

USHMM Archives, RG-50.468*0006

Ado Kabiljo who comes from a very religious Sephardi family of small shopkeepers in the Bosnian town of Visoko (about 6000 inhabitants before the war of whom about 130 Jews and almost no survivors) escaped from Jasenovac, joined the partisans. remained in the Yugoslav Army after armistice, served mainly in departments in charge of personnel and retired as colonel.

Ado was deported to Jasenovac in October 1941 with about 50 Jewish males from Visoko. Upon arrival they had to run from the Ustaša command to the camp (12 km) and whoever lagged behind was killed by blows. They were housed in barracks in the swampy section of the camp called Lonjsko Polje. They slept on barren wooden beds in their own clothes and the next days were sent to work or inside the camp on construction of an earth dam or outside the camp in forest work. The work was very strenuous. lasted long hours and the food consisted of a thin soup. On the dam construction the exhausted who would fall were beaten to death and left in the mud. After water penetrated into Lonjsko Polje they were transferred in November 1941 to Jasenovac III around the brick mill. No barracks for them, not even wooden beds. They sat or tried to sleep inside sheds without walls where bricks were put to dry. Many died. Ado told that he felt completely lost, he even did not know what was his name.

Ado's most terrible experience was the death of his mother Laura. They were both at this time in the Stara Gradiška part of Jasenovac camp. He was working at the farm taking care of pigs and she was with her two daughters, Edo's wife Zumbula and his eight month old boy Eliša and other women in the section of the prison called "Kula". The women were deported in February 1942. After a month or so each evening a group of women and children was taken by a truck to the main Jasenovac camp to be burnt in the furnace of the brick mill. It was a very primitive crematoria devised by the Ustaša officer Pišili who later became commander of Jasenovac. The crematoria was not used too long as it was inefficient. But one morning in the beginning of March 1942 Ado and his two brothers who were also in Stara Gradiška got the news that their mother, sisters and Edo's wife and baby boy were taken in the previous evening by the truck to Jasenovac. As they mourned, the next day they learnt that the women were are back at Stara Gradiška. Ado managed to see his mother who told him deliberately in a detached manner: they had no coal enough to burn us. The next evening the women from Ado's family were again taken by the police truck and they never returned. Ado does not know if they were first killed or thrown alive or semiconscious into the furnace.

Of the 25,000 to 30,000 Croatian and Bosnian Jews who were deported to Jasenovac only survived a handful who escaped on the eve of the liberation or before when on work outside the camp. Ado escaped in September 1944 while working in the river transport task force headed by the Jew Minc. He escaped together with a Serb and a Muslim. They killed the only Ustaša guard who was with them on a boat, jumped into the river Sava, swam to the Bosnia bank and with the help of Serbian villagers found their way to the partisans.

Ado described his days as a soldier during the war, his post war military career and refuted the anti-Semitic generalizations about the treacherous behavior of Jews in

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Jasenovac. He married a Sephardic girl from Bosnia. They have a son who is an electrical engineer and a daughter who is pharmacist.