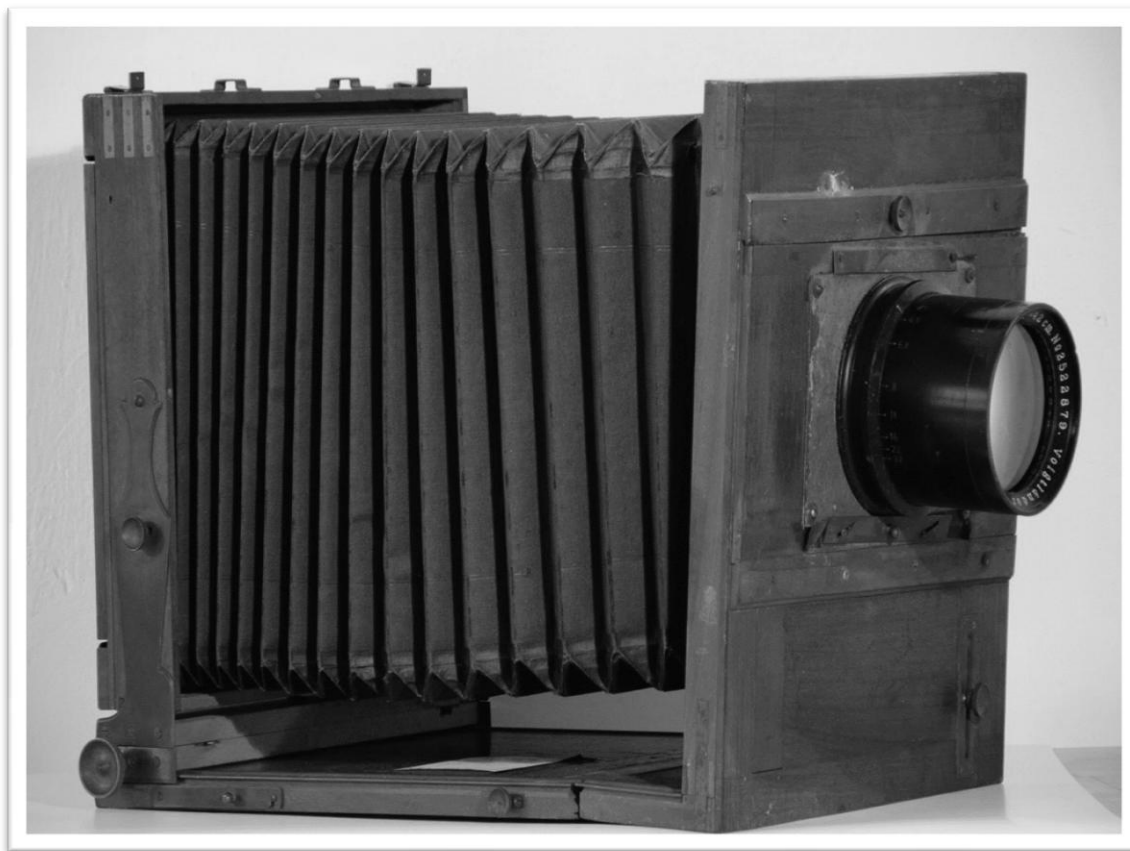

**“Whosoever saves a
single life, saves an
entire universe.”**

“Besa” – The Story of an
Albanian Family Rescuing
Jews



The Story of Two Families: Mandil and Veseli



The Mandil Family



The Wedding Of Mose
(Mosche) Mandil And
Gabriela (Ela) Konfino,
Belgrade, October 17, 1935

The Mandil Children

Gavra And Irena ("Bebba"),
Posing As Models for Their Father's
Studio in Novi Sad



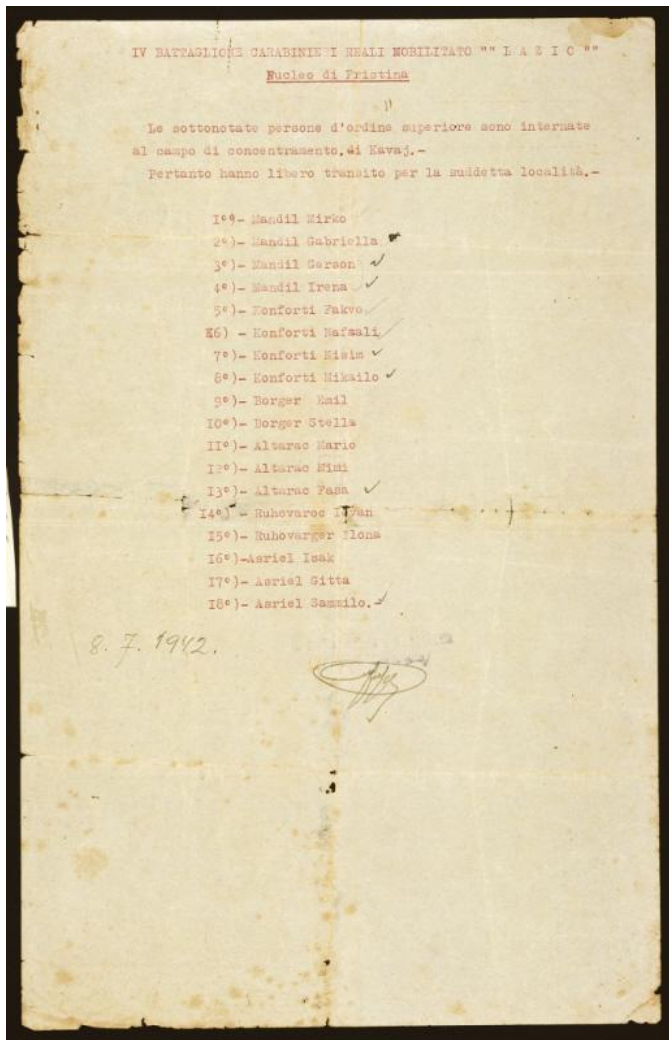
Flight From Novi Sad and Imprisonment in Pristina, 1941



Jewish refugee children in the prison in Pristina, April 1, 1941



Moshe and Gavra in prison



A document issued by the IV Carbinieri Battalion "Lazio" listing the names of 18 Jewish refugees imprisoned in Pristina who have been authorized to leave by truck for Albania. The Mandils are the first four names listed.

The Mandils in Kavaja and Tirana, Albania, 1942



Irena's birthday party, July 27, 1942. Irena is in the white dress. Gavra is to her left. Their mother, Ela, is 4th from left.

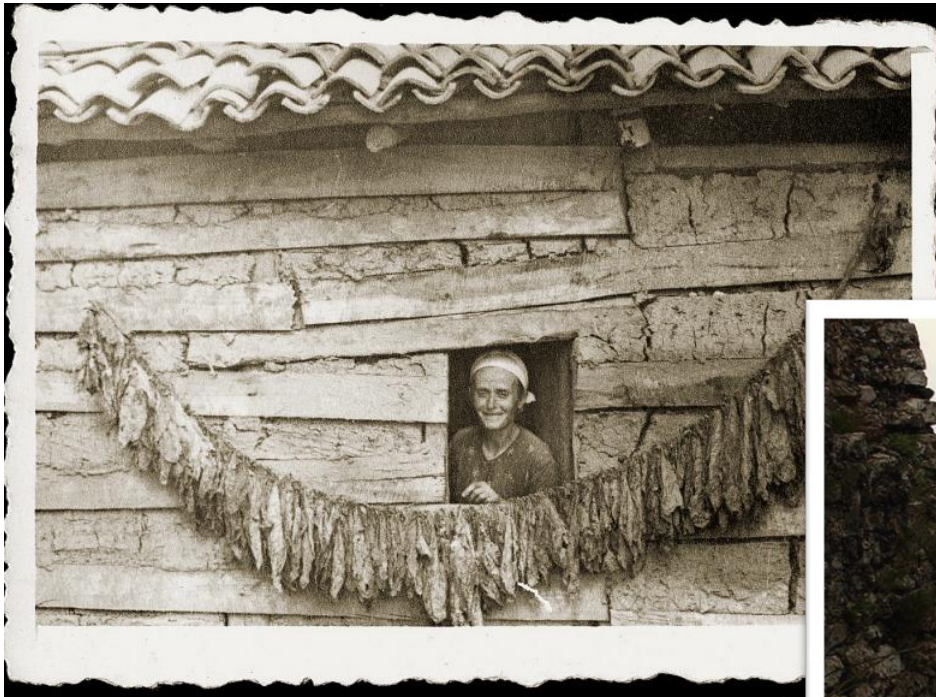
Gavra's class in 1942. He is sitting in the first row on the right.



Refik Veseli



Hiding in Kruje, Albania



Refik's mother Fatima, drying tobacco leaves outside her house in Kruja



The Hiding of the Mandil Family: A Day-to-Day Challenge for the Veselis



“When it started to get too dangerous to stay in Tirana, Refik suggested they bring us to the house of his parents in Kruje. Afterwards I learned [...] that there was a family council that took place [...], with Refik's father Vesel Veseli, Refik's older brother Hamid and his older sister Hyrije. The topic of the meeting was not **whether** the Jewish Mandil family should be rescued, but **how**. It was decided, then, that Refik's father should bring some donkeys to Tirana and that we should ride the donkeys to Kruje.”

From the Testimony of Gavra Mandil, Yad Vashem Archive 03.11543, Band Nr. VT-2652, S. 28f. (Hebrew)

Family Photo?



The families Mandil, Ben Yosef, and Veseli in Kruje, June 1st 1944

Refik and Gavra



Refik and Gavra
October, 1943

“Refik was like a
brother
to me....”



Moshe Mandil and Refik Veseli



“They loved each other very much.”

From Gavra Mandil's Testimony

After Liberation



The Mandil Family with
Refik Veseli after
Liberation in Novi Sad

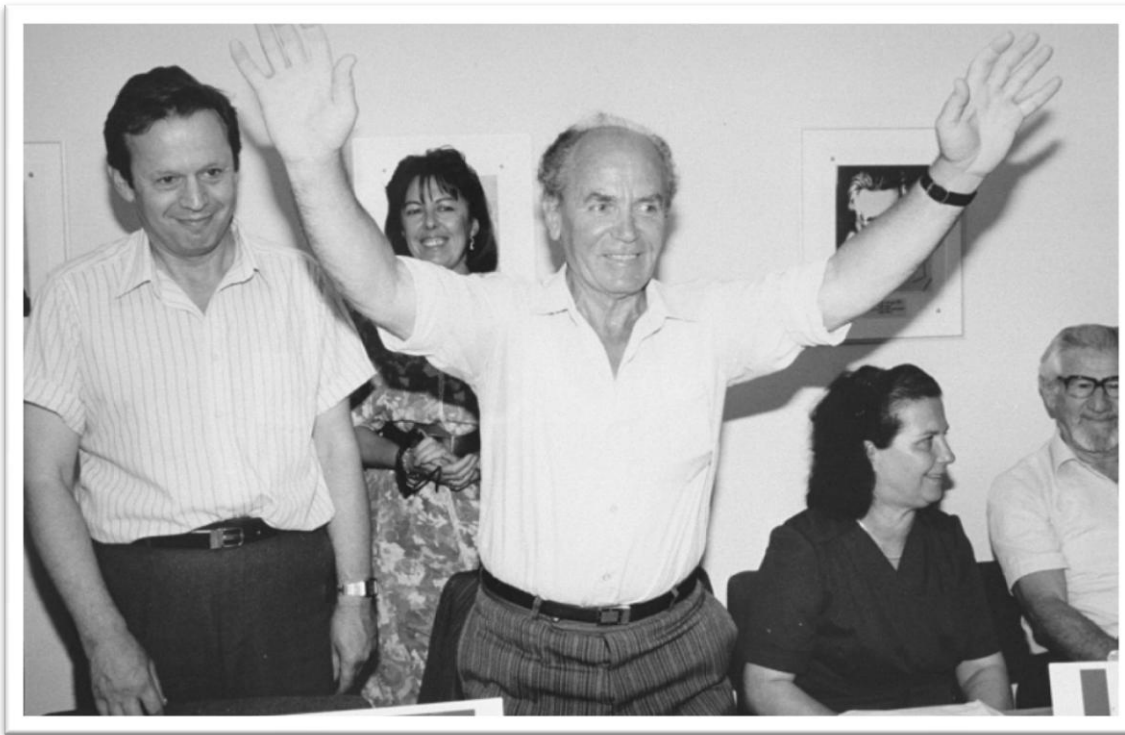
Starting a New Life in Israel



Gavra Studios, Tel Aviv
The studio exists still today:
<http://studiogavra.co.il/>

Recognition

On December 23, 1987, Yad Vashem recognized Vesel Veseli, his wife, Fatime Veseli, and their son, Refik Veseli, as Righteous Among the Nations. They were the first Albanian rescuers to be recognized.



Refik Veseli in Yad
Vashem, Jerusalem, 1990

Besa – a Moral Code



Drita Veseli, next to a portrait of her husband Refik Veseli, posing for the photo exhibition “BESA”

Refik Veseli:

“There are no foreigners in Albania, there are only guests. Our moral code as Albanians requires that we be hospitable to guests in our home and in our country.”

Refik Veseli about the option of reporting Jews to the Germans:
“(…) If an Albanian did this he would have disgraced his village and his family. At a minimum his home would be destroyed and his family banished”.