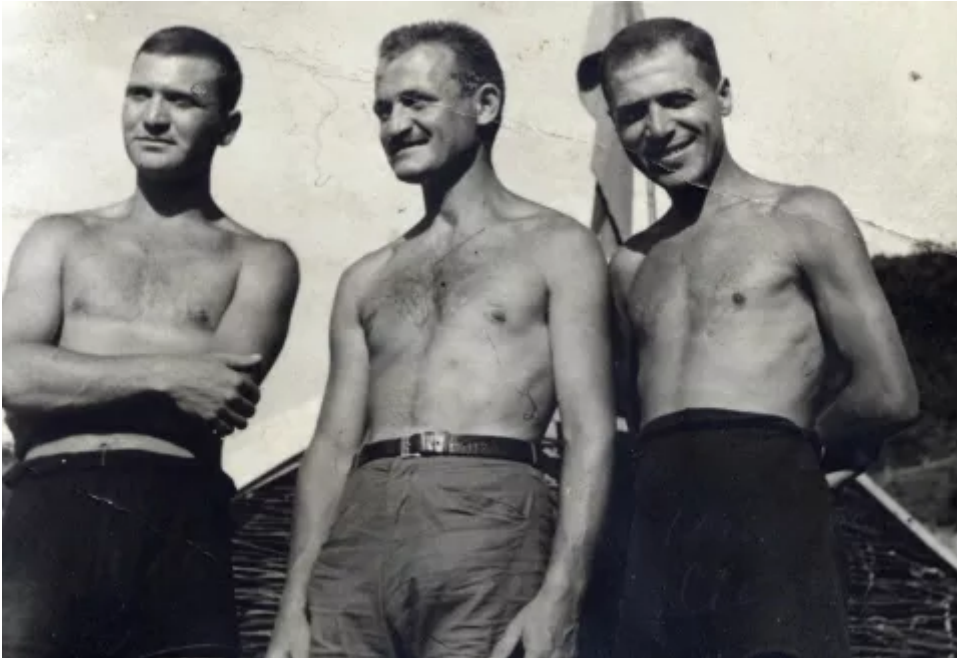


## Isak Levi In The Forced Labor Camp In Gabrovenitsa



This is a picture from the forced labor camp in the village of Gabrovenitsa along the Iskar River to the north of Sofia. We worked on the construction of a road there. The picture was taken in 1943. I am in the center. The men around me were Jewish. They used to dig, while I was sounding out the rocks where we put explosives and then we cleaned the rocks. Vitali is to the right, on the left is Nissim Benbasat, a friend of mine, who later became a journalist in the National Radio. When internments started in the 1940s my wife and I were interned first to Kyustendil, then to Pazardzhik and finally back to Kyustendil again. In Pazardzhik there was only one textile enterprise, in which clothes were being made out of jute and sacks were being sewed. Some good people recommended me to the owners and thus I started working. My wife also joined me there as a weaver, and so did twelve more Jews, who were interned like us. They were very grateful to me for that. So the winter of 1943 finally came to its end. During the next spring I received an instruction to go to a forced labor camp. All young men were mobilized. We were sent to the village of Gabrovenitsa, 10 kilometers away from Pazardzhik. We were accommodated in sheds and we started digging. Yet, the chief engineers from the textile factory decided that they needed me. After I had been in the camp for two days one of the factory's owners, Sotirov was his name, together with the local colonel went to the camp's superior and asked him to release me. He agreed and thus I got back to work. The other Jews were both happy about me and envied me. I was released from the forced labor camp because the order said that if there were more than three brothers in a Jewish family, one of them had to be liberated from the forced labor camp.