

Yosif Sabitai In Forced Labor



This is a photo of my father, Yosif Sabitai, in forced labor before we were interned to Ferdinand. My father is on the right. This photo was taken in 1941/42. After the Law for the Protection of the Nation was adopted in 1939, Jews were forced to work on construction sites for no pay whatsoever. My father worked on the construction of the road from Sofia north to Mezdra along the Iskar River. This road, some 200 kilometers long, was entirely built by Jews. When the Law for the Protection of the Nation was adopted, all Jews had to wear yellow badges. I was already 10 and had to wear one. I remember that there was another girl of Jewish origin in the School of Economics where I studied. We both wore badges, but that was not a big problem because the other girls didn't pay attention to it. Before we were interned, we started selling our belongings. Villagers bought our furniture dirt-cheap. We sold absolutely everything. A lot of goods remained in the house. For example, my mother had prepared a suitcase full of dowry for us, the three girls. She gave it to some acquaintances of hers for safekeeping, but we never saw it again. In 1943 we were interned to the town of Ferdinand [today Montana]. We were isolated there in a Jewish quarter and were permitted to go out for only two hours a day. Something funny happened there. My father had an employee from Ferdinand in his tinsmith workshop in Sofia - he was called Peno. This man Peno had a tinsmith workshop in Ferdinand. My father got in touch with him and he became Peno's worker. We were not allowed to work then, but my father used to sneak into his workshop to help him.