

סאנסקי מוסט

SANSKI MOST

DERVENTA דרוונטה

TRAVNIK טראוויניק

BIJELJINA ביילינה

BRČKO זאווידוביצי' ברוציקו

DOBOJ דובוי

ZAVIDOVIC

ואגרב

TUZLA טוזלה

ZAGRE

VLASENICA ולאסניצה

ZENICA זניצה

VISOKO ויסוקו

ŽEPČE ז'פצ'ה

SARAJEVO

VIŠEGRAD

בלגראד

וישגראד

BEOGRAD

WE MOSTAR מוסטאר

SURVIVED...4

YUGOSLAV JEWS ON THE HOLOCAUST

סקופייה

SKOPLJE

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Dr Đorđe BOŠAN

FROM THE LINE FOR EXECUTION MY
MOTHER PUSHED ME INTO LIFE



Dr Đorđe Bošan (Boschan) was born on 8 June 1926 in Senta, of father dr Aleksandar Bošan and mother Paula, née Šrajer (Schreier). He had an elder sister Magda (1922) and a younger brother Pavle (1931). Sister Magda and Đorđe were the only ones who survived.

He completed two grades of elementary school in Senta, and continued his education in Bačka and Kikinda, completing there the elementary school and five grades of grammar school. After the liberation he completed the senior three grades of grammar school in Novi Sad, and studied physics at the Faculty of Sciences and Mathematics in Belgrade. At the same faculty he did his doctoral studies and in 1976 received the title of physicist, Ph.D. He lectured physics at a number of higher education institutions and simultaneously he was engaged in experimental physics, publishing about 130 technical and scientific papers, the most distinguished ones published in the UK, Germany, Hungary and Yugoslavia.

Đorđe has been married since 1954 to Blažija, née, Kosić, a chemist. Their elder daughter Helena Pavlica is an electrical engineer and lives and works in Cairo, while the younger daughter, who specialized in pediatrics, a pulmonologist, is working in Niš.

He has four grandchildren and one great-grandchild, in Sarajevo.

The language spoken in our family was Hungarian. Our parents were religious, but not Orthodox, so in the family we celebrated the high Jewish holidays. We regularly observed the Shabbat. We moved from one place to another where usually there were no synagogues, except in Novi Sad. Anti-Semitism did not affect us directly and personally, but we did feel certain coldness towards us. Until the war, while changing residence from year to year, I could not build permanent friendships. The reason we changed residence was father's dire financial situation because as attorney he had very low revenues and was in search of a place where he would have more work. Father was much more modest than was usual in his line of work. He never lost a litigation, since he took up only decent cases. He often talked to



*DORĐE'S parents: father ALEKSANDAR
and mother PAULA, née ŠRAJER*

me about literature, being a highly educated intellectual, and his scope of interest was very broad – from Ancient Greek philosophy to Rabindranat Tagore, practically his contemporary. He had a huge library which I also used within the limits of my interests. Mother completed secondary education in Baja, at the beginning of the century, at the time when young girls usually did not attend secondary school. Her parents loved her very much, the atmosphere in their home was very pleasant. At home we had menorahs and all the Judaica objects needed for celebration of high holidays.

I was very young at the time, but ever since Hitler's coming to power in 1933 I was following up the escalation of Fascism, which was the only thing that disturbed the family.

We followed up on what was happening through radio and newspapers. We anticipated a tragedy, more by instinct than by actual knowledge.

I finished the fifth grade of grammar school in Stari Bečej, travelling every day by train from Čurug. I enrolled in the fifth grade in the autumn of 1940, and finished in 1941, just after the occupation, in the Hungarian language. Until that time Serbian was the language of instruction in the school. After that my education was interrupted; in the autumn of 1941

my sister was arrested under allegation of being engaged in political work. She was sentenced to many years of imprisonment. Initially, she served the sentence in the well-known prison Márianosztra in Hungary, and later in the great German concentration camps. Father was executed in Čurug on 5 January 1942, during a raid against Jews and Serbs, and his body was thrown under the ice of the Tisa river. Thus, it was my mother, brother and I who remained. Immediately after this event we moved to Stara Moravica in Bačka, with our grandfather dr Aleksandar Šrajer, who was the municipal veterinarian. He had retired before the war, but the Hungarians reactivated his service because of the demand for veterinary services. From May 1942 to May 1944, since I did not attend school, I did apprenticeship in an electrical shop in Stara Moravica. I think I learned the trade well, and it even helped me afterwards during my university studies.



*DORDE with his younger brother
PAVLE in Stara Moravica in 1943*

In May 1944 we were rounded up in Stara Moravica and transferred to the Ghetto in Subotica. Just prior to this, on 19 March, Germany occupied Hungary. We stayed very briefly in the ghetto, where we fed on the ghetto soup kitchen, like an army.

My mother and I managed just once to visit my sister in the Márianosztra prison. In Pest we changed transportation and, passing through Buda, in an alley whose name translates to the blue globe street, we spotted my father's elder brother looking through the window. Our eyes met, but it lasted less than a second. He immediately withdrew inside and closed the shades. We understood that contact with us would be a tragedy for him since he was hiding there. Without a word and without any stopping we moved on. In Márianosztra we saw Magda. She asked when we would be coming again, and mother responded with a sentence that had special meaning for our family:

„When the cherry trees blossom“.*

That was my only contact with Magda.

*Magda Simin published the book „Dok višnje procvetaju“ (Until Cherry Trees Blossom), published by „Bratstvo-jedinstvo“, Novi Sad, 1958. (editors note)

After a brief stay in the Subotica ghetto, an SS officer lined us up and asked all tradesmen to step forward from the line. I was standing to my mother's right, my younger brother to her left. As soon as the SS officer's question was uttered, my mother pushed me forward. By the time I recovered my senses after my mother pushed me, I was in the line formed by tradesmen. I think it was the following day that all the people from the ghetto were put on cargo carriages, including my mother, brother and grandmother. Grandfather Aleksandar had died in Stara Moravica before this. I could not come to peace with this and standing in front of the train I approached the SS officer asking him not to send my mother and brother to Germany. He answered calmly:

„Why not? My wife is also in Germany“.

That was it. The transport took them to Auschwitz, from where none of them were to return. Along with other tradesmen I was transferred to Baja, to a working camp of a German SS division. With this working camp we moved all across Hungary, and subsequently through Slovenia, to town Hoča, near Maribor, and then via Hungary and Czechoslovakia to southern Poland. In May 1945, fleeing in front of the Soviets, the division was withdrawing via Czechoslovakia, along with our working camp. A unit of Soviet tanks intercepted us. Fortunately, our trucks stopped at the entry to a huge neglected cemetery and we hid between the graves. When the situation calmed down we walked on foot to Brno, and from there, by clinging outside on the cargo train, we went to Budapest. There was a kitchen soup waiting for us there and we continued our journey by passenger train to Subotica.

There were about twenty people of different trades in the moving camp. By all standards, it was slavery. In order to enable us to work, they fed us relatively well. We performed auxiliary technical tasks and loading and unloading of wagons. I did not know anyone from the group before. The work was very hard, but we did not have any camp-like limitations like the others. We could talk among ourselves. Actually, we were needed as physical labor, like oxen! We obeyed, did the work, and they tolerated us. None of the group was killed. We were not subject to physical torture. All twenty of us were Jews. That was how it went on until the liberation.



MAGDA BOŠAN SIMIN, DORĐE'S sister, next to him, the only one of the whole family to survive the Holocaust

And just when we thought that we were free, we were surrounded by the military and taken to quarantine. Some days later I finally went back to Stara Moravica. It is difficult to describe the feeling that came over me on the way back, mixed with the joy of having survived and the sadness of having lost my dearest family. The only one who survived was my uncle Mirko Šrajer, my mother's brother, the sublieutenant of the Royal Army who, as commander of artillery unit heroically survived the bloody day long battle in which he destroyed three Wehrmacht tanks in a line withdrawing from Bulgaria. He was taken prisoner. He managed to jump out of the wagon in Erdely, and return home to Stara Moravica. However, he was right away sent to the Hungarian military working units. Once liberated from these units he moved to the Yugoslav Army and, as artillery scout he went with it to Austria. My other uncle, Stevan (Pišta) was with him in Ukraine and Russia, where he was killed in battle.

When I arrived to Stara Moravica, my uncle had not yet returned. I was met by my future aunt, who was keeping the house during the war.

Subsequently I moved to Novi Sad. I lived with my sister and worked for about half a year in the power plant, until the autumn, when I enrolled in the sixth grade of grammar school.

My meeting with the only person from our direct family who survived, my sister Magda, after the war, is equal to scenes from Greek tragedies.

Mirko's wife Vera Šefer and their ten year old son Đurika perished in Auschwitz. My younger uncle, Jakob Bošan, mathematician and a famous chess player, who was living in Kikinda, was transferred with his wife and daughter to the Belgrade Fair Grounds, not to return.

Since 1953 I worked uninterruptedly for twenty-five years for the Electronic Industry. In parallel to this, I lectured physics at the Faculty



Monument by SOLDATOVIĆ to victims of the Raid of 5 January 1942 in Čurug, during which father of ĐORĐE BOŠAN was executed

of Electrical Engineering, the Medical Faculty and other faculties, for thirty-one years, starting in the autumn of 1960, ever since the higher education institutions were established in Niš. I never had any problems in Niš as a Jew, nor did I feel any kind of animosity. In the Electronic Industry I worked as researcher and director, and in doing so I travelled to many countries for professional education.

Finally, I wish to mention that at the beginning of my university studies in Belgrade I lived with my sister Magda, and subsequently at the Jewish students' dormitory in Kosmajaska street.