

RG-50.120 #06

Bakovitz, Miriam

- 1.00 Bakovitch, Miriam – born Sarajevo Nov. 1921 Jewish neighborhood – Bilava in Spanish – lived there until age 7. Mother from Levy family – her grandfather was synagogue beadle – mother had 13 siblings, grandfather was Jewishly committed, and refused to educate his daughters. Paternal grandfather was a shop owner – sold fruit and seeds. Grandparents had 4 children, one of whom became a communist. Both sets of grandparents were poor. Her parents took pains to live close to her grandparents. Her father was a cobbler and did menial labor at a business office. Her mother worked at a factory for socks. Bakovitz herself was involved in Hashomer Hatzair for many years. Her family was both Jewishly committed and intensely patriotic.
- 1.58 Describes how she and her community became aware of the upcoming war. They encountered refugees in 1938-39. In 1941, her Shomer Hatzair group ceased to meet as the Germans entered Sarajevo. She describes how in March of that year she watched the demonstrations that took place when Yugoslavia on March 27 [Yugoslavia was forced to join Axis on Mar 25, and on Mar 27 a coup ensued. The new government would not obey the pact and was subsequently invaded by Axis powers – Encyclopedia of the Holocaust pp. 1717-1718] People were terrified by the bombardment. Germans entered the outskirts of the city. Jews did not know what would happen to them and were frightened. Her Shomer Hatzair leader proposed fleeing to Italy.
- 2.17 Her father was deported by the Germans in June 1941 and her mother in July. Jews began to be taken to the hills around Sarajevo where they were shot, in early summer. Youth who had lost families, including Bakovitz were taken in by other Jews. Jews were forced to wear yellow badges. She was sent to do manual labor at a military camp Maryunvo [ph]. Sent to work at weapon arsenals.
- 2.31 Germans and collaborators desecrated synagogue, burned its books. Came in contact with Jewish communist partisans. Father was presumably killed after deportation. Mother, along with her sisters and mother, was deported to Jacowa [ph]. Disguised as non-Jew she attempted to convince her mother to flee with her, but the mother insisted on going with her mother and sisters. She hid along with other Jews in the attic of a Jewish man who lived alone after the deportation of his family.
- 2.43 Stayed along with other Jews at secret base for communist partisans. They were betrayed and she was arrested by Ustash[?] and sent to prison. The other captured communists were hanged, although the leaders managed to escape.

- 2.53 Kas she was Jewish, she was sent to a transportation center to await deportation. She planned escape along with other Jewish teenagers but was unsuccessful. With the help of a Jewish woman with influence over the Ustash guards, she escaped to the house of a local partisan. With the help of the partisans she arrived at a partisan dominated village [Sept 1941]. For the next several month, she fought with a unit of communist partisans who at that time were allied with the Chetniks. Describes her experiences there.
- 3.35 In January 1942, a split occurred between the communists and Chetniks, and she fled with a partisan cousin to escape being killed by Chetniks. They eventually joined the main body of communist forces under Tito's command. Describes anti-Semitism among the partisans. In spring of 1942, the partisans ordered all Jews to depart and return to Sarajevo.
- 4.20 Her group of expelled Jewish partisans were hunted in the forests by Germans with dogs. They then split up into pairs, Bakovitz going with another girl. The two traveled to Ilija [ph], a town near Sarajevo, where Bakovitz knew a Serbian family. After a brief stay with the family,. She went on alone to Sarajevo.
- 4.35 She was taken in by a Muslim co-worker of her father's, where she stayed for several months.
- 5.01 She ran away, with the help of a Donobranit colonel of the Croatian Army, and traveled by rail to Mostar[ph], under Italian control, where several other Jews took refuge. Describes conditions. She then went to Methovitch [ph] where her uncle and aunt lived, and lived there in hiding until Sept 194-. She then went to Dubrovnic.
- 5.20 While travelling with a group to join up with partisans, she was captured by Chetniks, but was subsequently rescued by partisans and taken to rejoin her former unit. Describes her work as a medic for the unit. She was sent to accompany a wounded partisan to his village, where she cared for him until his death, at which point she was recalled to the partisan unit. She became an assistant to a doctor who cared for wounded partisans.
- 6.20 Describes daily routine as medic/nurse, experiences with typhus.
- 6.32 Describes problems with finding footwear.
- 6.37 Describes the end of the war. Her unit was greeted enthusiastically as they liberated towns from German occupation. She went to work in Mostar. When given opportunity for furlough, she was sent to a family in Trebinje [ph] as she had no living relatives. Returned to Sarajevo where she was had nurse at a hospital. All members of her family perished with the exception of her aunt from Methovitch and some cousins.

6.52 Describes experiences in the Yugoslavian army after the war. She did not inform her children that they were Jews until age 14. They then began active Jewish involvement. She went to live in Israel in 1972.

7.01 END OF INTERVIEW