

# The Veseli Family

## Easy to read life story



HOLOCAUST  
MEMORIAL  
DAY TRUST



The Veselis and the Mandils at the Veseli home.  
Photograph from Yad Vashem.

### Key words

**Muslim:** People who follow the religion of Islam.

**Albania:** A small country north of Greece.

**World War Two:** A large war fought in Europe from 1939 – 1945.

**Jewish:** People who follow the religion of Judaism.

**Nazi Party:** The group who were in power in Germany from 1933 – 1945, led by Adolf Hitler.

**Resistance fighters:** People who disagree with what the people in power are doing, and try to stop them.

**The Holocaust:** The attempt by the Nazis to kill all the Jews in Europe.

Vesel and Fatima Veseli and their four children were a **Muslim** family from **Albania**. They lived in a small village in the mountains.

One of the sons was called Refik. When he was 17 his parents sent him to the capital city, Tirana, to learn to be a photographer. At the same time a war was happening across Europe called **World War Two**.

One day a new man came to work in the photography shop with Refik. His name was Moshe Mandil, and he was **Jewish**. He had come to Tirana with his family from another country in Europe called Yugoslavia.

Moshe had to leave his home because his country was attacked by German soldiers. Germany was led by the **Nazi Party**. They wanted to get rid of all the Jewish people in Europe.

One year after Moshe arrived, Germany took control of Albania, and lots of Nazi soldiers came to Tirana looking for Jewish people. The Nazis knew there were only 200 Jewish people living in Albania. However 1,000 more Jewish people, including the Mandil family, had secretly gone there to find safety.

Refik realised his new friend was in trouble. He went home and asked his parents if the Mandil family could hide with them in the village. Straight away they said yes.

Vesel came to get the Mandil family with some donkeys. They didn't want to be caught by the soldiers, so they travelled on the donkeys at night, and hid in caves during the day. Finally they arrived at the village.

A little while later, Refik's brother Xhemal (*pronounced Jeh-Mahl*) brought another Jewish family who also needed to hide. Hiding two families was difficult, but the Veselis said yes again. None of their neighbours knew that the Jewish families were there.

In 1944 there was a battle in the village between some Albanian **resistance fighters** and the Nazi soldiers. The Albanians won, and the soldiers left the village. The Mandil family were so happy!

They left the Veseli's house for the first time in a year, and went to the town square. The neighbours were shocked, asking who these people were. Moshe said proudly, 'We are Jews!'

But the Nazis attacked the village again, and all the Jews had to hide. That night the soldiers went from door to door, searching.

Both Jewish families hid in the Veseli's house, and they all stayed silent in the dark. The Nazis thought the house was empty, and didn't search it. They were safe.

Everyone hiding in the house survived the war, thanks to the Veselis and their neighbours. The Mandils went back to Yugoslavia, and Refik went with them to keep training in photography. The Veseli and Mandil families were friends for the rest of their lives, and the Veseli family received a special award for helping the Jewish families.

The Nazis tried to kill all the Jewish people in Europe. This is known as **the Holocaust**. By the end of the war, the Nazis had killed six million Jews. Many Jews who went to Albania were saved by Albanian people. This is because of their strong Muslim belief that it was the right thing to do.

Find out more...

The Holocaust: [hmd.org.uk/holocaust](https://hmd.org.uk/holocaust)

More information about the Veseli family:

[hmd.org.uk/veselifamily](https://hmd.org.uk/veselifamily)

You can learn more about the role of Muslim rescuers on the **Faith Matters website: [faith-matters.org](https://faith-matters.org)**.

You can read more on the Yad Vashem website: [yadvashem.org](https://yadvashem.org).