

Mois Saltiel As An Outlaw For His Subversive Actions



This is me when I was wanted by the police. The police searched for me using this photo and after 9th September 1944 they returned it to me. The photo was taken in Sofia in 1942.

At that time when the anti-Jewish legislation was adopted – the Law for the Protection of the Nation, together with the fascist legislation – we became involved in anti-fascist activities.

One of our activities, for which I was sent to prison, was as much comic as tragic. In 1942 the platform of the Fatherland Front was read on Hristo Botev radio from Moscow. It had some demands and tasks set by the Fatherland Front for the democratic development of the country, including some against the anti-Jewish legislation. We decided to popularize this platform, because the government and the newspapers said nothing.

I was the leader of a number of UYW groups. In one of them we decided to make copies of the platform. Writing by hand would have taken a lot of time and we had no printing house. Then we decided to make copies of some passages in a photo studio. One of the members, Sabat Melamed, worked in one. He took the necessary materials and a cassette for film copying and we gathered in the apartment of Mois Perets on the corner of Odrin Street and Stamboliiski Blvd. at around 11-12 o'clock at night in August.

We started working. But the opening and closing of the box, in which we took the pictures was very noisy. The house was run-down and some Bulgarians lived on the floor below. We had put blankets on the doors and windows so that the room would look dark from the outside.

But we made a lot of noise and when it was midnight the neighbors came upstairs to see what was happening. They tried to open the door, but we locked it. They said, 'You are doing something illegal, we will call the police if you don't leave'. They went downstairs and we decided it would be best to stop working and leave.

One of us, who lived nearby, Leon Levi, took the box with all the materials to hide it at home. But there was a policeman in the café on the opposite street who noticed a young man carrying a box at night. He started shouting at him, 'Stop! Stop!' Leon started running. We heard everything from the room. Leon was caught and arrested.

Meanwhile, Sabat Melamed and I climbed over the roof and walking on the roofs of the small buildings reached the corner of Positano Street and Odrin Street where another friend of ours, Daniel Albahari, lived. We entered the house, waking the people up, but they let us spend the night there.

Meanwhile, when Leon Levi was beaten up, he confessed who lived in that house and Mois Perets was also arrested. That was when our illegal life started. The police started searching for me. They took a photo of mine from home and sent it everywhere. I hid at various places, but the police arrested many of the people who were members of my UYW groups, they organized a trial and sentenced me to death. But since I was under age, I was sentenced to 15 years of imprisonment. The sentence was by default because I was not present at the trial.

Later on, still living illegally, despite my efforts the police caught me because of the betrayal of one man and because I was not shrewd enough to evade them. It happened in 1942. Since I already had a sentence, I was sent to Sofia prison. After half a year I was sent to Skopje prison in Idrizovo.