Cadik Danon

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My name is Cadik Danon and my nickname is Braca. I was born in 1923 in Sarajevo, where I finished elementary school. In 1934, my family moved to Belgrade. I went to the First Male Gymnasium and an engineering middle school. In 1941, when the war began, we fled to an uncle's place in Tuzla, Bosnia. I have many early memories - some of my parents' stories and others that I personally experienced.

My family background

My grandfather Avram Danon - I do not know when he was born - lived in Bjeljina with his wife, Sara. They met at a party in Bjeljina, and were married soon after. They loved each other very much and the fruit of that love was 13 children - eight sons and five daughters. My grandfather had a cepenak - a small Turkish space - in the market in the center of the town. This shop was organized like a typical Turkish shop: during the winter there was a mangala, a wood stove, burning in the center; customers could pass by and immediately see everything in the store. Grandfather was an exceptionally hard-working man, and I can imagine how much he had to work to support 15 people. The children grew up in a certain degree of poverty. My father told me how he never had his own clothing or new shoes, only hand-me-downs from his older brother. He would have to roll up the sleeves; they were never shortened by a tailor. As he grew, he would unroll the sleeves until he outgrew the shirt and passed it down to his younger brother.

When my father, Isidor, was 13, he reached his bar mitzvah, the age, according to Judaism, from which a young man begins to fight for his own survival. My father told me that his bar mitzvah was a big and festive celebration; the chief rabbi from Bjeljina came, and my father received many presents. They made a special point to accent the bar mitzvah because it gave strength to the young boys, who were, in fact, still children, to keep on a serious life path. After the bar mitzvah, my grandfather told my father, in short, "Now that you are an adult, it is time that you start to work and earn money." My grandfather said he would give him some start-up capital. This consisted of some 20 molds for making soaps, which were cooked and then cut with a knife. He went to the market, took a box, covered it with newspaper and began selling. By evening, he had sold all the soap. When he counted the money, he realized he had made twice as much as his father said they were worth. The next day he went to his father's shop, paid for more soap, and little by little he

became a relatively rich man. He was incredibly hard-working, industrious, smart, sweet and honest; everyone he came into contact with wanted to talk with him and do business with him. By the time he was 15, he had saved a certain amount. He hired a carpenter to build a stand in the marketplace, and he sold his goods from the stand, protected from rain and sun. He also went to a tailor, who made him a suit to improve his appearance. He looked like a businessman, and he always advanced.

There were many poor Jewish women who knew how to bake, so he hired them and began to sell homemade cakes at the market. At the time, Bjeljina had a tense border with Serbia, so the garrison had been strengthened with a big military presence. The main customers for those cakes were soldiers and students.

In time, he went to Tuzla to begin a business. He worked with manufactured goods, and the work went well. One day he went to Gracanica, near Tuzla, to get goods for his shop. Walking down the street, he noticed two girls passing by. He took note of one in particular. She was extraordinarily pretty, with lovely eyes, beautiful hair, a nice figure. He followed the girls. But the problem was how to learn who they were. He went a few steps ahead of them, stopped at a store and took another good look at them. At that moment an old man came out of the store and told him they were the daughters of Cadik Danon, a merchant from Gracanica. He decided to go to synagogue to meet them. It was Friday night, and he met Cadik Danon who invited him to dinner. My parents met, liked one another, and within a very short time they married. Isidor began his new life with his beloved wife, Dona.

It was fortunate for my grandmother that she first had daughters who could help her take care of the younger children, primarily sons. The problem was marrying off all these girls. At the time, there was no chance to marry without a dowry. They were lucky that both my grandfather and grandmother were nice-looking and all their children were nice-looking; pretty girls are married off more quickly.

Grandfather and Grandmother were both Sephardim. They spoke Ladino with the children and the children responded in Ladino. Religious customs were regularly observed. Every Shabbat was celebrated with two candles, and all the holidays were celebrated first in temple, then at home. All of this occurred not long after the Turks left Bosnia, which means during the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia, so my grandfather, like all Jewish men, wore a fez. At the time, even members of other religions wore fezzes and they knew who was of which faith based on the color of the fez: Turks wore a deep red fez, Jews wore a dark brown fez; this is how they distinguished one another. My grandfather continued to hand down all Jewish customs and all the feelings that a Jew should have, and this was the same with my father, who wanted to raise us in a Jewish spirit and strictly observed the rules that were customary among Sephardi Jews. The Sephardi Jews were religious, but they were in no sense Orthodox. They were not too religious like the Jews in Poland, Ukraine.

The Jews socialized together. This helped ensure that marriages were, in general, Jewish. A Jewish man was obliged to marry a Jewish woman and vice versa. If the opposite happened, it was considered a great misfortune and an embarrassment to the family. This also was true for the other religions. When I was small, my two uncles Hajim and Gedalja were unmarried. Hajim married my mother's cousin Batseva and Gedalja married my mother's cousin Dona, who lived in Istanbul.

I never went to my grandmother and grandfather's; they died before I was old enough to visit them. When Grandmother Sara died, the grave was constructed according to Jewish law. The coffin was made from unrefined wood; she was washed and dressed in a white sheet. The rabbi put a lump of dirt under her head and she was buried. When the family came home, according to Jewish law, they were all obliged to sit on mattresses on the floor for seven days. Family members brought them food and all 13 children sat there for these seven days. Grandfather literally stopped eating and lost his will to live. After a month he died, as well. Again a funeral was held, Kaddish was recited and the children were left without parents. Fortunately, they were all grown up; the daughters were already married. Life went on in the same way with the older children helping the younger ones.

My father was the second-eldest son. Majer, the eldest, contracted tuberculosis and died, so that my father became the "pater familias," playing the role of head of the family. I remember one occasion when his eldest sister and the youngest brother, both of whom lived in Bjeljina, quarreled. One day a letter came from his eldest sister in which she asked my father to intervene as head of the family in her dispute with Gedalja. My father understood that this was not something serious. He invited them to Belgrade, where we lived. They came and, in short, he told them: Kiss and make up.

My mother's parents were also in love with one another and they had nine children, eight daughters and one son. They lived in Gracanica. They were also traditional, but not Orthodox. They celebrated all holidays at home. On his deathbed, my grandfather asked my father, his son-in-law, to take care of his family. My father was an exceptionally good and generous man and he promised to maintain the family, and he did help as much as was possible. The hardest thing was to marry off eight girls, each of whom needed a dowry and a husband. My father played the biggest role in marrying off all these girls. The family got along well, they all loved each other; it was like one soul and one body.

Childhood memories

I remember, I was still quite young and we were still living in Sarajevo, celebrating one Pesach, the holiday that recalls the Jews' salvation from slavery in Egypt. All the traditions connected to that holiday relate to fleeing from slavery and the Jews' 40-year stay in the Sinai desert. I remember my father put a piece of matzah in a big cloth napkin and he put it on my back, as a symbol of how the Jews quickly baked their bread so that they could get on the road to the Red Sea and Sinai during the night.

While living in Sarajevo, until 1934, we were members of the Hashomer Hatzair Zionist society, known as Ken. The organization's goal was to once again create Eretz Israel, based on socialist principles, and we prepared ourselves to go to Palestine, which was part of the British Empire. There we intended to work on kibbutzim. When we moved to Belgrade in 1934 we enrolled in the local Hashomer Hatzair. We socialized mainly with Jews. There were many friends; unfortunately all are dead and I will not mention them because it would make me cry.

During the war, my generation suffered the most. I was 18 when the war began. In Belgrade we lived very well; we socialized mainly with family. My father's family was mostly in Belgrade and my mother's family, in Sarajevo. Our house was a meeting place for the whole family for holidays and

different parties. We would get together, sing Sephardi poems; I remember the sad Sephardi ballad "Adio kerida non kjero la vida."

One day my father received a letter from his younger brother in Sarajevo, saying that his business had failed. He had a coffee-roasting enterprise, but he was not skilled and capable enough, so that enterprise went bankrupt. My father invited all his brothers and sisters to come to Belgrade at the same time, a week when there was no work. They gathered in our big dining room and my father said: "We have gathered here to see what we are going to do with our Mihael. You all know that he is not so hard-working and not so capable, but he is our brother. We helped him two previous times and you know that Jewish tradition says that one must help three times. This means we are still obliged to help him." Everyone agreed, and my father wrote how much he thought each brother and sister should give. First he read his own name and the biggest sum, then he read the rest of the names and what he thought they should give. Everyone agreed, Father found a shop at the Jovanov market, where he and three other brothers had shops, gave him merchandise and made the shop functional. Mihael came from Sarajevo with his wife and daughter, and they lived a nice life until 1941, when the pogroms began.

My father was an exceptionally good man and he wanted to help people, especially Jews. One day in the synagogue, a Jew from Dorcol told him about a poor woman who had a young man she wanted to marry, but she did not have the financial means to get married. My father told the man to invite the young girl to his shop. That day, there were only a few customers in the shop. I had come to help my father. A pretty, dark-haired girl came in, she had beautiful big eyes and pretty, curly hair. Father called over one of the apprentices and began to cut material for the dowry. I remember that he first took materials for blankets, then sheets and pillows - two big bundles of textiles. The young girl began to cry because she was embarrassed. I brought her a chair. When everything was prepared, my father had the delivery boy put them on a cart. I watched her go down the street, happy, thinking that soon she would marry and her greatest wishes would be fulfilled. What is interesting is that my father never told anyone. I remember sitting with my mother after the war, and telling her the story from the beginning to the end.

When we arrived in Belgrade we moved into an apartment on Jovanov Street, in Mr. Alkalaj's house. We had a beautiful three-room apartment with floor-by-floor heating. My father had a shop on Visnjicev Street in the Jovanov market. This was considered the Jewish market because all the shops were owned by Jews. There were four other brothers and one sister in the same market. We lived very well without problems. With respect to the country itself, Jews had full rights. I did not experience any anti-Semitism personally, nor did my family. This is because the Serbs were always inclined to be friendly to Jews.

In Sarajevo I went to the first grade of elementary school at Maria's Palace, and afterward in the second grade they enrolled me in the Kolo Srpskih Sestara School, an elementary school where there were better conditions. I had a wonderful teacher, Lala Susnic, who thought of us as if she were our mother. We loved her, listened to her and we learned a lot from her. During all of my schooling in Sarajevo, I went to Hashomer Hatzair, where we socialized, sang and danced. We wore gray shirts like on kibbutz, and we prepared ourselves for our eventual departure for the kibbutz. In Belgrade, the atmosphere was much warmer than in Sarajevo because Dorcol, the neighborhood where I lived, was Jewish. It was full of Jews who knew each other, socialized and helped one

another.

I enrolled in a secondary school for engineering, which was, in general, a school for children from modest backgrounds and poor financial situations. When they finished this secondary technical school, which lasted four years, they had a skill and were able to support themselves. I enrolled in the architectural division; one of my sisters enrolled in architecture and the other in medicine.

During the war

In 1939, World War II began. The Jews were nervous because they knew that Hitler had the worst intentions for the Jews. However, there was hope because the English and French were big powers, and it was hoped that they would resist Hitler. However, in 1940, Hitler carried out a surprise attack via Belgium on the French, who capitulated two weeks later. Everyone was upset, but optimism was greater than pessimism. There was hope that we would survive, that we would defend ourselves and somehow avoid the worse-case scenario. However, on March 27, 1941, the Tripartite Pact, which Yugoslavia had signed, was dissolved, and on April 6 the Germans began a surprise bombing campaign in Belgrade. We were on Jovanov Street, in Dorcol. The Germans bombed that Jewish neighborhood especially hard. We fled to a village near Belgrade. When the bombing was over, we returned home, took the necessary things and naively headed toward Thessaloniki on foot. However, we did not even manage to reach Mladenovac, 50 kilometers south of Belgrade, before Yugoslavia capitulated, and the army disintegrated. I saw with my own eyes how the army fell apart, gave over the weapons and was captured. When we arrived in Belgrade the Germans were already there and immediately began a census of the Jews in the Pozarna command. They made lists, and everyone had to wear a yellow band and go to work cleaning the city, which was destroyed by the German bombing. It was clear what was going to happen so we decided to go to our uncle's home in Tuzla, thinking it would be better there because it was part of the Independent State of Croatia. My older sister, Ina, remained in Serbia with her husband.

In Tuzla, the first few months were relatively calm. Then they started to make us register as well. They took us into forced labor in German garrisons, to a distant village where there was a sawmill, and we loaded planks and the like. When the partisan movement began, the repression started in earnest. Every day we read announcements about which Serbian partisan villages had been burned down and who had been killed. At the end of 1941, my younger sister, Sida, and I participated in the uprising, and we received permission from the anti-fascist organization to join the partisans. We made this request much earlier but were denied because our house was a shelter for messengers traveling from Sarajevo to Zagreb. Before leaving, we went to our parents and simply said we were joining the partisans. We asked a relative who had escaped from Sarajevo to Mostar to send someone with documents to take our parents to Mostar. We left into the pitch-dark night. I remember there was a curfew until 7 a.m., and my sister and I left at 6 a.m. The streets were empty except for the mounds of snow that squeaked under our feet. A three-man Ustashe patrol passed us. I hugged my sister so they would think that we were lovers, and not be suspicious. We reached an illegal apartment in Krek and waited there for four days. However, our messenger never arrived. On the fourth day, a comrade came to tell us that we could not go to the partisans, but would not say why. We returned home and only later learned the reason: On Majevica, a mountain above Tuzla where the partisan movement had a presence, Chetniks attacked the partisan headquarters. There were many dead, including the messenger who was supposed to

come for us. They slaughtered him. We were in Tuzla a few more days. One day, as I was finishing lunch, two Ustashe came. They had knives on their bayonets. They took me to the prison; there were already a lot of Jews there, including my father. This was the first round, and they only took Jewish adult males. We were all sentenced to Jasenovac. There was no trial; we only received the sentence stating that we had been condemned to Jasenovac. 130 of us were taken to the camp. Of these 130, I am the only one who survived that dreadful Golgotha known as Jasenovac.

Jasenovac was the biggest camp in the Independent State of Croatia, a quisling state. It was said that almost all of Croatia was strewn with these camps. Jasenovac devoured about 700,000 people: 25,000 Jews, some Gypsies and 650,000 Serbs. They were all innocent people who were taken there solely based on their origins. They say that it was one of the cruelest camps because the killing was done manually. The Ustashe killed people in the most bestial manner. They left the people without food so that they were weak, to ensure that resistance was impossible. They killed with knives, hammers and wooden axes, like the ones used to chop wood in the forest. People fell from hunger and exhaustion. The worst was when the Ustashe would grab someone in front of all of us, put his hand behind his back and slaughter him. I saw with my own eyes how one Ustashe, after slaughtering someone, licked the knife on both sides and said: "Oh how sweet Jewish blood is."

One day the Ustashe took 20 of us young and strong men to a big meadow near Jasenovac and ordered us to dig a pit. It was clear that this was a grave. By its size we could tell that it was going to be a massive killing. When the grave was dug, they ordered us to move 10 meters away. They brought between 200 and 250 Jewish and Serbian children - exhausted, hungry with ripped and dirty clothing - and one by one brought them toward the pit. One Ustashe used a hammer to hit each child on the back of the head and threw him in the grave. I expected they would kill us as well, but we were fortunate. Watching all of this, I wept like a small child. Standing next to me was a Jewish man who was older than me, about 30 years old. He was obviously religious, and he turned his head toward the heavens and said: "God, if you exist send lightning from the clear sky and strike these criminals." The Ustashe continued to kill the children. You could hear the screaming voices of children who were to be hit, the dull fall of children into the pit. The man next to me again turned his back to this cruel picture, made the same plea loudly. He fell to his knees and wept like a small child: "God was silent and the criminals did their work."

It was clear to me that there was no salvation in the camp; no one was getting out of this hell alive. The only way to survive was to escape and join the partisans. One morning when we were lined up in front of the barracks, an Ustashe came looking for people who had done construction work in the past. The day before, I asked the head of that construction group to take me into the group since I had finished a secondary technical school. This is how I got out of the camp. We went about 100 meters, where the Ustashe had their barracks. We were supposed to build several rooms for officers in those barracks. I was cutting planks of wood on the barracks' stairs when I realized that someone was holding the plank. I saw a young man in Bosnian village clothing holding the plank. When I thanked him, he said he could see I was having trouble and wanted to help. He asked me what I was doing there; I told him I was a prisoner and he innocently asked me what I had done. I told him I was a Jew. He said, "Of course you are not imprisoned because of that." It confused him. When it came time to get food at the kettle, he sat next to me, ate half of his portion of beans and then offered me some. I devoured those beans. Then he reached into his bag and gave me a piece

of bread that his mother had prepared for him. He had volunteered for service in the Ustashe. I asked him why and in a Bosnian dialect he told me: "A town crier came to the village, a drummer who brings news, and told us that those who voluntarily enlist in the Ustashe will serve for only one year, will receive a salary and their family will receive pensions. Those who do not go voluntarily will be forced to be home guardsmen, they will have to serve two years, they will not receive a salary and their families will not receive pensions. I concluded that it was wiser for me to volunteer."

The next day I came to the same work place. All the young men were dressed in Ustashe uniforms with wide belts. They had had a political lesson in which it was stated that Ante Pavelic was the father of all Croats, the Independent State of Croatia was the mother of all Croats, and no one other than Croats had the right to live there, the rest needed to be killed. In the afternoon, I expected that young man would again offer me food. But he looked at me in an unfriendly manner and threw in the trash the food he did not eat. Ten days later, in March, there was a rain storm. The water was so strong that it broke the levee that was protecting the camp. They woke us at midnight, gave us shovels, hammers, spades and took us to the levee. We worked all night shoveling dirt, but the water advanced so aggressively that it was all washed away. When dawn came, I was so tired from filling up the hole, I stood for a minute to rest. Suddenly I felt a strong strike on my back. I barely could hold myself but leaned against the hammer I was holding. When I looked up to see who had hit me, I saw the young man who had given me half of his beans on his first day with the Ustashe. When he hit me I turned toward the Ustashe officer standing under the levee; he nodded to the young man to continue. A boy was standing next to me with a shovel, and he was constantly pouring earth on the stream of water. This Ustashe, whose name was Muhamed, hit him on the head with a club. He fell to the ground. It was obvious that his skull had been broken. He fell in such a way that his body stopped the flow of water from the levee. Then the officer jumped up the levee and told him he could continue to hit people. He killed another five or six people who they put on top of the water flow, and that is how they stopped the water. We were ordered to pour earth over the bodies and to stamp it down with mallets. That is how the water was subdued.

Because of the flood, I was transferred from Jasenovac, with my father and other prisoners, to Stara Gradiska. The conditions for escape were even worse; Stara Gradiska was a fortress that the Austro-Hungarians built on the border with Turkey. Fortunately, one day I overheard that the Ustashe were going to select people for agricultural work. I cleaned myself up: I wiped off the mud, brushed off my clothes, shaved and brushed my hair. In the afternoon, there was the selection. Every line-up was dangerous because one never knew if they were selecting for killing. When I saw they were choosing young and strong men, I understood that this was not a trick; it was really for agricultural work. They choose about 20 of us. We were transported by train to an agricultural estate that formerly belonged to the Orthodox Church in Fericanci. Once again I was lucky. The Ustashe needed guards for the cattle they had stolen from the Serbian villagers; I was chosen to look after the cows. While we guarded the cows, the Ustashe guarded us. Since that summer was quite dry, there was no grass and they took us north to Obradovac, another Serbian village where the Church owned land. There we made connections with the villagers and planned our escape. The villagers brought us food, and were ready to help us in any manner.

The original plan was to attack the Ustashe, to kill and to save ourselves. There were 30 of us and 20 Ustashe. The man who cooked for the Ustashe had access to the anteroom where there were rifles, bombs and weapons. We thought that Dragan, the cook, could steal some bombs, and we would sneak up on the Ustashe while they slept, throw bombs at them, steal more weapons and kill them. However, they caught Dragan writing illegally to his parents, took him to Fericanci and slaughtered him. Another possibility arose while I was watching the cattle. The 10 milk cows grazed in the meadow. The Ustashe would come to check on me from time to time; there were always two of them guarding the prisoners while we watched the cattle. One afternoon as the cattle cooled off in the shade, a villager cutting oak nearby started eating, turned toward me and began whistling. This was a sign that he wanted to give me something to eat. I went over, and he asked me if I wanted to eat, cut me a piece of bacon and bread. I devoured the food. Then he asked me how it was with the Ustashe. To be safe, I said it was good for me. He told me he knew the Ustashe well. With that, he unbuttoned his shirt and showed me a still-unhealed knife wound on his chest, where they cut him. I asked him how he survived and he told me that he did not admit to anything and they let him go. He told me that his was a village of the national liberation council and that it could be arranged that the partisans attack our camp and liberate us during the night, and we would attack them from the inside. We waited months for the partisans to come, but they did not.

These two plans were created so that the Ustashe would be destroyed and the prisoners saved. After our first plan, partisans from the area appeared and the Ustashe brought another 10 men, so that we were 30 and they were 30. The partisans were not going to come, and we made an alternative plan. We decided to use the 10 minutes we had for getting the cattle from the camp to the pen to flee, if the Ustashe were not with us. When we seven returned from herding, the Ustashe left us and returned to the camp. We continued the 100 meters to the pen, and saw that we were alone. We jumped through the wires. We had to run across a meadow that was more than 1½ kilometers long, and we were constantly waiting for the machine guns to start firing on us. Once we reached the forest, it was easier. The villagers had left us seven clubs - which we needed more for the psychological help. The next morning we had already found the partisans and were divided into units. Of the seven of us, three died in battle; four lived to see liberation.

The seven of us escaped from camp on September 12, 1942. We were six Jews and one Croat, a veterinarian and member of the Party. He was arrested because he was a party activist at the veterinarian faculty. His name was Zorislav Golub. I advanced quickly in the partisans. We were all well received without a trace of anti-Semitism; they were happy and satisfied to have such qualified and capable people. All of us who had escaped from the camp distinguished ourselves with great bravery and courage and fought selflessly against fascism. We were all decorated and received promotions. After only three months, I became a company commissar. I was wounded in February 1943 and was hospitalized. I was operated on without any pain medicine in the worst and most meager conditions. Later, since I was an invalid, I was transferred to the command area. In 1944, I became a commissar of the Vocin airport where the English mission was stationed and where English planes came to give support to the partisans. In 1945, I returned to my brigade, the XII Slavonska, and became the head of the brigade's propaganda department. I came to Baljburg with the brigade on May 15, 1945, two weeks after the German capitulation. In Vocin, we surrounded a group of a 100,000 Ustashe who surrendered thanks to the English who were there with tanks.

Post-war

In May 1945, I came to Belgrade for medical treatment and to see if any of my family had survived. I found my brother-in-law's sister, who called my sister Ina and her husband. That evening, we saw one another again for the first time after four torturous years. They did not end up in camps; they were in the partisans and were decorated for their work. After a few days my younger sister, who was in the Dalmatian division, came to Belgrade, and a few days later my mother, who was in Bari, arrived. Our father was killed in the most bestial manner in Stara Gradiska.

After the war, we all began to work. My younger sister finished her studies; my older sister worked in administration; and I enrolled in the gymnasium, to compensate for the time I had lost, and I worked at Jugopetrol at the same time. In two years, I finished four years of gymnasium, graduated and enrolled in the architectural faculty in Prague. The period of the Informbiro arrived, when Tito broke off relations with Stalin; I returned from Prague and continued my studies in Belgrade. I graduated and began to work as an architect. I retired as the director of the planning firm Jugoprojekt, a large consortium planning firm.

I have had contact with the Jewish community since the first day after the war and uninterrupted contact with our people. I go to events and participate as much as I can. In 1999, I received an award from the Federation of Jewish Communities of Yugoslavia for my work. I wrote a book entitled "The Danon Family Tree Stump, a Memory of Jasenovac," in which I described the suffering to which the people of Yugoslavia were exposed, specifically the Jews. I received the first prize and used the prize money to print the book, which was published in 2000. The book is being translated to English, and I hope an English version will make its way around the world. I believe that this truth should be heard by all people, all nations, all countries because it is something that must not be allowed to happen again. There were such terrible things that the human mind cannot comprehend how terrible they were, or how it was possible to survive. From my family, which was a large family - my father's parents had 13 children who each had their own spouses, children, daughter-in-laws, son-in-laws, grandchildren and my mother's side - 45 people were killed. This includes the youngest, Avram, who was 2 at the time of his death, and the oldest, my father's sister Rifka, who was 60. This stuns me, but at the same time, it gives me strength to write. It is my wish that this book will be read by as many people as possible so that people will be careful to intervene in time against enemies and misfortune. One should never stop fighting, and one needs to take preventive measures so that evil does not happen, and if it already happens then only active fighting can save people and humanity.

In the fall of 1949, at the university, I first met Olga Mogin. It was love at first sight. We dated for 1½ years; however, one of her colleagues made an intrigue with her mother and we split up. I had two unsuccessful marriages, as did Olga. By chance, Jasenovac helped me return to my first love. In 1995, I was divorced and Olga was a widow. Olga was at her friend's weekend house. After lunch, she laid down on a chaise lounge on the terrace. The television was on. She had almost fallen asleep when she heard a familiar voice. I was in the midst of my first television interview about Jasenovac and the Holocaust. She had a good cry while listening to me. Afterward she called me on the phone, and we soon married.