



SURVIVAL IN SARAJEVO

JEWS, MUSLIMS, SERBS AND CROATS WORKING TOGETHER DURING THE BOSNIAN WAR, 1992-1995

AN EXHIBITION FROM CENTROPA

Credits for the historical and archival photographs are provided below. All photographs taken between 1985 and 1996 were taken by Edward Serotta. The photographs were taken on assignment for Time Magazine, Süddeutsche Zeitung, and Die Zeit. All these images appeared in Survival in Sarajevo: Jews, Bosnia, and the Lessons of the Past, by Edward Serotta, published in 1994 by the Brandstätter Verlag, Vienna, and Distributed Art Publishers, New York.

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Jewish Museum of Bosnia
Jewish Museum of Serbia
Collection Gerard Levy, Paris
The family collections of Hana Gasic, and Rahela Perisic
Jewish Museum of Vienna
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This exhibition has been created in partnership with the Jewish community of Sarajevo and its humanitarian aid agency,

La Benevolencija. In the early 1990s, as Yugoslavia tore itself apart, this tiny Jewish community decided it could not, and would not, take sides in the conflict. After all, Bosnian Jews traced themselves back hundreds

of years in this region, and for the most part, got along rather well with their Muslim, Serbian Orthodox and Croatian Catholic neighbors.

Out of respect for La Benevolencija, and the non-sectarian role it continues to play today, this exhibition attempts to be as apolitical as possible, and focuses primarily on the story of Bosnia's Jews, and what they, and their non-Jewish neighbors, did for their city during the war from 1992 to 1995. This exhibition, then, is genuinely about how civil society can function, even in the bleakest of times.

This exhibition also attempts to provide at least some background to the Sephardic Jewish history of the Balkans, in order to provide the visitor with a bit of perspective.



Sarajevo synagogue, late afternoon. October 1993.

Sarajevo is a long, narrow city stretched along the Miljacka River, with steep hills rising on all sides - ideal for artillery and snipers; hell on those living below. The airport was in the hands of the United Nations during the siege. Sarajevo residents were not allowed to cross the tarmac to reach the one sliver of land that led to Bosnian government-controlled territory. Enterprising Sarajevans simply dug a tunnel under it.



The photograph above was taken for Time Magazine in April 1995, when Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic attended the Passover seder in the Sarajevo synagogue. The book is the legendary Sarajevo Haggadah. For more than 1,000 years, the Haggadah is the book Jewish families have been using at the dinner table during each Passover seder (around Easter time) to tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt. This particular illuminated Haggadah was painted on the finest vellum, and decorated with gold leaf. Experts surmise that it was made for a family in south-eastern Spain around 1370.

How the book came to Sarajevo is a mystery. We know it was in Italy in the 17th century, and somehow, it made its way across the Adriatic, where a boy by the name of Kohen sold it to a local museum in Sarajevo in 1894. Since Bosnia was then in Austria-Hungary, the book was sent to Vienna for appraisal, where art experts in the Fine Arts Museum declared it to be a medieval masterpiece, hence its fame.

In the picture left are the words found near the front of every Haggadah which are recited on the first two nights of Passover: "All who are hungry, let them come and eat. All who are in need of fellowship, let them come and celebrate Passover with us."

These words became the unspoken motto of La Benevolencija, the Jewish humanitarian aid agency. Although Passover is a holiday that lasts eight days, in Sarajevo, it lasted three years.



The map below, published by Fama International, shows the siege of Sarajevo and the Bosnian Serb gun emplacements during the siege, from 1992 until 1995.



Jakob Finci in the Sarajevo Jewish Museum, January 1994.



Sarajevo was founded around 1460, in the early years of Ottoman rule. The first Jews – descended from those expelled from Spain in 1492—arrived in the city in the mid-1500s. These Sephardic Jews settled throughout the region—from Split on the Adriatic coast to Salonika on the Aegean—and in scores of towns in between.

The Sephardim (Sefarad means Iberia in Hebrew) brought to the Balkans skills they had been developing in Spain for centuries. They excelled as tinsmiths and in leather tanning. They traded in glass, textiles and furs. Centuries of study had taught them pharmacology and medicine.

As the Ottoman Empire continued its expansion through the end of the 1600s, Jewish communities prospered. But as the Ottoman Empire began its long and painful decline, the fortunes of its Jewish communities suffered as well. Many of the Balkan Sephardim were poor and uneducated. By the mid-19th century, the Alliance from France helped developed better schooling, hospitals and social programs.

Sephardic Jews proudly identified with their Spanish homeland: in their mode of dress, the lovely Spanish romances they sang, and with their language, Judeo-Español, or Ladino.

Throughout the Ottoman centuries in the Balkans, Jews were never forced to live in ghettos, as was their fate in northern Europe, and under the Ottomans, there had been no pogroms against them.

Ottoman rule collapsed in most of the Balkans in 1878. Bosnia-Herzegovina was occupied by Austria-Hungary and the first Ashkenazim (or Jews from northern and eastern Europe) arrived in the city.



Courtyard of Il Kal Viejo, the Great Synagogue, built in the 16th century. It remained in active use until German Wehrmacht and Croatian Ustasha soldiers burned it in 1941. It is now the Sarajevo Jewish Museum.



The keys from Spain. Legend has it among Sephardic Jews that when they left their homes in Spain, they took their keys with them, hoping to return.

The story may well be apocryphal, but these three keys, belonging to the Sarajevo city museum, are said to have come from a Bosnian Jewish family that traced its roots back to Iberia.



The Moorish style synagogue was built in 1902 by the Ashkenazi Jews, who began moving to Bosnia after the Austrian occupation in 1878. The synagogue is the sole remaining Jewish prayer house today.



The white leather driving gloves of Julius Brod. This photograph was taken in the home of Ljerka Danon, daughter of Julius Brod. Brod, an Austrian soldier in the

K&K Railway Corps, was given the honor of driving the train that brought Archduke Franz Ferdinand to Sarajevo in June 1914. These are the gloves he wore. That is his snapshot. After the First World War, Brod, a Czech Jew, came back to Sarajevo, which he had fallen in love with. He married there, and left his daughter with his photos and these gloves. The gloves were purchased by the Jewish Museum of Vienna in 1995, where they are on display.



Members of the Sarajevo Jewish community dressed in traditional costume, waiting for the arrival of Austrian Emperor Franz Josef, who visited the city in 1908.



Old postcard of the Sarajevo Jewish cemetery, founded in the 1600s. These oblong tombstones, which stand on a high hill overlooking the city, are unique.



old postcard of Jewish merchant in Salonika.

Approximately 75,000 Jews lived in Yugoslavia in early 1941. In March of that year, Nazi Germany invaded and overran the country. Yugoslavia was then divided among the Hungarians, Italians, Bulgarians and Germans. Croatia became its own puppet fascist state, run by the Ustashe.

Yugoslavia's Jews would travel different routes during the war but their paths led to the same place: death—by firing squads, gas vans, deportations to Croatian run concentration camps, or Nazi concentration camps in German-occupied Poland. 75–80% of the country's Jews were murdered.

Pre-war, 8,000 – 10,000 Jews lived in Sarajevo, of whom 80% were Sephardim, the rest were Ashkenazim. Fewer than 2,000 returned home alive.

Jewish participation in the Partisans was strong, with between 2,000 to 3,000 joining the fight. They

may not have been welcomed in every case, but by and large, families could count on the Partisans for protection, and Jews in Bosnia, and the rest of Yugoslavia, served on the front lines.

A Serbian Jew, Moshe Pijade, was Tito's right hand man. Beno Ruso, barely 20-years-old when the war swept into Macedonia, finished the war as a general. Eleven Yugoslav Jews were designated National Heroes at the war's end, and four of them were from Sarajevo.

Personal stories from the Centropa archive

The Albahari family traced its roots back centuries in Bosnia. This photograph was taken in the Bosnian town of Sanski Most in 1928, where the family owned a struggling dry goods store. The adults in the picture above left are David and Luna Albahari, and David's brother Jakob and his wife Rena. While David and Luna and their children managed to survive the war by joining Tito's Partisans, Jakob's entire family was murdered.



Centropa interviewed Rahela Perisic in Belgrade in 2005.



This photo was taken of Moris and his sister Rahela while they were serving as teenagers in Tito's Partisans. Moris had his bar mitzvah in the Partisans. "A group of Jewish doctors stood with me in a barn one day in the snow and helped me with the service." Rahela married and moved to Belgrade after the war. Moris remained in Sarajevo during the entire siege.



Centropa interviewed Hana Gasic in Belgrade in 2006.



Photograph of children's graves in the concentration camp of Djakovo, Croatia.



The old Turkish fortress of Vraca, which overlooks Sarajevo, was turned into a memorial for Sarajevans killed during the Second World War. Each name and age was listed. Approximately 10,000 names could be found, and of those, the majority were Jewish. The photograph shows only a few of the Abinun and Atijas names—both of them traditional Sephardic names. During the siege of Sarajevo in the 1990s, the Bosnian Serb forces used Vraca as a gun emplacement, and all the names on the walls were destroyed. None are left.

Hana was born in 1940 to Menahem Montiljo and his young wife, Flora Kohen. The photo above is Menahem's family. His father, Moze, is wearing a traditional fez. Menahem's wife Hana is wearing a traditional Sephardic headgear, a tuka. Moze, a textile trader, died shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War. His wife Hana, her daughter-in-law Flora, son Menahem and their baby, also named Hana, were saved by a Croatian, Gavro Perkusic, who went on to receive a Righteous Gentile award.

Since the Montiljo family lived on the top of a steep hill, whenever German or Croatian soldiers would come looking for Jews, the Muslim women of the neighborhood would call down to them, telling them not to waste their breath climbing the hill.



In the photo above, Hani Montiljo dressed in traditional Bosnian costume, 1928. Hani was an older cousin to Hana. Without finding protection, Hani and her mother were deported to the Djakovo concentration camp in December 1942. Djakovo is a village near Osijek, in Croatia.

Around 2,600 Jewish women and children were deported to Djakovo, most of them from Sarajevo. 556 women and children died there of disease and starvation, including Hani and her mother.

As each person died, the caretaker of the cemetery, a Croatian man by the name of Stefan Kolb (an ethnic German), buried each person, and noted their name and burial place. After the war, each grave was marked. The 2,000 other women and children were sent on to Stara Gradiska and Jasenovac. Almost none returned.





Most of the pre-Holocaust Jewish communities in Yugoslavia did not have enough members to function after the Second World War. Where once Ashkenazim and Sephardim had separate organizations, these traumatized communities came together.

Rather than remain in Tito's Communist Yugoslavia, about half of the survivors, including religious Jews and Zionists, left for Israel and the west. This left around 7,000 registered Jews in the larger communities of Zagreb, Belgrade and Sarajevo, with smaller communities in Skopje, Novi Sad, Split, Osijek and a few other cities.

During the decades of one party rule, Jewish communities did not offer much in the way of religious services, but they were exceptionally strong in social and cultural programs. This created—and it is unique in Central and Eastern Europe—a strong sense of belonging among those families that wanted to be Jewish.

The communities were also open to outsiders: there was no argument about “who is a Jew,” allowing only those with Jewish mothers to join the communities. Indeed, in later years, by the 1990s, the rabbis of Belgrade, Zagreb and Sarajevo were all converts themselves and were very much respected by their constituents. Jewish youth clubs created strong bonds; the summer camp in Pirovac (now in Croatia) was a magnet each summer for the country's younger Jews and families as well.

All this would come to an ugly end in 1990. Although most Jews in Yugoslavia did not become nationalists, it became nearly impossible for them to visit each other as they once did. With the economies in freefall and war looming on the horizon, thousands of Jews emigrated. Olivera Cirkovic, who had lived in Serbia all of her life, summarized why she left. “Once Yugoslavia was gone and I found myself living in a nationalist Serbia, I figured I may as well be a Jewish nationalist, so I took my children to Israel.”

Dr Bibi Herdlinger from Sarajevo said, “In my apartment building, and even on my floor, one neighbor turned into a Croat, the next one a Serb, the next one a Muslim. So I took my son, I packed my car, and I drove to Greece, where I registered to make aliya to Israel. I even drove my tiny car onto the ferry, then drove it off in Haifa. They told me I was the only person to make aliya in a Yugo.”



Meeting of Jewish youth in the Jewish community center of Zagreb. Throughout the country, Jewish teenagers often

met. Many lived in communities with only two or three Jewish families, so such meetings were very important. On the left is Eliezer Papo from Sarajevo, with Dani Ovadija also from Sarajevo. Eliezer went on to become a historian in Israel; Dani is an architect in London. Looking on in the white sweatshirt is Zlatica Altarac, and over Dani's shoulder is Moreno DeBartoli.



July morning, Sarajevo Jewish community center, 1988. Around 1,200 Jews lived in Sarajevo before the 1990s war. Religious life was severely proscribed in all of Tito's Yugoslavia, but Jewish social organizations were quite popular. In the 1960s, a community center was attached to the synagogue and it became the focal point for the city's Jews.



Photography Club in the Sarajevo Jewish community center. From the left: Dado Papo, Aron Kamhi, Djordje Tokic. Behind are: Salom Albahari, Gordin Zupkovic and on the right, Igor Hamovic.



Meeting of the Yugoslav Jewish communities in Belgrade, May 1989. Every spring, there was a memorial service at Djakovo concentration camp (see other pictures in this panel), after which participants drove to Belgrade, where all the Jewish communities met and discussed budgets and programs. In this photo, a Jewish community leader is holding forth while community leaders from around the country listen. There would be but one more such event before the collapse of Yugoslavia.



Pictured here are Moric Levi and his daughter Solcika, all from Sarajevo. They are visiting the Djakovo concentration camp, where their families had starved to death.



Sasha Kontos placing a wreath in Djakovo during the ceremony.

In post-World War II Yugoslavia, the Jewish communities welcomed you if your mother was Jewish, or if your grandmother played bridge with someone who was Jewish.



Sarajevo synagogue. This Ashkenazi synagogue was built in the Moorish style, so as to fit into the Sephardic community. After World War II, the synagogue was literally sliced in two. This is the upper floor, the former women's section, which now houses the synagogue. On the floor below, the rest of the synagogue was turned into a social hall.



Milan Hamovic and Rosita Danon at the Pirovac Jewish summer camp, July 1988. They married and soon emigrated to Israel after the war started.



Dunja Sprajc of Zagreb, leading children in song and dance at Pirovac. August 1988.





Timur kept the two-way radio logbook of the Jewish community during the siege.



The two-way radio room was connected with branches in the Belgrade and Zagreb Jewish community centers. Families from all over Sarajevo came to use it.



During the siege of Sarajevo, mail delivery was cut off for much of the time. The Jewish community, which had a logistics office in Split, collected

letters and then sent the mail to Sarajevo on one of the La Benevolencija trucks, which were rarely stopped at the borders and checkpoints. At other times, journalists were asked to remove the kevlar panels from their flak jackets and stuff them with letters, then bring them to the synagogue when they arrived in Sarajevo. Tens of thousands of letters poured into the community center, where young volunteers sprinted all over the city to deliver them. Others set up post office boxes in the community center.



Youth program at the community center on Sunday mornings. December 1993.



Srdjan Gornjakovic attending a patient in his office.

A sign hung over the pharmacy's counter: "Our doctors advise that talking about politics can be very harmful to your health."



La Benevolencija operated three pharmacies during the siege, and everything in it was free.



Micki, a nurse working with Srdjan Gornjakovic, is giving an injection to Donka Nicolic, then in her mid-90s.



Tzitzko had run a small cafe in Sarajevo before the siege. He set up a kitchen inside the Jewish community center and worked on three stoves: one for electricity, when the power had not been cut off; a gas stove; and even one for wood. Twenty years after the siege, Tzitzko is still preparing meals in the community center—and now produces exquisite Sephardic banquets.



Members of La Bohoreta, the women's club, preparing treats for children. January 1994.



Vlado, one of the volunteers, unloads a shipment of goods in front of the community center. November 1993.



A dentist came to call each week to help with fillings and dentures. I know who these teeth belong to, but I promised not to tell.



Between 1992–1995, La Benevolencija organized eleven rescue convoys out of the besieged city. All were underwritten by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. The first two were in the spring of 1992, when Joint, with the help of the Serbian Jewish community, rented planes from the Yugoslav National Army and sent the planes into Sarajevo and then to Belgrade.

The next several convoys were arranged in partnership with the Croatian Jewish community, and those convoys ended up in Zagreb.

The last and largest convoy, which can be seen in these panels, was organized by Joint, La Benevolencija, and members of the Croatian Jewish community. It left on 5 February, 1994. The convoy had 294 passengers, of whom 116 belonged to the Jewish community.

In the weeks preceding the convoy, La Benevolencija, along with a logistics expert from Joint, Eli Eliezer, obtained permission for the convoy to have free passage out of the Bosnian government territory, into Bosnian Serb held territory, through Bosnian Croat territory and finally into Croatia itself.



Danilo Nolic is reviewing the list of those who wanted to leave on the JDC convoy of 5 February 1994. Names had to be submitted to the Bosnian government, the Bosnian Serbs, the Bosnian Croats, the Croats and the United Nations for approval.



Danilo Nolic negotiating with Bosnian Serb officer Brane in the headquarters in Pale.



Jakob Finci welcoming French United Nations officers to the community center, so they could discuss the route of the convoy.



Eli Eliezer of Joint reviewing the convoy with Bosnian Prime Minister Haris Siladjic.



People bringing their bags to the synagogue on the morning of the convoy.



Josef Abinun bringing his suitcases in advance to the synagogue for the convoy leaving 5 February.

When the Jews are leaving, it is a bad sign for the city.

A saying that went around Sarajevo during the siege.



Nada Bojanic (left) saying goodbye to her children, who are leaving on the convoy.



One of six buses making its way across the Sarajevo airport, with UN armored personnel carriers escorting it.



Being helped onto the buses; bidding farewell to loved ones.



Bus making its way across no man's land and into Bosnian Serb territory. The UN escorts ended here. The six buses then drove 20 hours down to the coast of Croatia.





November 1993. The Jewish cemetery became the front lines during the siege. To the right of the cemetery's wall were the Bosnian Serbs. On the left side of the cemetery (just out of sight) and below the cemetery gate, were the Bosnian government forces.

willing to risk their lives to sprint across the city's airport, or pass through a crude tunnel dug beneath the airport tarmac.

More than 10,000 people were killed and about 50,000 wounded in Sarajevo by snipers or mortar attacks. The deaths included scores of people cut down in Bosnian Serb mortar attacks on water stations, a bread line in the central city, and the city's main outdoor market.

Despite shrill international condemnation of the wholesale human rights violations committed by the Bosnian Serb army and Bosnian Croat militia as well as civilian killings carried out by individuals attached to the Bosnian government forces, the outside world undertook no effective action to halt the bloodshed until after Bosnian Serb soldiers and Serbian paramilitary police troops, under General Mladic's orders, executed more than 8,000 Muslim men and boys, along with a number of women and children, after the takeover of the United Nations safe area at Srebrenica.

Three basic rules



When you see people walking, that's where you can walk.



When you see people running, that's where you have to run.



When you don't see anyone, don't go there.

These images display La Benovlencija's efforts to save lives and reduce the misery Sarajevans of all nationalities suffered during the siege of the Bosnian capital. The following are legally adjudicated facts, as established by the Hague war crimes tribunal.

Bosnian Serb military forces besieged Sarajevo from late spring 1992 until late-summer 1995. These forces were under the command of General Ratko Mladic and the political direction of the Radovan Karadzic, both of whom are on trial on genocide charges at the UN war crimes tribunal in The Hague.

Belgrade-backed Bosnian Serb troops controlled the city's water, electricity, and food supplies and used this control to apply pressure on the Sarajevo government. During the early months of the siege, it was possible to bring goods into the city through Bosnian-Croat held areas on the city's western edge. But this lifeline was severed by Bosnian Serb military operations in the late summer of 1992 and by the Zagreb-backed Bosnian Croat militia, which, from October 1992, turned against the mostly Muslim Slav Bosnian government forces in an attempt to force the Sarajevo government to agree to a three-way carve up of the country that would have effectively left the government in control of an unsustainable patch of territory around the capital.

Subsequently, Sarajevo had only two tenuous lifelines: an international airlift into Sarajevo's airport, whose operations were frequently shut down by attacks and threats by the Bosnian Serb military, and a route that ran along the treacherous mountain road over Mt. Igman and linked up with persons



December 1993. The offices of Oslobodenje, the Sarajevo daily newspaper that never missed a single issue during the siege, despite the obvious challenges of having no electricity, little water, very little paper and a completely destroyed building.



Sarajevans crossing the Miljacka, April 1995.



The university library of Sarajevo, which had been built at the turn of the century by the Austrians as the town hall. August 1988.



The university library, November 1993.

"If we only had a little more food, it would be like the Second World War."

Ljerka Danon



The sign reads "Warning Sniper". December 1993.



It seemed impossible to hide from mortars and snipers in Sarajevo. This apartment house is directly behind the Jewish community center. A family was just sitting down to have lunch when a mortar arched over the city and landed in their living room, killing everyone.



Death notices in Oslobodenje.



The Bosnian Serbs had cut off water to Sarajevo, so city authorities opened a few taps in various parts of the city, where people came to do their wash, and fetch water to bring home to clean with, cook with, and flush toilets. January 1994.



Bringing water home. January 1994.



Mrs Wagenstein is burning some books and newspapers in her Sarajevo flat. She purchased a metal stove, like most people did. She

and her husband would cook and sleep in their living room. "Thank God I was a Marxist," her husband, Dr Wagenstein said. "Marx's books last forever in the fire."



Trying to sell something in the Sarajevo marketplace. One week after this photograph was taken, a mortar landed in the market,

killing 68 people.





Of those who volunteered at La Benevolencija, who was a Jew? A Muslim? A Catholic Croat? An Orthodox Serb? No one asked. No one cared.

As Yugoslavia began to disintegrate in the late 1980s, one could divide the population between into two types of people: those who felt the pull of nationalist identity—and those who did not.

Jews in Central Europe had always felt more comfortable in larger, multi-ethnic empires. After all, they were by far the biggest losers in post-World War I Europe, because that unfinished business led to the Second World War and the Holocaust. Some joked that the Jews were the last true Yugoslavs, but that is not correct. A great many people in every section of the country – from Slovenia to Macedonia – preferred living in a multi-ethnic state, rather than being divided up by religion and ethnicity.

Sarajevo had always been Yugoslavia's most multi-ethnic city. It is true that during the war, reporters and public intellectuals painted Sarajevo with a rosier glow than was perhaps accurate, but by and large, people did get along.

When war did come in 1992, most Serbs and Croats fled the city. But a core of Sarajevans remained and many families were of mixed ethnicities. Sarajevo's Jewish community had long been respected in the city as an island of calm, and those who came to volunteer at the community center left their politics at the door.

Reporter to Jakob: Who are the best friends of the Jews in Sarajevo? The Muslims, the Serbs or the Croats?

Jakob to reporter:

That's a hard one, but I would say the Ashkenazim are the best friends of the Jews.*

*Jakob is jokingly referring to the difference between Ashkenazi Jews, who come from northern Europe, and the Sephardim, who trace their roots to Spain.

In January 1992, leaders of the Sarajevo Jewish community, Jakob Finci, an attorney, Ivica Ceresnjes, an architect, and Danilo Nikolic, an engineer, met with representatives of The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in Zagreb. The Joint, as it was known (or JDC), had been founded in 1914 to help Jewish communities in distress. They had been especially active in Yugoslavia in the years after the Second World War, with social welfare payments, supporting youth clubs and helping the communities organize themselves.

Finci, Ceresnjes and Nikolic asked for help in organizing airlifts out of Sarajevo while asking for food, medicine and clothing to be shipped in. At the end of the meeting, JDC's then president, Sylvia Hassenfeld, asked, "Will you need anything else from us?" Ceresnjes replied, "Yes. Body bags." No one said a word, and when the first trucks arrived in front of the synagogue in February 1992, they had everything the community requested –except the body bags.

Just during the Passover holiday in April 1992, a chartered plane brought more than a hundred Jews to Belgrade, where the Jewish community there welcomed all those who they had gone to summer camp with, had grown up with, and now had the chance to watch themselves spread out – to Canada, New Zealand, Israel, England and other countries.

There was going to be electricity that night, so someone handed Novo a video to watch on TV. "I just hope it's not a war movie," he said. Why, the man asked. Novo shook his head and muttered, "Who wants to watch amateurs?"

A refugee arriving in Sarajevo asked where to go for help. A man on the street told her, "Go to the synagogue. They'll help you. And if they can't, at least they'll listen."

On the first day of the shelling, several families in the neighborhood came running into the Jewish community center, asking if they could spend the night (there was no security detail at the community center then—there still isn't). The answer was yes.

Tzitzko, who had a small café in Sarajevo, set up shop and served soup to those who came to the community center. Blankets were distributed. Medicine was provided.

The next day, most people returned home, but came back for meals. Soon Tzitzko had three stoves—one for electricity (when it was working); another for gas; a third for wood.

Down the hall, a pharmacy was set up, and everything in it was free. Upstairs, Vlado set up a two way radio system, and connected it to the Jewish communities of Zagreb and Belgrade. And Sonja put the women's club, La Bohoreta, to work.

Also on the second floor, Srdjan, who came from a family of Serbs and Croats, set up the medical division, working alongside Mirjana, Jasna and Miki.





Zeyneba Hardaga in her daughter's apartment in Sarajevo.

“Come visit me in Jerusalem, Zeyneba, sit with me in my garden, and let’s talk about the old times in Sarajevo, before the war.”

Letter from Josef Kabilo to Zeyneba Hargada

This panel tells the story of Zeyneba Hardaga. Before World War II, Zeyneba and her husband Mustafa were a traditional Muslim family. Zeyneba never went out on the street without her face veiled. Mustafa had a large factory in Sarajevo, and one of his sub-tenants was Josef Kabiljo, a plumbing contractor.

When war came and Jews were rounded up, Josef Kabiljo tried to flee Sarajevo but could not escape. Unable to return to his own home, he knocked on the door of the Hardaga’s, who took him in. “You never abandon your friends,” Mustafa said. Josef Kabilo fled the city again but was caught by the Croatian fascists, the Ustashe. While imprisoned, food packages arrived for him. They had been sent by the Hardaga’s. Lucky enough to escape, Josef Kabilo returned to Sarajevo, and the Hardaga’s, were not only hiding all of the Kabiljo family’s jewelry but were making bank transfers to Kabiljo’s family members who escaped.

In time, Josef also escaped and returned to thank the Hardaga’s after the war. He moved to Israel and spent years telling Israel’s Holocaust Museum, Yad Vashem, about his brave Muslim neighbors. In 1985, although Mustafa had long since died, Zeyneba was flown to Israel and presented with a medallion as a Righteous Gentile at Yad Vashem.

Nine years later, it was the Muslim who needed rescuing. The State of Israel offered to bring Zeyneba, her daughter Aida, son-in-law Branimir and granddaughter Stela to Israel, and the family left Sarajevo on the JDC rescue convoy in February, 1994.



Srdjan Gornjakovic, a Serb doctor working for the Jewish community, is looking after his Muslim friend.



Zeyneba Hardaga on the JDC rescue convoy, 5 February 1994.



Zeyneba Hardaga greeted by the JDC president, Milton Wolf, on the coast of Croatia.



Upon arriving in Israel, Zeyneba received an invitation to meet Israeli Prime Minister Itzhak Rabin. “Thank you so much, Mr Prime Minister,” Zeyneba said. “No, it is us, Mrs Hardaga, who should be thanking you.” After the ceremony, Zeyneba told the journalists that they should all hurry home, because it was Friday and they needed to prepare for the Shabbat.



Denis Karalic in the Jewish community center, November, 1993

Denis Karalic was born in Munich in 1980 to a Bosnian Muslim father and a Polish Catholic mother. When his parents divorced in 1985, Haris

Karalic took his sons to live in Croatia and later in Bosnia, where he worked as a construction engineer. While living in Sarajevo, the family was trapped by the siege. Denis’ brother managed to flee, and Haris and Denis rented a room from Nada Levy, a member of the Jewish community.

Denis and Nada’s grandson, Rasho Bozovic, became best of friends. Rasho was a Serb, Denis was a Muslim, and they worked as water boys for the Jewish community.

In January while sitting alone in Nada’s living room, Denis heard a mortar shell and ran to the window as it flew over. A moment later, a second mortar shell hit the base of Nada’s house, shattering the window, blowing Denis across the room and throwing him against the wall. If he had been standing a few inches to his left, he would have been decapitated.

Djuro and Natalia, Rasho’s parents, offered to take Denis with them on the JDC rescue convoy in February, 1994. They settled in an Israeli absorption center, and Denis remained in Israel until the summer of 1999, when he finished high school in Yemin Orde, a boarding school near Haifa. After a short stint in Atlanta, Denis moved to Vienna, where he spent more than a decade working in the archives of the Holocaust Restitution Agency.



Denis was slightly wounded in a mortar attack in January 1994. Srdjan picked the glass out of his shoulders and back.



Haris Karalic saying goodbye to his son Denis.



Denis inside the bus as it departs Sarajevo, February, 1994.



Upon reaching the Croatian coast, Denis ran out of the bus and down to the sea. This was the first day in 22 months when no one was shooting at him.



Denis Karalic, 2010.