

Josef Baruhovic's Mother, Simha Baruhovic, At A Jewish Community Women's Section Meeting In Belgrade



My mother Simha (center), my sister Rahela (left) and I at Aunt Erna's house in Mostar during the war. The photo is from the 1940s.

In 1941, a month or two before the war began, my mother, sister and I moved from Zagreb to Sarajevo.

My father was in the army and my mother wanted to be with her family. The fighting lasted a short period, only two or three weeks, before the Yugoslav army capitulated. My father was taken prisoner, which we only found out later.

Once the Ustashe took over and the threat of danger increased, we left this apartment and moved in with another one of my mother's sisters who lived a bit further out of town.

Very soon sanctions against the Jews began to be issued. At first, a curfew was enforced for Jews (from 7 or 8PM) and we had to wear yellow badges in the shape of the letter Z (Zido = Jew).

Commissars were entrusted to control Jewish property, basically to ensure that the Jews did not try to sell their property. One of these commissars lived in my uncle's apartment.

At this point, special police began picking up people on the streets, ten to twenty people a night, putting them into trucks and taking them to camps. Later, they began going from house to house.

One day my mother's sister, Aunt Erna, sent her Catholic Croatian servant from Mostar to Sarajevo to bring me to Mostar where she and her husband lived.

We travelled by train, and since I was so small, no one asked any questions. A week later my aunt sent a taxi from Mostar to Sarajevo to pick up my mother and sister and bring them to Mostar.

Of course, she had to pay for these interventions. My aunt and uncle did a great mitzvah during the war. They saved and helped many Jews, and at one point there must have been twenty of us living with them.

That is how we came to Mostar, which was a relatively liveable town under Italian control. The Italians were entirely different from the Ustashe, and their treatment of the Jews was much better and more humane.

We had freedom to move around, and we did not have to wear the yellow Z.