Istanbul and wait there, where it was safer, to get their visas for Palestine. The problem was obtaining transit visas for Bulgaria, Greece or Romania, because these countries were already members of the Axis.

I set off on the evening of March 25 with about seventy children, mainly older ones, and arrived in Belgrade on the morning of March 26. From the station I took the children up Balkanska Street, through Terazije towards Dorćol and the new home of the Jewish Women's Society, where I had been told the children would be accommodated. My parents lived in Dobračina Street and, on the way to Dorćol with the children, I met my mother who was on her way to buy bread. I kissed her hurriedly, told her I didn't have time to talk and continued on with the children towards the home, which was on the corner of Tadeuša Koščuška and Visokog Stevana streets. Along the way I ran into a close friend, Rudi Abravanel (now living in the Shaar Haamakim kibbutz in Israel) and briefly exchanged information with him on what was happening. The children were moved in and went to bed after a breakfast especially prepared for them. At noon they were given lunch. I spent the whole day with them and only after supper went home, where I found my mother, my father and my sister Frida. I told them about the children and about what they had gone through in Austria and Germany. They listened to me in disbelief, especially my father who felt like a Yugoslav and always found it strange that I wanted to go to Palestine.

Early in the morning on March 27 we were awoken by an uproar coming from the Knez Mihailo monument in what is now called Republic Square. When I got to the square I saw the army in trucks

shouting "Better war than the Pact". I came home and happily told my family that it was now obvious that we wouldn't be occupied and that I had to go to my children in Dorćol, to take them to the demonstrations so that they could see for themselves that Fascism wouldn't rule the whole world. I arrived at the Jewish home. The children had already gathered for the breakfast that the Jewish Community had arranged for them. I told them to tidy up their straw mattresses quickly so that we could leave for the square. The children couldn't believe what they were seeing. Nor could I. The children saw Germany and Austria as Fascist powers and here they felt, for the first time, that the people had the strength to fight them. In the afternoon I ran to the Federation of Jewish Communities of Yugoslavia. There the secretary-general, Šime Špicer, told me that we would get wagons to take the children to Greece via Skopje and that, because the wagons would be sealed, we needed to provide food and water for the children. I was also told that they would be accompanied on the trip by two comrades from Hashomer Hatzair. These would be Merica Papo from Split (now living in the Maabarot kibbutz in Israel with her husband, Haim Aškenazi) and Mirijam-Mirkica Svečenski from Osijek (who died in Israel in 1981. Her younger sister, a Partisan from the beginning of the war, still lives in Zagreb). Both Merica Papo and Mircika Svečenski had been with me at the *hasharah* in Golenić.

The children set off from Belgrade on April 3, 1941. I was told at the Alliance to get some rest for two or three days and, if necessary, to return to Zagreb for the second group of children. It was believed that Yugoslavia which, under Simić, had declared itself neutral, would be spared from the attacks of the Fascists. And so I remained in Belgrade on April 4 and 5, in the belief that I would return to Zagreb.

AS FAR AS POSSIBLE FROM THE BURNING CITY

On April 6 we were awoken at six in the morning by the sound of aircraft and bombs exploding very close to the house in which we lived. I immediately took my parents and sister to the Tel Aviv tavern at 7 Zmaja od Noćaja Street, which was run by the Moreno and Koen families, my mother's cousins. We arrived under a shower of bombs and all of us together – my father, mother and sister, my aunt and her husband, my cousins Pajki-Valter, Erih and Zaki, ten of us altogether, carrying just a little food, set off that Sunday, April 6, with the bombs

raining down, along Kralja Aleksandra Street planning to get as far away from Belgrade as we could. Kralja Aleksandra Street was in flames. There was a strong easterly wind blowing that day which fanned the flames, spreading them faster. Through the chaos and smoke, I saw a man on the third floor of a building whose façade had been demolished. He was sitting at a piano, playing something. His playing could not be heard at all above the general confusion and the fire, but I've carried this image with me all my life. Everyone was fleeing in the same direction, towards Smederevo, leaving the city which was once so lovely but had now been transformed into hell.

We reached the Smederevo road, very tired, thirsty, hungry and freezing. The east wind had dropped when we arrived in a field at about two in the morning. On the horizon we could see flames in the sky over Belgrade. We lay down, right in the middle of the field, huddling together to warm ourselves.

At first light on April 7, we were awakened by the snow which had begun to fall.

The meadows were soon covered in snow as it began to fall more and more heavily.

It was not until dawn that, frozen as we were, we saw that we had spent the night in the middle of a yard. When the farmer saw us, he offered us his stable to sleep in, asking for quite a large sum of money in return. We agreed, because we didn't know where we would get to and we younger ones went to inspect the area. We came across columns of soldiers who were coming from all directions across the countryside towards Belgrade. They had boxes full of canned food which they were selling.

We returned to the stable with the cans we had bought. Erih and I decided to return to Belgrade and bring food from the tavern in Zmaja od Noćaja Street. We walked three hours to Belgrade, went to the tavern and filled our bags with cooking oil, bread and other items from the refrigerator, as much as we could carry. On our way back to Smederevo, as we were going down Kralja Aleksandra Street, Stukas suddenly roared above our heads. We were in front of the post office, near the Parliament. We went down into a shelter full of people grumbling among the chaos and confusion. When the attack was over we continued our journey and saw the National Guard on patrol, armed but in civilian clothes, defending the city against looting. Late in the evening we arrived back in our stable, which became our second home.

The following day, April 8, Pajki decided to head to Sarajevo to see his girlfriend and join the army, because he was a reserve officer. The weather improved and spring returned over the melting snow. Everyone except Pajki, who had left for Sarajevo a day earlier, stayed in the stable. We didn't go to Belgrade again, fearing a new German air raid.

FORCED LABOUR

At dawn on April 12, as we were washing our faces at the well in the yard, we saw on the road a fleet of cars coming our way, with swastikas and heavy machine guns. We quickly prepared and, without Pajki, set off for the city, for the Tel Aviv tavern, thinking we'd be safer there. We arrived in the centre of the city in the evening. Notices about the surrender of weapons and Yugoslavia's capitulation had already been posted on the trees in Kralja Aleksandra Street. There were German tanks in the street, one after another. People stood looking at the posters and weeping.

The single-story house in Dobračina Street in which we lived had been damaged by bombs, so we decided that we, the Moreno family, should live in a room behind the main tavern and that the Koens should stay in their apartment in Čubrina Street. We thought it was safer this way.

Not long after, on April 18, Pajki returned from Sarajevo, exhausted. He hadn't managed to join the Yugoslav units. He was just outside Sarajevo when the Usthas seized power and German troops were preparing to enter the city. So he didn't see his girlfriend but instead returned home, to Belgrade. He joined us on April 19, when the Germans ordered all Jews to assemble in Tašmajdan, in front of the fire station, early in the morning. There they gave us yellow bands for our sleeves and, later, *Magen David* signs for our front and back.



*Armando mowing at the
hahschara in Golenić. 1939*

At the same time, men between the ages of 16 and 65 were assigned to forced labour. I was put in the same group as Lazar Lotvin (he was in the Partisans during the war and later was secretary-general of the Automobile Association of Yugoslavia; he died in 1984). Bora Baruh, the painter, and others were in the same group. We were taken to the ruins of a bombed four-story building in Grobljanska Street which had been reduced to rubble down to the ground floor and in which there had been many victims. We dug it up, floor by floor, lifted the huge slabs of concrete. We worked with no protection from infection. The days were hot so the bodies we were digging up were already decomposing. Bora Baruh and his brothers all wore very thick spectacles. Because the Belgrade police knew the Baruh brothers well, Bora didn't dare wear his glasses, so that the notorious police officer, Kosmajac, who had been persecuting Communists, wouldn't recognise him. A few of us were always somewhere around him so that the Germans would notice he could hardly see. He just jabbed the ground with a mattock, not daring to swing it in case he hurt someone. One day they took us to Tašmajdan, where we spent the night sleeping on concrete.

When we had dug all the bodies out of Grobljanska Street, they moved us to the old Royal Court building, the dome of which had been destroyed in the bombing. There we were locked up for a night on the suspicion that one of us Jews had stolen something.

When a cache of munitions exploded in the Smederevo fortress, before the attack on the Soviet Union, all Jewish men between the ages of 15 and 55 were again summoned to Tašmajdan, from where they were taken to the camp for Jews at Smederevo. While I had been at the *hasharah* in Golenić, I had caught tropical malaria and every summer I continued to have attacks of malaria with a high fever. I had one of these attacks one day at noon when I was at Tašmajdan, so my friends took me to the infirmary. Egon, the commissioner for Belgrade Jews, was in charge of rounding up, identifying and harassing Jews. He had studied in Belgrade before the war and knew very well who was anti-German, anti-Fascist that is, in orientation. He spoke our language really well. The infirmary was set up under his management and the Margulis brothers worked there. They were medical students and now live in the US. They were on duty that day and confirmed that I had malaria. After giving me quinine they allowed me to leave Tašmajdan and go home, so I never went to Smederevo. Germans with machine-guns and rifles stood guard around Tašmajdan and

the people watched the Jews inside the barbed-wire fence from behind the army cordons. All the young people were dancing the *hora* as though it were summer holidays. I collapsed with my high fever.

While I was still in forced labour, on June 22, the Germans attacked the Soviet Union. A German came up to me and told me that Germany would lose the war because Russia was on the side of the Allies. I sneaked away from my work place, removed my armband and the Star of David from my chest and back and, breathless and excited, ran to the former Court building, to Dorćol, to Oneg Šabat, which was where the Jewish infirmary was and where the Margulis brothers, the medical students mentioned earlier, worked. Because we had no radio, this was real news for everyone. We believed that the war would now soon be over and that the Germans would soon fall. Of course I had to sneak back again to forced labour because otherwise they would have started looking for me and, if they didn't find me they would have arrested my parents.

WARNING FROM THE RADIO

One day Ika Kapon from Hashomer Hatzair came to me and told me he'd already travelled to Split three times. The city was occupied by the Italians and, most importantly, they were not persecuting the Jews. He said that he'd added an "i" to his surname in his First Boys' Secondary School student identification so that he was now "Kaponi" and he was from Split. He told me to give him two photographs of myself so that he could also get me a student identification which would say that I was being supported by my parents from Split, and on the basis of that I would get a travel pass as he had done. He told me that because I had a pure Italian name – Armando Moreno – no one would know who I was. The next day, as promised, Ika brought me the student identification. With this document I went to the Italian Consulate in Birćaninova Street, stood in line for half a day and was given a permit allowing me to "return" to Split and confirming that my train ticket had been paid for by the Italian Consulate because I was of Italian origin. Ika came again the following day and asked me to give him back the student identification because they had realised that I had never attended the secondary school before the war. I returned it to him and was left without the document I needed,

because the permit read that it was valid only when presented with my student identification with the number quoted.

I no longer worried about going to Split because I had a permit which proved that I wasn't a Jew. And so I stayed in Belgrade. I met up with Tarzan, with whom I had worked at the Elka factory and with Hajim Haravon, both of whom had connections with SKOJ.

We listened to Radio London and the news at Ruža Poljokan's place. She was a twenty-year-old Jew from Banja Luka who lived with her young Serb husband in Kosmajaska Street, over the road from the Ashkenazi temple. Ruža's husband was a technician at the German station Radio Danube and would bring the news from there. Ruža and her husband were members of SKOJ. However someone denounced him and one day German SS agents came for him. In order to escape falling into their hands he jumped to his death from the fourth floor window. They arrested Ruža, who was pregnant, and tortured and killed her in Jajinci. Her sister Paula, a pianist who had been in Hashomer Hatzair, joined the Partisans but was caught by the Chetniks and taken to the Sajmište camp where she was killed.

Radio London warned repeatedly that there would be mass executions in Belgrade on July 14, the day of the French national holiday. Because of this I decided to leave Belgrade with the pass which I had kept in my pocket, unused, for a month. On July 13, I went to the railway station, to which Jews had no access. There I met Sommer, a member of Hashomer Hatzair from Vinkovci whom we called "Compa" because he had one leg shorter than the other and had to wear orthopaedic shoes. He told me that he was going into the Serbian countryside and that he had a false sole in his shoe in which he kept leaflets and other propaganda material. We parted when the train set



*Armando Moreno in Split, 1941,
a photograph for his travel pass
issued by the Italians*

off for Zagreb. I was planning to be in Zagreb only until the evening train left from there for Split, and also because I didn't know what had happened to Joško Indig, Zehava and the other group of children from the Youth Alija, I wanted to find them and see what we should do next.

I arrived in Zagreb at the time when Otokar Keršovani and other Communist leaders were being executed. The station was covered with posters of people who had been shot. I found Zehava at the Jewish Girls' Home. She told me that Joško Indig had managed to take the children to Slovenia, which was already occupied by the Italians. She hadn't gone with him because her friend was in prison and she didn't want to leave him.

I took Zehava's advice and left for Split by train that evening. She said she couldn't hide me anywhere, that there were frequent and dangerous raids and that the safest thing for me was to take the train and relocate to Split. I suggested she come with me but she refused. On the way, in Zagreb, I also ran into Erih Gostl, known as "Guzl" (from the Zagreb Hashomer Hatzair). He was preparing to go to Jasenovac with his family and he and his whole family were killed. All he took with him to Jasenovac was his guitar.

FINALLY UNDER THE ITALIANS

When I arrived in Split I made contact with the Jewish Community. They put me in the Jarden Jewish Home, where I found many of my acquaintances from Hashomer Hatzair who were there as refugees from all over occupied Yugoslavia. Among them were my friends Miša Štajner (from Belgrade, died in Israel), Benko Demajorović (Belgrade, killed as a Partisan in 1944), Kreso Najman (Zagreb, now living in Australia), Rozina Tolentino (Trieste and Sarajevo) and others. We formed a kind of community and helped one another. We could sleep in the Jarden, which was in the centre of old Split, but we had to find our own food.

My brother Ernest Moreno was six years older than me (he died in Tel Aviv in 1973). He had been caught in Zagreb by the attack on Yugoslavia, but managed to reach Split and found me at the Jarden. He rented a room above the Jewish Community, so we were together until the Partisan operation in National Square in November 1941, when the Black Shirts arrested us and interned us in Canova in north-

ern Italy (Casa Isolata in the Dolomites). My brother was punished in 1942 by being transferred to a completely different part of Italy. There were another fifty people interned with us in the Casa Isolata, mostly from Yugoslavia, but there were also some from Austria and Poland. They included Dr Vagman (a Pole, later a Yugoslav Partisan, colonel and head of the Military Hospital in Sarajevo where he now lives in retirement), Dr Mermelstajn (Polish, later a colonel in the Yugoslav National Army, died in Belgrade), Altaras (from Split, where he died) and others.

WITH THE CHILDREN IN NONANTOLA

The Jewish organisation Delasem took over the care of the children who stayed in Zagreb and who reached Nonantola via Slovenia. This was after the first group, which I had taken to Belgrade in 1941, had arrived, via Istanbul, in Palestine in April of that year. This second group of children were accommodated in the Villa Emma in Nonantola. This group in Nonantola, led by my friend Joško Indig, sought me and discovered, through the Red Cross, that I was in Canova. They asked for me to be transferred to Nonantola, so I was taken there under guard and joined the group in the Villa Emma in April, 1943.

In Nonantola, together with Joška and the others, I made sure that the children were aware of the possibility of going to Erez Israel after the war. I also organised their social life, especially musical and sporting activities. These included the *Yom Sport*, the Sports Day, which was particularly attractive for the older children, who could get the younger ones interested in sport. Also with us in Nonantola were Dr Aleksandar Liht (president of the Association of Yugoslav Zionists) and his family and many other internees from Germany, Austria and Poland. In 1943 a group of children from Split also arrived, together with refugees from Bosnia. They immediately joined the children who had come to Yugoslavia earlier with the Jugendaliyah from Austria and Germany.

We were still in Nonantola when Italy capitulated in September 1943. German troops occupied the country while Allied units landed in the south and began advancing towards Rome. Joško Indig and I, entrusted by Hashomer Hatzair with the care of the group, paid visits to certain people who had connections with the senior officials of the Fascist administration in Nonantola – Dr Giuseppe Moreali and

Father Arrigo Baccari from the San Silvestro Monastery. Through them we were all given identity cards from the Nonantola municipality, proving we were residents of Nonantola rather than refugees.

Comune di Nonantola		CARTA D'IDENTITA' N. 10.073/34	
Cognome	MORENO	Nome	ARMANDO
Padre	fu Giulio	Madre	Sabina Silbermann
nato il	21 Giugno 1920	a	Vienna
Stato Civile	celibe	Nazionalita'	ex Jugoslava
Professione	studente	Residenza	Nonantola
Via	Lavora Villa Emma		
Connotati e contrassegni salienti			
Statura	m. 1.71		
Capelli	castani		
occhi	idem		
corp.	reg.		
SS.	pp.		
H.N.			
		FIRMA DEL TITOLARE	
		Data 18 AGO. 1943 <i>Armando Moreno</i> IL POSTATA <i>[Signature]</i>	

Identity card issued in Nonantola in 1943 and used by Armando Moreno when he took the first group of children to Switzerland

In the meantime, with the help of Delasem, the people of Nonantola and Father Baccari and Dr Moreali, all of us from Villa Emma, about two hundred in all, were hidden in the monastery and in the homes of people from Nonantola and the surrounding area, because the SS men had discovered that there were Jewish children and refugees there and had moved in across the road from Villa Emma. They began raids. Almost everyone knew that we were hidden somewhere, but not one of the Nonantola people betrayed us. Contacts were being maintained through me and Joška and through Italians who Father Baccari and Dr Moreali said could be trusted. (Dr Moreali has since died, but Father Baccari is still alive. I last saw him at the monastery in 2001). After we all fled Nonantola, with the help of the Italians, he was arrested by the Germans and interned in a camp.

JOURNEY TO FREEDOM

In September we decided to head towards the Allied forces, but it turned out to be difficult to get through the front line, so we began to consider crossing illegally into Switzerland. After quite some thought, we sent the first group of five rather older children, telling them to reach the Swiss border by going from Nonantola, via Modena and Milan, through routes that we'd established with Delasem and Jewish organisations from Geneva. This group returned from the border having been unable to cross because they hadn't established a connection at the border crossing. After their return, it was decided that the second group should leave, in October 1943. I led this group, because I spoke German, Italian, Serbo-Croatian and French. The group included Edgar Ašer (from Zagreb, now in Switzerland), with his mother and sister Alisa, and Arnold Viniger from Germany (now in the US). We managed to establish the border connection, and sent word to the people in Nonantola, so everyone came to the border and we crossed in October 1943. One boy committed suicide at the border because the Swiss border guards wanted to send the group back to the Germans.

We crossed the border and managed to get as far as Zurich, where the Swiss police arrested us. There we split up, because the Ašer family had a connection in Switzerland while Viniger and I were put into a private camp, Laufen. From there I was sent to various labour camps.

I spent time in the Champéry camp at Dent du Midi, where I was the commissioner for the National Liberation Movement and worked with a group of Yugoslav refugees collecting signatures on a petition for the movement to be recognised. I decided to join the Resistance Movement in France when there was talk of the Allied forces landing, because I thought that I would meet up with comrades who had stayed behind in Yugoslavia and fought as Partisans. And that's what I did, with the result that the Swiss authorities moved me to the penal camp at Zermatt, immediately opposite the Italian border. The Swiss authorities did not permit refugees to be politically active. After my five-day stay there, with the help of some connections, I crossed the border at Lausanne and joined the FTP liberation units in the north of France. From there I got in touch with Laza Latinović (who was the Yugoslav ambassador after the war), so that we could gather a group

of Yugoslav prisoners in France and cross over to Naples on an Allied ship, from there to Bari and the Partisan camp in Gravina. From there we transferred to Yugoslavia and I was assigned to the Eighth Corps of the Second Dalmatian Brigade.

In liberated Dubrovnik I was assigned to work on organising the Military Hospital of the Eighth Corps of the Second Dalmatian Brigade in May 1945. Dr Jakov Altaras from Sarajevo was appointed head of the hospital and his wife, Blanka, also worked with him.