

Mois Saltiel After Escaping From The Prison In Skopje



The photo was taken in Shumen in October 1944. We are partisans, just escaped from the prison in Skopje, the branch in Idrizovo. We became partisans in the 'Vassil Kolarov' squad and arrived in Bulgaria on 15th September 1944. I am standing in the middle, below me sitting is Mati Avramova.

The conditions in the prison were very bad. It was a two-story building situated in the center of a farming field, surrounded by a tall stonewall, and there was a faucet in the yard. We lived in big rooms, which at first had had spring beds, but when we arrived these beds were taken away and wooden bunk beds with hay mattresses full of dust and bugs were made for us. We were 19 Jews there. To name but some of them: David Shabbat, Samuil Nisimov, Isak Samuilov, Solomon Haimov, David Solomonov, Rudolf Levi, Rudolf Benvenisti, Isak Alvas and others. We were allocated in eight cells.

We were often sent outside on the field to do hard physical labor – harvesting and other things. We organized the escape of four people – two local Macedonians and two Bulgarians. They contacted the partisans in Macedonia and together with them arranged for some progressive soldiers to be sent as guards to the prison.

One of the organizers was Metodi Stoev, who kept in touch with the soldiers and was allowed to sleep outside prison – in the rooms where the guards slept. Vasil Ivanovski, who managed to escape, contacted the partisans and organized the contact with the partisans.

We realized the escape in the following way. After we, the political prisoners, were taken out to do our everyday work on the field, the older one of the guards was distracted by a political prisoner with some stories. When he was no longer paying attention to the other four prisoners, they managed to escape.

After the escape while we were on our way to Bulgaria with the Macedonian brigade a big army unit came from one of the villages to accompany us, because they saw that the situation in Macedonia was not good for the Bulgarian army. We dressed in army uniforms and reached Bulgaria on 15th September 1944.

I went to Kjustendil and from there to Razgrad to look for my family. I arrived in Shumen and found out that one of our political prisoners, Metodi Stoev, was already director of the police there. I worked as a policeman for some time to help maintain the people's authority in Shumen.