

SARAJEVO ROSE

LIVRIKU

de la orasjon ke se dizi a Stolac
dispoes de TEFILA sovre la
KEVURA del CADIK maalat moreno
arav rebi MOŠE DANON zehuto
jagen alenu AMEN

Tanbjen en este livriku se topa la
orasjon ke se dizi koando alguvu
va a BET AKAVAROT avižitar
algunus de sus dženetores o par-
jentes o amigus.

Treziadado por mano del hadti
MOŠE HAJIM moreno arav Alevi
Serai en año 1897

See page 66 for a description of this pamphlet.

Stephen Schwartz

SARAJEVO ROSE

A Balkan Jewish Notebook

SAQI

n association with

THE BOSNIAN INSTITUTE

Author's Note

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in association with
The Bosnian Institute

To my parents

*“Yo me mancharía toda
Por salvar la mi bandera”*

Classic Sephardic song

“There is no whisper quieter than the print in a book,
to be read by a person in solitude.”

Nehemiah Hiyya Cajón (c. 1655–c. 1730)

“All, young and old, put on the sword,
More voracious than the beasts of the forest;
All cry for liberty, the wise and the ignorant;
The fury of battle rages like the stormy sea.”

Rachel Morpurgo (1790–1871)

“Lord of the world, master of forgiveness, master
of every soul, powerful God of the spirits of all
creatures, in your power are all the souls of the living
and the spirits of all humanity!”

*Livriku de la orasjon ke se diži e Stolač dispoes de TEFILA
sovre la KEVURA del CADIK maalot Moreno arav rebi
MOŠE DANON zebuto jagen alenu AMEN, Trezladado
por mano del hadži MOŠE HAJIM moreno arav Alevi,
Saraj en anjo 5697*

“I arrive now at the ineffable center of my story. And
here begins my despair as a writer.”

Jorge Luis Borges

“That was twelve years ago. I still thought within the
framework of certain ideas. For example, I believed
in Hegel ... the Hegelian Logos in the process of
events.”

Miroslav Krleža

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1492–1992 and Beyond: The Sephardic Legacy

In 1992, Americans marked the cinquecentennial of Columbus's first voyage with heated debates over the merits and demerits of his "discovery." Jews spent the year revisiting the expulsion of the Spanish Jews on July 31, 1492, and re-evaluating the history of the Sephardic Diaspora.

The order for the Jews to leave Spain, originally issued March 30, was extended to the end of July, so that as Columbus's fleet of three ships departed westward, on August 3, the explorer and his crew witnessed other ships raising anchor for the Muslim East, bearing Jews invited to resettle in the dominions of the Turkish Sultan.

It was a time of upheaval throughout the known world: the Ottomans who welcomed the exiled Spanish Jews had pressed deep into the Balkans, and at the same time Granada, the last Muslim kingdom in Spain, was finally subjugated by Castile. Columbus's voyage would provide immense opportunities in the New World for the pillaging impulse of those Castilian-speaking

knights who conquered the Spanish Islamic realm. This turmoil ended a period of nearly 800 years in Spanish history during which the world's monotheistic faiths, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, had coexisted and cross-pollinated as they never have since. But the events of 1492 also resulted in the emergence of new streams in human culture: most significantly, in Ibero-America, but also in the Islamic culture of North Africa, especially Morocco, and in the lands where the Jewish fugitives settled.

In their numbers, the expelled Jews journeyed to Morocco – where many remained in close contact with Spain, as some do today – to Portugal, Italy, and later to northern Europe and the Americas. But above all, they traveled to Turkey and its then possessions in southeastern Europe. Over the next 200 years, the first wave would be followed by thousands of Jews expelled from Portugal, as well as “hidden” or “crypto-Jews,” converts to Christianity who allegedly practiced their ancestral faith in secret. Also known as *marranos* (a hate term best avoided, as it means “swine”), the purported “crypto-Jews” were harried from Spain by the Inquisition along with thousands more whose only offense was their Jewish ancestry.

Thus, Sephardic Jews share with Latin Americans a continuing awareness of the “birth trauma” associated with the year 1492. The Sephardim kept alive the memory of their Spain, especially its main language – the dialects of Castilian that came to be known as Judeo-Spanish (its liturgical form is called Ladino). In their new dispersion, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Macedonia, Greece, Romania, Bulgaria and Albania as well as in Turkey itself, they preserved the Spanish past. In towns large and small, throughout the mountainous Balkans, they lived as they had in the highlands of Spain, in Aragón and Andalucía.

Various books were published in 1992 and afterward, commemorating the date in Jewish history. *The Sephardic Journey*, a catalogue of a long-term exhibit at Yeshiva University edited by Haham Solomon Gaon, includes several excellent essays as well as numerous fine illustrations of Sephardic costumes, religious objects, printing and other items, from all the areas of



Sarajevo's "Spanish" (Sephardic) cemetery, 2000. (Photograph by Stephen Schwartz)

the Mediterranean where the Sephardim resided. The catalogue is especially valuable for its attention to Sephardic achievements in manuscript illustration and typography.

In Istanbul, the Macedonian metropolis of Salonika, Venice, Izmir, and Sarajevo – the five capitals of the Mediterranean Sephardic world – Spanish-speaking Jews, in the 15th through the 19th centuries, wrote numerous treatises on religious law and mysticism, while also creating notable literary works. They committed them to Hebrew print in volumes that are among the finest examples of early presswork. Volumes issued by the Sephardic printers of Istanbul and Fez were the first known books printed in the Turkish domains and in Africa. Some of the graphic art in these early works is exceptionally beautiful, such as the "frame" or decorative page border designed by Alfonso Fernández de Córdoba, which rivals the best of latter-day Art Nouveau design.

Spain and the Jews, edited by the outstanding historian Elie Kedourie, who died early in 1992, offers an overarching view of the Sephardic experience. In nine essays, preeminent scholars like Moshe Idel of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem summarize the

basic Sephardic themes: Jewish life in Spain before 1492, events leading to the expulsion, the situation inside Spain afterward, and the new life of the diaspora communities.

Idel, in his treatment of "Religion, Thought and Attitudes," follows in the giant footsteps of Gershom Scholem in discussing Messianism in the wake of the catastrophe of 1492. Scholem believed Jewish religion and mystical thought were transformed in a messianic direction by the tragedy of the expulsion; but Idel shows his customary critical approach in questioning Scholem's "sweeping and dramatic explanation."

According to Moshe Idel, the expulsion remained a marginal matter in Jewish legal commentaries and poetry. Even in the mystical literature of Kabbalah, he finds little evidence supporting Scholem's views. Idel writes with great clarity on these matters, and offers an especially enlightening discussion of "the Ari," R. Isaac ben Shlomo Luria Ashkenazi, the leading figure in Kabbalah and the greatest single influence on recent Jewish theology. He stresses that while Scholem saw the impact of the expulsion throughout Rabbi Luria's writing, it is nowhere actually mentioned.

However, Idel gives proper recognition to the central role of pre-1492 Spain as a center of Kabbalah, and acknowledges that the expulsion "contributed greatly to the spread of Kabbalah in general and to the establishment of the Spanish Kabbalah as the main form of this lore outside Spain." He also gives due honor to one of the greatest products of all Iberian culture, Jewish, Christian, and Islamic: the *Zohar*, or Splendor, authored by R. Moses de León in 13th-century Spain.

The somewhat mistitled *Expulsion of the Jews*, by the lecturer and performer Yale Strom, is a charming book notwithstanding its confused presentation. Its subtitle, "A Photo-History from the Inquisition to the Present," suggests something impossibly anachronistic. Rather, Strom has assembled a gallery of Jewish traces in Spain and in the centers of the Balkan and Turkish Sephardim, some of which are quite affecting.

The book begins in Yugoslavia, with the Sephardim of Sarajevo, and shows the Jewish life that remained in that city before the

onset of war in the fated year 1992. One of the most moving sets of photographs is that of the unused and vandalized *kbedertabara*, or purification house, built at the old Sephardic cemetery, known to the *Sarajlije* (Sarajevans) as the “Spanish” cemetery, and a gorgeous example of religious architecture. Dating from 1630, it is filled with gravestones in a unique Bosnian Jewish style, many of them inscribed in Judeo-Spanish. Strom also includes photographs from Split in Croatia, Skopje in Macedonia, Sofia and Plovdiv in Bulgaria, both of which possess impressive Jewish traditions, Istanbul and Izmir, Salonika, Athens, Lisbon, and four Spanish cities: Madrid, Toledo, Seville, and Córdoba.

As Strom’s photographs show, Spain has sought a reconciliation with Jewry. Jewish contributors to Iberian culture are officially honored, as with the statue of Maimonides erected by the Spanish government in Córdoba in 1964.

In that spirit, King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia of Spain, in the presence of the Israeli president, Chaim Herzog, attended services in the synagogue of Madrid in March 1992, and the conservative daily *ABC* published a lead article written in Judeo-Spanish by the Sephardic writer Moshe Shaul. The article quoted a Spanish professor, Federico Pérez Castro: “The Sephardic world, for Spain, should be more than a museum piece, however admirable; rather, it should be a living, breathing organ of the Spanish heritage, existing throughout the world, and providing a permanent Hispanic presence in every country and every city where Sephardim are to be found.”

At the same time, as everybody within viewing distance of a television could not but know, in addition to “ethnic cleansing,” mass rapes, internment, and burning of villages, the price of war in Bosnia-Herzegovina included wholesale cultural vandalism: the destruction of hundreds of libraries, mosques, churches, and other monuments.

The Bosnian Jewish community’s wartime work to preserve the memory of its presence in the country, lasting nearly 500 years, centered on humanitarian activities, but also involved “rescuing” the magnificent *Sarajevo Haggadah*, the most beautiful and valuable



Bosnian postage stamp commemorating the *Sarajevo Haggadah*.

illuminated Jewish manuscript in the world. In September 1992, the community held a remarkable observance of the 500th anniversary of the Spanish expulsion, titled *Sefarad 1992*. In three years following, community members worked to produce a volume of the conference's essays in Bosnian and English, *Sefarad 92 – Zbornik Radova*. The issuance of such a book has political as well as cultural meaning, like the preservation of the *Sarajevo Haggadah* – created in Catalonia and probably brought to Bosnia via Italy in the 18th century, and a potent symbol of Bosnian cultural pluralism.

The 26 essays in that volume cover nearly every aspect of Bosnian Sephardic life. The most touching testimonies are brief articles on towns like Bijeljina, the first to fall to Serbian forces in spring 1992, where Muslims were murdered and historic mosques leveled. The Bijeljina Jews had their own *meldar* (religious primary school); they constituted the third largest Jewry in Bosnia before the Holocaust, following Sarajevo and the old Turkish capital of Travnik.

In the book's introductory essay, Professor Muhamed Nezirović of the University of Sarajevo, an outstanding specialist in the Romance and Sephardic fields, compares Sarajevo under the Ottomans not only with Jerusalem but also with the Spanish city of Toledo, based on their similar "tolerance and multicultural physiognomy."

Old Sarajevo, or Saraj, or Bosna-Saray, was the northernmost major Ottoman city in the Balkans for centuries. Unlike the other great Sephardic communities, including Salonika and Istanbul, Sarajevo's distance from the center of Turkish power allowed for an equilibrium to emerge between four cultures, each of which – Muslim, Sephardic, Serbian Orthodox, and Croat Catholic – evolved its own variations in a common means of expression. Sarajevo was the Balkan place where the Sephardim were most fully integrated, although not assimilated.

After 1878 Bosnia came under Austro-Hungarian rule for 40 years. For this reason, the city remained free of the French cultural influence that, impelled by the 19th-century efforts of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, swept Salonika, Istanbul, and Izmir, as well as the smaller communities. In those places, the Sephardic élite, even before the arrival of the 20th century and its wars and genocides, seemed to forsake their Judeo-Spanish culture for the cosmopolitan advantages offered by the French language. Not so in Sarajevo, where there survived, according to Nezirović, "a very pure preclassical Spanish language, just a bit mixed with Turkish lexical elements, and, only in the decades immediately before World War II, [with] the Bosnian lexical inventory."

The Iberian linguistic modes of Sarajevo appeared in print media in such journals as *La Alborada* [The Dawn], established in 1901 by the poet Abraham Aaron Capón. A Bosnian variant of Judeo-Spanish emerged, first using Rashi Hebrew letters but later employing Latin letters and Slavic spelling. There is a distinctive aspect to the development of Bosnian Judeo-Spanish printing in the Latin alphabet. The presence of the Catholic Croats, especially after 1878, was in certain respects fortunate for the Sarajevo Sephardim (at least until World War II and the arrival of the *Ustaša*

terror). Croatian printing over the past 200 years has used the Latin alphabet while Serbian printers have used Cyrillic. Croat printers in Sarajevo thus produced books in Judeo-Spanish, using Latin letters and south Slavic orthography; previously, in all countries, Judeo-Spanish printers had used only Hebrew alphabets, while in Holland, Italy, and elsewhere, books for the *Converso* public appeared in standard Spanish and Portuguese. Judeo-Spanish in Latin letters represented a major breakthrough for Sephardic culture, and facilitated my own entry into its study. There was no tradition of Westernized Sephardic printing in Salonika, where fonts were Hebrew, Greek, or (at the end) Turkish; in Turkey, the tradition of printing Judeo-Spanish in Latin letters emerged with the latinization of Turkish under Mustafa Kemal.

The Sarajevo Sephardim published numerous Judeo-Spanish texts in Latin letters. But in both Hebrew and Latin type, the Judeo-Spanish of Sarajevo preserved certain dialectal characteristics, so that, for example, a 1924 editorial in the newspaper *Jevrejski Život* [*Jewish Life*] read, “*Tomando in konsiderasion las kondiciones ke governan onde mosotros, tokante la lingua in il modo de eskriver mos dechizimos al modo fonetiko ke eskriveri como se melda i kon letras latinas*” – “Taking into consideration the conditions that govern us, with respect to language in the manner of writing we have decided on the phonetic mode, that is, write as you speak but in Latin letters.”

Texts and commentaries from the Judeo-Spanish tradition have also been brought together in *Cuentos Sobre los Sefardíes de Sarajevo*, published in Croatia, where Bosnian Jewish refugees relocated with the outbreak of war.

* * *

Books Reviewed in this Chapter

Gaon, Haham Solomon, ed.: *The Sephardic Journey: 1492–1992*, Yeshiva University Museum Catalogue, New York, Yeshiva University Museum, 1992.

Kedourie, Elie: *Spain and the Jews: The Sephardi Experience – 1492 and After*, London, Thames & Hudson, 1992.

Strom, Yale: *The Expulsion of the Jews: 500 Years of Exodus*, New York, S.P.I. Books, 1992.

* * *

Sarajevo Historical Institute and Jewish Community of Bosnia-Herzegovina:
Sefarad 92 – Zbornik Radova [Collection of Essays], Sarajevo, Fond Otvoreno
Društva BiH and La Benevolencija, 1995.

Papo, Isak, Rikica Ovadija, Gina Camhy, and Clarissa Nikoidski: *Cuentos Sobre los
Sefardíes de Sarajevo*, Split, Croatia, Logos, 1994.

[Published in Forward (New York), October 9, 1992 and August
11, 1995]

A Manifesto for the Sephardim of Sarajevo

Older *Sarajlije* are generally aware that the majority of Sarajevo Jews are historically Sephardim, i.e., they descend from Iberian Jews expelled from Spain and Portugal 500 years ago and welcomed by the Ottoman authorities in the 1560s.

The oldest Bosnians typically recall that these Jews retained their own Hispanic language and related Iberian cultural forms, such as ballads, love songs, and sayings (*refranes*). They are acquainted with the history of the *Sarajevo Haggadah*, which has become, remarkably enough, a Bosniak patriotic symbol, for others as well as Jews. They may know of the time when Jews were considered a “fourth Bosnian nation,” and fought proudly alongside the 19th-century Bosnian patriot Husein-Kapetan Gradišćević, as they did in other struggles for the freedom of the country.

And of course, *Sarajlije* and Bosnians in general tend to sympathize with these Jews, as victims of persecution and as representatives of a small minority culture that, like the Balkan Muslims, are generally misunderstood by the outside world.

But few Bosnians realize how far the parallel between Balkan

Muslims and Sephardim may be extended. For, just as Balkan Muslims are a singular and heterodox element in the Islamic *ummah* worldwide, so are the Sephardim a unique and distinctive element of the general Jewish culture. Just as the Islamic *ummah* has been dominated by the powerful Arab nations, so has the Jewish world been overwhelmed, in the past century and a half, by the wealth and influence of German and Anglo-American Jews (mainly Ashkenazim and their descendants), who in the final reckoning of things have remarkably little in common with Sephardim.

The division between the Ashkenazim and the Sephardim is visible and dramatic in Israel. There the foundation of the Zionist utopia was laid by immigrants from Germany, Poland, and Russia, i.e. Ashkenazim. Yet with the inward flux of Balkan, Turkish, and Moroccan Jews, who are of Sephardic, i.e. Spanish, origin, as well as the immense movement to Israel of the *Mizrahi*, or Arab Jews – a term that may seem self-contradictory, but which is not – from the rest of North Africa, Iraq, and Yemen, a major social problem has emerged and persisted. For the European Ashkenazim continue to constitute the political and economic élite of Israel while the “others” – Sephardim, *Mizrahi*, and “Oriental Jews” from such places as Ethiopia and India – have become the working class and even an underclass.

In terms of religious traditions, the *Mizrahi* and “Oriental Jews” in Israel, even if they do not trace their origins to Spain or preserve elements of Iberian culture, are typically grouped with the Sephardim. Speakers of Judeo-Spanish, i.e. the true Sephardim, today constitute no more than a million of the 15 million or so Jews worldwide, and no more than 300,000 or so speak Judeo-Spanish in Israel. But the broader category of Israeli “Sephardim,” meaning those who originally spoke Judeo-Spanish and/or Arabic, not German, Russian, or Yiddish, are the numerical majority in Israel. They are increasingly the political majority as well, and all observers agree they will sooner or later attain full power in Israeli governance.

Although if anything the Israeli “Sephardim” have tended to be more ideologically rightist and anti-Arab than the Ashkenazim,

there are some Palestinians who believe that the eventual political triumph of the Israeli “Sephardim” could, in the next generation, improve relations between the two communities of residents in the land. But the majority of these “Sephardim” are also more religious and more intense in their faith than the majority of Ashkenazim. Furthermore, in religious and intellectual life a great imbalance is visible in that, while Ashkenazim rule Israel, contemporary religious Judaism, especially in its mystical expression, Kabbalah, owes a far greater debt to the Sephardim than to the Ashkenazim. Indeed, the Hebrew spoken in Israel today is a Sephardic, not an Ashkenazic variant.

A related cleavage in the Jewish world today has to do with the role of the German and Anglo-American Jews in defining the Jewish secular intellect and, above all, in furthering Jewish academic scholarship. For the truth remains that with the emancipation of European Jewry at the beginning of the 19th century, followed by the extraordinary rise of the German Jewish bourgeoisie, the Ashkenazim far outstripped the Sephardim in their influence over world Jewry. This fact was further strengthened by the Russian Revolution, the Holocaust, the post-1945 flourishing of American Jewry and the rise of Israel, in all of which Ashkenazim were most prominent. Today it is the American and Euro-Israeli Jews who define the face of Jewry to the world, much as the Saudis and rulers of the Gulf states seek to define Islam to the world.

This situation is especially unencouraging when one turns to the academy. There are programs for Hebrew and Yiddish studies in nearly every major American university, but almost none dedicated to Sephardic studies. Sephardic topics are relegated to the Romance languages and Spanish departments, where they typically occupy a single lecture in one course. We do not have a single authoritative volume in any language on the role of Sephardic literature and tradition in the evolution of Jewish religious thought. Nor do we have a basic reference work on Sephardic secular culture, popular literature, or, what is most important, Sephardic printing, especially in Italy and Turkey. Whole areas of cultural endeavor have sunk into the abyss of institutional forgetfulness. To cite one example,

Jewish printers in the Balkans at one time produced Judeo-Spanish translations of the *Zohar*, the Kabbalistic classic, a fact completely overlooked by enthusiasts of Jewish mysticism.

Sarajevo itself has a fascinating history as a rabbinical and Kabbalistic center. None of this has been adequately examined or analyzed. But we have thousands of volumes on the most obscure Ashkenazi theological, literary, and political topics and themes, categories which Jewish intellectuals and scholars have almost totally ignored among the Sephardim. Many millions of dollars are available in Israel and the U.S. for research on Ashkenazi Jewish culture. But no money, aside from tiny private donations, is forthcoming for the recording and preservation of Sephardica.

This gap is relevant to Bosnians in that among the few scholars of any creed attempting to remedy it are such Sarajevo academics as Professors Muhamed Nezirović and Kemal Bakaršić – neither of them, obviously, Jewish. Nezirović's splendid work *Jevrejsko Španjolska Književnost* [*Jewish Spanish Literature*],¹ published at the very beginning of the Bosnian war in 1992, is an outstanding contribution to the study of the Balkan Sephardim. As David Kamhi, the cantor, or *chazzan*, of the Sarajevo Jewish Community, commented late that year, "I know of no Sephardic community in Europe which possesses such a significant volume, which is systematic in a way that speaks for itself." But this book of Nezirović is almost totally unknown outside Bosnia. For a long time Nezirović believed that fewer than 50 copies of his book, which was printed only months before the outbreak of the Bosnian war, survived the conflict. He was told all the unbound sheets were cut up and used for cigarette paper by the Army of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Fortunately, this turned out not to be true.

Jevrejsko Španjolska Književnost continued the previous achievement of Muhamed Nezirović in establishing a text of an authentic Bosnian classic, the *Romancero Judeo-Español* of Samuel M. Elazar, a compendium of ballads, short lyrics, religious songs, and other Sephardica, issued in two volumes in 1987.² This anthology suffered a worse fate than did the Nezirović volume, when Serb

troops set fire to the publisher's warehouse, destroying the whole stock of the work.

There is precious little time left to redress this failing in scholarship; the true Sephardim are dying out, in Israel as well as in Sarajevo. As we approach Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year 5760, let us all, Jews, Muslims, and Christians, pray for the success of every effort to rescue the rare and beautiful culture of the Sephardim, wherever and however it may survive.

Notes

1. Nežirović, Muhamed, *Jevrejsko Španjolska Književnost*, Sarajevo, Svjetlost, 1992.
2. Elazar, Samuel M., *Romancero Judeo-Español*, Sarajevo, Svjetlost, 1987.

[Published in *Oslobodjenje*, the leading newspaper in Sarajevo, September 3, 1999]

On Kalmi Baruh Street

This is an intensely personal, elliptical, and non-Aristotelian story.

As a young man I looked for a poem, afraid I could not find it. And even after I found it, I kept looking.

I was told by a distinguished Brazilian “concrete poet,” Haroldo de Campos, who visited California: *Some poems are in the poet, but some poets are in their poem.* Few whom I knew then, in the San Francisco of the 1960s, understood this. Fewer might understand it today.

I have wanted to argue with Adorno, who said there could be no poetry after Auschwitz; I have quoted Celan, as proof that Adorno was wrong.

I have listened to Akhmatova, reciting her *Requiem*, on a tape sold to me after the fall of Russian Communism; I have heard the voice of Mandelshtam.

I write out of a compulsion toward a Brechtian ugliness and directness, which I resist.

I write now about images and signs, about the forest.

The “forest of signs” is a surrealist concept. I have lived my

life in that forest, surrounded by signs, by coincidences, by the language of the universe, the universe of language.

Here, I will try to account for my life within the poem, for the “poem of Balkan memory” as a succession of items of information, of *lived texts*: a place-name; a lyric; a wordless song, with an explication; a historical chronicle; epitaphs; many folk ballads; notes of a journey; monumental inscriptions; “the marks of hell,” songs in books burned; conversations in the velvet of the world’s emptiness; books and pamphlets and articles from a long-past war, in a cycle of expulsions and moral struggles; historical documents; personal memories; dreams; poems recited in public; scholarship and mentorship; hidden holy books rescued from the flames; a special *Bible*; prayer; banned books and their resurrection; and media.

All begins in the Latin world; with Spanish California, and with the Barcelona of George Orwell and Raimón Llull, and, above all, with the Sephardim of Spain and Portugal. Even something Brazilian persists: a line from a song by Vinicius de Moraes: *O homem que diz ‘dou’ não dá ...* – The man who says ‘I give’ does not.

In a dream at 50, I saw a Muslim woman writing Sufi texts; my writing is hers; I am only her pen.

* * *

I was, perhaps, always on the road to Sarajevo. Since my youth, I was interested in the Islamic world. I read and studied much; I come from California, with its main intellectual foundation in Spain, a country possessing an Euro-Islamic identity. I was inspired to study Islamic mysticism, or Sufism, and its influence on world culture, and then Jewish mysticism, or Kabbalah, and then the relationship between Kabbalah and Sufism.

Sarajevo was called the “Little Jerusalem of Bosnia” – *Yerushalayim chico* in Judeo-Spanish. “Jews are Sarajevo; Sarajevo was Jewish for centuries, the most Jewish of all the towns in the South Slav countries,” wrote the city historian Miroslav Prstojević.¹ My

turn toward Sarajevo began in 1975, when I was 26 years old, and had developed a mature intellect. I was living in San Francisco, in a lovely apartment on Telegraph Hill filled with art and art books, and my career as a writer had taken a positive turn. In those days I worked for the cinéaste Francis Coppola, on a weekly magazine he owned, called *City of San Francisco*. I wrote poetry and art criticism. I completed three book-length manuscripts – a historical novel, a novel about my own life, and a long political essay. Of them, the historical novel would later be transmuted into a work of regional history, written in an academic style.² The political essay would also be published. I was still, then, a man of the extreme left.

I had recently overcome a writer's block. My creativity had been particularly "liberated" by a trip to an Indian zone of Mexico. I was also taking classes at the University of California, Berkeley, concentrating on linguistics, with a specialization in Spanish. I felt I was in the second spring of my life. All roads appeared open to me.

I experimented with writing, and with the concept of verbal premonition – that by writing certain things I could anticipate or affect events. I played with texts about subjects that appealed to me, that could be considered obsessional. One such described a brand of Yugoslav cigarettes called *Sarajevo*.

I had written in January 1975, in a text entitled *The Glass Palace Chronicle*, "I like tobacco as a pretext for ritual. Like *Sarajevo* cigarettes. *Sarajevo* cigarettes are Yugoslav. They come in a thin metal box, enameled bright red with a Balkan palace on the cover. After you open the box there's a paper jacket fastened with a gold seal. Break the seal and lift the paper arms. It's like undressing your lover. You'll find a package in your lover's arms. You can hear someone's voice inside the package. It's frightening, but you open the package.

"And you find 20 *Sarajevo* cigarettes, oval, no filters. They look like marijuana joints, but are printed in gold and blue, *SARAJEVO*."

The tobacco was Turkish in taste. That, except for the events of 1914, was all I knew then of Sarajevo – but what did I know? That

approaching Sarajevo would indeed be like undressing a lover? That from inside the package in my lover's arms I would hear someone's voice, frightening? My lover was the world; Sarajevo the gift the world gave me, a gift of fearful speech.

By the time I came to know Sarajevo intimately, that brand of cigarettes was only a memory. But I now recall the red tin as a mechanism for nostalgia. I remember with great fondness the specialist tobacco shop that sold those cigarettes, on Clay Street in San Francisco, in the very heart of old Yerba Buena, the city's original precincts; the brick gutters, rain in cold and wet San Francisco, and my formative years there.

As I summon up the recollection of the red *Sarajevo* cigarette tin, I now realize that the building on its cover – the “Balkan palace” – was the former city hall, which then became the National and University Library. This is the structure a quarter hour's walk from where Archduke Franz Ferdinand was shot, and which was devastated in 1992 by Serbian artillery, when its 300,000 books and periodicals, many of them irreplaceable, were destroyed.

Aside from the essential biography of Tito, in 1975 I did not know Yugoslav history or literature, which was little translated. But let me not digress. The next year, I took a course at Berkeley in phonology, and wrote a paper on Judeo-Spanish. Of Jewish background, brought up in California, speaking Spanish, I was fascinated by this subject. But I knew nothing about it, because there were almost no Sephardim in San Francisco, and there was and remains almost no canon of Sephardic literature in English. I knew a couple of elderly Sephardim I could study as native speakers of the dialect, which seemed almost indistinguishable from standard Castilian. I wrote the linguistics paper to review the existing literature, and to understand the basis for differentiation between dialectal forms.

With this goal, I examined all the volumes on Sephardic culture in the University library. It was not a large collection – but it illumined certain dismaying moral issues for me. The Sephardim of the eastern Mediterranean – hundreds of thousands of “Spanish and Portuguese Jews” of the former Ottoman lands, from Bosnia-

Hercegovina in the north through old Macedonia, where the Jews had a great center in Salonika, to Izmir in Turkey – possessed a great printed literature. For five centuries, Jewish publishers produced religious and Kabbalistic classics and commentary, poetry, belles-lettres, verses of popular songs, newspapers, almost everything imaginable. But the great majority of their readers in Europe were wiped out in the Holocaust. Teenaged Jewish girls of Salonika died in Auschwitz singing traditional Judeo-Spanish folksongs.³ And finally, scholars of Judaica, especially in the United States, had done surprisingly little to preserve and memorialize this legacy.

But among the volumes in the Berkeley collection was an academic study titled *Judeo-Spanish Ballads from Bosnia*, edited by the American scholars Samuel G. Armistead and Joseph H. Silverman, published in 1971. I look back to the moment I first opened that book. In the quarter century that has passed, the words *Sephardim*, *Bosnia*, *Sarajevo* have expanded to fill my existence. I have sought to reconstruct, in my mind and my writing, as much as I believe may be known, from outside the community and in the aftermath of the Holocaust, of the Bosnian Sephardic world. And, after 1990, the abstract Sarajevo of the printed record became the real city in Bosnia, nearly destroyed by another genocidal conflict, but where, after the 1992–95 war, I went to live. Sarajevo became intimate for me.

Back to Armistead's collection of Bosnian Sephardic ballads. I had read deeply in Spanish, Italian, and French poetry, for 12 years, when I first opened this book. It was and is a jewel-box of culture – a small chest in which a whole world has been sheltered, truly a gift offered by a lover. I read, for the first time, the verse

*Noches, noches, buenas noches,
Noches son de enamorar,
Ah! noches son de enamorar!*

Nights, nights, beautiful nights,
Nights are made for becoming lovers,
Oh! Nights are made for becoming lovers.

This poetry struck me as almost unsurpassable. Here, in pure form, was the *ecstatic* expression I had searched for throughout my adolescence and early adulthood, in studying Mediterranean poetry, Spanish Catholic mysticism, Surrealism, Sufism, shamanism, Buddhism – and the history of millennial, antinomian, and other revolutionary movements. In San Francisco I had experienced many beautiful nights made for becoming lovers – the “warm San Francisco nights” of the ’60s pop song. I lived with an attractive woman in the exquisite apartment on Telegraph Hill. But the beautiful nights of Sarajevo excited a new interest. Somehow, it seemed to me, they would have to have been different: Jewish nights in a Muslim city, on the territory of the Ottoman empire, at least a century in the past. But with Spanish songs. In High Bosnia, which seemed impossibly remote from the rest of Europe although it required no more than two days’ journey from the Adriatic, even in the age of horse-drawn travel. Somehow, I knew the reality of those nights. I was there. The entire matter seemed dream-like, like a *waking dream*. Could any of it have, miraculously, survived the Holocaust? The night of Sarajevo was an other to the night I knew. I came to think of this inspiration as *Islamic ecstasy*.

Here I must return to first things. I had sung in an opera chorus as a child. Folk music had always interested me – my mother was an amateur of the “progressive” genre associated with Woody Guthrie and other American leftist performers. I loved to sing classic revolutionary tunes from Mexico and Spain. But the Sarajevo melodies took hold of me in a new way. I had never heard of such eloquence in Ashkenazi Jewish lyrics from Poland and Russia. I longed to hear the song itself. It drew me into a fantasy – a green and rocky Balkan Sephardic fantasy. That also made me feel I knew something of Sarajevo.

Such music contained a universe, a cosmos as vast as the reality studied by Einstein, with its curvatures and emptiness and brilliant light, and it was worth living one’s life for. I sensed then, and many times afterward, that if I heard that music performed, if I learned to sing those songs, time and the world would cease to constrain me; that all barriers would melt away. I also knew immediately that

studying those songs would make me a better writer. And that, paradoxically, if I heard and learned that music, *I would need nothing else in the world* ... not even to exist. I could lose my family, give up my possessions, my apartment and my art collection, my job and my security, and retire to a single room, alone, with that music and my thoughts and paper upon which to write – whether or not anything I wrote would see print. There would be no point to making the encounter with that music an academic matter, as I had thought to do. Rather, I would have to submit the entirety of my existence to those songs, even if I were to lose my mind, to wander into a forest and die. To die in Islamic ecstasy.

And that is how it was ... all that I experienced in the ensuing 25 years happened so that I could learn those songs, for little other than my own delight. I read Gershom Scholem on the 17th-century Sephardic “false messiah,” Sabbetai Zvi, and encountered similar songs. I read Trotsky on the Balkan Wars of 1912–13 and was impelled further on the path. But I will take each step in its proper order.

What was this music? Jewish, but also Spanish or Ottoman, Christian or Muslim? Some of these questions could be addressed by recourse to the text, as analyzed by scholars like Armistead. Others I could not answer until 15 years had passed, and I had heard the melodies. After 10 more years, I recognized the tune of *Noches, noches, buenas noches* as the same sung in the divinely, deliciously beautiful old Bosnian song *Slavuj ptica mala* [*Sing, Little Nightingale*], which became a patriotic anthem of the Bosnian Muslims in the 1992–95 war. This understanding seemed to encompass all that needed to be known.

In 1991, travelling through Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia, I saw my first-ever minarets, explored magnificent mountains, lakes, and rivers, interviewed many remarkable people, took beautiful photographs, and even wrote some poetry. But the greatest treasure I brought back with me was a book in two volumes: the *Romancero Judeo-Español* of Samuel M. Elazar. This choice item was printed in Judeo-Spanish with Latin letters and South Slavic orthography, with parallel translations

into Bosnian, edited by Muhamed Nezirović. It was published in a series of literary classics of Bosnia-Herzegovina. I bought a copy in downtown Sarajevo, for about \$7.

Although I reported on the breakdown of Yugoslavia, the search for such traces of Sephardic inspiration had been the latent goal of my 1991 trip, for I had encountered these songs on a tape purchased in Zagreb the year before, and had read an essay on Bosnian Jewish traditions by Zdravko Sančević, a Croat who lived for decades in Venezuela. (Sančević, an academic expert on Sephardic culture, would serve as a Croatian ambassador to Bosnia-Herzegovina during the ensuing war.)

My Balkan journeys have always been accompanied by musical explorations, plunges into exquisite vocal traditions. First, in Croatia, the Dalmatian style of *a cappella* singing known as *klapa*, flute-like and clear as the waters of the Adriatic, simple but poetic in a way typical of West European secular songs or madrigals. Then, in Bosnia, the style known as *sevdahlinke* (from the Turkish word *sevdah*, or passion), sinuous and sensuous, erotic and reflective, extraordinarily personal and tragic, exemplified by the singer Safet Isović, whose tapes conquered me. Next, Albanian patriotic songs and wedding music. And, intertwined with all of it, the Balkan Sephardic lyric.

The Balkan Sephardic musical tradition left its traces in many unpredictable places: Sabbetai Zvi was said to have loved the song *Meliselda*, which describes a princess with milk-white skin coming out of her bath, as symbolizing the sabbath. But Elazar's *Romancero* was a genuine revelation. The verses therein captured me; I even took the book with me on a visit to Nicaragua, where its Spanish idiom seemed anything but out of place. A revelation in all senses: the Sephardic musical tradition drew on spiritual, mystical, and literary sources, but, above all, showed a remarkable capacity for the poetic transformation of elements drawn from neighboring cultures.⁴

Armistead's 1971 *Judeo-Spanish Ballads from Bosnia* comprised a small anthology of Sephardic ballads compiled and published in Bosnia in 1933, with comments by Kalmi Baruh, a great Sarajevo

Jewish intellectual killed by the Nazis. The ballads had been printed in a periodical for which Baruh wrote, the *Jevrejski Glas* [*Jewish Voice*], a Sarajevo weekly using the Latin alphabet and Slavic orthography. In discussing the composition of these works, Baruh invoked the name of Israel Najera, the distinguished 17th-century Hebrew religious poet, whose *ẓemiroṭ*, or short religious verses, were based on the texts of old Castilian (Christian) melodies. This practice has been called “Hebrew–Spanish punning;” it was widespread and controversial in the great Sephardic age, the four centuries following the expulsion of 1492. Sarajevo Jewish music could be described, using an epithet from modern times, as “fusion.”

Armistead, the most important American specialist in Sephardic lyrics, has pointed out that the song tradition in Sarajevo was “less conservative” than that in the great Sephardic metropolis, Salonika. The song collector Samuel Elazar himself declared that Sephardic Bosnia produced “poetic expressions distant, in form and substance, from the original Spanish models, with, by contrast, the emergence of a resemblance in style and content to Bosnian folk music and the Muslim love songs known as *sevdablinke* ... The love songs, in which the love of a boy for a girl and vice versa are proclaimed, are full of the sentiment we call *sevdah*. This passionate feeling, without parallel in its affective depth, is expressed in its most delicate and noble form in the ballads that we call, with full reason, ‘our [i.e. Jewish] *sevdablinke*’ ... It is certain that we can speak of no Western influence in these Sephardic melodies ... The Sephardic songs, which were almost always sung individually, reproduced Arab, Turkish, and other motifs drawn from Oriental music. When we hear them, nothing stops our souls from being transported to a romantic and oriental world, to quietude and a placidity of being, to that unique and exquisite languor we call *sevdah*.”

But Kalmi Baruh lit my path, with his evocation of Hebrew–Spanish melding and his citation of Israel Najera, a truly great poet. When I went to Sarajevo after the war was over, I was delighted to buy the collected essays of Kalmi Baruh in Serbo-Croatian,⁵ and to find a street named after him, *ulica Kalmija Baruba* in Bosnian. A



The view from Ulica Safeta Mujića, Sarajevo, 1999. (Photograph by Stephen Schwartz)

small street, to be sure, only a block long. An obscure street, away from the old Ottoman market and the Habsburg-era central city, near the border of the old Sarajevo and the new, Titoite Sarajevo, in the neighborhood known as *Marijin Dvor*, or Maria's Palace. It is relatively new; by decision of the Sarajevo city council, on April 3, 1970 it was ordered that some newly planned, until then non-existent streets be named, and a street was given the name of Kalmi Baruh.⁶

There is nothing of significance in Kalmi Baruh Street.

In 1999 I came to reside only a few metres away, on the parallel Safeta Mujić Street. Where Kalmi Baruh Street was sheltered by various large structures, Safeta Mujić Street was right on the Serbian firing line throughout the recent war. I had the lower floor of an old Bosnian stone house. I had a courtyard, or *avlija*, with a wooden gate. The Ottomans did wonders with wood. When I looked out my door there was nothing to see, because shelling had blasted the landscape for two blocks westward. There began "Sniper Alley."

Every day I passed the sign reading Kalmi Baruh Street. Every

day I remembered the first time I read his name, in San Francisco in 1976.

From Kalmi Baruh Street everything is visible: to the south, the “Spanish” Jewish cemetery, from where the Serbs rained down fire; to the east, the famous Muslim graveyard at Alifakovac. And some honorable remnants of Titoite Yugoslavia are near Kalmi Baruh Street: the plaque and bust marking the place where Vladimir Perić, codenamed “Walter,” the youthful leader of the Partisan underground in Sarajevo, was killed by Nazi collaborators during World War II, and the statue of Djuro Djaković, founder of the Communist Party, assassinated before the consolidation of Stalinism. All wreathed in the green of Bosnian trees. In this world, a city of the dead affirms the value of human life: that is Sarajevo.

In socialist Yugoslavia, the writings of Kalmi Baruh were adopted into the canon. He was born in Sarajevo in 1896. He attended middle and high school there, and was drafted into the Austro-Hungarian army in the First World War, then captured by the Russians. After the war he studied in Vienna, where a brilliant circle of Balkan Sephardic intellectuals had gathered, including the Nobel laureate Elias Canetti. He returned to Sarajevo, having written his doctoral thesis on the Bosnian dialect of Judeo-Spanish, and worked as a teacher. He dedicated himself to the collection of Sephardic ballads and poems, traveling for that purpose throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina, and venturing as far as Prishtina, the capital of Kosova, and Skopje, in Macedonia. Sixty years later, I retraced most of his itinerary, along ruined roads, often filled with snow.

Kalmi Baruh also shone as one of a group of Sephardic writers in the “new” Sarajevo of the 1920s and 1930s, among them the fiction author Isak Samokovlija. I knew nothing of Samokovlija until I went to Sarajevo, but there I came to love his work. Baruh and Samokovlija belonged to a movement for the defense of Sephardic culture, today essentially forgotten, centered in Sarajevo, and distinct from the Zionism that was just then flourishing among Bosnian Jews as elsewhere in Eastern Europe. A document published in Belgrade in 1995 includes the following comments:

“In the year 1926 there was a crisis in the Jewish youth movement in Yugoslavia ... the Sephardic youth in Sarajevo ... wished to separate. Among the Sarajevo Jews two groups of intellectuals were formed. One of them ... was exclusively in favor of the Zionist idea. The other group consisted of Sephardic intellectuals that struggled for the recognition of the Sephardic movement, and for a more realistic and tolerant policy that would take into account the issues of Jewry in Yugoslavia ... [T]he Sephardic movement paper *Jevrejski Život* [*Jewish Life*] ... gathered excellent newspapermen and writers like Isak Samokovlija, Kalmi Baruh, and others.”⁷

Kalmi Baruh died in 1945 in Bergen-Belsen.

This is now the writing of mine I most esteem, and which I would keep near my heart, as an amulet:

What begins in California, belonging to the Latin world, ends in the Sephardic Balkans.

But people were killed at Kalmi Baruh Street during the Bosnian war.

The famous Sarajevo streetcars turn the corner near there, and their wheels sometimes screech loudly in the night.

I am standing there now.

I hear the chazzan of Sarajevo, my friend David Kamhi, singing the Sephardic classic Dos Amantes Tengo la Mi Mama (I Have Two Lovers, Mother) – forever.

Kalmi Baruh Street is the center of my universe, forever.

There, and wherever I go, Islamic ecstasy remains with me, forever.

Notes

1. Prstojević, Miroslav, *Forgotten Sarajevo*, Sarajevo, published by the author, 1999.
2. See my *Brotherhood of the Sea: A History of the Sailors' Union of the Pacific*, New Brunswick, Transaction Books, 1986.
3. See Levy, Isaac Jack, *The World Stood Silent: Sephardic Poetry of the Holocaust*, Champaign, University of Illinois Press, 1989.

4. Later, in an extraordinary encounter, the Mexican poet Gabriel Zaid, a companion of Octavio Paz and a true friend to me, pointed out that a classic Sephardic ballad, *Dame la mano, paloma* [*Give me your hand, my dove*], of which I will say more in this volume, is also recorded in Mexican folklore, in the swamplands of Tabasco, in Yucatán, Oaxaca, and Veracruz.

Gabriel gave me a volume on Sephardic balladry that documented this fact. I passed it on to Professor Nezirović, who became my friend, and of whom I have *much* more to say. His personal collection of books was also burned during the Serb shelling of the town.

5. Baruh, Kalmi, *Izabrana djela*, Sarajevo, Svjetlost, 1972.
6. Information furnished by Ivan Čerešnješ.
7. Exhibition catalogue, *Jewish Youth Societies in Yugoslavia, 1919–1941*, Beograd, Jewish Historical Museum, 1995.

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In Jewish Sarajevo

“Rabbi Hirsch ben Yakov Ashkenazi, generally known as Hakham Zvi, the father of Rabbi Yakov Emden, is said by the latter to have recalled that in Sarajevo in the middle 17th century, where Hakham Zvi served as rabbi, ‘At that time there were women who said, “Let us go and slay demons.” They dressed themselves in white linen garments and made strange movements in the air with their hands. Then they would spread out their garments and collect much blood coming from the air as if with their hands ... They had slaughtered [the demons]. There was one woman who would say: “Who wants me to give him the smell of paradise,” and she would raise her hands heavenward, catch something in the air, and offer an exceedingly fragrant odor to anyone who wanted it.”

Gershom Scholem, *Sabbetai Sevi, The Mystical Messiah*

“... some things are Jewish, some not, this has been however the only way of being a Jew in Sarajevo. Our

biggest achievement is survival and for this purpose even things which are not in line with the religious regulations, have to be done.”

Jakob Finci, in Ari Kerkkänen, *Yugoslav Jewry: Aspects of Post-World War II and Post-Yugoslav Developments*¹

The Rebbe and the Shaykh

Menachem Mendel Schneerson was the *rebbe* or spiritual guide of the Lubavitcher Chasidim, a sect of extremely pious and mystically oriented Orthodox Jews originating in tsarist Russia. When he died in 1994 at 92, he was considered by his followers to be *moshiach*, the Messiah, the Redeemer of Jewry whose coming would mark the End of Days. Schneerson lived in Crown Heights, a Brooklyn neighborhood, and often met with large groups of his followers, to dispense teachings and blessings.

It is said that at times Schneerson would give himself over to a *niggun*, a “Song of Longing.” This was a wordless melody, which he hummed ecstatically. As the tune brought recollections, his emotions would visibly increase, so that soon he would be seen crying uncontrollably. According to a scholar who studied the Lubavitchers, Sally Gross, the *niggun* was known as “Shamyl’s Song,” and Schneerson would often continue weeping while telling the story of its creation.

Schneerson taught that Shamyl was the ruler of a mountain kingdom, which the Russian tsar sought to conquer and incorporate into his empire. Because Shamyl and his followers held the strategic high grounds in the mountains, the Russian campaign failed by use of arms. The Russians then sent Shamyl a message offering him a truce and an alliance; but when he came to negotiate, he was seized and imprisoned. In his cell, he composed the melody.

Russian Chasidim heard the melody, learned the story, and were deeply moved by it, Gross said. She wrote in an e-mail to me, “They saw it as a metaphor for the lofty primal state of the soul, of its descent into materiality, and of the hope of future spiritual

exaltation. For this reason, they adopted the melody and made it a part of their own tradition.”

I never knew Schneerson, though I have encountered many of his disciples; and I have also met and spoken with many individuals who consider themselves successors to Shamil. Imam Shamil, as he is known to Muslims, was the greatest *Gazi*, or Islamic warrior, of the 19th century, and is among the outstanding exemplars in *jihad*, or holy war, in defense of Islam. He was both a brilliant guerrilla fighter and a mystical dervish.

Shamil was born in 1796, a member of the small nation of Avars in the Caucasian highland of Daghestan. He was a childhood companion of Kazi Mollah, a fellow-Avar and dervish who was a key figure in launching the resistance of Caucasian Muslims to the tsarist regime. Imam Shamil became the symbol of this struggle, which lasted more than 60 years and took almost 80,000 Russian lives. Shamil inflicted such serious defeats on the Russians that he has been credited with the psychological undermining of the empire, leading to revolution two generations later. Karl Marx wrote of the Caucasian liberation struggle, “The brave Cherkess seriously defeated the Russians several times. People, learn from them, see what people who want to remain free can do.”

That the Lubavitcher *rebbe*, representing a Jewish sect that had been outrageously oppressed by the Russian authorities, both tsarist and Communist, should honor the memory of a Muslim fighter against the same tyranny might not seem surprising. What is especially intriguing, however, is the apparent emotion he attached to the song and story of Imam Shamil. Professor George Wilkes of Cambridge University, another correspondent on these topics, has busied himself with attempting to trace the path of transmission of the tune, which he presumes is a Caucasian Muslim song, to the Lubavitchers. For me, however, when I learned of “Shamil’s Song,” the shock of recognition came in finding evidence of the parallel path of Judaism and Islam, which extends back to the origins of Islam as well as to the post-Talmudic era.

Jewish-Muslim relations, especially those “hidden” from broader scrutiny, are the foundation of the Balkan chronicle that

properly begins here. My literary interest in this subterranean current in the affairs of the world, as previously described, was reinforced by three additional streams in life. I spent many years researching the cultural history of Kabbalah, the classical school of Jewish mysticism, according to the interpretation of Spanish Jews and their heirs, the Sephardim, who had lived in Muslim countries. Leading secular scholars have seen in Kabbalah something very close to Sufism, or Islamic mysticism. Indeed, anybody who studies Kabbalah historically sees in it the phenomenon I call *Islamic ecstasy* in the relationship between man and God. Kabbalah and Sufism share the goal of a human merging with the divine presence, which leads in turn to eloquent speech in praise of the Creator, in the form of poetry and song.

Second, while examining Kabbalah and its origins on the borderlands of Muslim and Christian Spain, I began traveling to the Balkans as a journalist. For the first time, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, I found myself in a Muslim country. For the first time, in 1991, I walked into a mosque, namely, the Imperial Mosque, still magnificent in prewar Sarajevo.

A third experience that strengthened the other “tendencies” in me involved my encounter with an Albanian Catholic theologian, Gjon Sinishta. From 1990, while still in San Francisco, I worked with this man, an exiled leader of Albanian Catholics, in producing a bulletin. I assisted him in documenting, translating, and editing, all with the hope of helping Albanian believers rebuild their religious life after nearly 50 years under the most severe and god-hating of the Communist regimes. The Albanian dictator, Enver Hoxha, had ordered the closing and destruction of hundreds of mosques, churches, and the *teges*, or lodges, of the Bektashi dervishes, a Sufi order headquartered in Albania.

Gjon Sinishta taught me that for him, a Catholic, Muslim Albanian believers were no less dear to his heart. He instructed me in the tradition of mutual respect and friendship between believers of the two faiths, which involved Albanian Catholics joining their neighbors in celebrating Bajram, the Islamic holiday at the end of the holy month of Ramadan, and Muslims honoring Christmas.



Moses Strikes the Egyptian; illustration from the 1823 *Haggadah* printed by Anton Schmid, with engravings by Abraham bar Jacob (Amsterdam, 1695), based on Biblical illustrations by the Swiss Christian Matthaeus Merian (1625–30). These specific depictions were standard in printed *Haggadot* for centuries.

I also learned something really significant from my Albanian studies: that Catholicism in the Balkans has a spiritual intensity often missing elsewhere (except, notably, in Spain!), and this great quality could be ascribed to Muslim influence, especially to Sufism. Gjon taught me that in regions like the Balkans, ruled by the Ottomans for centuries, the praise of God and fear of God of Muslims had saturated the social life of all believers, greatly affecting Christians. I came to understand, as well, the influence of Balkan Islam on popular Jewish spirituality in the region. I thus closed many circles. Finally, thanks to Gjon, I encountered and examined the traditions of the Bektashi dervishes, through the work of the Albanian Baba Rexheb Beqiri of Detroit, who died in 1994.

All of this began to really come together for me in 1997. I went to Bosnia-Herzegovina for a month, as a representative of the International Federation of Journalists, and this time I took

my copy of *Qur'an* with me. I read chapter, or *surah*, 28, known as "The Story," about the life of Moses. The account of Moses' life in Jewish scripture is very beautiful and moving. But *Qur'an* has something more: therein, after Musa [Moses] killed an Egyptian who was beating a Jewish man, he prayed to and was forgiven by the Creator. He then declared, "Oh my God, because you have forgiven me, I swear I shall never serve a sinner." Thus Muslims believe they must never aid oppressors; they are, as Muslims, the children of freedom. We see the fruit of this belief in the life of Imam ShamyI.

After moving to the Balkans to live, in 1999, my understanding of Jewish-Muslim religious links was further enriched, if I may use the phrase, by my involvement with the Jewish community of Sarajevo, and then, most importantly, by a period of residence in Kosova, in which I spent a great deal of time with the local Islamic authorities as well as dervishes. Professionally, my work in Kosova included extensive consulting on interreligious relations.

Many Jews are aware that periods of Muslim rule over Jewish communities – Abbasid Baghdad, Arab Spain, the Ottoman empire, of which the latter welcomed the Sephardim – involved great religious and cultural achievements for the Jews. Many believe that these experiences were exceptional. There is a cliché about Balkan Islam I have heard many times and in many places, and which is related to this. The cliché holds that in its essential tolerance and openness to other traditions, the Muslim tradition in the Balkans is "Islam lite." I do not believe this. I believe – more than ever after September 11, 2001 – that the tolerant and open Islam of the Balkans, which is also found in much of West Africa, Morocco, Turkey, India, ex-Soviet Central Asia, and the Far Eastern Muslim countries, expresses the essence of Muslim civilization, and that oil-fueled fundamentalism is the exception, or deviation.

The most remarkable lesson I learned in the Balkans reflected the response of the Balkan Muslims to the threat of literal genocide they had faced in Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as the horrors visited on the Albanian Muslims of Kosova. Many observers saw in the Balkan Wars of the 1990s a conflict between Christianity and Islam;

many feared or fantasized the intrusion of Islamic fundamentalism into these conflicts, and many more predicted that Balkan Muslims would respond to their nightmare by a flight into extremism.

Such theorists were wrong on all counts. The Balkan wars of the 1990s involved politics, not religion; Muslim fundamentalists played no significant role in the wars in either Bosnia-Herzegovina or Kosova, and the Balkan Muslims, some of whose leaders I know very well, have decisively rejected fundamentalist extremism, even after the torments they have undergone. They seek recognition for a European Islam that is fully European and fully Islamic, equally indigenous and legitimate within its historic home.

The emergence of such an Islam may dramatically change the course of world history. Without such an Islam, there is every probability that the next centuries will be marked by a deepening global confrontation between Islam and the West, producing continuous wars, terrorism, and cultural reaction.

I have therefore come to believe in certain challenging concepts about Islam in the contemporary world. It is of the greatest importance for intellectuals in the West, both Christian and Jewish, to overcome their ignorance, prejudice, and fear about Islam, especially in the wake of September 11 and the antiterror war. Most Westerners know literally nothing about this faith, which has a billion and a half adherents.

Further and most importantly, I do not believe that the present conflict in the Middle East has religious roots or even much of a religious dimension. Judaism and Islam are simply too close to one another, resembling each other too much. The Middle East conflict is a political and national problem in which politicized religion plays a subsidiary and illegitimate role. Finally, I believe that peace in the Middle East may be achieved, but only through a consensus between Jewish and Muslim believers; especially religious Jews who lived earlier in the Arab world and spiritual Muslims unwilling to yoke the cause of Islam to nationalist politics. The ironies of the Middle East situation are multiple: although essentially a nonreligious conflict, it exacerbates the potential for confrontation between religions; and it may be resolved only by religious will.

The Rabbi of Stolac

A tradition I learned in Sarajevo illustrates how, in the legacy of Jewish–Muslim coexistence in the Ottoman lands, peace and justice may prevail.

Rav Moshe Danon of Sarajevo is known to some as “the rabbi of Stolac,” nicknamed for a town in western Hercegovina, although he did not serve as rabbi in Stolac, and was not born there. He is associated with the town only because he died there, on the road to Eretz Israel. But the events that led to his departure from Bosnia for the Holy Land are legendary, reflected even in beautiful Sephardic balladry. Rav Danon is a Bosnian Jewish saint, or, as Muslims would say, a *wali*.

Reworking this material in the year 2002, I could not readily remember when I first heard about Rav Danon, his blessed biography, his burial at Stolac, pilgrimages to his tomb, and Bosnian Jewish songs on these topics. I think this is probably a consequence of advancing age and aggravated stress. While I had completed a substantial account and survey of the literature on these events, the tomb, and the songs, it took me a bit of review before I decided that my first contact with the epic had come by reading Noel Malcolm’s *Bosnia: A Short History*.² Because Malcolm’s description of these incidents represents the most elementary account, stripped to what I and many others would consider the central feature, it bears repeating here, as a starting point.

Malcolm writes in his discussion of the Bosnian Jews and Gypsies, “One intriguing story involves the fate of a Jew from Travnik, Moses Chavijo, who converted to Islam, took the name Derviš Ahmed, and began to rouse the local Muslims against the Jews. In 1817 the leaders of the Bosnian Jews complained of his attacks, and had him tried and executed. Some of his followers later complained to the next governor of Bosnia, Ruždi-paša, who seized the opportunity to squeeze some money out of the Jews: he commanded that they pay a recompense of 500,000 *groschen*, and seized ten leading Sarajevo Jews, including the rabbi, threatening to kill them if the payment were not made. The end of the story,



Two historical photographs, from the 1920s and 1930s, of pilgrims at the grave of Rav Danon. (*Photographers unknown*)

however, is that a crowd of 3,000 Muslims took up arms and demanded the Jews' release – which was promptly done.”

But that is hardly “the end of the story.” Malcolm cites this account to the work of Rabbi Moric [Moritz] Levi, *Die Sephardim in Bosnien*, published in 1911.³ This volume is not considered very reliable. Consulting the Bosnian-language edition of this book, issued in 1996,⁴ we find that Levi embroidered the tale by declaring, “ignorant folk among the Muslims, believing the convert [the alleged Jewish apostate] to be a true miracle-worker, lamented his death and complained.” However, the religious aspects of the anecdote, when I first encountered it, were secondary to that of Muslim–Jewish solidarity in the face of a manifest injustice.

Bosnia-Herzegovina is the only European country aside from Spain itself where Sephardic Jewish culture is considered part of the common cultural legacy. On beginning my extended residence in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1999, I soon learned that the story had significant other resonances for Bosnian scholars and *Sarajlije* who knew of it. While the element of Muslim solidarity remained significant, the obscure story of the alleged apostate and dervish from Travnik receded into the background. To the forefront came the figure of Rav Danon of Sarajevo, the rabbi imprisoned by Ruždi-paša; followed by the story of his burial in Stolac, the habit of visiting his grave, and the composition of songs in Judeo-Spanish about the epic and the pilgrimage.

The Jewish account of these events is best told, in my view, not in the Levi volume but in a source Levi used, that is, the mainly unpublished history of Sarajevo Jewry written at the end of the 19th century – at least a decade before Levi – by Moše ben Rafael Attias, known as Moše Rafajlović and as “Zeki-Effendi,” a leading Sarajevo Jewish notable of his time.⁵

In his account, beginning in 1819, Derviš Ahmed, an Islamic mystic who lived in Travnik, had a reputation as a dissident. For an unknown reason, this individual came in conflict with a Travnik Jew named Benjamin Pinto. Derviš Ahmed was arrested by the Ottoman authorities and executed. Other dervishes then revealed that Derviš Ahmed was a Jew named Moše Haviļjo. It was also

alleged that Pinto and some Jewish accomplices had conspired to punish him for apostasy.

Ruždi-paša reacted to the case by an attack on the Jews in general. The small and poor Jewry of Travnik did not offer much of a target, and they were left in peace. But the governor's eyes turned to the Jews of the great city of Sarajevo; he demanded a payment of 50,000 Turkish gold *groschen* from them, as indemnity for the dead man. He then ordered the arrest of ten of Sarajevo's leading Jews, beginning with Rav Danon, the outstanding Jewish spiritual leader in the country. Furthermore, the fine was increased to 500,000 *groschen* to be paid within three days, or the Jews would be executed.

Panic seized the Sarajevo Sephardim as they faced a wholesale assault on their security and their rights. The situation looked extremely grim. But a well-known Sarajevo Jew, Rafael Levi, who was greatly respected by Muslims, had the idea of appealing to his neighbors' humanity. On the fourth of *Heshvan* in the Jewish calendar, which fell in October, the night before the hostages were to be executed, Rafael Levi went to the coffee houses where he knew Muslims met and talked, and exhorted them with an emotional description of the dreadful threat hanging over the Jews. It was Sabbath eve, when as a pious Jew Rafael Levi should have remained in his home, but the welfare of the community impelled him to violate religious law.

The Muslims were profoundly touched, and consoled Levi for the tears he shed as he spoke. Then, "all together, as if they were one," the Muslims swore an oath, pledging to give up their lives, if necessary, to save the arrested Jews. The Muslims rushed to the house, overlooking Sarajevo, of Ahmed Barjaktar Bjelavski, the *barjaktar*, or local commander, of the Bjelave neighborhood, where Jews and Muslims lived together. Barjaktar Bjelavski swore, "by Allah, I will not allow this injustice!" He summoned the other *barjaktars*, ordering them to come with their best horses and most loyal servants.

Before dawn the next morning, some 3,000 Bosnian Muslims led by Barjaktar Bjelavski, armed and ready for combat, surrounded

the governor's place of lodging. The *barjaktar* struck the gate with his scimitar, shouting that the governor must come out. When the governor appeared, the *barjaktar* denounced him and demanded justice for the Jews. The governor ordered Rav Danon brought from a cell and forced him to bow before an executioner. But before the sword could fall, the *barjaktar*'s men had broken down the gates. They liberated Rav Danon and the other imprisoned Jews, then followed the rabbi to the synagogue where he preached the story of *Purim* to them – the great Jewish holiday celebrated by Balkan Sephardim above all, and which commemorates the rescue of Persian Jewry from a genocidal plot. The incident became known as the “Sarajevo *Purim*.” The Bosnian Muslims later denounced Ruždi-paša to the Sublime Porte in Istanbul.

Most remarkably, it is said that throughout this ordeal Rav Danon remained completely indifferent to the events around him. He carried a copy of *Torah* and assured those who visited him in his cell that there was nothing to fear, that all was foreordained. According to one source, the Sarajevo historian Vlakjo Palavestra,⁶ the ransom that had been raised to save the Sarajevo Jews was used to refurbish the city's 16th-century synagogue. Other reasonably accessible published sources on this incident include the work of the Sarajevo historian Miroslav Prstojević,⁷ and the outstanding study by my friend Muhamed Nezirović, *Jevrejsko Španjolska Književnost*. Nezirović's book is especially useful on the confrontation of the virtuous Rav Danon and the evil, Haman-like Ruždi-paša. An inaccessible but precious document is a printed pamphlet in Judeo-Spanish, the *Livriku*, or *Little Book*⁸ – which we would call a chapbook, since it consists of only one signature, or 16 pages, and on which I will elaborate.

A decade after the events, in 1830, Rav Danon left for Palestine, with crowds of Sarajevo Jews saluting his departure. But he died at the coffee house of Mehaga, in Stolac, on the way to take a ship from Dubrovnik. He was buried nearby, at the order of the local authorities. Annual pilgrimages to his grave for his birthday, celebrated in June, were common among the Bosnian Sephardim until World War II; photographs survive of adults clustered around

the Hebrew-inscribed sarcophagus. Sad meditation on such images has become, of course, a common experience for all writers on recent Jewish history, as, in the faces of the pilgrims, mostly women, we see many who must have died in the Holocaust. As with other such saintly Jewish monuments in the Sephardic world, the grave was also honored by local Muslims, especially dervishes.

Before the recent Serbo-Croatian war came to Stolac, a former Sarajevo Jew living in Switzerland, Moric Levi – not the rabbi and author – had sought to transform the grave of Rav Danon into a world-renowned spiritual center comparable to the nearby Catholic shrine at Međugorje. The local authorities facilitated the transfer of the property to the Jewish Community of Sarajevo. Ivan Čerešnješ, a Sarajevo architect and, for some time, president of the Jewish Community of Bosnia-Herzegovina, oversaw the partial rehabilitation of the site, which was interrupted by the war. The *kbeder tabora*, or mourners' wash-house, was left unreconstructed, even though painted decorations were "still visible in one corner of the seriously decayed building," according to Čerešnješ. This latter structure is known in Bosnia-Herzegovina as a *čevra*, short for *čevra kaddisha*, or burial society.

Interfaith Interludes in Kosova

I must now leap ahead, to the tale of how I, an American journalist, came to serve as a Jewish representative in the organization of an interreligious council on the wartorn soil of Kosova. The story begins in the year 2000 in Sarajevo, where Franciscan father Marko Oršolić had a problem. He is the director of the International Multireligious and Intercultural Center, which promotes reconciliation in the Balkans. Father Oršolić is also major supporter of one of the most important regional institutions, the Bosnian Interfaith Council.

The latter group consists of Mustafa efendija Cerić, head of the Muslim clerics of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Catholic Cardinal Vinko Puljić, Serbian Orthodox Metropolitan Nikolaj Mrdja,



Left to right: Stephen Schwartz, Marko Oršolić and Don Viktor Sopi, Albanian Catholic priest, Bistrazhin, Kosova, 2000. (*Photograph by Ilija Stipić*)

and Jakob Finci, president of the Jewish Community of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Finci, the only member of the Council who is not a religious official, is a lawyer by profession. But he is by far the most active participant in the Council, and is often honored by being misnamed “the rabbi of Sarajevo.”

The Council’s work became so important for Bosnia-Herzegovina that an effort began to create a similar council in Kosova. Meeting in Sarajevo, with Finci and his colleagues as their hosts and role models, Kosova Serb Metropolitan Artemije Radosavljević, Catholic Cardinal Mark Sopi, and Muslim Grand Mufti Rexhep Boja signed a declaration calling for interfaith cooperation.

But there hung the problem facing Father Oršolić, who has undertaken to make such a project reality. While Jews are considered indispensable to the success of such a body, there are almost none in Kosova – the discovery of two Albanian-speaking Jewish families in the town of Prizren, totalling 38 members, was considered a

major event of the 1990s. Thus, Father Oršolić went to see “rabbi” Finci, and the upshot was that the present author, as a speaker of Albanian with prior experience in Kosova, was designated “special representative for Kosova of the Jewish Community of Bosnia-Hercegovina” and deputized to represent Finci in attempting to create a Kosova Interfaith Council.

On a crisp day at the end of winter, with spring approaching, I set off by car from Sarajevo with Father Oršolić, his Bosnian Muslim woman assistant, Nada Džankić, and Father Ilija Stipić, another Bosnian Franciscan who had worked in Kosova. We drove through the so-called “Republika Srpska” to the Montenegro border and beyond, stopping for the night at an Albanian Franciscan priory in the city of Nikšić. The next day, we drove out of the Montenegrin mountains into the green plains of Kosova.

For me, Kosova is a land of permanent *déjà vu*. It has to do with the landscape. As a Californian, when coming down from the high, sharp peaks of Montenegro – the name of the place means “Black Mountains” – I am always reminded of the Central Valley of California. Kosova is mainly agricultural, with rolling hills and lazy little streams. The road from Montenegro is even a bit reminiscent of the Grapevine, the highway from Bakersfield to Los Angeles. There I have the strangest feeling I have come home.

In visiting the troubled town of Mitrovica in the north of Kosova, divided between Serbs in its northern zone and Albanians in its south, I again recall the American West. Mitrovica is a mining and industrial city, and it has the same feel as mineral centers throughout the southwest, the Rockies, and northern Mexico. There is the same dust in the air, the same horizon of barren, worked-out hills, the same atmosphere of quick riches and fast, cheap life. It could be somewhere near San Bernardino, in the Mojave Desert.

In borderlands all things become one: the border between Serbs and Albanians, in northern Kosova, is no different from the border between Anglos and Hispanics, at the southern end of California. But, of course, Kosova has undergone hatred and violence unseen in the American West for generations. I have visited several Serb

enclaves in Kosova, including the monasteries of Peć, in the town known in Albanian as Peja, and Gračanica; have walked through the devastated ruins of beautiful old mosques and Islamic libraries blown up during the 1998–99 war; have inspected Albanian Catholic churches wrecked by collateral damage from NATO bombs.

I found that Father Oršolić was correct in emphasizing the positive role Jews can play in interfaith dialogue in Kosova. Perhaps because there is no Jewish community that may be forced to take sides, I was welcomed by all. At the patriarchate of Peć, a Serbian monk led me on a tour of St. Dimitrije's chapel, a gorgeously decorated place with thousands of icons, and he was touchingly happy to hear me describe it as representing "the collective memory of the Serb people."

In the city of Gjakova, south of Peja, I was welcomed by two very different men, who, within an hour, echoed each other. At the Albanian Catholic church of St. Anthony, Father Ambroz Ukaj said, "This is your home. The Pope always reminds us that the Jews are our elder brother." A mile away, Baba Mumin Lama of the Bektashi Sufi order embraced me and said, "You are the elder brother. We must always love and respect the elder brother."

Of course, in a place like Kosova, where bloodshed was so recent, interfaith dialogue would not be easy. The Orthodox monks at Peć were guarded by Italian troops from the Kosova Forces (KFOR). Asked if they trusted the Italians, one young Serb answered simply, "We must." Father Ambroz recalled the horror of a massacre by Serb terrorists at the nearby village of Korenica, which is 90 percent Catholic and 10 percent Muslim. When the priest went to the Yugoslav police commander to ask what had happened, he was threatened himself.

Baba Mumin said it would be hard for him to sit down with Metropolitan Artemije, given what the Albanian people have suffered, but in the end he pledged to support the work of a council. Muslims in Kosova are anything but fundamentalist, notwithstanding recent efforts in that direction by Saudi agents, and the role of the Bektashis in fostering interfaith cooperation will doubtless be crucial.



The Peć patriarchate of the Serbian Orthodox Church, 2000. (*Photograph by Stephen Schwartz*)



A Jewish grave in Prishtina, Kosova, 2000. (*Photograph by Stephen Schwartz*)

Time passes ... and then, in the Kosova capital of Prishtina, with some time to myself, I decided to search for the Jewish graveyard I had heard about. I had been assured it existed, but having visited and photographed various such sites in Bosnia-Herzegovina, I knew it could consist of just about anything. In Sarajevo, the magnificent “Spanish” Cemetery dating from the 17th century is a major city monument, badly damaged in the 1992–95 war and now being rehabilitated. The Herzegovinian city of Mostar has a small but lovely cemetery with a new Holocaust memorial. But I had also visited the Jewish cemetery of Stolac, where Rav Danon is buried, and that in the north Bosnian town of Sanski Most, an unmarked plot left overgrown for some 50 years, and only recently rediscovered.

So I walked out of the Grand Hotel Prishtina and asked a



Synagogue in Mostar, Hercegovina, built 1904, now a children's theatre, as seen in 1999. (*Photograph by Stephen Schwartz*)

cabdriver, Agim Latifi, if he had ever heard of a Jewish cemetery in the city. It took him a minute to get clear what I was talking about. Finally, he said, "You mean *Yabudi*? People of Israel?" Yes, I replied. "Of course," he said. "I haven't been there for 15 years, but I can take you there."

We drove to the southern fringe of the city, to a large park fading off into a forest, and then into high hills. "This was the best park in the city before the war," he said. Unfortunately, it was now filled with garbage. "We need to clean it up," he added, as if reading my thoughts.

He parked the car, put the Club on the steering wheel, and led me down and across a road. "If I take the car here it's a problem," he said. "Thieves." He pointed to the top of a hill, covered with trees. "There," he said. "Up there."

We toiled up the incline, along a muddy track, blessedly free of garbage once we reached the first rise. I picked up a stone to place on a grave, although I was, I admit, somewhat doubtful. It didn't look like the normal place for a cemetery, although it was quite

lovely. To one side, the whole town of Prishtina was visible. From a nearby minaret, we heard the commencement of the Muslim call to prayer.

I was huffing and puffing, but finally we reached the top of the hill and entered the woods. "It's here," said the taxi driver, but then he stopped. "No, not there." He turned back and we wound around through underbrush. "There," he said, pointing to a couple of stone slabs, overgrown and seemingly unmarked. It was windy on the hilltop, and I buttoned up my coat.

We continued, with more stone slabs around us, and then I found the first with a Hebrew inscription and Hebrew date, 5678. There were several inscribed gravestones, some with Stars of David. In contrast with Bosnia, here were no fences or other indicators; simply the graves on a hilltop, in a place of peace, some of them knocked down, others undisturbed. The Muslim call to prayer had ended.

I stood in the breeze and realized I had forgotten to bring a *kippah*. But I had a package of tissues, and pulled one out, holding it in place on my head. I took the stone from my pocket and put it on the grave before me. Then, as so many times in Bosnia-Herzegovina, I took a card from my pocket, on which were written the words I read aloud: "*Yitkadal veyitkadesh sheme rabbah ...*"

Further Notes from Stolac, Herzegovina

Let us now return to the saintly life of Rav Moshe Danon, and the "Sarajevo *Purim*."

Sephardic ballads about these events were composed in Spanish during the 19th century, and in the first decades of the 20th. Two, among what seem to have been many, were printed in the monumental, two-volume *Romancero Judeo-Español* of Samuel M. Elazar. One of these ballads begins,



The author at the grave of Rav Moshe Danon,
Stolac, 1999. (Photograph by Laura Peterson)

*Sabida es la maravilla
Y contada en larguilla
Haremos chica poesía
En favor del Rav Danon.*

Well known is the marvellous tale
Many times told in many words;
Let us sing a little ballad
In honor of Rav Danon.

The text continues with a refrain praising Rav Danon for his wisdom, vision, and the merit of his pilgrimage, while also describing the effects of the pilgrimage on others:

*En Mostar fueron sentados
Varones pocos bien encontrados
Con firmamentos fueron atados
Por visitar Rav Danon.*

In Mostar some youths were waiting,
All together, well dressed, well spoken;
They'd made pledges unto heaven
To visit the grave of Rav Danon.

A second ballad on the theme ends with a description of the governor, Ruždi-paša, driven from Sarajevo:

*Muchos si a él entesados,
Salió cosa que no iba pensando,
Todo su saber perdió,
Y a Travnik el huyó.*

Many assembled around his fortress,
And something happened he didn't expect;
He lost all his mental powers
And to Travnik he quickly fled.

It is now appropriate to turn to a Bosnian Muslim account of the dramatic Sarajevo events associated with Rav Danon. This is a document I have translated under the title "Petition of 249 Sarajevo Notables Against the Injustices of Ruždi-paša," and which was published in 1966 in a memorial volume on Jewish history in Bosnia-Herzegovina (see Appendix, p. 157).⁹ It is very interesting to note that in this document, the governor is presented as the author of a series of injustices against the population of Sarajevo, chiefly involving abuse of their hospitality and excessive requisitioning of supplies. The abuse suffered by the Jews is mentioned, but is not a central issue: "he chained, shackled and imprisoned the Chief Scholar [rabbi] of the Jews and some Christians, who are the inhabitants of our city and who are guaranteed protection

and security by our laws. He tortured them, using boiling water, and even imposing tortures never seen before in our country and indefensible. Because of this violence and hatred, the Jews' children and families cried out, and their weeping was heard unto the seventh heaven. But the said governor felt no pity, and he insisted that fines had to be paid, although they could not be. Four or five times he was asked to accept a payment of five thousand gold *groschen*, in vain, as he met these offers with a thousand humiliations, and then decided to transfer his hostages in chains to his residence in Travnik. In the dawn he handed them over, chained and shackled, to his militiamen, and he followed them to Travnik."

Further, in this Islamic document, the clash of arms involving the Sarajevo Muslim citizenry is presented in an entirely different light; this narrative of events may have been composed with the aim of absolving the *Sarajlije* from charges of lawlessness. Rather than an organized effort to free the Jews, on the part of leading personalities, we read in the petition that when the hostages were on their way out of the town, "As usual, poor and rich came into the streets to observe this parade. The said militia were evilly inspired, and aimed their guns at the citizens. When they fired their weapons, everybody was stunned, and started to run left and right in order to save their lives and souls. Crazy and crying for help, they fled the militia. When wise folk found out about this event, they went to the aforementioned governor, so that we could report on the events and plead with him. When we pointed out these mistaken actions, he burst out in aggravated rage and refused to forgive, before departing for Travnik. After that, he sent out orders, alleging things that never happened, and he even added that we, God forbid, fired cannons at him and that we effected a siege against him."

The discourse on the "Sarajevo *Purim*" of 1819 therefore produces differing items of cultural memory. One centers, from the Jewish perspective, on Muslim solidarity with Jews; another, also Jewish, focuses on the virtue of the rabbi; and yet another, from the Muslim perspective, stresses the broader injustices committed by the governor. They become one in emphasizing the

special nature of *Sarajlija* identity, the civility among *Sarajlije*, and the resistance of *Sarajlije* to injustice.

The gravity of the cultural vandalism in the 1990s in Stolac and continuing insecurity in the town provoked considerable concern on the part of Jews knowledgeable about the life of Rav Danon and the significance of his grave. For this reason, I determined to visit the grave. With the assistance of Grace Kang, then a civil affairs expert with the UN Mission in Mostar, and Alfred Reich, an officer of the International Police in Stolac, both of them American citizens, I was able to complete an inspection of the grave. I pronounced *kaddish* at the site, and took photographs. I was not the first person of Jewish background to visit the grave since the outbreak of the war in 1992. That very great honor belongs to a Sarajevo Jew who now lives in Israel, Milan Hamović, then aged 62. Mr. Hamović is married to a descendant of Rav Danon, and he visited the grave and recited *kaddish* on February 25, 1999. However, Jakob Finci stated that I was the first to go to the Danon tomb, after the war began, as a special representative of the Jewish Community of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

We completed our visit on the morning before the Sabbath eve, March 13, 1999. The grave of Rav Danon consists of a monumental stone in the old Bosnian Jewish style described by one authority as “seated lions,” the most famous examples of which are found in the “Spanish” Cemetery of Sarajevo. The form is unique and clearly shows the influence of the Bosnian *stečci*, or pre-Islamic sarcophagi, clustered nearby at a place called Radimlja. The grave is inscribed in Hebrew as follows:

THIS STONE IS HERE PLACED
 SO THAT IT BE A SIGN AND MONUMENT
 FOR THE BURIAL OF THE SAINTLY PERSON
 WHOSE WORKS WERE WONDROUS
 AND OF WHOM IT WAS SAID THAT HE WAS PIOUS
 AND SAINTLY
 HE WAS OUR MASTER TEACHER AND GREAT
 HAKHAM RAV MOSHE DANON HIS GOOD
 WORKS AID US. AMEN.

HE LEFT THIS WORLD ON THE 20TH DAY OF SIVAN
5590¹⁰

As previously noted, after his death in 1830 the grave of Rav Danon became a place for regular pilgrimages by Bosnian and other Balkan Sephardic Jews. The similarity of this practice with pilgrimages to the tombs of Islamic holy men in such places as Buna, also in Hercegovina, is worthy of note. Unfortunately, the practice virtually disappeared with the genocide of Bosnian Sephardim during the Holocaust.

I was able to confirm that the grave of Rav Danon was secure. The cemetery is located at Krajišni, a few kilometers west of the town itself. The grounds are rather well kept, all things considered. There is a substantial paved area surrounding the Danon gravestone in the form of a menorah, and a menorah also decorates the gate of the iron fencing. There are two other graves in the cemetery, for a total of only three Jewish dead. The third grave is inscribed in German,

ARNOLD SILBERSTEIN
Gestorben im Mai 1889.

The second gravestone is without an inscription.

The remaining issue involves the old *kbeder tabora*, or mourners' wash-house and shelter, at the cemetery. A Sephardic song about the Stolac pilgrimages, included in the Elazar *Romancero*, describes the erection of the *kbeder tabora*, which was intended to be refurbished during the Communist period under the direction of Ivan Čerešnješ.

Čerešnješ has written me, "During the war, heading one of our convoys with food, I stopped there, gave a break to drivers, and spent half an hour just sitting there, thinking that it is the last time I could come, because Croats did a thoroughly terrible job, burning and destroying everything non-Croat. I had the feeling that it is just a question of time when the site will be on the schedule for annihilation." In 1999, I interviewed Fahrudin Rizvanbegović,

then Bosnian minister of education, whose family were Ottoman landlords in Stolac, and rightfully considered outstanding among the Muslims of eastern Hercegovina. He recounted the pride his forebears felt at accommodating Jewish pilgrims to Stolac during the months of May and June, in the years before the existence of hotels. He described his own careful and loving attention to the grave of Rav Danon, so long as he lived in the town. He had, he said, asked friends to continue tending the monument after he was forced to leave by “ethnic cleansing,” the infamous euphemism for attempted genocide.

Minister Rizvanbegović’s interview concluded with a reminiscence that further expressed the psychology of Bosnian Muslims and their attitude toward their Jewish neighbors. At one moment during the war, he escaped to Sarajevo from a Croatian concentration camp at Dretelj; his and his wife’s worldly possessions consisted of no more than 50 *Deutsche Marks* in cash. He went out one morning to buy a container of oil, which cost DM 35. However, he was accosted by a woman who offered him a copy of the reprint of the *Sarajevo Haggadah* for DM 30. The expenditure would make it almost impossible to buy oil, he realized; how would he explain such a purchase to his wife? And yet, after some bargaining, he handed over his precious *Deutsche Marks* for the copy of the glorious Jewish manuscript.

It was the first book in his new library. “This is destiny,” he said quietly. It is profoundly desirable that the memory of Rav Danon move all residents of Stolac and of Bosnia-Hercegovina in general, to permit the complete protection and restoration of all such monuments. In addition, it is to be hoped that, in the spirit of human solidarity, the return and safe residency of all former refugees be assured, and that the full reconstruction of all sacred structures be guaranteed. I would also encourage resumption of Jewish group visits to Stolac. My 1999 journey was carried out two weeks after I heard and read the *Megillat Esther* in a study room off the prayer hall of the Ashkenazi synagogue and Jewish community center in Sarajevo, *en los días de Purim*, the year 5759. I also heard the



Ashkenazi *shul*, Sarajevo, built 1902, as seen in 2000. (Photograph by Stephen Schwartz)

voices of *mujezins* from the numerous mosques near by, calling the faithful to the final prayer, or *jacija*.

Early in 2001 Čerešnješ sent me a copy of a precious item from the library of the Sarajevo synagogue: the previously mentioned *Livriku*, a prayer book carried by the Bosnian Jewish pilgrims to the grave of Rav Danon. A pamphlet of 16 pages, it is titled, in Judeo-Spanish, *Livriku de la orasjon ke se diza e Stolac dispoes de TEFILA sovve la KEVURA del CADIK maalot Moreno arav rebi MOŠE DANON zebuto jagen alenu AMEN, Trezladado por mano del hadži MOŠE HAJIM moreno arav Alevi, Saraj en anjo 5697* – “A Little Book of Prayer to be Said in Stolac After TEFILA over the BURIAL PLACE of the SAINTLY Beloved Teacher rabbi and master MOSHE DANON May His Merits Protect Us AMEN, Taken down by hand from the Hadži MOSHE HAJIM teacher and rabbi Ha-Levi, in Sarajevo in the year 5697 [1937].”

The *Livriku* is an important document for many reasons – one of them typographical, related to the development of Bosnian Judeo-Spanish printing in the Latin alphabet, a topic I have

previously dealt with. The *Livriku* contains only Judeo-Spanish text, with no Hebrew counterpart. I have collected Jewish religious pamphlets printed in such diverse places as Morocco, Algeria, and Egypt (in Hebrew and French), and Trieste (in Hebrew and Italian), but I know of no other examples, after the period of “Marrano” printing, in Holland, Italy, etc., for Jews who had been forcibly converted to Christianity, of a Sephardic sacred text without an accompanying version in the holy tongue. This could be taken to indicate a decline in Hebrew education, or an exceptional vigor of popular religiosity (the view I prefer) in Bosnia; to employ the common cliché, a glass half empty or half full.

I have translated some selections from this little book; later, I returned to Stolac with it in my possession. In June 2001 Čerešnješ and I travelled from Sarajevo to Ulqin, in Montenegro, to examine the purported Muslim *turbe*, or tomb, of Sabbetai Zvi. We went south through Hercegovina, stopping at Mostar to view the new Holocaust memorial in the city’s large Jewish cemetery. We then detoured to Stolac to inspect the Danon tomb. The *kbeder tabora*, which Čerešnješ had hoped to see rebuilt, was originally set up by a very rich merchant from Sarajevo, Daniel Shalom Uskubi. Daniel Shalom Uskubi, or Uščuplija, i.e. a man from Skopje, was an outstanding Jewish *Sarajlija* of the pre-Holocaust decades. Also known as Moshe Menahem, he derived his wealth from the wholesale textile trade, importing British and Czech fabric via Croatia. He commonly took walks in the Markale, the great Sarajevo produce market outside the Ottoman city center, for amusement.

The graveyard is now tended by a Muslim peasant, one of the few left in “Croatian” Stolac, who is paid by the Mostar Jewish community. We arrived in the June days traditional for visiting Rav Danon’s tomb, carrying with us the *Livriku*; I said its prayers aloud at Rav Danon’s tomb, reading, “Lord of the world, master of forgiveness, master of every soul, powerful God of the spirits of all creatures, in your power are all the souls of the living and the spirits of all humanity!”

An ancillary and extensive discussion could and should address the issue of tomb visitation in Islamic societies, and the influence of

this practice on Bosnian Jews. Judaism opposes prayer to a *tzaddik* (Jewish saint) or similar intercessory prayer, because all prayer is to be directed to the Creator. But Judaism does not oppose prayer at the grave of a *tzaddik* on the presumption it will influence the righteous to speak to the Creator for the petitioner. Grave visitation in Israel itself ended after the fall of the Temple, but was revived in the Renaissance, thanks to R. Isaac Luria Ashkenazi, the fabled “Ari” of Kabbalistic tradition.

Islam deals in varying and contradictory ways with grave visitation. Bosnian Islam, which is permeated with the spirituality of Sufism, encourages it. Saudi-sponsored Wahhabi Islam, which rejects spirituality, harshly condemns grave visitation and is known for the deliberate destruction of tombs and graveyards in the Balkans as well as in Hejaz, the territory that includes Mecca and Medina, and elsewhere. Jewish grave visitation is rare outside Israel – it is mainly found among Moroccan Jews and among East European Chasidim. In this context, we return to the matter of Sufi influence in Jewish mysticism. But these are other topics, for examination elsewhere.

About Ivan Čerešnješ

The name of Ivan Čerešnješ, the architect responsible for the original rehabilitation of the Jewish cemetery in Stolac, is unfamiliar to all but a very few Americans, and, in addition, is difficult for them. His family name is Hungarian, pronounced *Chereshnyesh* and meaning “cherry-tree.” It was originally *Kirschner*, in German. His nickname is Ivica, pronounced *Ivitzá*, but is Slavic rather than Hungarian. When I first met him he was President of the Jewish Community of Bosnia-Herzegovina, headquartered in Sarajevo, where he remained under fire for three years, directing a Jewish relief operation.

My acquaintance with Čerešnješ began on a day in Sarajevo in January 1991, as Saddam Hussein’s weapons first struck Israeli soil. I awoke early that morning, to the voice of a *mujezin*; a loud, deep

sound calling the Muslim faithful to prayer from a nearby minaret, belonging to the Ferhad Paša-Vuković-Desisalić mosque, erected in 1562. Late in the day I went to the city's Ashkenazi synagogue and Jewish community center, where excited young Jews watched the Gulf War as it unfolded on CNN.

I had come to Sarajevo by bus from the Adriatic coast city of Dubrovnik, a day trip along a road once followed by Sephardic Jews, through the beautiful mountains of Hercegovina. Dubrovnik has a great Jewish history, symbolized by its synagogue, the second oldest in Europe, just off the Stradun, the stone main street in the very heart of the town.

In January 1991 the Dubrovnik synagogue seemed unused, and was cared for by a Serbian woman art student. War was near in Dubrovnik, nearer than Kuwait: Serbian irregulars (*četniks*) had blocked the road from Zagreb, the Croatian capital, to the Adriatic, with log barricades; occasionally they fired at cars. In Bosnia-Hercegovina there were reports of arms movements. During the siege of Dubrovnik, later that year, the synagogue building was twice hit directly by Serbian shellfire, according to Mimi Ferera, a Dubrovnik Jewish woman whose family had assumed overall responsibility for the building. (The synagogue has since been refurbished.)

Riding the bus that frigid January, with open warfare still to come in Yugoslavia, I passed through Mostar, the capital of Hercegovina, where Jewish gravestones were prominent in the cemetery. The landscape grew yet colder and more forbidding as the road proceeded upward into the highlands, and I suddenly understood what fortitude was required of the Jews who made this migration – without good roads or buses, to say the least. Bosnia seemed, at first, an inhospitable land, and that very quality, producing isolation, may explain many things – including the endurance and even splendor of its Judeo-Spanish culture.

The bus wound along the highway, into the deepening evening. At Jablanica, the first rest stop, the driver left to eat his lunch, and we were served *loza*, a raw *rakija* or clear brandy made from grapes, in a roadside inn nearly open to the elements. Further on, we passed through another town, where three lovely teenaged

girls in headscarves – I presume they were Muslim – boarded the bus and walked with assurance down the aisle. They went only a kilometer or two beyond the town limits, but the driver accommodated them. One of them sat next to me, and I asked her, in my then rudimentary Slavic, the town's name. She answered in a sweet, hushed voice: Konjic – meaning “Place of Horses.” Here, I thought, was a trace of Islamic ecstasy.

We reached Sarajevo near midnight. It was cold the next morning in the Baščaršija, the old Ottoman market, where I bought oranges in a small shop. The city is set high in the mountains, as the world learned thanks to interminable television broadcasts of the shelling, from its heights, by Serbian troops.

Čerešnješ, whom I soon met, was in his mid-40s in 1991, of medium height and slender, with, as I later learned, a history of heart ailments. He seemed as responsible and serious as he was bright, witty, and confident; a great guide to Bosnia's exquisite capital, its synagogues, mosques, churches, Turkish-style residences, and baroque public buildings. Its many mosques are covered with snow in winter – a curious sight for the Western visitor who equates Islam with hotter lands.

But there was a shadow over Čerešnješ, as well. In the 1990 election in Bosnia-Herzegovina, he had stood as a candidate of the Serbian Democratic Party or SDS, led by Radovan Karadžić, soon to attain world notoriety as a war criminal. Shocked, I told him directly, in 1991, that I considered that decision a gross error on his part, dangerous for the Bosnian Jews. He agreed with me, offering no explanation.

In Sarajevo, as in every other Bosnian and Herzegovinan settlement before the 1992 war, the minarets seemed to hold up the sky, sheltering the Christian Orthodox, Catholic, and Jewish structures around them. But by 1995, more than 2,000 mosques and more than 500 Catholic and 500 Serbian Orthodox churches and monasteries had been destroyed by war in Bosnia.

During the months that followed my 1991 visit I stayed in touch with Čerešnješ by telephone. When I took my leave of him and of Bosnia that year, we agreed to meet again in Sarajevo in

September 1992. The occasion was to be *Sefarad* 92, the community commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain and their journey to Bosnia and other places in the Balkans.

The event came, and I could not be present. By September 1992, Sarajevo was convulsed with mortar and rocket explosions, its people constantly under fire. Yet Čerešnješ and his colleagues, who sought to preserve the city's Jewish heritage, continued with their plans for the event.

Jewish monuments had been damaged in the fighting. Čerešnješ told me early on how the Serbs placed artillery, followed by sniping posts, in the city's "Spanish" cemetery. The graveyard is set in a strategic location, on a hill called Vrbanja, in the district of Kovačići, directly overlooking the newer, post-Ottoman town. Prevented from examining its condition, he feared the worst.

Of the city's seven present and former synagogues, the oldest, built for a Sephardic congregation in 1581 and, under Tito, housing the Sarajevo Jewish Museum, was closed by mortar damage. It still stood in the Baščaršija, close to the Gazi Husrevbeg Mosque, built in 1531 and, as the largest mosque in the former Yugoslavia, the pride of Sarajevo. Other nearby structures include an important Serbian Orthodox church, an Orthodox monastery, and the city's beautiful Roman Catholic cathedral.

Almost as soon as the war began, in spring 1992, Čerešnješ delivered a televised declaration to the city's residents. He denied Serb propaganda claims that Jews had abandoned the city; although about 400 had fled or been evacuated, he said, at least 700 more had chosen to stay in the city, to work and fight alongside their neighbors, against the aggression. The broadcast was electrifying, a needed boost to the morale of those who loved Sarajevo. In a *San Francisco Chronicle* interview with me, published on May 30, 1992, Čerešnješ repeated that pledge, saying: "We Bosnian Jews have decided to remain here, as we have for 500 years."

Through the war, Jewish community functions and relief facilities run by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee – the "Joint" – were maintained in the community center at the

Ashkenazi synagogue. The latter, built at the beginning of the 20th century, sits on the other side of the river Miljacka from the Sephardic synagogue-cum-museum. Services, previously held in the Ashkenazi synagogue, were mainly suspended with the outbreak of the war.

The *Sarajevo Haggadah* remains the greatest artistic treasure of the Sephardim worldwide. When fighting commenced in 1992, it was removed to a vault in the National Bank of Bosnia-Herzegovina from its previous home, in the National Museum of Bosnia-Herzegovina; it had also been hidden during World War II.

But in the ashes there also appeared the flower of hope: the end of communism, and the Bosnian war, had brought about the revival of an old and respected Sarajevo institution, the Sephardic community welfare body, *La Benevolencia*. In its resuscitated form the institution's name was given an added, Balkan *j*: it became *La Benevolencija*, which emphasized its Sephardic uniqueness. Yet at the same time, using resources developed from Jewish donors abroad, it became a general welfare organization serving all *Sarajlije* – Jews and Muslims, Croats and Serbs, Gypsies and Albanians. At the time of this writing its pre-1941 building, on a street given its name – *Ulica La Benevolencija* – serves as headquarters for the Bosnian federation's Ministry of Internal Affairs, or state police.

Sefarad 92, marking the expulsion of Jews from Spain – a tragedy that paralleled the “ethnic cleansing” suffered by Bosnia's Muslims, as stated eloquently by a Sarajevo philosopher, half Jewish, half Serb, Predrag Finci – opened the week of September 11, 1992. (Coincidences may be heartbreaking.)

John Pomfret of the Associated Press reported on the preparations for the event: “On a table-tennis table in a cluttered room next to a synagogue, Zoja Finci works to restore ancient parchments – Hebrew scripts telling the story of the Exodus from Egypt. A dab of acetone here, a swab of alcohol there. Despite the crash of mortars and heavy machine-gun fire outside, Finci is preparing for an exhibition. With an almost heroic obstinacy,

the Jews of Sarajevo are planning to celebrate 500 years [of their history].”

Pomfret noted that *Torah* scrolls and holy books, like the *Sarajevo Haggadah*, had been placed for safekeeping in steel trunks. Predrag Papo, a computer engineer and synagogue guardian, said, “Now we can only pray in our houses.” Blaine Harden of *The Washington Post* described the opening of the conference: “The gathering of about 500 artists, politicians, clerics and business leaders took place in the Holiday Inn, a high-rise built in 1984 for the Winter Olympics. It has been hit hundreds of times in the past five months by Serbian bullets, artillery, and mortar shells, wounds that have turned the south side of the structure into a gouged-out ruin. Bodyguards for the assorted dignitaries in attendance checked their pistols, machine guns, and shotguns at the hotel’s pizza parlor.”

“This is a time of contrasts, between good and evil, hatred and friendship, one against the other,” said Bosnian president Alija Izetbegović in his inaugural remarks. “Our celebration in the middle of this destroyed town is another of the contrasts.”

In Jewish Sarajevo

Before the Holocaust, Jews made up 15 percent of Sarajevo’s population; around 7,000 Sephardim and 1,500 Ashkenazim. A community of Greek-speaking (Romanipot) Jews predated the Sephardim in Bosnia, but by the mid-16th century ten Sephardic families resided in Sarajevo.

The community grew and increased its economic and intellectual wealth: here lived translators of the *Zohar* and readers of *Me’Am Lo’ez*, the religious encyclopedia of the Balkan Sephardim. Great rabbis and commentators shared the Iberian speech of those expelled beginning in 1492 – their Judeo-Spanish was a dialect of Gallegan, or northern Portuguese, written and printed in the Hebrew script known as Rashi letters. The city, second only to Salonika in Macedonia as a Balkan Sephardic religious center, was

known for its famed *yeshiva*, the Rabbinical Academy of Sarajevo, drawing students from throughout the region. (Later, when I went to live in Sarajevo, I spent a great deal of time in the building of the former *yeshiva*, on what is now Čemaluša street, a narrow lane in the heart of the city. It had been taken over by the BH Press news agency, which assisted my journalistic work in numerous ways.)

What was Sarajevo, as a Jewish city, before Hitler? A tour through the Sephardic synagogue-cum-museum was revelatory. Family names testified to the painful journey from Iberia, with stops in Italy, Greece, and Bulgaria: Pardo, Pinto, Toledano, Capon, with daughters called Bella, Blanca, Joya, Justa, Flora, Luna, Perla, Rosa, Estrella, Soledad.

The glories of Bosnian Jewry did not vanish with the Holocaust, although some 10,000 Jews died in Sarajevo during World War II. The *songs*, above all – imbued with the beautiful mixture of western and eastern Mediterranean literary and musical styles peculiar to the Balkan Sephardim – remained alive, preserved among the old, and some of the young, and remembered by all, including Bosnian Muslims and Christians.

Still, the cultural record of Sephardic Bosnia was devastated by the Nazis. Seven thousand volumes held in private libraries, as well as by *La Benevolencia* in its original incarnation, were stolen and destroyed along with very old medical and scientific manuscripts, extraordinary ritual objects in silver, and an unknown number of paintings. Sadder yet for Sephardic culture was the loss of three manuscripts bringing together Iberian stories, ballads, poems, *refrains*, anecdotes, and historic documents in Judeo-Spanish. Yet some books survived – I was even assured in Sarajevo in 1991 that many splendid volumes were to be found in the houses of the old.

In 1581, the Turkish grand vizier Syavush Pasha, reputedly a Croat, ordered the construction of a compound, the *Čifut Han*, or Jews' Inn, around the original synagogue. This "Great Courtyard" included a communal lodging house with 46 rooms for the accommodation of poor families, the synagogue, and a travellers'

hostel. The compound was not, however, walled or gated. Čerešnješ commented, "There were never ghettos in Bosnia."

As noted by Blaine Harden, at least 100 Jews had affirmed their proud history by joining the Bosnian Republic forces in the war.

* * *

I returned to San Francisco from a vanishing Yugoslavia in February 1991. The Serbian attack on Croatia began in earnest that June. I still remember the first frightful incidents of terror in that war.

I remember Borovo Selo – its name means "Pinetree Village," although it was named for the Borovo rubber company, where most of its residents were employed – in May 1991, before the war had become serious. Thirteen Croat police officers, young male volunteers, were tortured and mutilated, then killed, after they were captured by Serb *četniks* in that Slavonian suburb, near, too near, to what would become the martyr city of Vukovar. Twenty more were wounded. Pictures of the grossly disfigured corpses, eyes missing, were shown on Croatian television and circulated in full-color pamphlets.

I remember my fear and horror, praying this would be an isolated incident, and would not foreshadow a general onslaught of atrocities. Of course, I was naive.

I remember Dalj – its name means "Distance" – in August, 1991, when the Croatian war was in full cry. Serbian forces came across the Danube and seized the town, killing at least 80 Croatian guards in a bloodbath. Then, hundreds of residents disappeared. They simply vanished! It was the first mass disappearance, but not, of course, the last. Months afterward the impact remained; a Croatian woman suddenly said to me, "You know, we never found out what happened to the people at Dalj." I prayed again that this could only be an exception and not a harbinger. Of course, I was wrong.

I remember Vukovar – its name would seem to mean "Wolves'

Home,” but in fact refers to the Vuka river, and means “Vuka Village” – the Croatian Guernica, symbol of long and hard resistance – its final end, in November 1991, when the *četniks* paraded in perfect order through the town, with their black skull-and-crossbones flag, their exaltation of death. Hundreds of defenders, Croat, Serb, Hungarian, Ruthenian, and otherwise, were taken away and disappeared.

I prayed, then, for the souls of the dead and for the survivors. I knew this war had changed us all, had brought us face to face with an abyss inside us all: an absolute inhumanity, where some would kill and others be killed.

Then the war came to Bosnia. I remember Bijeljina – its name means “Little White Town” – when, in March 1992, it was the first sizable Bosnian community captured by the *četniks*, who had once again come over the river from Serbia. They immediately executed dozens of unarmed men and women. Muslim community leaders were arrested and sent to camps. Mosques were vandalized and further defiled.

A Jewish friend, close to Bosnians, told me that at Bijeljina women and children, hiding in the mosques, were killed, and that *četniks* defecated on their corpses. I still could not believe the savagery, and I almost protested to him against atrocity propaganda. It was, of course, no propaganda.

On June 1, 1992, the Islamic journal *Preporod* [*Renaissance*], published in Sarajevo, reported: “The war in the sovereign state of Bosnia-Hercegovina is exacting a toll which is daily becoming heavier and more painful ... in Bijeljina they committed a frightful massacre against the Muslims. The criminal militia arrived from Serbia and with the assistance of the local Serbian population. Nor today can anyone enter Bijeljina to find out about the misery the people have suffered. All the mosques in Bijeljina have been desecrated, pillaged, and damaged. The Muslims’ suffering began during the second day of Bajram¹¹ and is continuing even to this day. In Bijeljina, Muslims have been placed outside the law.”

For years thereafter, no non-Serb authorities or journalists were allowed to enter Bijeljina.

I remember Brčko, where atrocities continued for weeks, Bosanski Brod, “an example of the struggle for freedom and defense of the homeland,” according to *Preporod*, and Goražde, which “defended itself courageously.” Brčko fell, Bosanski Brod was betrayed, but Goražde held out, becoming one of the infamous “enclaves” on the Drina frontier.

In remembering my own days in Croatia and Bosnia in 1991, I have sought to relive the time when such horror was still something historical, something long past, something that could be imagined but that one could not imagine being real.

I have recalled with yearning those moments on the cusp of war, when I first saw those landscapes, heard those voices. In 1991, coming home to California, I brought back poetry and music, rather than terror and disgust. I had my tapes of Sephardic singing, my copy of Elazar’s *Romancero*, but also the wonderfully soulful and jolly love songs of Safet Isović, performer of *sevdahlinke*. I drove down the California coast and back one fogbound weekend later that year, my car stereo rollicking with the accordion, violin, guitar, and passionate voice of Safet, the master of Bosnian Muslim ecstatic music, celebrating *Saraj’vo Grad*, that city of lovers.

On August 4, 1992, I wrote in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, under the headline, “Serbs Accused of Arrest, Deportation of Jews.” After a telephone interview with Čerešnješ, I reported, “Jewish authorities in embattled Bosnia-Herzegovina warn that ‘hundreds’ of members of their small and historic communities number among the victims of the ‘ethnic cleansing’ campaign by Serbian forces in the republic, although the plight of deported Slavic Muslims and Croats has received wider publicity.

“‘Ethnic cleansing by the Serbian military has resulted in the arrest of Jews from northern Bosnia and their being dumped like packages, alive but barely so’ in the areas of Sarajevo under the control of the Bosnian government, Čerešnješ said. ‘Some Jews who were caught in the net are unaccounted for, and we fear they may have been killed. We are trying to locate everybody.’ He noted that historically there had been sizable Jewish communities in such Bosnian cities and towns as Banja Luka, Vlasenica, which was

recently 'cleansed,' Zvornik and others now under Serb control.

"Nedžib Šaćirbey, Bosnia's diplomatic representative in Washington, said, 'Anti-Jewish propaganda has begun to be heard in the Serbian media, at the same time as the cleansing campaign has begun to affect Bosnian Jews, as well as the other small minorities in the country, which include some ethnic Turks, Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarians, Albanians, Gypsies, and even some Italians.

"It is hard to confirm the exact numbers because of the chaos, but we hear that anybody who is not an Orthodox Christian is a target, which would include Jews as well as Muslims and Catholics. It is interesting that we have some small Russian communities in Bosnia that have not been touched.'

"Čerešnješ said the campaign was a bitter blow because Sarajevo's Jews had warm relations with the Bosnian Serbs in the past. He himself ran for the republic's ethnic-based legislature in 1990 as a candidate of the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS).

"This policy is aimed at anybody considered undesirable by the extremists,' Čerešnješ said. 'In fact, they are also killing and deporting Serb inhabitants who are known as Bosnian loyalists or who are considered weak in their support for the so-called cleansing program.'

"Čerešnješ expressed bitterness at the 'abandonment' of the small Bosnian Jewish community by Jewish organizations in Europe and the United States. 'We are a long-established element in Bosnian society,' he said. 'We deserve better than to be left to fend for ourselves.'"

I was criticized by Jewish leaders in America for publishing this reportage, which was deemed "alarmist." Nevertheless, by 1999 I had read details of a specific such incident: the kidnapping and murder of Viktor Glancer, a Jewish citizen of Teslić, near the Bosnian town of Dobož. Glancer had been taken for a Croat. His son Damir later described his own situation, after his father had been killed by a Serbian terror squad known as the "Mice." Damir Glancer recalled, "I prepared a propane bottle, to kill myself if they came to arrest me again." Eventually, the son emigrated to Israel. Seven years later, he returned and located his father's grave.

Damir Glancer declared, “I had a hard time dealing with the fact that he was horribly tortured. An autopsy found out that he was missing half his skull and that all of his ribs were broken. He was really bestially tortured.” This was how Serb terrorists dealt with Jews who fell into their hands in 1992. I was correct in reporting the campaign that lay behind such atrocities.¹²

Years went by after my 1990 and 1991 visits, and again and again I listened to Safet on his tapes and closed my eyes, trying to return to that innocent moment when I first heard his voice, romantic and happy, celebrating Sarajevo. Balkan music became a drug for me – as performed by Safet and by his predecessor, Himzo Polovina, and by Omer Pobrić and later by Shyhrete Behluli, Shkurtë Fejza, and other Kosovar Albanian patriotic singers. These names are unknown in America, but how they lightened the depression from my life! A decade later, I bless and bless again the day I first purchased a tape of Safet, on a hurried afternoon on Zagreb. The cover art showed the singer against a background of trees, and I, who had not yet seen Sarajevo thought, *green ... that's Bosnia, the green of forests, and the green of Islam*. García Lorca, a son of Arab Andalucía, wrote *Verde que te quiero verde*, in a poem I read at 15. I would add, *Is this not the same green?* I continue blessing the moment in a shop in Sarajevo where I bought more of his tapes, in a city still within the old, crumbling Yugoslavia, on a freezing cold morning, with a bag of oranges in my other hand. In a time of peace.

The Marks of Hell

When I saw Ivica Čerešnješ again the marks of hell were visible on him. But hell was where he was set on returning.

Almost two years had passed, including six months of torment in the streets of Sarajevo, and Čerešnješ came to the U.S. for a national meeting of the “Joint” in December 1992.

Čerešnješ flew to the West Coast, where he was greeted by



The Benevolencija Jewish pharmacy on Hamdija Kreševljaković Street, Sarajevo, 1998. (Photograph by Stephen Schwartz)

relatives, friends, Jewish leaders, and members of the small local Bosnian-American community.

The “Joint” had facilitated ten evacuations of refugees from the besieged Bosnian capital. Čerešnješ helped direct the refugee operation, but declined to be rescued himself, although his wife and three sons had gone to Israel.

“I am the elected head of the community and it is my duty to stay in Bosnia,” he insisted. Again, he declared, “Jews have been there for 500 years. We have a great history and a great presence. We have the right to a future.”

When the war began the Sarajevo Jews opened their arms to their fellow-victims – Muslims, Serbs, Croats. The “Joint” assisted Čerešnješ and the reborn *La Benevolencija* in establishing a dining hall and three pharmacies open to all in need, whether Jewish, Muslim, Croat, or Serb. “We are emphasizing cooperation and our common humanity,” Čerešnješ said. Years later, I was told by Sarajevo Muslims that the Jewish pharmacies, by then closed, had saved the city by preventing epidemics.

Čerešnješ was changed by the experience of war; he seemed older, somehow smaller, perhaps undernourished. He had grown a beard. He was quieter, less demonstrative than when we first met.

He had become a chain-smoker, a liability when meeting for hours at a time with large American Jewish leadership groups, among whom few smoke. During his three days in San Francisco, we spent a good deal of time together, and there were many, many long silences.

Čerešnješ had seen the official count of the Jewish population in Sarajevo fall from about 1,200 to 700, after the first evacuations. Then the roll of Jews grew again, as more came forward in Sarajevo and from other Bosnian towns. During the period of Titoite communism, many had declined to enter their names in the state-controlled community register.

The number of Jews in Sarajevo reached 1,000, but again fell, with continued refugee departures. About 500 remained at the beginning of December 1992. Except for 100 quite elderly people, who were at the head of the list for rescue, they were, like Čerešnješ, bent on staying, committed to preserving a Jewish presence in Bosnia.

Fortunately, only two members of the Jewish community had then been killed by the fighting, although Čerešnješ said some old people died from the pain and terror of the experience.

The fluctuating numbers of Sarajevo Jews had led foreign journalists to suspect that non-Jews were seeking a fraudulent Jewish identity to escape the city, believing that protection by the "Joint," the U.S. Jewish community, and Israel might be their only safeguard against uncontrolled Serb, Croat, and Muslim extremists.

Čerešnješ replied by reminding me of a prediction he made to me two years before: that once Jewish identity ceased being monitored by the Communist state, at least three times the number of Jews previously counted would appear.

"It's a phenomenon everywhere in East Europe," he noted. "Some are children of mixed marriages. Some were timid and suspicious of the state. Some were simply lost in the countryside,

with no reason to come to the city very often. Also, in Yugoslavia entering one's name on the community register indicated Jewish nationality, while many Jews preferred registry as Yugoslavs in nationality. I believe that the Jewish communities of all the former Communist countries are at least three times larger than is usually estimated."

I later learned that, to a degree, the foreign reporters were correct, in that a number of people had been made "honorary Jews" to facilitate their escape. In Sarajevo, these were mainly righteous Gentiles, who saved Jews during the Holocaust, or their children. But in the Hercegovinan town of Mostar, capital of the Croat occupation zone in Bosnia, the local Jewish leader, Zoran Mandlbbaum, handed out Jewish identity papers to anybody whose life was endangered. I see nothing wrong with this practice.

Čerešnješ spoke sombrely of the other Jewish communities in Bosnia. Around 50 Jews from the small towns of northeast Bosnia, which had been hard hit by the Serbian "ethnic cleansing" campaign, were still unaccounted for. Some whole communities no longer existed. "Zvornik is empty," Čerešnješ said, referring to a place known before the Holocaust for its Jewish religious life.

Not long before the Bosnian war broke out in 1992, Čerešnješ was invited to Bijeljina, which had a large Jewish community before World War II, by the local Muslim leaders, for an educational program on Bosnian Jewish history. Shortly after his trip there, Bijeljina was, as previously noted, the site of the first mass atrocities against Muslims in this war, its mosques destroyed.

These relationships and traditions reflected the history of Jews as the "fourth Bosnian nation," which they were believed to be even after their numbers were decimated in the Holocaust. Thirty-six Jewish communities still functioned in Yugoslavia before the wars of the 1990s began, including, in Bosnia, those at Zenica, Tuzla, Banja Luka, Doboj, and Mostar, as well as Sarajevo. Zenica and Tuzla managed to hold out against the Serb onslaught. But the Bosnian government soon reported more tragedies like that of Bijeljina: "Life in Doboj is in chaos. The 16th-century Sultan Selim mosque has been heavily damaged." Banja Luka was taken by Serb

forces as the center of “ethnic cleansing,” which eventually became the capital of the “Republika Srpska.” Čerešnješ spoke painfully of Mostar, in which the historic Old City, with 17 mosques, had been demolished.

Čerešnješ’s contradictory commitment, to Jewish survival in Bosnia as well as to escape for those who sought it, rubbed off on Eli Eliezri, a Jerusalem-born organizer who successfully oversaw the refugee trips and who is a veteran of similar actions in Ethiopia and elsewhere. “Everybody says, get the people out, get them to Israel, and that’s my job,” Eliezri told me. “But there are those who refuse to leave for good, like Čerešnješ, and I admire that. I think the tradition of civility and culture was so strong, between the Jews and Muslims there, that were conditions to revert to real peace, as they were before, almost all the refugees would want to come back.”

Čerešnješ and Eliezri stressed at that time that, wherever possible, Muslims and Christians were included in the refugee operation alongside Jews, not as pseudo-Jews, but as rescued neighbors. Thus, the evacuations had rescued some 1,400 people in total, about 1,000 of them Jews.

Čerešnješ compared besieged Sarajevo with the Warsaw ghetto in World War II. And with that he left San Francisco, to return via New York and Israel to hell.

I Am a Rose

Carried away by the beauty of the lyrics in Elazar’s *Romancero*, I had set to work, as soon as I came back to the United States in 1991, writing about this book and seeking to interest scholars and editors in it (without, I must say, much success).

I prepared a *précis* of Bosnian Jewish history, accompanied by six of the most famous and beautiful song lyrics, one lengthy ballad, and a poem by the 19th-century Bosnian Jewish versifier Haim Altarac, done into standard Spanish and then translated into English. I titled this essay *I Am A Rose: Bosnian Jewry’s Past*

and *Present*, borrowing the first lines of one of the most beautiful Sephardic songs:

*Yo soy una rosa – Yo soy una flor
Crecí en la frescura – Donde no da el sol.*

I am a rose – I am a flower
I grew in the foliage – Where no sun had shone.

Here is an obvious reference to the lines from the second canto of *Shir ha-Shirim*, the Song of Songs, or Solomon's Song, that is the greatest of all Jewish Kabbalistic texts and the fount of lyrical tradition in the Judeo-Christian world: *I am a rose of Sharon, a rose of the valleys.*

Another of these creations, sublimely beautiful and sung to a haunting Oriental melody, was, it is said, heard in Auschwitz, from the mouths of young girls deported there from Macedonia:

*Arbole-e-e-s – Lloran por lluvias
Y montañas – Por los aires.*

For-e-e-e-sts – Cry for the rain
And mountains – Cry for the wind.

I Am a Rose was first published in English, in a New York annual, the *Journal of Croatian Studies*, thanks to my friend Karlo Mirth, its editor. Later I sent the text to Octavio Paz, who published it in Spanish in his Mexico City monthly, *Vuelta*, read and respected throughout the world.

Another of the texts I translated, sometimes called the "Sephardic national anthem" for its immense popularity, begins:

*En la mar hay una torre
En la torre hay una ventana
En la ventana hay una niña
Que a los marineros llama*

In the sea there is a tower
 In the tower is a window
 In the window is a girl
 Who calls out to passing sailors.

The figure of the sea, the tower, and the girl is a common and powerful one in this literature. My friend the Mexican poet Gabriel Zaid also pointed it out in his country's canon. I pored through the *Romancero judío-español* of the great Spanish linguist Ramón Menéndez Pidal, published in 1906–07 and based mainly on texts collected in the Balkans. There I found a key to the tower in the sea, so to speak. Menéndez's *Romancero* includes two texts that seem to be variants of a single original. He titles one of these *Expulsión de los judíos de Portugal*. It begins:

*Éramos tres hermanicas, – Hijas del rey Don Londrino
 Las dos eran ya casadas – e yo por casar me finó*

We were three little girls – Daughters of Londrino the king
 Two were already married – And I had my wedding ring.

The second is titled *Hero y Leandro*, and begins similarly:

*Tres hermanicas eran, – Tres hermanicas son
 Las dos estan casadas – La chica en perdición*

Three little girls there were, – Three little girls there are
 Two of them were married – The youngest was disgraced.

I have heard this ballad sung with great gusto, in another version:

*Tres hermanicas eran – Blancas de rosa, Ay! ramas de flor,
 Tres hermanicas eran – Tres hermanicas son*

Three little girls there were – Roses white and flowery boughs,
 Three little girls there were – Three little girls there are

*Las dos eran casadas – Blancas de rosa, Ay! ramas de flor,
Las dos eran casadas – La una en perdición*

Two of them were married – Roses white and flowery boughs,
Two of them were married – The other was disgraced.

This, one of the most popular ballads among the Bosnian Sephardim of the past, tells a story in which, in some versions, the tower again appears. The text continues:

*Su padre con vergüenza – A Turquía la mandó
En medio del camino – La niña se durmió
En medio de la mar – Castillo le fraguó
Por all pasó un caballero – Su capa la dió
Uno en cada cara – Y uno al corazón*

The disgraced girl's father, out of shame, sends her to live far away; in the middle of the journey, she falls asleep; in the middle of the sea, she raises a tower. The latter image, in Menéndez's version, clearly melds with the previously noted maritime tower. His text reads:

*En medio del camino – castillo le fraguó
Ventanas altas le hizo – por que no suba varón*

In the middle of the journey, she built a tower high
Built with narrow windows – so no man could come nigh.

The remainder describes a passing knight who drapes his cape over the girl to protect her, with one corner covering each side of her face and the third corner over her heart.

Sung, as I have said, with immense enthusiasm, this wonderful ballad seems traceable, through Menéndez, to the experience of expulsion from Iberia. Its symbolism seems, superficially, erotic. Yet I have come to see in it an entirely different theme: that of Sephardic history. The three little girls are, I propose, three great

ages of Judaism: the two that made good marriages are the epoch of the prophets and the age of the *Talmud*; the girl whose virtue was lost represents the Sephardim at the time of the expulsion. The father, whose real identity it seems unnecessary (if not blasphemous) to mention, sent the Sephardim into exile. Wandering, they grew exhausted on the roads, but thanks to commerce, they became rich, building “the tower in the sea.” The gallant knight who offered his cape was the Turkish Sultan.

The three girls appear in two other songs that have become dear to me. One is a version of the first and most sensuous Sephardic song of which I ever heard, *Noches, noches, buenas noches*, as sung by the American Sephardic singer Flory Jagoda (who is from Vlasenica in Bosnia). Here is her text:

*Noches, noches, buenas noches,
Noches son d'enamorar, Ay! noches son d'enamorar.*

Nights, nights, beautiful nights,
Nights are made for becoming lovers, Oh! Nights are made for becoming lovers.

*Dando vueltas en mi cama, como una pez en la mar ...
Tres hermanicas eran, todas tres en un andar ...
Saltó la primera y dijo, gozemos la mocedad ...
Saltó la segunda y dijo, gozemos la novedad ...
Saltó la mas chiquitica y dijo, madre como la voy dejar ...*

The singer complains of turning, alone, in bed, “like a fish in the sea,” then evokes the three girls. The first says, “let us enjoy our youth,” the second, “let us enjoy spring,” but the third warns her mother she must leave home.

A curious parallel to these figures is to be found in the very first song I ever heard sung by Safet Isović, and to which I became devoted, *Na Bembaši na Babića Bašča* (*At Bembaša in Babić's Garden*):

*Na Bembaši na Babića bašča,
Tri djevojke bostan posadile.*

At Bembaša in Babić's garden,
Three girls were planting a field.

*Naokolo pšenicu bjelicu,
U sredini dinje i karpuze.*

They were surrounded by white wheat,
Standing among the canteloupes and watermelons.

*Navadi se jangin momče mlado,
Pokrade im zelena bostana.*

They provoked a flame in the handsome lad,
As they stood in the green garden.

*Tri djevojke stražu postavile
Uhvatiše jangin momče mlado.*

The three girls mounted a guard
To capture the fire of the handsome lad.

*Prva veli: "Da ga osudimo"
Druga veli: "Da ga objesimo"
Trecia veli: "Meni oko vrata"*

The first said: "We will judge you."
The second said: "We will hang you!"
The third said: "I'll hang you around my neck!"¹³

It was only much later that I recognized a common melody in *Noches, noches, buenas noches* and the lovely Bosnian Muslim song *Slavuj, ptica mala* (Sing, Little Nightingale). It is interesting to find that in its lyrics the singer's solitude and the number three both remain present:

*Slavuj ptica mala, svakom pjesmu dala,
A meni junaku, tri tuge zadala,
Prva mi je tuga, što ja nemam druga.*

Sing, little nightingale, giving all your songs,
Within me, for a hero, three tears fall.
First is a tear, because I have no other.

Which came first, the Sephardic or the Bosnian song? Does it matter?

Along with these interpretations there persists, in my consciousness, another understanding of those three girls, those roses white and flowery boughs: the memory of the three beautiful young girls I saw in the bus in Konjic that night in 1991, in their headscarves, while I was on the way to Sarajevo. They were, I suppose, Muslim. And they were, I suppose, raped and probably killed by the *četniks*, in 1992. Konjic became infamous, then, for such crimes. After seven years, beginning in 1999, I passed through Konjic frequently, on the way from Sarajevo to Mostar by car and by rail; passengers change trains at the station there. As late as 2004, the minaret of the town's main mosque still lacked its top, blown off and left jagged by war.

To the Other Spain

The biography of Ivica Čerešnješ, as much as any Sephardic song, reflects the dramatic mix of modern and ancient tragedies associated with Spain as well as with Sarajevo. Čerešnješ lacked the Sephardic *yiches*, or distinguished religious ancestry, valued by the Sarajevo Jews; he was an outsider. His father was a Hungarian Jew, Sandor Čerešnješ (in Hungarian, Csérésnyés), who went to Spain during that country's 1936–39 civil war, as a volunteer in the International Brigades, the heroic adventure of that generation.

In Sarajevo's Jewish Museum there stood a memorial with the names of Bosnian Sephardim who died in the Spanish civil war:

Iberian names, returned to Spanish soil in struggle against fascism. (It was only fitting, then, that Spain took in some 50 Bosnian refugee families in 1992.) Echoes of the Spanish civil war, with all its passion and betrayal, were loud in the Bosnian conflict.

The world stood aside, while a reactionary military – ideologically communist, this time, but no less fascist than that of Franco, 50 years before – attacked the people it was sworn to defend. Repeated massacres and other sadistic atrocities shocked and shocked again.

“There was almost no hatred or even anger in Bosnia in the recent past,” Čerešnješ declared in May 1992. “The tensions surfaced suddenly, and then the remnants of the Yugoslav army that had concentrated here after the retreat from Slovenia and Croatia rose up against the interests of all Bosnians.

“In fact, thousands of Bosnian Serbs joined the Muslims and Croats in rejecting the Serbian army,” he said.

As in Spain, a people’s army emerged – men and women from all ethnic groups, all ages, all classes and attainments and ambitions, rallied to the militia. Ragged kids in tennis shoes ran messages up and down the hills, dodging bullets. And sometimes failing to dodge them. Bosnian militia defended their barricades with obsolete firearms and old-fashioned helmets that made them seem to have emerged from a 1930s newsreel. They stood behind barricades of truck tires, like the militia fighters of Barcelona in the Spanish conflict.

As in Spain, where their image exploded on news pages and movie screens around the world, women took up arms. “The men were wounded, we had to replace them. There was no choice,” said Mara Perišić, an infantrywoman, in an Associated Press interview. “Male soldiers were at first dubious about fighting alongside women, but lost their doubts in the heat of battle,” according to Omar Gabela, a male commander of the Bosnian loyalist forces.

The Bosnian war had other parallels with the Spanish bloodletting. In Spain, as described in that great modern classic, George Orwell’s *Homage to Catalonia*, the Communists, backed by Moscow and its arms, betrayed their Anarchist allies; so in Bosnia

the well-armed Croats deserted the Muslims for a separate deal with the Serbs. More complex forms of treason were also to come.

"The Bosnia we loved will never return," Čerešnješ told me in 1992. "The Muslims and Croats are now carving their pieces off the corpse of Bosnia, and we feel the next stage will be a conflict between them." And in Bosnia as in Republican Spain, "uncontrollable elements," violent and corrupt, emerged to terrorize further those who were already victims.

Like the Spanish Anarchists the Bosnian Muslims seemed an exotic item in history, born to a tradition of heresy, obscure and friendless. Also as in Spain, the foreign press reported the Bosnian militiamen and women sang loudly under fire.

They sang *sevdahlinke*. "When I went to Bembaša I took my white sheep," they sang – a very famous *sevdahlinka* that happens to have several alternate texts in Judeo-Spanish, one of them with a Jewish religious significance. A Spanish journalist described them singing the commoner version of the song, and wrote of his encounter with a Bosnian militiaman: "‘¡No pasarán!’ he shouts, using a phrase well known to Yugoslavs of his generation." *¡No pasarán!* – the slogan of the Spanish Republican forces – means *They shall not pass!*

Inevitably I learned the story of Bembaša and the white sheep. Bembaša, the same location mentioned in the previously described *sevdahlinka* about three young girls, is a place on the Miljacka River, to the west of the town of Sarajevo, where lovers walked. It is a gorgeous location, wooded and unspoiled, and until the Communist era in Yugoslavia was the site of the old *tekija*, or lodge, of the Mevlevi Sufis, followers of the Persian poet Rumi. It was said that the last *djed*, or supreme leader, of the Bosnian Church, an independent Christian sect, neither Catholic nor Orthodox but distinctly Bosnian, had turned his sceptre over to the *baba*, or supreme *shaykh*, of the Mevlevi Sufis, who kept it in the cellar of the *tekija* at Bembaša.

The song's words in Bosnian are:

*Kad ja podjoh na Bembašu
 Na Bembašu na vodu
 Ja povedoh bijelo janje
 Bijelo janje sa sobom.*

When I went to Bembaša
 To Bembaša by the water
 I took my white sheep
 My white sheep went with me.

The narrator takes a white sheep with him to Bembaša, because Eid al-Fiṭr, the second Bajram in the Islamic calendar, is approaching, and he will sacrifice the sheep. Further, he is seeking a girl, and wants to impress her with his wealth. Only in 1998 was I taught that this exquisite song, known all over Bosnia, also has a Sephardic religious version, sung *Al Noche de Albad*, or at the end of Shabbat. In its original form, the first of its 12 stanzas reads:

*El Dios alto por su gracia
 Nos mandó mucha ganancia
 Nos quitó de toda ansia
 A nos y a todo Israel*

God almighty, by his Grace
 Has given us many riches
 Has taken away all fears
 For us and all Israel.

It seems the whole history of Jewish–Muslim relations in Bosnian culture is contained in this story of a song. My friend the *chazẖan* of the Sarajevo synagogue, David Kamhi, revealed to me the existence of a third version, from the town of Travnik, that deals with faithless love. But that song involves another set of stories altogether ... which I am as yet unready to tell.

* * *

In his first visit to New York, at the end of 1992, Ivica Čerešnješ was most impressed by his discovery of a uniquely American invention: kosher Chinese food. But in Manhattan he was also approached by an elderly Jew who had fought alongside Čerešnješ's father, Sandor, in Spain, in the International Brigades. The man handed him a file folder of Čerešnješ's father's mementoes.

Čerešnješ brought the file to San Francisco and told me about it, knowing I had co-authored a book on Soviet intervention in the Spanish civil war.¹⁴ "Do you know who Blagoje Parović was?" he asked.

A typical Balkan question. Of course, I knew nothing of this individual. "He was presented to us younger Yugoslavs as a hero of the International Brigade who died in Spain in battle, but now we know he was shot in the back by the Communists," Čerešnješ told me. The packet of memorabilia included a little handkerchief stained with blood, ostensibly taken from Parović's body.

I took the packet to my home, opened it, and arrayed the items on my desk.

First, a photograph of four men, two in tailored uniforms. Čerešnješ identified one as Parović, with Sandor Čerešnješ on his left; Čerešnješ is the exact image of his father.

With the photo, a handful of bright, martial postcards issued by the Spanish Republican authorities. A map on oiled paper showing the position of the 46th division, 101st brigade, Spanish Republican Army, on October 2, 1938, during the ill-fated offensive on the Ebre River.

And the handkerchief: linen, about four by four inches. In two opposite corners, appliquéd Catalan national flags, four red bars on yellow. On the other corners, painted Spanish Republican colors: red, purple, and a smear of gold glitter. In ink, *R. de España 1938*.

I pull a volume off the shelf: the *Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern*, by Branko Lazitch and Milorad Drachkovitch, published by the Hoover Institution Press.

The entry is easily found, but brief: Parović was born in 1904

into a Hercegovinan peasant family. He was a shoe repairer. In 1924 he joined the Yugoslav Communist Party; he went to the Lenin School in Moscow in 1929. He entered the apparatus of the Communist International, with missions in Germany, and used the party name "Schmidt." He was promoted to the Yugoslav party central committee, and then to the politburo, but in 1936 he was dropped from the leadership and went to Spain. He was political commissar of the XIIIth International Brigade and "was killed in action in July 1937."

1937? The date on the handkerchief said to have been taken from his body is 1938. Čerešnješ insisted he was executed. Perhaps after several months in prison, but executed by Stalinist agents.

Parović and his Yugoslav comrades were dubbed "Our Spaniards" by the Spanish Republican publicity machine, which produced an opulent propaganda booklet with that title, specifically dedicated to Parović. He had directed recruitment in Yugoslavia for the Brigades, which drew up to 1,600 south Slavic volunteers. In September 1937, Parović was hailed in *Communist International*, the monthly organ of the world movement, as one who fought "with all energy and determination against counter-revolutionary Trotskyites ... for the Bolshevik line of the party."

International Solidarity with the Spanish Republic, an official history of the International Brigades published in Moscow in 1975, offers only two brief references to Parović: in one, it is stated he was killed at the beginning of the battle of Brunete in July, 1937. The other is more precise: Parović "fell in the battle of Villanueva de la Cañada on July 6, 1937."

"We know now that many were executed," Čerešnješ said. I read the historical entries with a man's blood before my eyes. R. Dan Richardson's flawed but authoritative history of the International Brigades, *Comintern Army*, notes that the XIIIth I.B. became known as "the Slavic brigade" after its original membership, which had included French, Belgians, Germans, Italians, and volunteers from various Balkan nations, was disbanded. The original XIIIth Brigade did not fight in the main battle of the war, at Madrid.

According to Richardson, "At some point during the Brunete

campaign of July 1937 the XIII Brigade underwent a crisis from which it never recovered. Just what happened or the exact sequence of events remains unclear. But the results leave no doubt as to the seriousness of the event. The XIII Brigade was dissolved as a unit and its men were scattered into other Brigades. Simultaneously the Dombrowski Brigade ... assumed the number XIII itself, thus helping to cover up the fact of the dissolution."

Sandor Voros, another Hungarian veteran of the I.B. and author of a disillusioned memoir, *American Commissar*, wrote about the experience of the volunteers at that period in the Spanish civil war: "The Kremlin leaders ... base their main reliance on terror. Officers and men are ruthlessly executed on their orders. The toll is particularly high among the Poles, Slavs, Germans, and Hungarians." A collection of materials from Russian archives, *Spain Betrayed: The Soviet Union in the Spanish Civil War*,¹⁵ edited by another friend of mine, the historian Ronald Radosh, with two collaborators, includes documents dealing with the XIIIth I.B. and the battle of Brunete.

In *Spain Betrayed*, the image of the brigade in which Čerešnješ's father served has dark and bright aspects. After Brunete, in June 1937, a high official of the Communist International wrote in a confidential message to Moscow, "This brigade is not destroyed, it has been murdered." An extensive discussion of Brunete and the XIIIth I.B. also figures in a long report written by Moshe Stern, known in Spain as General Emil Kléber, a former head of Russian intelligence in the U.S. and commander of the international volunteers who saved Madrid in November 1936. In his description, Brunete was a disaster.

"The 13th Brigade was given one of the most difficult sectors, at Romanillos, and despite its fatigue, it generally fought no worse than the other units," Kléber wrote. "Even so, a misfortune befell it; one battalion of this brigade, not standing up to the enemy's pressure and being pounded by the enemy air force and artillery, fled from the front ... the battalion in question was not the only one in this operation to do so." This was the background for the disbanding of the brigade.

Another commander of the International Brigades, General Karol Swierczewski, known as “Walter,” wrote later, “on the disturbing day of 26 July ... there was a general panic and flight.”

The Fate of a Rebel

The file on Čerešnješ's father also included a packet of clips, in Hungarian and English, from a New York Hungarian-language paper of communist leanings, *Magyar Jovo* [*Hungarian Daily Journal*], and from, of all things, the *Saturday Evening Post*. For the historical drama of Sandor Čerešnješ did not end in Spain.

Sandor Čerešnješ was assigned, within the International Brigades, to the battalion of Hungarian volunteers, under a well-known political figure, Laszlo Rajk. Rajk was the head of the Communist Party branch in the battalion. At the end of the Spanish war, Čerešnješ was interned with Rajk in France, in concentration camps described by Arthur Koestler in his book *Scum of the Earth*. Čerešnješ was then sent to North Africa, liberated by the Allies, and joined the British Eighth Army as a psychological warfare officer.

During his British service, Sandor Čerešnješ met his wife, also Jewish. They married and she became pregnant with Ivica. In 1945, they moved to Sarajevo. Three years later, Sandor Čerešnješ was summoned to Hungary by Rajk and the other Communists who had assumed power in Budapest.

Then, in one of the most gruesome and bizarre chapters in Communism's history, Rajk was removed from authority. Tito's break with Stalin and other events behind the scenes in the Kremlin produced a cycle of new purges, aimed at alleged “Trotskyites” and Titoites, mostly Jewish, mostly Spanish civil war volunteers. Outside Yugoslavia, the Spanish veterans, having risen high in the political structures of the post-1945 Soviet satellite states, were cut down. The release during the 1990s of the Venona record of Soviet secret police communications, by the U.S. National Security Agency, revealed that Stalin's killers planned this massacre even

before World War II had ended. Its origins were ultimately traceable to the defection, in the late 1930s, of a high-ranking intelligence officer, Ignacy Porecki-Reiss, who broke with Stalin, rallied to Trotsky, and was then murdered.

Anti-Semitism was a barely hidden motif in these affairs. Rajk's trial in Budapest in 1949, in which he was charged with a plot to establish himself as dictator, was the first major performance in the series. In 1947 Sandor Čerešnješ appeared as a contributor in *Magyar Jovo*, the New York Hungarian leftist organ. On September 23, 1949, seven days after the trial began, the paper published, in English, "The Text of Rajk's Indictment."

In the tenth paragraph, one reads: "Upon orders from the Yugoslav spy service, [Rajk] made the spy Sandor Csérésnyés Interior Ministry Press Chief, when he knew that Csérésnyés had worked as an English agent, for Csérésnyés tightened the connections between Rajk and the spies at the Yugoslav legation."

This reference also appears in the official record of the trial, *Laszlo Rajk and his Accomplices Before the People's Court*, published in Budapest in 1949. Čerešnješ did not appear as a defendant in the Rajk trial, but as a witness. He was also frequently mentioned by Rajk and the other defendants, including Lazar Brankov, a Yugoslav diplomat.

The barbarous character of the Rajk trial is best expressed by incidents on the first day. The President of the Court, Dr. Peter Janko, began the proceeding by demanding that four of the eight defendants – not including Rajk – disclose their "original" names. Gen. Gyorgy Palffy said, "Formerly my name was Gyorgy Österreichischer." Dr. Tibor Szonyi was "Hoffman," Andras Szalai was "Ervin Landler," Bela Korondy was "Dergan." The clear imputation was that the four were Jews. (Of the eight accused, these four and Rajk were hanged.)

At the close of the first day's session, which ended along with Rajk's testimony, Dr. Janko turned on Rajk. The following bizarre dialogue ensued:

"The President: I have one final question for you. What was the name of your father?

“Rajk: Jozsef, but he is dead.

“The President: What was his surname?”

“Rajk: Jozsef Rajk.

“The President: That is, Jozsef Rajk, as you say. What was your grandfather’s name?”

“Rajk (irritated): My grandfather, being of Saxon [i.e. German Christian] descent, wrote his name as Reich.

“The President: So you say that your grandfather was called Reich. How did it become Rajk? Legally?”

“Rajk: Legally.”

Dr. Janko continued badgering him, until Rajk burst out: “In this respect I wish to add that I am of Aryan descent, and genuinely too, because on one side I am Saxon. The Hungarian Aryan law ...” Dr. Janko interrupted to again quibble over the spelling of the defendant’s name, then adjourned the court.

This repellent disclaimer by Rajk may have been an oblique attempt to expose the trial’s anti-Semitic focus, developed under the direction of Soviet police officials. The favored targets, in the Rajk trial and in a later proceeding in Prague against the Czechoslovak Communist leader Rudolf Slansky, were those like Sandor Čerešnješ who combined a double stain – presumptive Jewishness and service in Spain – with another damning factor: exile in Britain during World War II. Here is nightmarish proof that Stalinism had, consciously or not, arrogated to itself the mantle of Hitlerian politics in Central and Eastern Europe ... as Slobodan Milošević did in Serbia in the 1990s.

On the third day of the Laszlo Rajk trial, witnesses were called. The fifth was Sandor Čerešnješ. His testimony reflected the hallucinatory nature of the Stalinist trials in general.

Čerešnješ began by professing he had served as an English and Yugoslav spy. Although Trotsky had never had a significant following in Hungary, and Trotskyism showed little trace in Yugoslavia, Čerešnješ declared that Rajk had formed a Trotskyist group to agitate among the members of the International Brigades interned in camps in France in 1939. A group of top Yugoslav Communists, also Spanish veterans, were described as

so “forcefully” pursuing Trotskyist work in the French camps that they assumed overall leadership of the Trotskyist groups among the interned. (The Yugoslavs themselves were reported in the Western press to have declared, from Belgrade, that they had never even been in the French camps. However, it is fully established that some were held in the camp at Gurs.)

Čerešnješ went on to claim that in October 1939, at the French camp of Vernet, Rajk had established a close contact with Enric Adroher Pascual (whose name was misspelled as Enrique Andreher), also known as “Gironella,” a leader of the Spanish anti-Stalinist but non-Trotskyist party, the POUM, or Workers’ Party of Marxist Unification. As every reader of Orwell’s *Homage* knows, the POUM had been the target of Muscovite repression in Spain. The POUM’s main leader, Andreu Nin i Pérez, was murdered by Soviet agents. Čerešnješ claimed falsely that Adroher had been sentenced to death in Republican Spain.

The remainder of Čerešnješ’ four pages or so of testimony was vague, with charges only that Rajk sought to build up his own power and was pro-Tito. As noted, at the conclusion of the trial, Rajk, Palfy, Szonyi, Szalai, and Korondy were condemned to be hanged. The sentences were carried out in short order. The remaining three defendants received heavy prison sentences.

The bundle of *Saturday Evening Post* clips in the file given to Čerešnješ in New York seemed to illuminate the Rajk trial while confusing his father’s identity. They recounted the long-forgotten persecution of an American telephone company executive resident in Budapest, Robert Vogeler, arrested along with a cousin of the actor George Sanders. In prison, Vogeler encountered Sandor Čerešnješ, who described how he had helped in the case against Rajk. However, Vogeler identified Čerešnješ as a Catholic, with a large cross in his cell, and quoted him blaming his situation on his “peasant background.”

Yet Čerešnješ assured me his father was a Jew. Had some part of the family converted? Had his father been driven insane? Or was Sandor Čerešnješ dissembling while spying on Vogeler? All Čerešnješ could add was that his father was imprisoned in Hungary

until 1956, when he was released during that year's insurrection. Rajk was rehabilitated the year before and, eventually, was restored as a heroic martyr to Hungarian history.

In his first American visit Čerešnješ had read an account from *The New York Times*, published in 1987, and centering on Laszlo Rajk, Jr., son of the executed leader. Čerešnješ pointed out to me the comments of the author, *Times* journalist Michael T. Kaufman, who wrote: "There is convincing evidence that Rajk was ... asked to sacrifice his life for the party and that the offer was carried to him by his best friend, Janos Kadar. As the younger Rajk understands it, Kadar visited his father in prison to explain that as a consequence of the Yugoslav rift the party was imperiled and threatened by dissension. According to the son's understanding, the plea was coupled with a promise of quiet banishment to the Crimea, which may have been made in good faith and then countermanded in Moscow.

"According to information that came to light after the elder Rajk was posthumously rehabilitated, beginning in 1955, the interview in prison between the two old friends had been secretly taped by Matyas Rakosi, First Secretary of the Hungarian Workers' Party, who reportedly used the recording to blackmail Kadar. Her son says that Rajk's widow had planned before her death to move in the Hungarian courts to recover any records of such a taped prison talk."

We now have the transcript of Kadar's prison conversation with Rajk, in which we find nothing but bullying, threats, and insults.

And Čerešnješ's father was mixed up in this bloody intrigue as well. His idealism was broken, his commitment turned against his principles. The man who had volunteered to fight in Spain was reduced to the status of a vulgar jail-house provocateur.

Behold the 20th century: in Sandor and Ivica Čerešnješ, two generations of men caught in the jaws of history, in Spain, in Hungary, in Bosnia, in the name of freedom, of the future, of life.

* * *

In discussing historical parallels between Bosnia and Spain, between Sarajevo and Barcelona, Čerešnješ offered another, reaching further in space and time. “Read Josephus on the siege of Jerusalem,” he said. “It’s all there, beginning with the division into three factions.”

And indeed, Bosnia’s war is reminiscent of Josephus’s account, in *The Jewish War*, in the general brutality and deception practiced by the participants, but also in other details. For example, the Serb *četniks*, known for their devotion to murder by the knife, resemble the fearsome First Century terrorists known as the Sicarii. Thus does history track and torment us.

Before he left San Francisco in 1992 I presented Ilica Čerešnješ with the one distinctive thing I felt I could offer him: truth.

I gave him an original copy of a lucid pamphlet on the Stalinist betrayal of the Spanish Republic, *The Tragedy of Spain*, written by the German anarchist Rudolf Rocker and published in New York by the Yiddish anarchists of the *Freie Arbeiter Shtimme* newspaper. “This describes how the Spanish were betrayed, as the Bosnians are now betrayed,” I said.

I gave him two other Spanish anarchist documents – first, a collection on the infamous May Days of 1937, when the Stalinist attack on the Barcelona anarchists began, under the command of another Hungarian, Erno Gero – whose assassination Rajk was accused of plotting. Also, a pamphlet on the role of the anarchist “uncontrolled elements” in the war.

Lastly, I gave him *Hermanos!*, by the American novelist William Herrick, a volunteer in Spain. Although fictionalized, the work was the first fully truthful account, by a veteran, of the International Brigades. “Read this,” I said, “and you will understand your father’s experience in Spain.”

Čerešnješ returned to Bosnia, and days, weeks, months, of further bloodshed went by.

In July 1993, Čerešnješ was interviewed by *Naš AS*, a Bosnian exile newspaper published in Split, Croatia. He declared, “Today

about 700 Jews remain in Sarajevo. The condition of their lives is hardly different from that of other citizens. We are imperiled no less than our neighbors. We undergo the same pain and suffering; but since we are accustomed to gathering, sharing each other's company, and helping one another, we Jews manage more easily than others. But we are not selfishly assisting only each other. We are helping the rest of our fellow-citizens. For example, three-quarters of the city is supplied by our three pharmacies in Sarajevo. If we succeed in breaking the blockade of the city, we will also bring in food and distribute it equally.

"Still, living conditions in the city are impossible and every day they become more difficult. Our citizens today live lives unworthy of animals. People have been robbed of all the benefits of civilization. At this moment, 35 grams of food per citizen enters the town, which literally means a half crust of bread. People are undergoing pain, agony, and degradation.

"As a Sarajevan, I can say that I would be happiest if I could tell all my friends and loved ones that they must leave this hell. However, as the president of the Jewish Community I believe it would be terrible if a community which has existed in Bosnia and Hercegovina for 500 years should leave because of this miserable conflict in which we were uninvolved.

"Our Bosnian community is proud of having stayed out of politics, in the past as now. I am proud to affirm that we Jews are loyal to our country, Bosnia-Hercegovina, and not to politicians. We support no political party, and no side in this war, because we know all sides are complicit in this tragedy; thus, we have distanced ourselves from the combatants. I sincerely hope that after the 500-year legacy of Jews in Bosnia-Hercegovina, it will not be my misfortune to serve as the community's last president. To the last atom of my strength, I will fight for the survival of the Jewish Community in Bosnia.

"As a completely separate matter, I will also fight with all my strength to extricate every last frail, elderly, and infirm Jew from Sarajevo, this victimized, dying city. Local politicians, especially in Sarajevo, made a grave mistake in not evacuating all the women,

children, elderly, and sick people. Every child killed represents an irreparable loss.

"We have long since removed all the Jewish children from the hell of Sarajevo. Today tens of thousands of children remain in Sarajevo. Children are the most valuable wealth of a nation and a society. And if a nation is unaware of this, the nation does not deserve these children."

A year after my leavetaking from Čerešnješ, in November 1993, Reuters reporter Arthur Spiegelman wrote that convoys run by the "Joint," to evacuate those Jews who wished to escape, had included Muslim and Christian refugees, but that the Bosnian government had "forced them to 'ethnically cleanse' their last convoy."

Spiegelman wrote, "Sarajevo Jewish community leader Ivica Čerešnješ reluctantly confirmed that the restrictions had been imposed, although he said he was now promised that would not happen again. 'They stopped us from taking anybody but Jews and the Jews we could take had to be under 15 or over 65 years old,' he said ... Čerešnješ spoke to Reuters after a meeting of the World Jewish Congress in New York, where he alluded to the conditions, saying, 'We had some problems during the last convoy and we came here to avoid those conditions for the future' ... He said an 11th convoy was being planned for the near future but declined to say when it would take place ... Čerešnješ said the convoys have to pass through 38 checkpoints but had never had someone taken off and that the Jewish community was trusted by all sides.

"Several people at the meeting, including survivors of concentration camps, pressed him on why any Jews stayed in the city and he said, 'If you ask someone ten times to leave and they stay, that is their decision. What can I say?' He added that all Jewish children are now out of the city. He described conditions as worsening. 'There is no food, gas, electricity, and there is killing around the clock. People are killing each other out of hatred and fear. I see hunger and fear rising on all sides,' he said, adding that he planned to return soon."

The Return

What remained to be preserved of Jewish Sarajevo? If nothing else, the “Spanish” Cemetery, the oldest in the city, seized by the Serb *četniks* at the beginning of the war, and still the scene of bitter fighting two years later, when Bosnian troops had entrenched themselves on one of its borders. Artillery and rifle fire shattered the graves, sending fragments flying, so that even the dead were allowed no peace. The graveyard occupies about 30,000 square meters, or some 7.5 acres.

Traditional accounts held that the cemetery was established in 1630, when the land was rented by Rabbi Samuel Baruh from an Islamic *waqf*, or religious endowment. Later the Jewish community bought the property, which originally was much larger; when a railroad was built under Austro-Hungarian rule, about half the space was lost. In the later 1920s, gated walls were built around it. The gravestones are significant, both for their form and their inscriptions. Hewn in a quarry near by, they are sarcophagi of the kind known as “seated lions.”

There are upward of 3,000 Jewish graves, with markers typically engraved and painted in Hebrew and Judeo-Spanish, using Rashi letters, although more recent ones also include Roman lettering, and many later ones resemble the gravestones used by other faiths. Large and fine old markers indicate the graves of famous scholars and rabbis. Many of the markers feature homilies, but all the inscriptions make up an irreplaceable record of Sephardic life in the Balkans.

In addition to the markers, the graveyard’s stone walls show considerable sturdiness. Further, the *kheider tabora* at the cemetery is a solid stone building, erected in 1926. These structures and the hundreds of gravestones made the “Spanish” cemetery an extremely attractive military asset during the war. With the end of the fighting, entry to the cemetery, even for caretaking purposes, was impossible because of the enormous number of mines and other unexploded ordnance on its grounds.

In February 1998, I met in Sarajevo with Jakob Finci, Čerešnješ’s

successor as president of the Jewish Community of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Thomas Jarnehed of the Swedish Army, regional manager for Sarajevo and Goražde of the United Nations Mine Action Center, and Major John Hazel of the British Army.

Jarnehed described how a demining project had been established by the Norwegian State Aid Agency, to remove mines from the entire area of Grbavica, which surrounds the “Spanish” cemetery. The demining of the cemetery, in addition to the neighborhood – i.e. demining for the dead as well as the living – had been promoted to the local residents, according to Jarnehed, above all because of the cemetery’s historical and cultural value.

The cemetery was “heavily infested” with mines and other unexploded ordnance, totaling tens of thousands of individual items, according to Jarnehed. Although mines were an obvious problem, unexploded rifle grenades were an even greater hazard.

The borders of the graveyard were the worst infested, having three to five mines per square meter. Demining of one square meter required 1,000 probes. Electronic detection equipment was useless because of the large quantities of metal.

Demining of the “Spanish” cemetery was completed in spring 1998. Toward the end of 2000 the *kebeder tabora* had a new copper dome, which shone in the sun.

* * *

In March 1995, I had heard again from Čerešnješ. Traveling around the United States on a tour sponsored by the United Jewish Appeal, he had arranged to visit San Francisco, and called me. I rushed to his hotel.

Čerešnješ had come to the Pacific Coast this time with his sense of humor strengthened, although still darkened by the ordeal he had experienced for three years. California was swept by rain and floods, and the newsroom where I worked was in turmoil as reporters and editors scrambled for the latest data.

“Floods? What’s the big deal?” Čerešnješ asked. I answered,

“Easy for you to say,” and for once the cliché was grossly inaccurate. I told him floods were rare for us, but, compared with the rain of fire and steel in Sarajevo, they seemed paltry and even rather entertaining.

We spent an evening and the next morning together. Čerešnješ still chain-smoked; now, he had to contend not only with Jewish leadership meetings where smoking was not permitted but also with San Francisco cafés where smoking was banned. It was a trial, but at least one could purchase real tobacco without resorting to the black market or other desperate methods, as in Sarajevo.

Čerešnješ told me, however, that a ceasefire, shaky but nonetheless real, had been established in the martyred city, and life was, to some extent, back to normal. Still, any hope that might emerge from such a situation was, it seemed, balanced out by yet more bad news from all sides, Serb, Muslim, Croat. Again as in the Spanish civil war, factionalism, gangsterism, corruption, and treason seemed to spread constantly throughout Bosnia in battle. Čerešnješ told me much I could not tell others: he had clearly come to me to unburden himself. I was far away from Sarajevo, as far as Čerešnješ could go and still expect to find a friend. I had not gone to Bosnia, once the war began; family problems and professional obstacles had prevented me, and I felt guilty at not making the pilgrimage into risk.

Yet, somehow, the very fact I had not gone to Bosnia as a war correspondent or other media personality seemed to reassure Čerešnješ, to convince him that I was a friend rather than a reporter looking for a story. And, of course, we had Spain in common, in all its incarnations.

We walked through the North Beach district of San Francisco in a light rain that evening, stopping at one cafe after another. We stood together on the ground where, 19 years before, I first read the name of Kalmi Baruh. The variety of bars and restaurants, the vitality of the scene and the streets reminded Čerešnješ of the old Sarajevo, another city of lovers, of poets, and of rebels.

He could not predict when the war might end, and had grown weary with his mission. About 600 Jews survived in Sarajevo; the

city's population had stayed at some 300,000, or half the prewar total. Čerešnješ wanted to escape to Israel, where his wife and children remained in difficult conditions. The Serbian forces were, he said, much weaker than many outsiders imagined: most of the Serbian youth had fled abroad to avoid military service, and the commanding ranks of the Bosnian Serb army were mainly occupied by old men.

On some points, he was reassuring. The revived welfare institution *La Benevolencija* now functioned well as a pan-Bosnian agency. Communications and transportation had improved. The *Sarajevo Haggadah* was, he told me, still safe. Čerešnješ remained committed to the preservation of Bosnia's cultural memory of the Sephardim, and I presented him, as in the past, with a book – a special book, a “rabbinical” copy, as I joked, of Menéndez Pidal's *Romancero judeoespañol*, bearing my handwritten annotations. He greatly appreciated the books I had given him before.

Čerešnješ also expressed approval at my efforts to publicize Elazar's *Romancero Judeo-Español*. Such work was important, he said, because the entire press run of that wonderful anthology had been burned by the *četniks*, who set fire to the warehouse owned by the Svjetlost publishing company, in the Serb-held suburb of Blažuj. Copies were exceedingly rare, he said, and Elazar's daughter (he had died in 1965) would be thrilled to learn that it had been excerpted in journals on this side of the Atlantic, such as Octavio Paz's *Vuelta*.

The news of the destruction, the death of that book, shocked me. Is it unfeeling, inhuman, to be moved more by violence against literature than by cruelty against people? I cannot say. The philosophy of the Serbian *četniks* in Bosnia, led by Karadžić, a fairly successful poet in cosmopolitan Sarajevo, has been summarized as: “If we cannot write, we at least know how to burn libraries.”

Ivica Čerešnješ returned to Sarajevo, and survived. By 1997 he had gone to Israel. After much travail, he was appointed to a position at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

I asked around about him when I visited Bosnia in 1997, as a media analyst for the International Federation of Journalists, and

again during a visit early in 1998, at the very beginning of serious fighting in Kosova. Concern for the *Sarajevo Haggadah* and the possibility of republishing a reproduction of it remained a topic of discussion. Čerešnješ communicated with me from Israel in autumn 1998 via e-mail.

In the meantime, he had joined the staff of HUJ's Center for Jewish Art. His work there involves documentation of art, architecture, and other aspects of the Jewish material legacy in the former Communist countries. In a report published by the Center, I read a story that seemed as alluring and magical as the Sephardic music of Bosnia. In the mountains of Azerbaijan, Čerešnješ's colleagues had visited, in 1997, several communities of "Mountain Jews." These ancient communities lived mixed with Karaite Jews, who rejected *Talmud*, and small numbers of *Gerei Tzedek*, or ethnic Russians who had converted to Judaism. In a town called Kuba, near Baku, Jews from highland and valley villages in Azerbaijan were joined by Jews from Iran. The Jewish community of Kuba "is today enjoying a renewal due to their improved economic situation." Traditionally merchants, the Jews of Kuba now conduct an extensive trade in Chinese consumer goods, "leading to a very high standard of living," according to the report.

These "Mountain Jews" also have a high birth rate, and the Jewish population is therefore growing as former residents of outlying villages move to Kuba. New homes are being built, and the local cemetery and synagogue have been restored. Immigration to Israel is very low, and there are clans with members that are Muslims as well as Jews. The "Mountain Jews" believe in their mountains.

These Jews know something, something I also want to know.¹⁶

In 1999, I moved to Sarajevo to live, and saw Ivica Čerešnješ again. He did not disappoint me: he expressed righteous anger at the propaganda in Israel in favor of the Serbs, and against Albanians, during the Kosova war. But from others in Sarajevo, I had learned more about the darker side of Jewish survival in the Bosnian conflict – of things Čerešnješ had referred to in the soul-baring we shared four years before. To cite the worst example, Čerešnješ had described

to me, in one of his San Francisco visits, how Mordechai Atijas, president of the Jewish Community of Doboj, proclaimed himself a "Jewish četnik" and assisted other Serbian extremists in expelling Muslims from the town. The so-called "Bosnian Serb Republic" later featured a so-called "Grand Rabbi" of the territory.¹⁷ Horribly enough, such phenomena were not unique to Doboj; a separate volume would be required to catalogue the ignominies performed by the "official" Yugoslav and Serbian Jewish organizations in Belgrade, as well as the anti-Albanian role assumed by the equally official Macedonian Jewish leadership. In Kosovo, according to the Israeli daily Yedi'ot Aharonot, some 40 Israelis fought in the ranks of Serb terrorists.¹⁸

But this dolorous accounting, like other chapters, belongs elsewhere ... Suffice to say that the Bosnian Jewish community was, then, deeply divided; virtue was hardly universal in Sarajevo under siege. It was a time when it seemed God had turned away altogether from beautiful Bosnia-Herzegovina. For Ivica Čerešnješ, it may have been best to remain in Israel after the war, however much Sarajevo pulled at his heart. In a sense, nothing he did could overcome the primordial error of his candidacy for the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) in 1990.

I feel great affection for Ivica Čerešnješ, and great identification with him. I associated him with Bosnia, but in a sense my deeper bonding with him indicated the root of his tragedy. His family was not Sephardic nor Bosnian nor religious; rather, they were Ashkenazi, from Bukovina, and Marxists. Sarajevo sheltered him as it has so many other refugees, and as it did me, also neither Sephardic nor Bosnian, and following a path beginning under the sign of Marx no less than of Moses and Muhammad. But it was, finally, up to men like David Kamhi and Jakob Finci to determine what it means to be a Jew in Sarajevo. They remained in the city after the war, and from them I sought, finally, understanding.

A Library Reborn

I returned to Sarajevo, intending to stay.

The shelf near the Ark, behind the *bimah* in the Ashkenazi synagogue, has a tag reading, in handwritten Latin letters, *Tikkuney Zohar*. But for seven and a half years, the shelf has been empty.

The *chazẓan* of Sarajevo, David Kamhi, points to the words, translating them for me, but I assure him that I know the meaning of the phrase: *Rectifications of the Zohar*, one of the fundamental commentaries on Kabbalah, first printed at the distinguished Hebrew press of Mantua, Italy, in 1558.

I have the good fortune to be present at a uniquely historic moment: the rebirth of a library. Kamhi, along with Moric Albahari, another member of the Jewish Community of Sarajevo, and a woman helper, is retrieving sacred *seforim* in Hebrew, Aramaic, Judeo-Spanish, Ladino (the Sephardic liturgical language), Yiddish, and even a few in German and English. Lovingly, they lift the volumes from steel coffers that have held them safe, kept in the synagogue basement since the outbreak of the Bosnian war.

Kamhi, a proud Sephard *de sangre pura* (of pure lineage), is careful to observe all the proper regulations in completing this holy labor. We three males wear *kippot*. Kamhi's first action is to put aside one of the steel boxes as a *genizah*, or depository for religious books that will no longer be used. The overall collection is, predictably, magnificent. One minute I am holding in my hands a copy of *Shulchan Aruch* [*The Set Table*], R. Yosef Karo's canon of Jewish customary law, printed in Venice. A moment later, I watch as Moric Albahari carefully opens a Torah portion inscribed on leather, centuries old, but with unfaded ink, as bright as if it had been produced yesterday. A 19th-century prayer book produced in Germany has a single line scrawled on its inside cover: "The owner of this book died in Bergen-Belsen in 1944."

But these tasks are anything but sad, and the 60-year-old *chazẓan*, David, in professional life a violin teacher at the Sarajevo Music Academy, is in his element. He smiles as I rush out to buy a disposable camera, anxious lest this moment pass without a permanent record. After coming back, I kid him, telling him he should kiss each *sefer* as he handles it, but he says, "They're too dusty, I don't want to have to wash my face as well as my hands." Slowly, the shelves of the library fill up, restoring to physical reality the collective memory of the Sarajevo Jews.

Chazẓan David Kamhi could be called the secret mayor of

Sarajevo. He knows everybody, from high Muslim politicians to amateur accordion players to one of the city's outstanding heroes in the recent war, the Serbian general Jovan Divjak, who rejected the ultranationalism preached by his fellow-Serbs, and commanded the city's defense. David introduces me to Divjak on the street, and as we talk passers-by, one after another, stop to shake the general's hand, to kiss him on both cheeks, even to salute him military-style. A few days after that, Divjak leads me on a tour of the positions he and his troops held, on a single hill above the city, surrounded by peaks under enemy control and replete with enemy artillery. The trenches are shallow, and I imagine they have filled up with dirt in the four winters since the peace of 1995. "No," he says, "they were always shallow trenches. We had no shovels, and dug them with our hands."

Later, I watch a video series on the collapse of Yugoslavia, in which we see Divjak walk, upright and defiant, directly into sniper fire, amazingly unharmed as he demands the shooting stop. But at the end of the war General Jovan Divjak was pensioned out of the Bosnian Army command, allegedly because hardline Bosniak officers could not stomach a Serb, any Serb, among them. He learned of his retirement by reading about it in the newspapers. He could hardly cross the line, then, into the "Republika Srpska," not after three years fighting Serbs whose propaganda loudspeakers howled each night with threats against his wife and children for his "treason." So Divjak has stayed in Sarajevo on a tiny pension, directing a foundation for Bosnian children. Strangely enough, he is happy. He lifts his face to the bright sun and breathes the clean air of the Sarajevo hilltops, and remarks, "Life, life is worth living, no matter what."

Like Divjak, who hands out meagre scholarships for gifted music students, David Kamhi has a wealth of projects aimed at expanding the cultural horizons of Sarajevo's most important survivors: its children. David hopes to lead the Sarajevo Chamber Orchestra, affiliated with his Music Academy, on a tour of the United States, telling me it can be done for pathetically small expenses. Perhaps because of the Austro-Hungarian occupation

of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which lasted for 40 years from 1878, classical music is taken very seriously here. But David, in classic Jewish style, is a fountainhead of inspiration: he is talking with a leading politician about establishing a Bosnian peace corps; he also is involved in plans to open a restaurant that would serve ecologically pure food. He has inaugurated cultural programs in the refurbished lecture hall of the synagogue, and above all wants to get a piano for the Community Center, to offer more and better performances.

David Kamhi and his family were saved in the Holocaust by their Bosnian Muslim neighbors. Today he is the unique guardian of fealty to Jewish tradition in Sarajevo, the city where at Purim we sit for the reading of *Megillat Esther*, in serenity and peace.

He asks me to assist in a service, but also asks if I am circumcised, for most younger Bosnian Jews were not. David has a marvelous voice, and he leads the bare *minyan* in singing *Leha Dodi* [*Come, My Friend*], the Shabbat hymn written by the Kabbalist Shlomo Alkabetz, brother-in-law of R. Moshe Cordovero, the teacher of R. Isaac Luria. The melody, which is stirring, was composed in Sarajevo, according to David. And in this part of the world Luria's great hymn *Yom Tzakeh L'Yisrael* [*This Day for Israel*] also has an optimistic flavor.

David Kamhi and the other Bosnian Jews recently welcomed two Lubavitcher Chasidim, who had toured most of Eastern Europe. I was now in Sarajevo, and thanks to them I was able to place *mezuzot* in my little Muslim-style house, near the infamous Sniper Alley, where, had I lived there during the war, I would most certainly have been killed. I recited the blessing, nailed the *mezuzot* to my doorposts, and kissed them, grateful for the miracle of Jewish survival in Sarajevo, however troubled it might be.

Rosh Hashanah in Sarajevo

Here begins a spiritual adventure. It's the first morning of *Rosh Hashanah* 5760, a fine clear Saturday, and I'm walking along a

riverbank carrying a Bible. It's a large volume, the *Ferrara Bible* in Spanish, first printed in 1553 for the use of Iberian converts to Christianity, who fled Spain for Italy to escape the Inquisition. The river is called the Miljacka, and runs smoothly between stone banks. The city is Sarajevo, where, at 50, I came to live.

Before describing the religious aspects of this moment, there is something that should be said about Sarajevo itself. It is a curious place for Americans from California, where I have lived almost all my life, or from Texas, where various of my friends, who went to Bosnia to work, originate. Although Sarajevo is known throughout the world, and is the capital of a country, it is not large. It has no more than 400,000 inhabitants, and they are not crowded together. The main streets and boulevards are not filled with traffic or a crush of pedestrians. This lack of urban density and a blessed absence of pollution are not merely consequences of the recent war. Sarajevo was never much more than an Ottoman provincial capital, yet it shone with civility and wealth.

But for Americans from the Southwest or the West, it, like other Balkan localities, feels strangely familiar. It is hard for us to remember we are in Europe. Commerce is undeveloped; there is no vast expanse of neon as in London or Brussels or Barcelona. People are friendly, mainly young and upbeat in their attitudes, and everybody knows one another. Above all, Sarajevo is on the frontier between West and East, with the unfinished feel of a border town, a city on the edge of the world, more like San Francisco than Boston. Altogether, one is reminded of, say, Tucson, Arizona, about 1962. *These are my borderlands* ...

There are few bookstores in Sarajevo, but there is a wonderful literary scene. Food is generally fine, and political talk is closer to the authentic cutting edge than that to be found anywhere else on the globe, since here the issues of post-Communism, revived nationalism, and democracy have been debated in blood and bombs, not in words alone. Thousands died in Sarajevo for the multicultural values U.S. intellectuals take for granted.

And there is spiritual life: some 70 mosques, as well as Catholic churches and monasteries, Orthodox institutions, and the



Interior of the first Sarajevo synagogue (*Kabal Viejo*), founded 1581, as seen in 1991. (Photograph by Stephen Schwartz)

Ashkenazi synagogue now styled the Jewish Community Center, one of seven Jewish sacred buildings, the synagogue to which I am headed with my copy of the *Ferrara Bible* in a plastic bag.

Oh yes, another feature of Sarajevo makes it different from those Western and Southwestern American cities: most of them are flat, on the open plains. Sarajevo is built along the river gorge of the Miljacka, which happens to run west to east, between high, green, and very beautiful hills. On Sabbath eves, when the sun sets, especially through the rainclouds that often gather, rays of light fall upon the lovely heights, with their minarets and little houses, in an exquisite display: the *Shekinah* reveals herself at those moments.



Zenica synagogue, built 1906, as seen in 1997. (*Photograph by Stephen Schwartz*)



On the left, the first Sarajevo synagogue, on the right the second (*Kabal Nuevo*), first recorded 1746, as seen in 2000. (Photograph by Stephen Schwartz)

Then, Sarajevo, which for some is the heart of the world, is also a very high place in God's world: truly, the little Jerusalem of the Balkans, even after the Holocaust, Communism, and a barbaric war.

I walk the distance from my home to the Ashkenazi Synagogue, which is on the south side of the Miljacka. The morning service for the first day of *Rosh Hashanah* begins with no more than a *minyan*, by contrast with the night before, when the prayer hall was packed. The synagogue is not the oldest or the most handsome in Sarajevo. Its neo-Moorish design is a bit garish. The only Ashkenazi temple in the city, it was built in 1902 by Hungarian Jews who had come to the city during the period of Habsburg rule.

The other Sarajevo synagogues, six of them, two presently owned by the Jewish Community, were all Sephardic. The oldest, the *Kabal Viejo*, built in 1581, has been the Jewish Museum since the end of World War II. Near it is the *Kabal Nuevo*, a smaller synagogue erected at least a century later, and first mentioned in Turkish documents in 1746. Both are located within 50 meters of

the historic center of Sarajevo, the complex of buildings founded by Gazi Husrev Beg, the greatest Islamic builder in Bosnia: a mosque, an Islamic high school, or *madrasa*, and a market.

Of Sarajevo's Jewish community, officially numbering about 900, a third are Jewish in terms of *halakhah*, born of Jewish mothers. The rest are children of or spouses in mixed marriages. This creates some ironic situations, particularly on the secular side: the two women who direct the day-to-day activities of *La Benevolencija*, the Jewish welfare organization, are both Muslim!

The Jewish remnant is still overwhelmingly Sephardic, and some of the elders speak Judeo-Spanish, an aspect of life in Sarajevo that, no matter how many times one hears that idiom spoken, remains astonishing. One never gets over how the language brought out of the Iberian peninsula, by Jews expelled in 1492, survived in the Bosnian mountains.

But that phenomenon also explains many things. It is because of the Sephardic tradition in Sarajevo that I walk along the river carrying the *Ferrara Bible*, which will be opened on the *bimah* for the *Torah* reading, during the morning service. It is not, of course, a copy from the original printing in Ferrara, which would be priceless. Rather, it is a beautiful edition produced in Los Angeles in 1992, on the 500th anniversary of the expulsion. This and other such volumes exist because of the unrelenting work of preservation carried out by a remarkable professor at the University of Southern California, Moshe Lazar.

Their use in the Sarajevo synagogue reflects a similar tenacious dedication on the part of the community's *chazkan*, David Kamhi. Kamhi insists on maintaining the Sephardic liturgy as it exists in few other places today, although he proudly states it is done in Sarajevo as in *Neve Shalom*, the great Sephardic synagogue in Istanbul. Kamhi is rigorous about two things: his own pure Sephardic origin and his support for the Bosnian Republic. He served in the so-called "Muslim" army in the 1992–95 war and was then posted as a diplomat to the Bosnian Embassy in Madrid. He thus redeemed a debt to the Bosnian Muslim neighbors that saved his family from the Holocaust.

Moshe's editions are appropriate for David's ambitions, but the *Ferrara Bible* seems especially so to me, because after three generations under Communism, the Jews of Sarajevo greatly resemble those *conversos* who, having fled from Spain with little or no real knowledge of Judaism, groped their way back to the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob on Italian soil. The *Ferrara Bible* was translated into a magnificent Castilian version and printed in Latin letters for the use of those fugitives. Moshe Lazar has had the text reset from the original black letter to make it more readable. Kamhi insists on including Judeo-Spanish sections in every service, and because so many Americans, who know no Hebrew, Bosnian, or Judeo-Spanish, come to the synagogue, he has long wished that someone would translate his Spanish comments into English. He also yearns for a friend with whom to practice Spanish.

Kamhi has therefore made me his synagogue *amora*, or interpreter, a high honor possible only because of my good Spanish, reflecting my California origins as well as my journeys in Latin America and Spain. On the eve of *Rosh Hashbanah* I am blessed with an experience I never thought possible. I find myself at the steps of the *bimah* in the synagogue, putting on *tallit*. I kiss the fringes and recite the blessing while wrapping the garment around my shoulders.

Then Jakob Finci, the grandson of Sarajevo's 19th-century high rabbi, and president of the Community, comes forward and announces that our *chazzan* will be assisted in the service by me. My duties are pretty elementary: to translate Kamhi's remarks from Judeo-Spanish, which he pronounces after Bosnian, into English. The post of *amora* doubtless exists only in this synagogue. Yet I stand on the *bimah* and dutifully render his words for the understanding of our American guests, who are relatively many. The really magnificent moment comes afterward when, at the *kiddush* for *Rosh Hashbanah*, I sit at the high table with the community elders: Kamhi, Finci, the *shammash* Moric Albahari, and Predrag Papo. I translate from Judeo-Spanish, line for line, as Kamhi describes each of the items before us, wine, apples, grapes, pomegranates, honey, and bread, and explains how to complete the blessing. I



Jakob Finci, Sarajevo, 1997. (Photograph by Stephen Schwartz)

note with satisfaction, for the security of their souls, that some distinguished Muslim guests touch the wine glasses to their lips but do not drink.

On the following morning, having taken my *Ferrara Bible* back to the synagogue, I am rewarded beyond measure when Kamhi asks me to say the mourner's *kaddish*, then calls me for the first *aliyah*, which I give in Spanish, from the prophecy of Daniel. I am proud that my voice as I read from the *Ferrara Bible*, which lies open on the *bimah*, is firm and strong, and that I speak the language with fluency. For I am an authentic traveler, a "crosser of borders," the meaning of the word *Ivrit*, or Hebrew. It is a strange coincidence that the reading comes from Daniel, since Kamhi then asks me what *yizkor* I want prayed, and I answer, for my mother, Helen, daughter of Daniel. An even more curious synchronicity has taken place earlier, during the blowing of the *shofar*, when the blowing occurs exactly as a wedding procession passes by, with the honking of auto horns.



Sarajevo *chazzan* David Kamhi, 2000. (Photograph by Stephen Schwartz)

Kamhi makes me promise to bring my *Ferrara Bible* back for the *Yom Kippur* service, which of course I will do. We owe so much to the goodness of Moshe Lazar, whose great work in printing these *seforim* has aided us in preserving some thread of Sephardic tradition, like the blue thread in the *tallit*, in Sarajevo. And I owe so much to my *morenu*, David. He is alone and legendary in his devotion here. After the morning service “the elders” gather at a table by the door of the community center, Kamhi, Finci, Papo, Albahari, and old/young Jakob Danon with his noble, Sephardic profile. Albahari asks us to sign a card for the Jewish mayor of central Sarajevo, Igor Gaon. All sign – mine the only Ashkenazi name among these Sephardim – but Kamhi refuses to touch a pen on the *Shabbat*. A Muslim woman who works in the community office comes in and tells him Bosnian TV is on the telephone, and wants to discuss its coverage of the New Year. He refuses, and afterward complains to me, “They should know our traditions, they are *Sarajlije*, and should know that a Jew does not take telephone calls on the *Shabbat*.”

On the second day of *Rosh Hashanah*, which is not a *Shabbat*,



Sarajevo *shammash* Moric Albahari, 1999. (Photograph by Stephen Schwartz)

but *Al Had*, the end of *Shabbat*, I stand over the waters of the Miljacka, the river running through Sarajevo. *Kippah* on my head, facing Jerusalem, I pray and perform *tashlich*, or the abandonment of my sins, by emptying my trouser pockets, which I previously filled with breadcrumbs, into the stream. The bits of bread hardly strike the water – they are intended for the fish in the river to consume – when birds that live under the bridge swoop down to seize them. Is this an omen? Will my sins remain suspended in time and in the air?

The bridge on which I stand is a highly appropriate place for such meditations. For years, it was known as Principov Most, or Princip's Bridge, named for the Serb extremist, Gavrilo Princip, who assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914. The fatal event occurred only five meters from the bridge, on the other side

of the street. Until 1992, golden footprints marked the place he stood, and the Mlada Bosna [Young Bosnia] museum occupied the building on the corner, commemorating the group of which he was a member. Soon after the most recent conflict broke out, the steps were torn out, the museum was shut down, and the bridge reverted to its previous and present name, *Latinska Ćuprija*, or the Latin Bridge.

But these are among the reasons, I think, why the Sephardim loved Sarajevo: a West–East layout that induces the *Shekinah* to reveal herself; a river at which to perform *tashlich*. I have my own reasons, as well. Perhaps all this is only research: yet I think insistently of the Sephardim who went to Italy in the decades following the original expulsion of 1492, after having been compelled to convert to Christianity. *The trauma of the great banishment has its parallel in the Holocaust, and the generations who lived as forced converts also have theirs, in the Eastern and Central European Jews who, as in Yugoslavia, survived Communism.* Once again, without much in the way of authentic Judaism, the Jews of the 1990s from Warsaw to Bucharest and from Prague to the Pacific struggled to regain it, like the *conversos* who traveled to the Italian cities before them. The latter went to Italy with non-Jewish spouses and, therefore, non-Jewish children; Italian Jewish communities once included congregations of Jews, unredeemed converts, and “bastards,” or *mamzerim*. Prior to going to Sarajevo, I knew much about such issues; my mother was not Jewish when I was born, and I had no *bar mitzvah*. Indeed, I had no religious instruction whatever as a child. Now I know yet more about the condition of those without a clear religious identity.

But I have left out a whole other world here, for Sarajevo is Slavic and Muslim in its majority. The Slavic speech is difficult for many Americans to learn, but somehow I make myself understood. Sarajevo encourages us each to live in our own universe, and all the cosmic spheres are open. On the first night of *Rosh Hashanah* I walk back up into the old town, and hear the *muezzin* at the Ferhadija mosque recite the call to prayer, or *adhan*, for the last time that day, at 8:39 p.m. There are two things that never fail to move me, when I hear the *adhan* in Sarajevo: that it is never alone, but is always

followed by the voices of other *mujezins*, and that I am in a fully European city; a recognition as miraculous as the Spanish language in the mouths of Jews born in rural Bosnia. These observations are, of course, commonplace to Bosnian Muslims.

Sarajevo is worth defending. As I pass the Gazi Husrev Beg mosque, two young boys cross the narrow, cobbled street from the *madrasa*, one with his arm protectively around the other's shoulders. The guiding one walks into the prayer hall, which is crowded with worshippers, while the other heads to the *šadrvan*, or fountain, for ritual washing.

After performing *tashlich*, I come home on the afternoon of *Al Had* and take a nap. I dream that my mother, who taught me so much about all these things, is with me here in Sarajevo.

Literary Letter from Sarajevo

Sarajevo, I emphasize, is not one of the great, as in large, European capitals – thank God. Or, as some hereabouts would prefer it, *alhamdulillah* [Allah be praised]! Its population stood at no more than 600,000 before the 1992–95 war, and the effects of the long siege left it with half that. Peace has restored its population to 400,000. It remains a small, intimate city, where the streets seem empty half the time – a De Chirico painting with mosques, perhaps – and where everybody seems to know everyone else.

But old *Sarajlije* complain that today they do not recognize their neighbors. Too many real Sarajevo folk, they insist, fled to Germany, the U.S., and other places of refuge, leaving the city to a different set of refugees: Muslim peasants expelled from the towns of eastern Bosnia that remain within the “Bosnian Serb Republic.” The *Sarajlije* sneer at these unfortunates, calling them *papci*, or hill-billies.

The film director Ademir Kenović, whose work includes the first postwar Bosnian feature, the 1997 release *Savršeni Krug* [*Perfect Circle*], grimaces when he hears such comments. He considers the urban dislike for the rural immigrants a form of racism. But



Kemal Bakaršić (left), Ivan Čerešnjaj (right), Sarajevo, 1999. (Photograph by Stephen Schwartz)

Kenović is a man of great generosity who cannot speak ill of anybody, while other *Sarajlije* – for he is a native of the city – sneer at a lot of people. Their sensibility, which seems borrowed in some part from the Vienna of a century past, when the Habsburgs ruled here as well, is generally cynical, impossible to convince or please. This attitude long predated the privations of the recent war.

The hard-shelled mentality of Sarajevo's élite, intellectual as well as political, has a classic depiction in the novel of the Bosnian author Meša Selimović, *Tvrđava* (The Fortress).¹⁹ Set in the 1770s, *The Fortress* portrays a veteran of the Russo-Turkish wars, the poor clerk and poet Ahmet Sabo, who having come back to his native Sarajevo finds his family dead of plague. Invited to a dinner of city swells, supposedly to honor soldiers, he gets moderately drunk and mildly bemoans the fate of war heroes who do not enjoy such hospitality. As a reward, he is assaulted and nearly killed, and, while he is unconscious, unknown thugs defecate and urinate on him. He even loses his miserable position as an assistant scribe. Many *Sarajlije* today would identify with him.

Professor Kemal Bakaršić of the University of Sarajevo, the world's leading authority on the Hebrew manuscript known as the *Sarajevo Haggadah*, describes with glee the befuddlement of a certain distinguished American intellectual. At great risk to himself, this man of goodwill came to the city during the worst period of the war. Having presented himself to Bosnian colleagues, he was astounded when, after he had recounted the harrowing details of his journey, the most distinguished individual among them looked him up and down and with a distinctly juvenile tone, said merely, "Bond. James Bond." Bakaršić loves this story, because it says everything that needs to be said about Sarajevo and about foreigners. "It took him a long time to get it," he recalls.

Sarajlije are also contemptuous of those among their own who spend too much time strutting their stuff. The television producer Adil Kulenović, who broadcast heroically through the war, is a figure of widespread fun because his of interview style, which is considered pompous and incoherent. The publisher and general cultural maven Ibrahim Spahić may be the most hated man in Sarajevo just because he does so many things, and most of them well. He publishes books, organizes classical music and theatre festivals, and sponsors seminars on entrepreneurship. In such an environment, throwing a party for Bosnians, rather than foreigners, can be dangerous. The first half hour may feature an unpromising silence as individuals who loathe one another wait to see who will embarrass him- or herself by speaking first.

But most foreigners don't have parties with many Bosnian guests. The two worlds – international and local, to use the common vocabulary – do not merge. Europeans and Americans spend most of their free time with other expatriates. Newcomers may sometimes be found in the famous, or infamous, Holiday Inn, which was built for the 1984 Winter Olympics held in Sarajevo. The squat yellow box, one of the ugliest hotels in the history of hostelry, was a convenient target for Serbian snipers during the war. It has been completely refurbished, and is as depressing to behold as ever. It is no longer owned by the original chain, but its prices remain American, i.e. very high, and the bathrooms still

feature paper sanitary strips over the toilet seats. One might be in Pocatello, except that they don't take credit cards. Most of the clientele are foreign experts on per diem.

When members of the international community do hold a bash, Bosnian guests are usually limited to a few members of the office staff who sit stiffly in a corner, saying nothing. For what, after all, is there to say? Local staff are paid about 10 percent of what the internationals make, so that a Bosnian university professor working as a translator in a foreign agency may take home about \$600 per month, while his or her (foreign) boss is making at least \$10,000 monthly, plus housing allowances. Foreigners get the pick of homes and apartments, eat in restaurants with names like *La Familia*, which cater almost exclusively to them, and have limitless supplies of gasoline for their chauffeured vehicles. And everybody knows it.

Of course, not all the foreigners who show up in Sarajevo belong to that delicate class that has been called "the humanitarian mafia." Some are writers and artists, and some are even poor. Still, the time has long passed when international cultural stars like Susan Sontag regularly graced the city with their presence.

Sontag once compared the Bosnian war with the Spanish civil war and complained that, unlike the Bosnian war, the Spanish conflict produced "some of the finest literature of [its] time." She even put Orwell, Hemingway, and Malraux in the same basket, thus placing *Homage to Catalonia* on a level with the gassy *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and the horrendous *L'Espoir*, and bemoaning the absence of similar products from the Balkan cauldron. She was predictably wrong on all counts. Orwell's immortal classic was not intended to be "littrachoor," as Pound might have called it, but was merely accurate and sincere journalism. A number of reporters on the Bosnian war have published books that may be honorably compared with *Homage to Catalonia*, most notably Roy Gutman, author of *A Witness to Genocide*, Peter Maass (*Love Thy Neighbor*), Chuck Sudetić (*Blood and Vengeance*), and David Rohde (*A Safe Area*). Rather like Orwell, Maass and Sudetić in particular were stirred by the hypocrisy they encountered in the Balkans to question their presumptions about themselves and their work.

As for Hemingway, the great failure, and Malraux, the grand (also as in large) fake, nobody reads their books about Spain today, and rightly so; both volumes were dishonest, contrived, and inauthentic in virtually every detail. Hemingway portrayed Stalin's squalid mercenaries in the International Brigades as paragons of modern-day chivalry, and Malraux equated the Spanish anarchists with Christ's disciples, a serious insult to both parties. To have written the Bosnian war's equivalent of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is a distinction to be eschewed at any cost.

This is not to say great writing was not produced by the Bosnian war. It was, but in the language formerly known as Serbo-Croatian and now as Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian, and little of it is likely to be translated into English. The Muslim Bosnian author Nedžad Ibrišimović was widely execrated among prickly *Sarajlije* for his closeness with the domestic administration of President Alija Izetbegović, but his *Book of Adem Kabrman the Bosnian*, a slender prose narrative, little more than a short story, is brilliant as well as brief.²⁰ The poet Amir Talić had been locked up in Serbian concentration camps and prisons during the 1992–95 war. He has written a poem about the experience, reminiscent of Paul Celan, titled *Solitary Confinement*, which, comprising only twelve lines, bears reproduction in full:

Ironbound is the room in which I am alone
 Ironhound is the guard of the hellish apparatus;
 Only my soul breathes free within me
 She my soul cannot be betrayed.

My brain sways in its little hut
 Its floor wobbles with each heavy blow
 Still her divine power floods me
 Beneath her wings she shelters me.

With the hangman's spittle the hellish apparatus sparkles
 His murky eyes drown in mine, which are clear.
 Oh hangman my brother your frenzy will end
 When my pain restores you to the right path.



Poet and screenwriter Abdulah Sidran (left), documentary filmmaker and journalist Zijad Mehić (center) and Jovan Divjak (right), Sarajevo, 1999. (*Photograph by Stephen Schwartz*)

Something may be lost in the translation, but not very much. And many Sarajevo authors, including the best among them right now, the poet and film scenarist Abdulah Sidran (who coauthored the screenplay for *Perfect Circle*), are not only good writers who work to a high standard; they are also taken seriously as public figures. That fact, which is perhaps the single aspect of literary life that most distinguishes Europe from the United States, was especially visible at the 1999 Sarajevo Poetry Days, an annual festival that began in 1961. Readings were held for a week, at the House of Writers, a club typical of the former Communist world, but pleasant enough with its restaurant and patio, as well as in three high schools and at a downtown theatre. The events were varied, but serious and dignified, and drew crowds of young people along with their parents.

Indeed, the readings had something of the air of a Russian literary evening as described in the memoirs of, say, Nadezhda Mandelshtam – except that nobody appeared from the secret

police to haul the poets off. Aside from those described above, including Ibršimović and Talić, the participants offered a range of styles and manners, including an author of charming verse for children, Ismet Bekrić.

Of course, a poet who writes for uncorrupted children would seldom be included in a mass reading in the United States or Britain – in contrast with, say, a rapper. But that was not the only aspect of the Sarajevo festival that contrasted with Anglo-American fads. There was no glorification of perversion, no indulgence in detailed description of sex or self-mutilation, no playing for laughs as if in competition with stand-up comedians, no “spoken word” noise pollution. There was no screaming of rage against men, heterosexuals, governments, systems, or even against Communism or the Serbs. Indeed, when the recent war was alluded to, references were muted, as in Talić’s work.

Sarajevo writers do not need to be reminded of the ghastliness they lived through, but they do not use it as a pretext for bad writing either. They are, however, obsessed with certain parallels, which may seem arguable to outsiders but are very real to them – above all, with the Holocaust. Most Bosnians are well aware that having survived in their majority, having put up an armed defense on their own territory, and having been rescued by the West hardly puts them in the same category as East European Jewry of two generations past. Nevertheless, Bosnian Muslim intellectuals identify strongly with the Jews of Poland and Ukraine as representatives of a European community whose Islamic affiliation made many Christian Europeans ignore their travails. This has led to a certain exaggerated affection for the Jews among Bosnian politicians; as Jakob Finci has remarked, “elsewhere the problem is anti-Semitism, here it is philo-Semitism,” as each of the rival ethnicities, Muslims, Serbs, and Croats seeks to curry favor with Jews.

At the same time, the first part of Finci’s remark should not be overlooked. Sarajevo, a city that is presently 92 percent Muslim (reflecting both the aforementioned influx of rural refugees and postwar flight of Serbs), is extraordinarily free of anti-Jewish

feeling, and it may well be the only major European city where the community center and synagogue have operated for decades with no exceptional security measures in effect – even after September 11, 2001. The door has stayed wide open daily, and nobody is asked for identification, offering quite a contrast with Jewish community facilities in such cosmopolitan centers as Amsterdam, Barcelona and the Croatian capital, Zagreb, which feature buzzered doors and security guards.

Good relations between Bosnian Jews and Muslims mainly reflect the surviving influence of the Ottoman empire, which ruled Bosnia-Herzegovina for some 450 years, and its protection of the Sephardim. Bosnian Muslims are genuinely sentimental about this history, never tiring of pointing out that the most famous Bosnian folk song, *Kad ja podjoh na Bembašu* [*When I Went to Bembaša*], also exists in a Sephardic version.

Regardless of whether parallels between the agony of Bosnian Muslims and the Holocaust are valid, some interesting literary works have been written by Sarajevo writers about the Jews. The poet Admiral Mahić has a well-known poem, “The Old Sephard,” which quite movingly describes David Kamhi. The poet and prosewriter Hazim Akmadžić has produced an extraordinary novel, *Mislilo Sam Da Je Mjesec Žut* [*I Thought it Was a Yellow Moon*], about a dead Jew whose soul flies over Bosnia in wartime. The book well deserves translation into English, but such is unlikely, given the general indifference toward Balkan literature in the Anglo-Saxon world.

Kamhi is also the unquestionable model for a personality in *State of Siege*, the short novel of the Spanish author José Goytisolo, who visited Sarajevo during the war.²¹ The character is described as “the musician D.K. of the Jewish Humanitarian, Cultural, and Educational Society ... well versed in Ladino ... and the Sephardic adaptations in the Balkans of our Spanish collection of ballads.” In the narrative, the musician and community activist tells the other Bosnians, “You now know, alas, in your own flesh, what fell to our lot to live when we took refuge here, bringing with us our *Haggadah*. Now dispossession and misfortune have made us

equals.” The book further describes colloquies with “D.K.” and other Balkan intellectuals such as I personally experienced, that “went from the esotericism of Ibn al-‘Arabi to the initiatory chain of the Ottoman brotherhoods, from the grandeur and decadence of the corps of janissaries and renegade Christians who served the sultan to the variants of the traditional Ladino collection of ballads through the centuries ... the conversation touched on the religious syncretism of the Macedonian Bektashis.”

State of Siege also includes this comment, which could stand as emblematic of certain foreign intellectuals in the Balkan wars: “I have never been so deeply moved nor doubtless will I ever be again.” As Orwell wrote, at the conclusion of *Homage to Catalonia*, “The whole experience has left me with not less but more belief in the decency of human beings.”

The poet Semezdin Mehmedinović (whose excellent *Sarajevo Blues* has been published in English, remarkably enough, by City Lights Books in San Francisco) has correctly described the foundation of Bosnian culture as a melding of Islamic Sufism, Jewish Kabbalah, and Franciscan Catholic mysticism. Perhaps for this reason, Bosnian poets tend to write a lot about souls, theirs and others; but they manage to avoid pathos. Or rather, they leave it to those foreign authors whose form of solidarity with Bosnia-Herzegovina consists in composing maudlin, cartoonish verse about what they imagine to have happened – and which ends up all tears and histrionics.

To Bosnians, what happened between 1992 and 1995 was not a prolonged anxiety attack, or even a tragedy, but a crime, committed by ex-Communist politicians of all ethnicities, bent on holding on to their power no matter the consequences. But of course, that would not play well at a feminist poetry reading in New York or London, where descriptions of mass rape rendered in bad verse reduce the shock of such situations to second-hand atrocity propaganda. In reality, Bosnians are a little sick of hearing foreign poets talk about the siege and the war. If they are too polite to sneer openly at it, they nonetheless sneer silently.

Still, even without the frequent presence of Sontag & Co., the

parade of foreign artistic mediocrities continues. A young Finnish musician arrives in Sarajevo and announces he has come “to make a statement for peace,” to which the only proper response must be, “well, take a number.” Nevertheless, after a few days one observes that he spends all his time with other foreigners, and has found no Bosnians to whom he may make his statement. A Canadian amateur filmmaker had begun production of an utterly wretched, overacted, and badly conceived film in an attempt to “understand Bosnia,” after spending no more than 24 hours in the country: it seemed she understood everything even before getting on the airplane from Toronto.

A characteristic event takes place on a Saturday night, toward the end of September 1999. In an “open studio” at the end of the old Ottoman market, a crowd gathers for a *vernissage*. Two middling abstractionists born in what was once Yugoslavia, Nada Denić from Dalmatia and Milan Jakšić from Osijek – both in Croatia – display their works. They now live in the northern Serbian province of Vojvodina – known for its wealth, sophistication, and political independence from the regime of Slobodan Milošević. But the real centerpiece of the evening is a long discourse by a German woman, Dr. Inge Landzettel, representing the city of Darmstadt, whose municipal officials are paying for the event. She is, it is said, originally from Vojvodina herself – one of those Germans displaced in the aftermath of World War II, in an earlier round of local “ethnic cleansing.” She directs a personal, “performance art” effort called, modestly enough, The Inge Project.

With a look of sublime, nitwitted happiness at having gained what seems a captive audience, she discourses interminably on war, peace, art, love, philosophy, mysticism, solitude, friendship, and “how wonderful it would be to live in a world without borders.” Well, there were no borders between the Bosnians and their neighbors in the old Yugoslavia, and look what happened. Of course, the principle “good fences make good neighbors,” memorably enunciated by Robert Frost, seems to have been enshrined in the 1995 Dayton Agreement, which institutionalized the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina into the “Serb Republic” and its counterpart, the “Muslim-Croat Federation.”

However, these days pretty much every honest person, Bosnian and foreign alike, admits that Dayton, the crown jewel of Bill Clinton's diplomacy, has failed miserably. There is, simply, no common ground between ordinary people, Muslim, Serb, and Croat, who consider themselves Bosnians first, and the politicians whose interest is to maintain their separation. But nobody seems to have an alternative to Dayton either. Bosnia ends up muddling along as it muddled along under the Ottomans, the Habsburgs, the royal Yugoslav regime of the 1920s and 1930s, and Titoite Communism.

Perhaps that is the way it was intended for Bosnia-Hercegovina to exist; certainly, intimate knowledge of the place leads one to agree with the cynical *Sarajlije* who sneer at all those foreigners whose pompous self-importance and ready-made solutions seem no more valid or valuable than the slogans and lies produced in the Spanish civil war. Love us or hate us, they seem to say, but you may now stop rescuing us. They have a point.

Letter from Sanski Most

Like beatniks of old, on a crisp autumn morning, two poets met, with rucksacks packed, to set off by bus for a poetry reading in the hinterlands. But many aspects of this trip would make it different from the vagabondage of Jack Kerouac and Gary Snyder 50 years ago. To begin with, parallel to the half century that has passed since that famous literary pair set out as Dharma bums, the poets in question were both 50 years old.

Furthermore, the location was Bosnia, and the poets were a Bosnian-Canadian, Admiral Mahić, and none other than myself. And in my rucksack, with my notebooks, volumes of verse, camera, clean shirt and underwear, and razor and toothbrush (for we were expected to stay overnight), I packed, carefully wrapped in a plastic bag, my *tallit* and *siddur*.

We were headed to the north Bosnian town of Sanski Most, asked to come there to perform our poetry and, in my case, to



The Jewish graveyard at Sanski Most, 2000. (*Photograph by Stephen Schwartz*)



The Bjelave-Mejtaš synagogue in Sarajevo, founded 1900, restored in 1924, today unused for religious purposes, as seen in 1999. (Photograph by Stephen Schwartz)

visit the Jewish graveyard, in which the mourners' *kaddish* had not been said since the Holocaust. Čerešnjev told me, "I was there in 1989, having been told there was a kind of jungle where the Jewish cemetery stood ... A couple of months later, I got a letter from one of the professors from the local high school with photos showing the cleared cemetery and a short report that he took a group of school kids and did a good job there, cleaning that mess. Later, unfortunately, I had no time to go there." The poet Abdulah Sidran had also made a short television film about the Jewish cemetery in Sanski Most.

This latest invitation, extended by the Bosnian poet Amir Talić, had come about because of our participation, mine and Mahić's, in the 1999 Sarajevo Poetry Days. This annual festival included readings at high schools, and I was struck by an inspiration: why not, as the Californian I was, do something wild and crazy, in lieu of reading my somewhat lugubrious poetry about the Bosnian war, and in view of the boredom with which *Sarajlije*, including



The former building of La Benevolencia, the Jewish welfare society, on the street named for the revived organization, Ulica Benevolencija, 1998. The building itself became the headquarters of the Bosnian federal police after the 1992–95 war. (Photograph by Stephen Schwartz)

high school students, have come to greet such effusions by foreign intellectual tourists?

I decided I would sing a Sephardic song, since in Bosnian the words *poem* and *song* are the same: *pjesma*. So when my turn came to read to the students of Sarajevo High School Number One, I launched into one of the oldest and most beautiful Sephardic lovesongs:

Give me your hand, oh my dove,
 So I may climb up there with you
 That I may watch you sweetly sleeping
 When you take yourself to bed.

A little risqué for a high school audience, but, as such things typically go, it hit the target. The kids appreciated it, the rest of the poets loosened up and read some of their own more daring verses, and I got a great write-up in the evening paper, complete

with photo. It says more about postwar Sarajevo than about me that such an event would make news.

That led Talić, poet and civic hero in the town of Sanski Most, to invite me and Mahić to come north through the mountains of Bosnia – including a stretch through the “Serb Republic” – on a cold morning. We would even get paid and enjoy a night’s rest in the local hotel, along with free meals. Talić is proud that residents of his city have refurbished the Jewish cemetery, even though it includes only seven known graves.

I did a little research after agreeing to his request, and learned some grimmer facts. Moric Albahari, the distinguished *shammash* of the Sarajevo synagogue, is from Sanski Most, and he told me how on an August day in 1941 the *Ustaša*, Croatian fascists then occupying the town, had rounded up the Jews, almost all of whom were shot to death.

But I wasn’t prepared for the unearthly beauty of Sanski Most



The second-floor window columns of the 1931 Grand Sephardic Synagogue in Sarajevo, as seen in 2004; the only visible evidence of the former use of the building, which was destroyed in 1941 by the *Ustaša* and Nazis. It is now the Bosnian Cultural Center. (Photograph by Stephen Schwartz)



Hamdije Unkić and Admiral Mahić, Sanski Most, 2000. (Photograph by Stephen Schwartz)



Mahić, Schwartz, Amir Talić, Ammar Talić, Sanski Most, 2000. (*Photographer unknown*)

when Mahić and I arrived there after a six-hour bus ride. It seemed like heaven or like the heaven that Californians dream of, that is, like the West Coast landscape in which I grew up. A plain made just for farming, surrounded by green hills, with the lovely river Sana flowing through it— a river that in a very free translation of its Bosnian name, *rijeka Sana*, could be called “River of Dreams,” since the word *san* means dream in that language.

I was also unprepared for the true meaning of the visit. I have noted that Amir Talić, our host, had been locked up by the Serbs. His poem about the experience, previously quoted in full, begins “Ironbound is the room in which I am alone ...” Decades after the Holocaust, Talić had experienced something like the horror the Jews of his town had once undergone. When Sanski Most was seized by Serb extremists in 1992, and the Muslim population was “cleansed,” many of them to be executed immediately, the gentle, funny poet had become the head of the clandestine resistance and aid group Merhamet. Of course, he was eventually arrested. But

his wife and children refused to leave the city in which they had lived their whole lives. Then news came that they could visit him in prison, but Amir's wife could not make the trip. His handsome son Ammar took it upon himself to go to Banja Luka, the main Bosnian city controlled by Serbs.

Ammar stole money from his mother's purse and sneaked aboard a bus full of Serb soldiers, sitting next to an elderly woman. When guards checked identities on the bus, which happened about every 30 kilometers, Ammar leaned close to the old Serbian woman and the terrorists assumed he was her relative. I pondered this story while riding the bus back through the Serbian zone, to Sarajevo. And in October 2002, three years after I heard it, I read a similar anecdote. Ten years before, a youth named Admir Žikić had been saved from a massacre at Mioče in Bosnia, near the border with Serbia. Aged 13, he was one of 17 Muslims from the Serbian town of Sjeverin, travelling in a bus that was halted by paramilitaries. The rest – 15 men and a woman – were abducted and brutally murdered on October 22, 1992. The Muslim teenager escaped because the terrorists believed he was the offspring of a Serb couple on the bus, Desa and Ilija Kitić.²² How many such events may have occurred, in so many such conflicts?

After Ammar Talić got to Banja Luka, a city of which he knew nothing, he walked the streets asking strangers for directions, until he found the jail in which his father sat. When he finally got access to his father, the distance through the bars was too far, and he could see his lips moving but could not hear his words.

Ammar was all of 11 years old. He repeated this trip seven times before the town of Sanski Most was freed in 1995, an event that came about the same week as our poetic visit there, for Amir Talić had neglected to tell us we were honored guests at a celebration of the fifth anniversary of that very liberation.

The next morning I put on *tallit* and, after finding the direction of Jerusalem, began firmly, “*Yitgadal veyitkadash sheme rabbah!*” Six Muslim men stood at the edge of the graveyard and said “*Amen!*” at each appropriate place, indicated by my gestures. Later, we were guided around the town, and shown the houses and commercial

buildings of the Jews who once lived there, by an erect Muslim man of at least 70, Hamdije Unkić, who had gone to school with the Sarajevo *shammash*, Albahari. Unkić had also assembled authoritative notes on Jewish family histories in Sanski Most.

As we boarded the bus to return to the capital city, Unkić pointed a couple of blocks away and said, "There is the building where the Jews were locked up, before they were sent away in freight cars, that day in 1941. I went there to see if I could talk to Moric, my friend from school, but they were all gone, already gone." Hamdije Unkić also was only 11.

Is a Muslim man who tried, as a child, to visit the imprisoned Jews of Sanski Most and who had preserved the record of their presence there a Righteous Gentile? What can we say, but that the men of Sanski Most, as children, have shown courage beyond that of many, many grown men? What can we say of children saved from death by the accident of where they sit on a bus, as it wends its way through enemy territory? I know the silence that attends the passage along such landscapes; but that is all I know.

Literary Letter from Kosova

In 1990, when I first heard about Albanian Catholic writers, I felt a sense of *déjà vu*. The Berlin Wall had fallen, but for many of us who followed events in the former Communist states, it was unclear how profound or permanent the damage to the cultures of those countries would prove to be. Indeed at that time, Albania, which lagged behind the rest of Eastern Europe in gaining its freedom, was still oppressed by the one-party dictatorship of Ramiz Alia, successor to the infamous Enver Hoxha. Under the latter, Albania had become the only officially atheist state in the world, and religious culture had been rigorously and murderously suppressed. As late as 1972, a Catholic priest, Fr. Shtjefën Kurti, was executed for baptizing a child in Albania. The very concept of Albanian Catholic intellectuals seemed inextricably linked to the worst excesses of leftist totalitarianism.

My perception of an apparent historical echo had its source in the research I had done as a university student, on the Spanish dialects of the Sephardim. I had learned, in scholarly libraries, about the whole printed literature of novels, poetry, plays, popular ballads, proverbs, religious works, and journalism that had once been read and appreciated by Jews in the Balkans. Except in Turkey, most of this writing had suffered a fate comparable to, if not worse than, that of Yiddish literature – most of its exponents and audience had been murdered by the Nazis.

Thus, to write an academic survey of Sephardica was to delve into a truly lost literature; to examine these works was a saddening, infuriating, and finally deeply depressing exercise in literary archaeology. I assumed the same was true of the Catholic writers in Albanian. Their leading figures, I was told, had been killed by the Communists; their works were absolutely banned; their faith and even their regional dialect – indigenous to northern Albania and Kosova – suppressed. Once again, having access to old volumes, I turned the pages of a vanished tradition; once again, I felt a communion with the voices of the dead, never again to be heard.

But I was wrong. Since going to Kosova in 1999 and visiting Albania, I have seen that the Catholic literature of the Albanians, along with religious and classic works in general, is undergoing an amazing renaissance that has everything to do with the end of Communism and remarkably little to do with the NATO intervention.

On the main street of Prishtina, the capital of Kosova, one encounters numerous bookstores along with improvised bookstalls on card tables and even the hoods of cars. In contrast with Sarajevo, where such microenterprises involve the looting of individual books from destroyed homes, these piles of paperbacks and hardbounds are typically newly printed in Kosova or imported from Albania, where the end of Communist censorship has stimulated an explosion of publishing. For both their own people and the outside world, the Albanian language and culture are coming into their own.

Only two of the writers associated with the Albanian Catholic

tradition and its defense – Arshi Pipa, who was Muslim but who wrote in and defended the Ghege dialect of the Catholics, and the poet Martin Camaj – have been translated into English. The rest of them are unknown to the general Anglo-American audience: they include the author of the first novel in Albanian, Ndoc Nikaj (1864–1946), and three outstanding folklorists, Mons. Vinçenc Prennushi (1885–1949), Bernardin Palaj (d. 1946, also an important poet), and Donat Kurti (1903–83). Further, a social and cultural commentator of outstanding gifts, Anton Harapi (1888–1946) stood alongside a great poet of faith as well as physical passion (and its voluntary renunciation), Lazër Shantoja (1892–1945), and the poet and essayist Ernest Koliqi. Aside from Pipa, Camaj, and Koliqi, who escaped to the West, all of these men were slaughtered by Enver Hoxha.

The fate of Ndoc Nikaj is especially outrageous – if such distinctions may be made at all. After the fall of the Communist regime in Albania, Hoxha's successor Ramiz Alia was put on trial. At the conclusion of the proceeding, in 1994, he asked for mercy. My friend Gjon Sinishta told me that someone in the courtroom cried out, "Don't ask for mercy! What mercy did you show Ndoc Nikaj, the dean of Albanian writers, whom you and your kind killed when he was 82 years old!" I was, at first, inclined to doubt this tale, as too good to be credible. I have since become a believer, having had the extraordinary pleasure of seeing Ndoc Nikaj's novels and works about him on sale everywhere in the Albanian lands. Rev. Nikaj wrote more than 400 works and was a leading standard-bearer of the national culture for several generations; he authored the first printed history of the Albanians, issued in Brussels at the end of the 19th century.

His first novel, *Shkodra e Rrethueme* ("Shkodra Besieged"), was published in 1914. It begins with street rhymes: "*Tak-tuk, Tak-tuk! Shkodra mbet pa buk! ... Tuk-tak ... e buk' aspak! ... Tak-tik! s'mbet metelik!*" That is, "Shkodra has no bread! ... Bread there is none! ... Nor is there money!" It is a short and rather simple work, telling a predictably romantic tale. Although considered an historical novel, it deals with events only a year past when the book appeared: the

assault on the northern Albanian city of Shkodra by Montenegrins, during the first Balkan war, in 1912. Its protagonists, the lovers Ndoc and Leze, who are children of the Shkodra elite, undergo various adventures in the middle of the fighting, becoming separated while learning political and moral lessons. Thirty years after the book was published, the regime of Enver Hoxha accused the aged Rev. Nikaj of plotting the violent overthrow of the Communist government; 50 years more passed, and the martyr's name rang out in a Tirana courtroom.

Archbishop Prennushi, a Franciscan, published, in Bosnia in 1911, one of the most important collections of Albanian folklore, and translated some dozen European works of literature into Albanian. His crime was a refusal to cooperate with the Communist authorities after Hoxha had made an approach to him. He was sentenced to 20 years' hard labor, and was kept among the most dangerous prisoners. He was tortured, but his intense Christian faith gave him a strength and dignity that seems superhuman. He suffered from a hernia, which made it painful to walk. Nevertheless, he was beaten with wooden staves, his hands and feet were bound, and he was hanged from the ceiling of the interrogator's lavatory until he fainted. Archbishop Prennushi described the situation to the young Arshi Pipa, a fellow-prisoner, with amazing humor: "I was like a side of beef in a smokehouse." He was ordered to perform heavy labor stacking logs, and joined the work party without protest.

The Catholic cleric, near the end of his days, sacrificed himself for the serenity of others imprisoned with him, maintaining secret communications, at considerable risk, with priests condemned to death. Archbishop Prennushi died of a severe asthma attack. His fellow-prisoners attempted to succor him, massaging his feet and keeping a fire going at night in the cells, after finding ways to secure more wood from the guards. Just before his death, he told Pipa he finally understood Goethe's deathbed declaration, *Mehr Licht!* ["More light!"]. That light, the archbishop said, was spiritual, not physical.

Prennushi had, long before, written a poem, "The Nightingale

of Rozafat,” in which he argued that the nightingale had learned its song from the laments of prisoners in a Turkish dungeon. It is hard to imagine a lyrical figure more symbolic of the Balkan destiny. Similarly, Abdullah Karjagdiu, professor of English literature at the University of Prishtina, described authors like Prennushi and Pipa as having “created a horizon of expectation in the Kosovar public. They were enemies of Communism and defenders of local and Christian tradition. They were condemned as decadent and reactionary, as foreign spies and worthless scribblers. This excited great subterranean interest in them among Albanian readers.”

I will not continue with an extensive description of the martyrdom suffered by all these men, since this would have no other effect than to weigh down the heart of the reader with anger and pain. We are not all Solzhenitsyn; we have not all undergone and borne witness to these horrors, nor have we all the capacity to record or even to comprehend them. Suffice it to say that when, in Prishtina, I first saw the portrait of Anton Harapi, a heroic Catholic priest and Albanian patriot killed by Hoxha, on the cover of a recent issue of the literary magazine *Jeta e Re* [*New Life*], I was moved to tears. Although the name *New Life* was given to that journal, once an official publication, as a metaphor of Titoite Communism, an immensely satisfying resuscitation has occurred. The Albanian Catholic authors, unlike the Balkan Sephardim, have fully returned to their world. And their works are read with enthusiasm. In a visit to the Franciscan monastery of Gjakova, a center of Albanian Catholic culture for generations, my research assistant, Edmond (Edi) Shyti (pronounced *Shootee*), and I received copies of *National Unity and National Ideals*, a volume of Harapi's patriotic essays on civic themes, democratic values, and social responsibility, dating from the 1920s. A few days later, Edi told me, “Nothing has changed. I read those words and I felt as if he were writing about us today.”

The town of Gjakova is itself a very special place – the Jerusalem of Kosova – in that, while most Kosovar Albanians are Sunni Muslims, Gjakova has a Catholic majority, as well as the strong presence of Sufism. It is a center of the fascinating, heterodox

Bektashi sect of Muslims, which has come under the influence of Christianity, Judaism, and Buddhism. The leader of the Bektashis in Gjakova, Baba Mumin Lama, told me that in Bektashi *teqes*, or “lodges,” four books are always present: the *Torah*, *Psalms*, *New Testament*, and *Qur’an*. But Gjakova also suffered enormously from all sides in the recent war. Serbs devastated Baba Mumin’s own *teqe*, along with its library, which included a thousand-page manuscript describing the pilgrimage to India and back, on foot, of another Bektashi divine, Baba Qazim, who was curious about Buddhism. Yugoslav soldiers, police, and paramilitaries destroyed the 16th-century Hadum mosque, with its large library and *madrassa* (religious high school), and committed a horrifying massacre in the *teqe* of another Sufi, Sheh Dervishdana.

The Dervishdana incident figures in the indictment of Slobodan Milošević at The Hague. Sheh Zejnelabedin Dervishdana was killed by masked *četniks* on March 26, 1999 along with two sons, two neighbors, and a friend. The family of Sheh Dervishdana maintains the *teqe*, which follows the Sa’adi-Jibawi form of Sufism.

Eli Dervishdana, the daughter of the *sheh*, said her family had included “seven generations of *boxhas* [Islamic priests], four of dervishes, and four successive generations of Kosovar *shëhid*s [martyrs], of whom all the main male line were now dead.” Her young brother Nesemi, who was 17, was killed in the Kosovar demonstrations of 1981.

She described to me the night of terror when “*četniks* in black masks came to the door. I saw only three of them, but there were at least 15.” Sheh Zejnelabedin, aged 59, along with his two sons, Fahri (37) and Emin (32), two close friends, Arif Bytyci (73) and his son Urim (38), and a neighbor, Sylejman Begolli (48), were slain.

Three of the victims were killed in the house, but Sheh Zejnelabedin and two others were taken into the *teqe*, and in the presence of the sacred objects of the dervishes and a portrait of Imam Husayn, a martyr particularly mourned by Shia Muslims, were murdered.

The bloodstains remain on the floor, under the carpets. Sheh

Zejnêlabeledin's deputy, Sheh Rama, was killed in the *četnik* massacre in the nearby hamlet of Korenica on April 27, 1999, a month later.

In that dreadful incident, one of the worst in the entire Kosova conflict, *četniks* arrived in buses, with red bandanas tied around their heads or as armbands, according to a local resident, Tom Dedaj.²³ Korenica's population is 90 percent Catholic and 10 percent Muslim. When the *četniks* had completed their assault on Korenica, at least 129 people, possibly as many as 155, including women and children, were dead. All had been unarmed. One survivor said every man in the village over 16 had been killed. The ratio of victims was approximately the same as that of the living: 90 percent Catholic, 10 percent Muslim.

When the inhabitants of Korenica returned there, in June 1999, they found graffiti on one house reading, "Keep quiet or the *Specijalci* will come – Arkan." This was the signature of one of the worst Serb terrorists. The scene they encountered was still horrendous. The returnees found mass graves filled with bones and hair, although many of the dismembered corpses lay where they had fallen. In a burned house, limbs and other parts of men's bodies lay on the top floor.

The local Serb army commander lived in Korenica. When the survivors of the massacre first came streaming into the Catholic church at Gjakova, Father Ambroz Ukaj went to the officer and demanded to know what had happened. He was interrogated on how he knew anything had happened at all, and he replied that women in the village reported the mass arrest of all males.

The story of one Korenica villager, Daniel Berisha, 40, is extraordinary. Berisha had been a driver for the O.S.C.E. mission in Kosova. Tom Dedaj recounted that on the evening of the massacre he had found Berisha hiding in the hills with bullet wounds in his leg and burns on his arms and forehead. Berisha said that the Serbs had come at 7:30 in the morning and separated the men from the women and children. They gathered the men on the third floor of the Berisha home and a local policeman whom Berisha recognized ordered them to turn their backs and then began shooting them at close range.

Berisha said he fell and pretended to be dead. The Serbs set blankets afire and covered the bodies with them. After the Serbs left Berisha escaped, although wounded. The next day, the group hiding in the hills attempted to break out of a Serb encirclement, but they were caught. Another witness, Flora Merturi, said she saw Berisha beaten to death, but when his corpse was found he also had five more bullet wounds, two in his forehead and three in his chest.

Mrs. Merturi claimed the Serbs had paid Gypsies to bury the dead, separating the Catholic and Muslim corpses. Muslim corpses seemed to have deliberately been left in shallow graves, with a hand sticking out of the ground here, a skull half uncovered there.

Many bodies were unrecognizable and were buried without identification. The Serb assault on Korenica was a reprisal for a skirmish in which three local Albanians ostensibly took part and in which seven Serbs died. The horror of Korenica has persisted over the years; many of the men were taken to Serbia where they were murdered and interred in mass graves. Eventually the buried were returned to their families, but the shock produced at least one suicide of a mother in Gjakova, after her two sons' remains were sent to her.²⁴ The tomb of Baba Dan, founder of the Sa'adi *teqe* in the village, today contains the bodies of several children killed in the *četnik* attack.

But Serbs were not the only perpetrators of cultural destruction in Gjakova. The shock wave from a NATO bomb dropped on a Yugoslav barracks wrecked the Franciscan monastery and the nearby Catholic church of Sts. Peter and Paul – the latter still an empty ruin in 2000. And of course, as the world knows, Albanians took revenge on the Serbs after the NATO entry into Kosova. In Gjakova, a large, new Serbian Orthodox church was blown up, and Serbs recall bitterly that the Albanians danced all night around the rubble. But the older and smaller Serbian Orthodox church only blocks away was left unharmed.

The politics of restoring and protecting such cultural treasures is complex. The Albanians saw more than 200 mosques and other Islamic structures wrecked by Yugoslav forces; some 80



Tombstones vandalized by Wahhabis at the wrecked Hadum mosque in Gjakova, Kosova, 2000. (*Photograph by Stephen Schwartz*)

Serbian churches and monasteries have been damaged. On both sides, whole buildings were reduced to nearly unrecognizable piles of masonry. But even when there is the possibility of their reconstruction, international intrigues may get in the way.

For example, the Saudis, who throw a considerable quantity of money around the Balkans for rebuilding mosques, are Wahhabis, a fundamentalist sect of Islam with its own notable principles of architecture.²⁵ Their style of mosque design can best be described as Islamic kitsch. They do not approve of interior mosque decorations, and Wahhabi doctrine considers the maintenance of gravestones to be idolatry. For this reason, at the end of July 2000, Saudis who had taken over the refurbishment of the Hadum mosque complex in Gjakova suddenly turned up in the old Ottoman cemetery inside the walls and began removing centuries-old gravestones. The Albanians reacted with predictable rage, especially since their familial traditions, as well as their need to establish their historic claim over the land, are strong inducements to the preservation of graveyards. But Gazmend Naka, an expert with the Institution

for Protection of Kosova Monuments, told me, “The Saudis say NATO and the UN will let them do whatever they want, and that we Albanians have nothing to say about it. The Serbs killed us physically, but these fanatics want to kill our cultural heritage.”

For this reason, Naka called on NATO’s Kosovo Forces command, which has mounted guards at Serbian churches threatened by Albanians, to place similar protective units at Islamic structures – but NATO is trying to get out of the monument protection business. Sitting in armored cars and tanks watching Serbian Orthodox churches is not a productive use of military resources, and there is no interest in extending the program to mosques. Fortunately on August 5, 2000, the UN-backed authorities barred the Saudis from the Hadum mosque rehabilitation project.

Serbian Orthodox and Albanian Catholic and Islamic religious sites are not the only centers of attention for cultural restoration in Kosova today. An energetic Albanian journalist of Bektashi origin, Myrteza Studenica, has established a Kosovar–Jewish Committee with the aim of refurbishing the old Sephardic cemetery in Prishtina, re-establishing the old synagogue in the original marketplace (the synagogue was destroyed under Tito in the 1950s, along with a historic mosque), and identifying other Jewish holy places in the territory. If the synagogue were rebuilt it might attract a congregation from among the foreign personnel assigned there – after all, one of the internationally appointed rulers of Kosova, Bernard Kouchner, publicly recalled the death of his grandparents in Auschwitz – but the conception is, to say the least, visionary on Studenica’s part. Jews have not made up a large element of the population in Kosova since the Habsburg–Ottoman wars of the 18th century, when most of them fled.

The Jews who survived the Holocaust mainly left Kosova after World War II, but are remembered with nostalgia by Albanians. A remarkable number of the latter also protected Jews during the Nazi occupation. Luan Shllaku, the director of George Soros’s Kosova Fund for an Open Society, told me with a certain diffidence that his family, well known in Gjakova, had sheltered a Jewish man, whom they considered a brother and who slept in the same bed

as Luan's uncle. The survivor had gone to Israel after 1945, but his relatives had come back to the Balkans in 1999, when they realized that the Shllakus were probably among the thousands and thousands of Albanians who had been expelled to Albania and Macedonia. The survivor's children found the Shllakus in a camp and offered them a return favor, in the form of refuge in Israel.

Which, in a distant sort of way, brings up another issue: interethnic reconciliation between Albanians and Serbs. This question is mainly articulated in the global media by foreigners, whose accounting of it has been less than satisfactory to an observer on the ground like myself. The international authorities in Kosova – NATO and the UN – have concentrated on a “politically correct” approach that is completely unrealistic: more or less ordering the two nations, which, unlike those in Bosnia-Herzegovina, have no common language and no tradition of intermarriage, to embrace. Sorry, that isn't going to work. Too much violence has taken place, and too much is continuing. But among ordinary Serbs and Albanians, a certain exhaustion is noticeable. More, anybody who spends time among local folks, rather than hanging around humanitarian functionaries pretending to be war dogs, hears people from both sides talk about their friends among “the others.” Most Albanians know at least one Serb they would protect, and vice versa. But of course that doesn't make the evening news, where “if it bleeds, it leads.”

Albanians and Serbs alike are getting pretty sick of the Balkan cockpit. The former look with great yearning at Europe and America – at the civilization from which they have long been excluded, thanks to their isolated language and unfortunate political destiny. The latter feel they were led to ruination by Milošević – who, let it be understood, was not a Serb nationalist, but an old-fashioned Stalinist Communist adept at using fascist-style ethnic mobilization to keep himself in power. If the foreigners can establish law and order, and then leave the Serbs and Albanians to tend their own gardens, repair their homes and holy places, build up businesses, and raise children, Kosova may surprise everybody. Physically, it is beautiful – truly God's country, to employ the dreadful old cliché.

Certainly, it and its people deserve some peace. It's a big job, and in the end, like it or not, only NATO can do it. But they can't wait around for love to blossom.

Nausea

And then Milošević had fallen, and the world rejoiced. I was close enough to the action, in October 2000, to see it as a sham. *Nausea* is the title of a famous work of fiction by Jean-Paul Sartre. But my thoughts on this topic have little to do with literature, especially with fiction. On the other hand, they have every thing to do with real, physical nausea: a sensation of disgust, repulsion, and, yes, even some fear, that grips the human organism.

Albert Camus is perhaps a better literary personality for discussion here. I do not know the exact quote in which Camus expressed his deep disillusionment with Europe and its alleged democratic values in April 1939, at the fall of the Spanish Republic. Many were angry, many were moved to tears, but Camus expressed something more: for him the betrayal of the Spanish Republic made it impossible to ever again believe in the principles, the promises, the fine words pronounced by politicians ... all politicians, of every ideology, creed, and stripe.

Europe let the Spanish Republic die. Europe believed in maintenance of the *status quo* as a response to crisis; it cherished order, not freedom. This had been true during the American civil war, and it was so during the Spanish revolution, which most called a civil war, and during the Balkan conflicts, none of which could legitimately be called a civil war.

I confess to suffering nausea in those moments, as the weeks and days of October 2000 went by. An October of shame. An October of despair. An October of betrayal. An October of nausea. I have said many times that I viewed the Balkans of the 1990s the way my parents' generation saw the Spanish civil war – as a great, almost cosmic war of good and evil. Now I had come to my own April 1939. Now I stood with Camus, in utter disgust; in nausea.

With its passionate embrace and approval of the alleged political transformation of imperialist Serbia – the Serbia that less than two years before, as continually since 1804, burned the homes, killed the children, murdered the women, and tortured and slew the men among the Muslim and Albanian population of the Balkans – the West revealed that all its promises of democracy, human rights, and liberation were absolutely meaningless verbiage.

The West has shown that political calculations, military interventions, and programs for economic transformation in the Balkans were guided by nothing other than pure, improvised self-interest. The Western leaders sought to cover their shame by making a show of aid and solidarity.

In the final reckoning of things, from the Western viewpoint it seems that reconciliation with Serbian imperialism is more important, more necessary, more moral, and obviously more useful than guaranteeing the defense of the threatened Kosovar Albanians, who, unlike the Bosniaks, have no real military force of their own to protect them.

Western media acclaimed Vojislav Koštunica's "revolution" in the same way they once hailed the hippies as revolutionaries, or as they promote a new consumer product with the claim "it's revolutionary!!!!" The very great majority of Western journalists know nothing of revolution; they have no idea what a revolution in Serbia would entail.

The Nobel Prize-winning poet Czeslaw Milosz, rightfully celebrated at the 2000 Frankfurt Book Fair, wrote about the Bosnian war, "Now, when a revolution is really needed, those who were once fervent are cool."

I was 52 years old in October 2000. I believed I had left my revolutionary sentiments behind me. I had come to embrace entrepreneurial economics, trade union negotiations, and essentially religious and conservative values. I no longer thrilled to the sound of anarchist songs or dreamed of a life on the barricades as I did when young.

But the obscene rush to support the new Serbian nationalists in Belgrade left me with a deeper contempt for and revolt against the

world order than I ever felt in the 1960s or 1970s. Unfortunately, however, today there is no horizon for leftist revolution. Leftists around the world sided with Belgrade during the NATO bombing and joined the wild dance in celebration of Serbian “freedom.” There is, simply, no hope for a leftwing response to the moral decay of the West.

The moral revolutionaries of the 19th century did not draw back from the need to stand alone in a time when most of those around them had lost their heads. Tolstoy represented one such example. Trotsky believed that even in the age of triumphant Stalinism a single man who believed in truth and principles was compelled to act. We who know and love Kosova, in particular, could take inspiration from our own symbols of isolated resistance and hope, from Shota Galica to Shaban Polluzha to Adem Jashari.²⁶

I could not say where and how the witches’ orgy in honor of the vampires of Belgrade will end, or if it will end. I had no recommendations at that point as to how Albanians, Bosniaks, and their friends should proceed. A challenge to the whole of the world order is impossible, but nothing less is appropriate. A weak, fearful, begging posture is unfit for this noble people, the children of the eagle, the children of freedom, and their friends and supporters.

For myself, I decided to go immediately to Washington, D.C. – a capital much more significant than Belgrade at the moment – to investigate the situation and to see what roads remained open for the victims of Serbian imperialist fascism.

In the end, perhaps, we do not need Camus or even Milosz to help articulate our outrage. At these moments Albanians recall how the national poet, Fr. Gjergj Fishta, once described Europe – as “a whore.” The Croat author Miroslav Krleža wrote similarly. The party in the brothel is at full swing, the music is loud and many are enjoying themselves. But I vowed to approach this festival of evil neither as a prostitute nor as a patron of prostitutes.

I come from California, and I will conclude by quoting what I have come to call “the creed of California protest journalists,” written in 1897:

“I will be the people’s word. I will be the bleeding mouth from which the gag has been snatched. I will say everything.”

Zenerlija

On the way back to the United States, in Frankfurt, I had a Balkan dream. I was riding a bus through a crowded border town. I saw an interesting religious structure, belonging to which faith I did not know. I left the bus and began walking; I asked, in Albanian, the location of the border: *Ku është kufiri*? It's the border of Macedonia, but with what other country is uncertain. Someone tells me the church is *Zenerlija*, and a place of healing. I feel vaguely anxious, and end up with two Americans, one of them familiar to me, in the office of an international organization.

October 31, 2000

*Postscript**The Balkans After September 11*

The bitter doubts I felt when Milošević was deposed would soon be reinforced. A disturbing but undeniable truth emerged after the atrocities of September 11, 2001. That is that the leadership of the United States, while nobly committed to the eradication of terrorism and a new global democratic transition, had no clear vision of the demands of this struggle, no idea who its friends and enemies in the Islamic world may be, and no understanding of how to organize an effective coalition to support its strategy.

The U.S. followed radically mistaken policies in the many areas. These included a failure to confront the Saudi regime regarding its subsidies and organizational support to international Wahhabi extremism. But more depressing was the failure to strengthen U.S. commitments in the Balkans.

American leaders seemed blind to their need for real friends in the Islamic world and the proven support of the Balkan Muslims for the American cause. The United States has not acknowledged the goodwill it created in the Balkans. Simple logic dictated that the

U.S. should build up Bosnia-Hercegovina and the Albanian lands as forward bases for the struggle against extremism and for real democratic development in the Islamic world.

Kosovar journalist Veton Surroi published a series of extremely perceptive articles in his Prishtina daily, *Koha Ditore*. On August 15, 2002, returning from a visit to Istanbul, he described Kosova as “between Kabul and Baghdad.” He argued that the shift of American priorities toward crises in the Middle East and Central Asia would make it crucial for the Balkans to arrive at “quick stability ... not just preventing conflicts, it also means the establishment of functional states as a part of European or Euro-Atlantic stability.”

The Kosovar journalist emphasized that the main aim of the U.S. is prevention of the use of Kosova as a base for destabilizing activity. The same obviously applies to Bosnia. The U.S. may diminish its specific commitment, but it cannot leave Bosnia in a way that facilitates either Wahhabi or *četnik* aggression.

We may hope that U.S. leaders arrive at a correct position on the maintenance of stability in Bosnia-Hercegovina, Kosova, and Macedonia. The right perspective on the Balkans dictates more than imposing order. It means rallying the Balkan Muslims to the struggle against extremism.

As it looks forward to the next stages in the antiterror war, the U.S. leadership would do well to make the most of the solidarity shown by Balkan Muslims. To abandon the Bosnian Muslims, Kosovars and Macedonian Albanians now would be worse than an error ... it would be a crime.

Washington, September 11, 2002

Appendix

*Petition of 249 Sarajevo Notables Against the Injustices of
Ružd-paša, 1819*

This is a truthful and faithful petition, submitted as a letter to the Sultan by honorable *muderrisi* [*madrasa* teachers], respectable *kadis* [judges], *imams*, *batibs* [Friday prayer leaders], good *shaykhs* whose prayers have been always granted, *šerturnaja*, *baščije*, *šerdengečtije*, *barjaktari* and other persons granted ranks by the janissaries of Odžak – merchants, craftsmen, poor and handicapped, who under the shelter of God inhabit the city of Saraj-Bosna, the capital and the head of the Bosnian province – the firm fortress guarding the state and the steel key of the imperial borderland, the place of mercy, according to *Hadith*: “Those who show mercy, will receive mercy from the all-merciful. Be compassionate to those on Earth, that pity may be granted you in heaven.”

For some time, by the will of Allah Almighty, your subjects, the Bosnian populace, have been attacked by hunger and various other pains and suffering. Hence, they entered into agreements with nearby villages and towns, so that the mass of the people have been able to breathe a sigh of relief and live. Even as they survived thanks to such cooperation, a plague descended and many people died or were reduced to misery. Only some dozens of people managed to save themselves from disaster. Therefore, poor and rich declined to such an extent that the nourishment of the people and the children, poor and rich, has collapsed in a sea of troubles and difficulties. In procuring food to sustain themselves, they fell to a point of utter weakness and deprivation.

From time immemorial, we have concerned ourselves with our commerce and we have known what our duty is – to feed our soul by prayers for long life and the power of the Sultan’s court – and to submit ourselves to him. We guarded ourselves from forbidden acts, we always tried to remain within God’s shadow over the world. We always submitted to the orders of great governors, respected judges and other officials and we were always a bulwark of the faith and state. Therefore, we were showered with grace and fatherly care, and, until now, we humble subjects of this city, by the Sultan’s supreme

decree, have been freed from all state taxes. When the grand *viziers* travelled to their residence in the town of Travnik, they would, according to the ancient rule, spend three nights in our city. During their stay, there was a general requirement for all residents to donate in fulfillment of official needs, and to sacrifice their property and their souls for the rulers' comfort, so they would encounter no difficulties. Therefore, in the moment that the rulers' fortunate feet stepped on Bosnian territory, we respected the regulation, as we always did, and collected provisions and held them ready for ten days, as is necessary for a journey to our town.

And although such rules obtained, the present governor, His Excellency Mehmed Ruždi-paša, did not honor past precedents, and he prolonged the transit to Travnik to forty days. One day before his arrival in Sarajevo, he demanded a large quantity of food and he asked for much more to be delivered later, more than ever before. In doing this, he bore down on the poor and weak, he did not consider the feelings of the populace who have not, by anything they have done, deserved his scorn and dissatisfaction. When ordered, they have delivered all kinds of food and hence fulfilled all expectations of traditional hospitality. In violation of the rules, he slept in our city for ten days, and he repeatedly demanded food, also requisitioning food on his own. During that time, he burdened the humble inhabitants of our city with all sorts of insults and he invented crimes in order to justify punishments. Two days after his arrival, he demanded from the citizens of our city, in a hitherto unknown innovation (*bid'a*), 500 sacks of food. We did not have capacity to meet this demand, and thus, two days before his departure to Travnik, without the support of the judicial authorities, he imprisoned the Jews. There was no way for them to pay the fine he demanded, while the legal proceeding was baseless, because they had committed no crime or misdemeanor; he came up with this case only to enrich himself. To achieve this goal, he chained, shackled, and imprisoned the Chief Scholar [Rabbi] of the Jews and some Christians, who are the inhabitants of our city and who are guaranteed protection and security by our laws. He tortured them, using boiling water, and even imposing tortures never seen before in our country and indefensible. Because of this violence and hatred, the Jews' children and families cried out, and their weeping was heard unto the seventh heaven. But the said governor felt no

pity, and he insisted that fines had to be paid, although they could not be. Four or five times he was asked to accept a payment of 5,000 gold *graschen*, in vain, as he met these offers with a thousand humiliations, and then decided to transfer his hostages in chains to his residence in Travnik. At dawn he handed them over, chained and shackled, to his militiamen, and he followed them to Travnik. As usual, poor and rich came into the streets to observe this parade. The said militia were evilly inspired, and aimed their guns at the citizens. When they fired their weapons, everybody was stunned, and started to run left and right in order to save their lives and souls. Crazed and crying for help, they fled the militia. When wise folk found out about this event, they went to the aforementioned governor, so that we could report on the events and plead with him. When we pointed out these mistaken actions, he burst out in aggravated rage and refused to forgive, before departing for Travnik. After that, he sent out orders, alleging things that never happened, and he even added that we, God forbid, fired cannon at him and that we effected a siege against him. After he denounced us this way, we reported what happened in a document composed by the *sharia* court. Although we have not committed any crime or error, we pleaded with him for mercy and forgiveness. But even in this he did not relent, but he brought Albanian militia to destroy Sarajevo and to kill women and children. In addition to that, he sent orders to all the districts of the Bosnian province, which forbade the provision of food to our town – so that his evil intentions oppressed, even more, men, women and poor children. Because the populace that lives in our town are mostly craftsmen, they need to buy and sell in the bazaar, and supplies are brought weekly from other districts. Even under normal circumstances, they must exert a great effort to obtain food for one week. In addition to that, he gathered captains and other officials, under the pretext of discussing the security of the borderland. In pursuit of his caprices and lust for revenge, he wrote a report to the Sultan describing our behavior in a bad light. He asked our notables to put their seals on the report. After they refused, because they had not read it, he compelled them to sign it by force. Then he dared to submit this report to the throne of the Sublime Porte, to accuse all of us and to oppress us.

Therefore, we dare, by way of the present report to the Sultan,

to point to the real truth and to beg His Majesty the Sultan, out of mercy for his people, to listen and not to believe untruths, and to express his boundless mercy to the wretched people and innocent children.

"The responsibility of giving orders belongs to those who merit giving them."

Praying to Allah for aid:

Here signs the poor Seyyid Nuruddin, Noble and Most Honored, This is as it is, and I am a witness to it.

Muhammad al-Vaki, former judge in Dubnici, God alone suffices for us, and the court is his guard!

Seyyid Abdullah, former judge in Loviç [Albania].

A servant praying for the exalted Ottoman state:

Muhammad, former judge in Mostar. God alone suffices for us, and the court is his guard.

Here signs the poor Sayyid Muhammad Amin, judge.

A servant praying for the exalted Ottoman state:

Sayyid Abdul Kelim, judge.

"He pities those without pity":

Here signs the poor Muhammad Nazif, former judge in Strumici.

A servant praying for the exalted Ottoman state:

Mustafa Sabri, former judge in Šcherkoy (Pirót).

A servant praying for the exalted Ottoman state:

Muhammad Selim, former judge in Mostar.

A servant praying for the exalted Ottoman state:

Sayyid Muhammed Sunn'ullah, judge.

"The responsibility of giving orders belongs to those who merit giving them."

Here signs the poor Abdullah Rashid, former judge.

A servant praying for the exalted Ottoman state:

Hadži Salih Vehbi, former judge.

Seyyid Shakir, mufti of the city of Sarajevo.

A servant praying for the exalted Ottoman state:

Shakir, former judge in the Adin district (Anatolia).

A servant praying for the exalted Ottoman state:

Suleyman Ruždi, former judge of the Pazardžik district.

Prayerful servant Muhammad Amin, teacher in the Gazi Husrevbeg *madrasa*.

Prayerful servant Osman, teacher in the Simzade *madrasa*,

Prayerful servant Muhammad, teacher in the Mehmedbeg *madrasa* of Bistrik.

A servant praying for the exalted Ottoman state:

Mustafa Abed, former judge: The truth is as written here, "My community must not fall onto the wrong path."

Prayerful servant begging Allah's mercy, Muhammad Hilmi.

Prayerful servant Hadži Abdullah, teacher in the New *madrasa*.

Prayerful servant Hassan, teacher in the Bakr Baba *madrasa*.

Prayerful servant Hadži Mehmed Hafiz, public preacher in the mosque.

Hadži Hassan, public preacher in the mosque.

Numan, vernacular preacher in the mosque.

Hafiz Yusuf, religious instructor of children.

Hadži Salih, vernacular preacher in the mosque.

Halil, religious instructor of children in the Old *mekteb* [religious elementary school].

Hasan, religious instructor of children.

Abdullah, vernacular preacher in the mosque.

Hadži Abdullah, religious instructor of children in the Gazi Husrevbeg *mekteb*.

Seyyid Mustafa, Friday preacher in the Sultan Mehmed mosque.

Shaykh Hassan, Friday preacher in the Alipasha mosque.

Osman, Friday preacher in the Abdullah Pasha mosque.

Muhammad, Friday preacher in the Yahya Pasha mosque.

Ahmad, Friday preacher in the Yakub Pasha mosque.

Hassan, Friday preacher in the Mehmed Beg mosque.

Omar, Friday preacher in the Kadi Omer-effendi mosque.

Abdullah, Friday preacher in the Kadi Bali-effendi mosque.

Mustafa, Friday preacher in the Hadži Isa mosque.

Ibrahim, Friday preacher in the Kućuk Katib mosque.

Osman, Friday preacher in the Sagrački mosque.

Ibrahim, Friday preacher in the Mullah Arab Atik mosque.

Hafiz, Friday preacher in the Shaykh Fera mosque.

Muhammad Sabri, Friday preacher in the Husrevbeg mosque.
 Osman, Friday preacher in the Mehmed Pasha mosque.
 Mustafa, Friday preacher in the Ajas Pasha mosque.
 Mustafa, Friday preacher in the Skender Pasha mosque.
 Salih, Friday preacher in the Gazi Balibeg mosque.
 Osman, Friday preacher in the Kemalbeg mosque.
 Muhammad, Friday preacher in the Kadi Hassan-effendi mosque.
 Osman, Friday preacher in the Vekil-harč mosque.
 Fejzullah, Friday preacher in the Divan Katib mosque.
 Yusuf, Friday preacher in the Kasim Katib mosque.
 Ibrahim, Friday preacher in the Tabak Suleyman mosque.
 Salih, Friday preacher in the Balizade mosque.
 Ibrahim, Friday preacher in the Shaykh Muslihuddin mosque.
 Hafiz Mustafa, Friday preacher in the Čekrekči Muslihuddin
 mosque.
 Hafiz Ahmad, Friday preacher in the Bakr Baba mosque.

Sayyid Omar, deputy governor of Sarajevo.
 Osman, administrator and commander.
 Mustafa, administrator and commander.
 Derviš Suleyman, commander.
 Muhammad, commander.
 Feyzullah, state official.
 Derviš Mustafa, chief scribe.
 Muhammad, commander.
 Muhammad, commander.
 Abdullah, palace official.
 Lutfullah, inspector of the fortress.
 Hassan, administrator and commander.
 Mustafa, commander.
 Muhammad Sadiq, commander.
 Omar, administrator.

Followed by 174 more signatures and seals, for a total of 249
 signatures and seals, including religious, military, and Janissary
 officials, as well as 17 dervishes and 52 merchants.

*[Translation from the Serbo-Croatian by Bojan Klima and Stephen
 Schwartz, rendering Ottoman political terms and titles of signatories by
 their English equivalents.]*

Notes

1. Published by the Finnish Oriental Society, Helsinki, 2001.
2. Malcolm, Noel, *Bosnia: A Short History*, New York, University Press, 1994.
3. Levi, Moritz, *Die Sephardim im Bosnien*, Sarajevo, 1911, second edn, ed. K. Bakaršić, Klagenfurt, Wieser Verlag, 1996. Also see Levi, Moric, "Rav Danon i Ruždi Paša," *Godišnjak 'La Benevolencije' i Potpore*, Sarajevo, 1933.
4. Levy, Dr. Moric, *Sefardi u Bosni*, Sarajevo, Bosanska Biblioteka, 1996.
5. Unsigned, "Sarajevski Purim/Sarajevska Megila," in *Jevrejski Kalendar 5759*, Beograd, 1998–99 (based on account of Moše ben Rafael Attias, known as Moše Rafajlović and as "Zeki-Effendi.")
6. Palavestra, Vljako, *Legends of Old Sarajevo*, Zemun (Serbia), Most Art, 2000.
7. Prstojević, Miroslav, *Zaboravljeno Sarajevo*, Sarajevo, 1991.
8. *Livriku de la orasjon ke se dižj e Stolac dispoes de TEFILA sobre la KEVURA del CADIK maalot Moreno arav rebi MOŠE DANON zehuto jagen alenu AMEN, Trezladado por mano del badži MOŠE HAJIM moreno arav Alevi, Saraj en anjo 5697*. Sarajevo, 1937.
9. Published in *Spomenica 400 Godina od Dolaska Jevreja u Bosnu i Hercegovinu*, Sarajevo, 1966.
10. Rizvanbegović, Izet, "Stari jevrejski nadgrobní spomenici na Krajišni kod Stoca," in *Naše starine*, Sarajevo, 1956.
11. The commencement of the 1992 war in Bosnia-Hercegovina has come to be known as the "bloody Bajram."
12. Popović, Vasko and Lidija van der Haiden, and *Nezavisne Novine* Research Team, "Reign of Terror in Teslić Started with Execution of 38 Bosniaks and Croats," *Nezavisne Novine* (Banja Luka), September 15, 1999, and Glancer, Damir, "They Slapped me and Put me in Prison: They Thought I Was a Croat," *Nezavisne Novine*, October 6, 1999.
13. "Na Bembashi na Babića bašči," from Žero, Muhamed, *Sevdah Bošnjaka: 430 Sevdablínki sa Notnim Zapisom*, Sarajevo, Ljiljan, 1995.
14. *Spanish Marxism vs. Soviet Communism: A History of the P.O.U.M.* (with Víctor Alba), New Brunswick, Transaction Books, 1988.
15. Radosh, Ronald, Mary R. Habeck, and Grigory Sevostianov, eds, *Spain Betrayed: The Soviet Union in the Spanish Civil War*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2001.
16. Unsigned, "Exploring the Visual Remnants of the Jewish Community in Azerbaijan," in *Newsletter*, Number 14, Jerusalem, Summer 1998, published by the Center for Jewish Art of The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
17. See discussion of these events in Kerckänen, op. cit.; p. 41 of this book, and footnote 1, above.

18. Ben-Yishay, Ron, "The Israeli Soldiers of the Serb Army," *Yedi'ot Aharonot* (Tel Aviv), June 11, 1999.
19. Published in English by Northwestern University Press, 1999.
20. This work was published in Spanish as *El libro de Adem Kabrman*, México, Breve Fondo Editorial, 2000, in a translation by Antonio Saborit and myself. It was named Book of the Year in Translation by the Mexican daily *Reforma*.
21. Goytisolo, José, *State of Siege*, translated by Helen Lane, San Francisco, City Lights Books, 2002; originally published as *El sitio de los sitios*, Madrid, Alfaguara, 1995.
22. Matović, Dragana, "Last Salary," *NIN* (Belgrade), October 24, 2002.
23. The incidents of the massacre at Korenica have been documented by various international bodies.
24. Shala, Blerim, "The Story of a Mother," *Zëri* (Prishtina), June 2, 2003.
25. For further discussion of these matters, see my *Two Faces of Islam*, New York, Doubleday, 2002.
26. For a discussion of these figures, see my *Kosovo: Background to a War*, London, Anthem Press, 2000.

Different sections of this prose narrative, with texts of Sephardic ballads, first appeared in the *Forward*, *Journal of Croatian Studies*, *Illyria*, and *The New Criterion* (New York), *World Affairs* (Washington), the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Ljiljan*, *Oslobodjenje*, and *Walter* (Sarajevo), *Dita* (Prishtina), and *Vuelta* (Mexico).

The sections titled "The Rabbi of Stolac," "Further Notes From Stolac, Hercegovina," and the Appendix were presented to a seminar at Haverford College, Haverford, Pa., November 10, 2002. I was honored beyond measure to join there two of the scholars I most respect and admire in the world: Professor Ivo Banac of Yale University and Professor Michael Sells of Haverford. I was also happy to participate in the conference with Amra Hadžimuhamedović, director of architectural reconstruction in Sarajevo, and Professor Laurie Hart of Haverford.

Homage to Muhamed Nezirović

Of the friends I have made in my Balkan travels, there is nobody alive who is dearer to me, in certain respects, than Professor Muhamed Nezirović of the University of Sarajevo. Hamo, as he is universally known, is not a prepossessing person. He is a scholar through and through, even though he served as his country's ambassador to Spain from 1994 to 1998. During the Bosnian war, his home and personal library, in a zone quickly taken by Serb troops, were entirely burned.

Hamo deserves great honor for the centerpiece of his academic work: his publications on the Bosnian Sephardim. This Bosnian Muslim has gone much further than any Jewish scholar alive today in studying the Judeo-Spanish idiom and traditions among the Jews of the South Slavic lands.

He was born in Sarajevo in 1934, in the mixed Muslim and Serb *mahala*, or neighborhood, of Nadmlini. His family owned land and were active in commerce; they had strong personal links with the Sephardic business community. Indeed, an uncle, although Muslim, was a member of the Jewish choral society, *Lira*, and

toured Palestine with it in the mid-'30s. Hamo himself, as a child, had an account in the Bank Geula, a Jewish bank expropriated by the Germans during World War II. An aunt, who had gone from Sarajevo to live in Bijeljina, often spoke bitterly of the arrest by the Nazis of her three Jewish women friends, Mazalika, Mazalta, and Ordunja. She protested their arrest, saying she did not wish to be separated from them, and a German soldier warned, "If you love them so much, you can go with them." Hamo also has two brothers who still live in Sarajevo.

Hamo finished his elementary and secondary education in Sarajevo, then studied Romance languages at the university there. After several years as a secondary school teacher in Gradačac and Konjic, he was appointed a university graduate assistant. He spent three years in France completing his dissertation, *Le Vocabulaire dans deux versions du Roman de Thèbes*, which he defended at the University of Clermont-Ferrand in 1975. He soon received his first appointment to the faculty of the University of Sarajevo, where he remains today, as Professor of French and Comparative Romance Grammar. Among his many publications, he was editor for the cultural history of Bosnia-Herzegovina in the *Yugoslav Encyclopedia*. He was decorated *Cavaliere della Repubblica d'Italia* by the Italian government.

My first encounter with Hamo was not personal, but involved my purchase of his two-volume edition of the Elazar anthology, *Romancero Judeo-Español*, in Sarajevo in 1991. Later, I discovered some copies of Hamo's *Jevrejsko Španjolska Književnost* [*Jewish Spanish Literature*] lying unnoticed in bookstores, after most of them had been destroyed during the 1992–95 war.

One of Hamo's most significant contributions is his article "La Istoria de los Žudios de Bosnia de Moše (Rafael) Atias (Zeki-Efendi)," delivered to the Fourth International Congress of the History of the Spanish Language, held in La Rioja in 1997.

This paper offers an indispensable panorama of intellectual life among the Sarajevo Sephardim at the end of the 19th century. In it, Professor Nežirović – one should not use a nickname in seriously describing his scholarly work – recalls the founding of



Muhamed Nežirović (left), with the author, Sarajevo, 1999. (Photograph by Congress of Bosniak Intellectuals)

the weekly newspaper *La Alborada* [*The Dawn*] in 1900. *La Alborada* carried as its subtitle, *Periódico Instructivo-Literario órgano del Žudaismo de Bosnia y Erzegovina*. This publication was issued in Judeo-Spanish, mainly using square Rashi Hebrew type, by the poet Abraham Aaron Capón. Capón was born in 1853 of a rabbinical family in Rushchuk, on the Bulgarian bank of the Danube (the Nobel laureate Elias Canetti was from the same town). He had first attempted to launch *La Alborada* in Ploesti, Romania, in 1898–99, although a letter indicates it was printed in Rushchuk. But the enterprise had failed.

Capón had then decided to emigrate to America, but on the way he stopped in Vienna, where he was delayed by a great influx of Russian Jews heading across the Atlantic. He met a Jew from Bijeljina named Meir Danon, who invited him to go to Sarajevo; he went and remained there until his death in 1930. In a short biography published in the *Elazar Romancero Judeo-Español*, Capón is credited with a “majestuosa personalidad.” He worked as a

religious and secular teacher, and he was an enlightener; when he arrived in Sarajevo his sophistication surprised the rest of the Jewish believers, as did his dedication to the study of scientific and Hebrew topics. He wore European dress, rather than the traditional Ottoman costume still typical of Sarajevo. Later in his life he wrote theatrical pieces and poetry.

La Alborada lasted only seven and a half months in Sarajevo, but it had a considerable impact. Congratulations on its foundation were sent by the Rabbinate of Turkey and the Jewish Academic Youth of Vienna and Sarajevo. Its most important contributing writer was one of the most distinguished Jewish citizens of the city: Moshe ben Rafael Attias, known as Moshe Rafajlović and as “Zeki-Effendi,” author of a *History of the Jews of Bosnia*. This work was signed “*El Amante de la Luz*” [*The Lover of Light*].

Zeki-Effendi was born in Sarajevo in 1845 to a leading family, and was educated in a Turkish state school open to members of all confessions, but mainly attended by Muslims. The curriculum was Islamic, and Zeki-Effendi’s study there was notable, although not unique among Sarajevo Sephardim. He travelled to Istanbul where he carried out further religious studies, and his knowledge of Islamic culture led him to a devotion to the outstanding Persian poet and mystic Muslihud’din Sa’adi, the 13th-century author of the *Gulistan*, or *Rose Garden*. Returning to Sarajevo, he entered the Turkish official service and rose to a high position in the tax authority. With the arrival of the Austro-Hungarian occupation in 1878, he remained employed as financial counsellor.

Both Capón and Zeki-Effendi wrote standard Castilian, not Judeo-Spanish, although their texts were printed in Hebrew letters. In 1911, the great Spanish scholar of Sephardic balladry, Don Manuel Manrique de Lara, toured the Balkans in Attias’s company, collecting oral texts in Bosnia, Serbia, and Kosova. Capón commissioned Zeki-Effendi to write an authoritative history of the Bosnian Jews, and Moshe ben Rafael Attias has become especially identified with the historiography of R. Moshe Danon, “the rabbi of Stolac.” Another of the most interesting aspects of Zeki-Effendi’s history is his indication of the communal role of

the *waqf* or Islamic endowment of the great Ottoman governor Gazi Husrevbeg, to whom the tenants of the original Jewish residences, as well as Jewish shopkeepers in the Bezistan market paid rents. Other fascinating items include a record of departure for Safed, the Palestinian center of Lurianic Kabbalah, by one of many distinguished rabbis.

The rabbinical history of the Bosnian Jews is one of the numerous topics discussed in Professor Nežirović's 1992 volume *Jevrejsko Španjolska Književnost*. This work provides a uniquely thorough picture of a regional Sephardic culture, discussing features of its dialect, religious and literary genres, folklore and artistic literature, with exemplary texts and analyses thereof. It is a book well deserving of translation and publication in other languages.

Professor Nežirović delivered an excellent summary of Sarajevo Sephardic history at a conference on Spain and Hispanic Culture in the European Southeast, in Athens in 2000, with the title "El Lugar de la Comunidad Sefardí de Bosnia entre las Comunidades Sefardíes de Europa y el Mediterráneo." He told me that at the conference he conferred with Marius Sala, a great Romanian scholar of Romance linguistics. Sala's volume *Estudios sobre el judeoespañol de Bucarest*¹ was the first book on the topic I ever bought, in San Francisco in 1976, while staring into *Sarajevo* cigarette tins, soon after encountering Kalmi Baruh. I brought the book with me to Sarajevo. Hamo had lost his copy when the Serbs burned his house, and I gave mine to him, with others that were difficult for him to obtain.

Hamo said Sala had agreed with him that Sarajevo should become a new center of Sephardic studies. And I, of course, also concur; we have several times discussed how beneficial it would be for the University of Sarajevo to include a Center for Balkan Jewish Studies. But these sentiments may also echo that found in the paper "El Lugar de la Comunidad Sefardí de Bosnia ...," where it is noted that in 1924 the Sarajevo newspaper *Jevrejski Život* [*Jewish Life*] criticized "the *Sephardismo* of Sarajevo, a *Sephardismo* absolutely detached and separatist, that wishes to see Sarajevo as a center of pan-Sephardism because Sarajevo, according to the opinion of the

promoters of this idea, is the capital and most central city in the entire Sephardic world.”

The same paper notes that the first collectors of Sephardic ballads were the Bosnian rabbis HaKohen Moshe ben Mikael (1702) and HaKohen Bahar Moshe David (1794). This is the tradition I have tried to support, and to which Muhamed Nezirović belongs. He also points out that in the darkest moments of fascism in Bosnia-Hercegovina, during World War II, the Islamic communities of the country directed “Muslim Resolutions” to the Axis occupiers, calling for the protection of life and property of all Bosnians, regardless of religion. The topic of these resolutions is absent from academic discourse in the West; but its legacy also unites us.

The contribution of Muhamed Nezirović to Sephardic studies represents an indispensable resource for Jewish cultural history. But his position in Sarajevo may be the seed of a vision. Sarajevo has been scarred by the same intolerance of the non-Christian “other” that led to the Holocaust. Its university, which once graduated numerous doctors and other professionals employed throughout the Muslim world, today struggles toward reconstruction. I have often been told by Eastern European diplomats and intellectuals of their ambitious plans for new memorials to Jewish martyrdom in World War II. But I have several times proposed that rather than create new museums, one of the governments or universities in southeast Europe should endow a department of Sephardic studies, with the mission of preserving books and manuscripts and providing a home for visiting scholars from Spain, Israel, and the United States. I am prepared to offer my own small contribution to such a program, in the form of Sephardica I have collected. But I can imagine no better place for such an effort than Sarajevo, and no better person to lead such a program than Muhamed Nezirović, my friend and mentor.

Hamo is a true son of Sarajevo and a truly righteous Gentile.

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Abraham Kohen Herrera: Notes on a Renaissance Jewish Traveler

For Moshe Lazar

“Cielo: es la unidad de todos los cuerpos, y de quien sin contradicción alguna se puede afirmar y negar todos; pues los excede, contiene, y causa, como agente equívoco, y mas excelente. O es un cuerpo natural, sencillo, ingenerable, incorruptible, y libre de alteración perniciosa, el primero y mas excelente de todos los cuerpos, cuyo movimiento, es vital y en círculo, y cuya calidad es la lumbré: y mediante estos dos universales instrumentos, es causa eficiente, conservante, y perficonadora [sic], en virtud de su ánima, inteligencia y demas superiores, en especial de la causa incausada y primera de todos los elementos y elementados. O el cielo, es una quinta esencia, sobre las de los cuatro sencillos cuerpos, o elementos; libre de contrariedad y corrupción, dotada de excelente vida, luz, figura, orbicular, perpetuo y circular movimiento, que en si contiene todos los elementos y elementados, en los cuales, continuamente influye, mediante su lumbré y movimiento.”

“Heaven: it is the unity of all bodies, and of which without any contradiction may be affirmed or denied all; because it exceeds, contains, and causes them, as an equivocal and most excellent agent. Or it is a natural, simple, ingenerate, incorruptible body, free of pernicious alterations, the first and most excellent of all bodies, whose movement is vital and circular, and whose quality is that of splendor; and through these two universal instrumentalities, is the efficient, conserving, and perfecting cause, by virtue of its soul, intelligence, and other superior (aspects?), particularly that of being the uncaused cause and first among all elements and elementary states. Or heaven is a fifth essence, above those of the four simple bodies, or elements; free from contradiction or corruption, endowed with excellent life, light, figure, round, perpetual, and circular movement, which in itself contains all elements and elementary states, which it continuously influences, through its splendor and movement.”

Abraham Kohen Herrera, *Libro de Definiciones*,
Exact place and date of publication unknown,
Holland, 17th century C.E.

The Jewish dimension of the Renaissance has been neglected by popular historians. The life of Abraham Kohen Herrera (c. 1570–1635), a widely travelled Spanish/Italian Jewish merchant and mystic, offers a view into many fascinating aspects of the Renaissance in Europe, Asia, and even in Africa. He was the child of Jews who, after conversion to Christianity, were forced out of the Iberian peninsula by the Spanish Inquisition. Brought up as a Christian, he reverted to Judaism, in a long intellectual journey. He became a noted adept of Jewish mysticism, or Kabbalah; and, above all, he was a Renaissance traveler.

A merchant and scholarly wanderer, he stood at multiple historical crossroads: between the Christian and Jewish aspects of



Poster for the 5th Conference on the Social and Cultural History of the Jews on the Eastern Adriatic Coast, Dubrovnik, 2004.

Hispanic civilization; between the Christian western Mediterranean and the Ottoman east; between the old, mystical, Spanish school of Kabbalah and the then new “messianic” Kabbalah emerging in Palestine; between scholastic philosophy and mysticism in general.

His life encompassed a series of adventures, revelations, and remakings of his identity. Kohen Herrera is an extraordinary figure in the history of his time, who may have been the model for Shylock in Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice*. He was a very influential Kabbalist, and he provides us with a better understanding of Kabbalah as a feature of Mediterranean Jewish life interrelated with the Christian and Muslim intellect.

Going to Dubrovnik

As the 1500s came to an end, a cosmopolitan, sophisticated merchant traveler then turning 30, and known as Alonso Nuñez de Herrera, journeyed to the city of Ragusa, called Dubrovnik by Slavs and Turks, on the eastern shore of the Adriatic.

He had come to know much of the world of his time. He grew up in opulent Florence and sojourned in Morocco as a commercial representative of that country’s Sultan; he had been kidnapped by English adventurers and spent years as a hostage in London.

When he went to Dubrovnik he carried out business responsibilities for his uncle Juan de Marchena, a Florentine who prospered in the service of the Moroccan Sultan, Mullah Ahmed al-Mansour. Dubrovnik stood on the frontier of Christendom and the Islamic world, as well as of the German Jewish, or Ashkenazic, and the Iberian Jewish, or Sephardic, traditions.

Herrera was rich but troubled, unresolved about his religious identity. Brought up as a Christian, he nonetheless felt deep longings for Jewishness. The sense that he had lost something precious tormented him, even if he had never fully known it, and even as affirmation of it was risky. At the same time, much about the Christian culture in which he was raised maintained a hold on him.

Herrera was a thinker as well as a trader. He accumulated a library of Jewish religious and mystical works, and spent more time delving into Jewish mysticism than studying the formal rituals of Jewish observance. Spanish Jews forced into conversion were supposed to be overwhelmingly concerned with a return to their primordial faith. But Herrera was drawn to the transcendence of Kabbalah rather than to the daily worship of traditional Jews; he considered himself a spiritual Jew while retaining a public identity as a Spanish Catholic.

In Dubrovnik he formed a bond with a mystic from Palestine, who called himself Rabbi Israel Sarug. Herrera may have encountered Sarug during a prior business visit to that city.

Dubrovnik, with its elegant marble streets, palaces, markets, churches, and convents, was a natural meeting point between the Jewish commercial communities in Italy and the Ottoman countries. Israel Sarug and Alonso Nuñez de Herrera had been preceded in Dubrovnik by other Jewish Renaissance figures, including a noted medical writer, João Rodrigues (Johannes Amatus Lusitanus) and a Latin poet, Isaac Kohen, known as Didacus Pyrrhus, both born in Portugal. Events on the Dalmatian coast of that time resonated throughout Europe. This was demonstrated in 1651, when the Amsterdam Jewish printer and teacher of Spinoza, Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel, a disciple of Herrera, published his notable plea for English tolerance toward the Jews, *To His Highnesse The Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland and Ireland*. Addressed to Oliver Cromwell, this classic exposition included a survey of Jewries throughout the world of that time, from Morocco to India.

Menasseh ben Israel noted therein the construction of the port of Spalato, i.e. Split, by the Sephardic Jew Daniel Rodrigues, writing, "The Inventor of the famous *Scala de Spalatro* (the most firme and solid Traficq of Venice) was a Jew, who by this his Invention transported the Negotiation from a great part of the Levant into that City." Later, ben Israel commented that Rodrigues had cleared the port of Klis of the pirates known as *uskoks*: "Don Daniel Rodrigues, because of his prudency and other good

qualities, was sent in the year 1589 from the most Excellent Senat of Venice into Dalmatia, to appease those tumults and scandals given by the Vsquoquibs in Clissa [Klis]: which he most manly effected, and caused all the women and children, that were kept close prisoners, to be set at liberty, brought also to an happy issue many other things of great moment, for which he was sent."

At the same time, ben Israel alluded to other, dreadful 16th- and 17th-century events in Dubrovnik. In 1502 a group of Dubrovnik Jews was accused in a blood libel – the alleged murder of a Christian woman. There ensued an extremely difficult period for the city's Hebrews. Catholic clergy demanded that the Jews be banished and such an order was issued, although traders and physicians were exempted from it. The Ottoman Sultan twice, in 1516 and 1545, compelled the citizens of Dubrovnik to readmit the Jews. (Jews harried from the city often took refuge in nearby Bosnia-Herzegovina, ruled by the Ottomans, and, in addition, Jewish doctors from Dubrovnik treated the Bosnian Muslim élite.) In 1622 a blood libel was again alleged. Jews were locked into their gated street, a real ghetto, and heads of families, totaling 47 men, were catalogued. Sanctions were strengthened and most Jews departed Dubrovnik, although Jewish migration to the city resumed in 1633.

Indeed, Dubrovnik became rather notorious as a factory of blood libels, leading Manasseh ben Israel to note, "In Araguza ... a Jew ... was accused of this ... wickedness [ritual murder of a Christian], and not confessing it, they imprisoned him betwixt t[w]o walls, and being in that distresse ... he cited before God all the Judges to answer there for what they did; and ... within a year after, many of the Judges died, and those that lived, fearing the like might befall them, and lose their lives, set him free." The victim in that instance was named Isaac Jeshurun.

Dubrovnik was therefore an uncertain place for a Jew, especially one uncertain himself, with a Christian name and history. Still, in both its Venetian and Slavic communities, Ragusa/Dubrovnik had become a center of Renaissance literary activities; indeed, it was the site of the beginning of the Renaissance in the Slavonic world.

Menasseh ben Israel also noted the poetry of Amatus Lusitanus, including verses dedicated to the outstanding Sephardic personality of the time, Don Joseph Nasi, appointed Duke of Naxos by the Ottomans: "Joseph Nasino, unto whom Amatus Lusitanus dedicated his fifth and sixth Centuria, was by Sultan Solime made Duke of Maccia, Earle of Andro, Seignor of Millo, and the seven Islands."

Dubrovnik had passed from Hungarian to Ottoman suzerainty in the early 16th century. It was allied with Spain by treaty and even sent forces to assist the Spanish Armada in the attempted invasion of England in 1588. Dubrovnik was one of the furthest eastern outposts of Spanish, as well as Italian cultural and commercial contact, and had relations with the Spanish imperial port of Cádiz, the European entry point for the gold and silver of the New World. Early Jewish participation in Dubrovnik trade included commerce with Jews in Catalonia in 1421.

Herrera had first gone to Dubrovnik years before the trip in which he began his study with Sarug, on a mission connected with the city's extensive mineral trade. But historians have also described, then, a minor wave in the currents of Mediterranean Jewish emigration, when Sephardim fleeing the whims of recent papal policy toward the Jews landed on the Eastern Adriatic littoral.

Herrera may also have appreciated Dubrovnik as a place of ultimate self-discovery; its small Jewish community, if at times endangered, allowed him intellectual tranquility and "space" to work out his beliefs. It was the closest place in Christendom to furnish easy access to the Ottoman realm, in which Salonika, in particular, was famous as a center of *Torah* scholarship. However, the poet Isaac Kohen, or Didacus Pyrrhus, had also written in praise of the freedom and independence of Dubrovnik, which was a republic, though only a city-state.

But above all, it was in Dubrovnik that Herrera and Sarug began their dialogue on Kabbalah, and Herrera's life was changed completely. Under the influence of Sarug, he made a momentous personal decision. He publicly embraced Judaism, and changed his

name to Abraham Kohen Herrera, under which he appears in the Dubrovnik city records.

Sarug, a generation older than Herrera, is one of the most enigmatic figures in Jewish history. His rabbinical title was a pretense, as was much else in his life; he was in many respects a charlatan. He was apparently born in Egypt, and had written Kabbalistic works in the years before Herrera's birth; he was an adept of the manipulation of Hebrew letters by assigning them numerical values.

Israel Sarug was filled with mystical urgency. In Palestine, he had come under the influence of the greatest Jewish religious figure of the second millennium: the *Ari*, or Lion, Rabbi Isaac Luria of Safed (1534–1572). Luria had founded a school of Kabbalah named for him, the “Lurianic Kabbalah.”

In the first two thirds of the 16th century, a unique community of Jewish thinkers and writers had developed in the Palestinian city of Safed. Their number included Joseph Karo (1488–1575), author of *The Set Table* [*Shulkhan 'Arukh*], a condensed code of Jewish law, and R. Moshe Cordovero (1522–1570), mentor of Luria and a supremely great Kabbalist in his own right. Grappling with the tragic immensity of the fall of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews and the terror of the Inquisition, these Jews found an explanation of that horror and suffering in Kabbalah.

Pursuing theosophical pathways, they rejected the preaching, popular among German Jews, that saw in the Spanish martyrdom a divine punishment for lapsed piety. Luria and the group in Safed embraced an alternative explanation of the world's brutalities: a disastrous rupture of divine “vessels,” identified with the cosmic structure, in the process of creation. The breaking of these vessels, or *qelippoth*, had led to a permanent conflict between the divine principle and lower forces in the world. Luria and his disciples envisioned a Kabbalistic *tikkun*, or “healing,” through prayer and study that would re-establish the cosmic harmony. This became a doctrine of “*ha-olam tikkun*,” the world of restoration and redemption. Luria and his disciples sought more than a mystical accounting for the turmoil at the end of the medieval era; they

sought also a renewal and reform of Judaism in the direction of broader human transformation.

The influence of the Safed Kabbalists on later Judaism is incalculably great. The Safed Kabbalists loved *The Song of Songs* [*Shir Ha-shirim*], and pious Jews thereafter gave full Sabbath recitations of it. Luria himself composed religious anthems sung today in Jewish households, while the great sabbath hymn *Leha Dodi* [*Come, My Friend*], composed by Cordovero's brother-in-law, Shlomo Alkabetz, is now sung in every synagogue.

Given their Palestinian location, it is both comprehensible and fascinating that the relationship of the Safed circle to the *Ari* greatly resembles that of Islamic Sufi mystics to a *murshid*, or spiritual guide. Luria himself was born in Palestine to an Ashkenazi father and Sephardic mother.

Sarug was the first student of Lurianic Kabbalah to come to Europe. He claimed, falsely, to have personally known the *Ari*. Sarug had chosen Dubrovnik, with its few Jews, as the place to first communicate to Europe this new, urgent, and reforming Jewish theology, but this was probably only for geographical reasons. For Sarug, Dubrovnik may have been little more than the most convenient drop-off point, the "last stop" between the Near East and Italy.

The transformation in Dubrovnik of Alonso Nuñez de Herrera into Abraham Kohen Herrera – his public "re-Judaization" – was followed by his leap into Lurianic Kabbalah on his own. He became Sarug's first student, and thus may be partially credited with introducing Lurianic Kabbalah to a wider European audience. This obscure encounter, presently known only to a handful of specialists in the history of Jewish philosophy and religious doctrines, marked a significant turning point in European and Jewish intellectual history, as well as in Herrera's own life.

The relationship represented an opportunity for Herrera to learn, as he had learned about the world from his merchant uncle and others. Sarug, although himself imperfectly trained in Judaism, led his companion through all that he knew of Mosaic tradition and law, and Herrera's own soul became permeated with Sarug's mystical fantasies.

Sarug and Herrera developed a special intellectual intimacy. They became spiritual partners, praying and studying together. Judaism, then as now, in a convention similar to that visible in Christian monastic life and in the Islamic Sufi tradition, encouraged such relationships.

But above all, Herrera, who had been ambivalent about his Jewish origins, suddenly faced a direct and profound challenge: to participate in the Lurianic “healing of the world.” This, Sarug made clear to him, he could not do as a Spanish Catholic. He had to embrace Judaism, openly and proudly, and he had to participate in the great new work of redemption.

Spain and the Jewish Conversos

Alonso Nuñez de Herrera was also known as Rodrigo de Marchena. Beginning life as a Christian, he was born in Italy about 1570. His family had converted from Judaism to Christianity, and were thus known as *conversos*, or “New Christians.” Less politely, they were labelled *marranos*, or “swine.”

Herrera later described himself as the “son” of a rabbi, David Kohen de Herrera, from Córdoba in Andalucía, the area of the Iberian peninsula that remained longest under Islamic governance, and which was the object of great Jewish nostalgia. However, this may have been intended to mean a “descendant” rather than a direct offspring. After their conversion to Christianity in Spain, the Herreras fled the country in the face of the Inquisition, and relocated in Florence, where they grew rich in commerce. A great literary chronicler of the Spanish Jews of that time, the Amsterdam poet Daniel Levi de Barrios, claimed Herrera was a descendant of the “Great Captain,” Gonsalvo de Córdoba, viceroy of Naples, but this is plainly apocryphal.

We know much about Jewish life in Spain before the nightmare of forced conversions and expulsions began, and, although in less amplitude, much detail from the lives of Jews who, faithful to their tradition, chose to leave Spain rather than convert.

However, for various reasons, the life experiences, strivings, yearnings, and difficulties of those who *accepted* conversion have been largely ignored, except in rabbinical commentaries, where they are condemned in rigorous terms. The stories of those who, after becoming Christian, were nonetheless forced to leave Spain, and those who, once out of the peninsula, opted to resume their Judaism have also yet to be examined in appropriate detail.

The Herreras are representative of these latter categories. They may have become Christian in Spain, on the presumption that they could remain there, but then took flight, under the Inquisition's lash. They moved to Italy, which was a stopping point for faithful Jews on their way, in most cases, to the Ottoman empire, where they could openly practice their religion. But many "new Christians," the Herreras among them, chose to tarry in Italy and to delay their resumption of Jewish practice.

The reluctance of the Herreras and others to "reconvert" immediately, for such was the requirement imposed by rabbinical authorities on those who had abandoned the Mosaic faith, is controversial. Loyal Jews reproached the *conversos* for having renounced Judaism in the first place. While popular memory holds that such people became "New Christians" purely under duress, there has always existed the recognition that many were motivated by convenience, and, above all, by an unwillingness to abandon a very comfortable life in Spain.

In addition, it may have been that, having departed from Spain, *conversos* in Italy evinced a similar "opportunism" in the slowness of their re-Judaization. Ashkenazi or German Jews have long offered an unfavorable contrast between the northern European Jews, who preferred the flames of public burning to renunciation of Judaism, and the allegedly soft and decadent Iberian Jews, who were loth to give up their pleasant homes and the shade of their orange trees.

At the time of Herrera's birth, almost 80 years had passed since the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, in 1492, and from Portugal, in 1497. For world Jewry, the Iberian expulsions were the worst catastrophe since the fall of the Temple in 70 C.E., and their

impact was similar to that of the 20th-century Holocaust. The downfall of Iberian Jewry was obviously traumatic for those who, like Herrera's family, had suffered through it. But Herrera's life was also played out against a wider background of ferment throughout Europe. Between 1570 and 1635, a series of better known, more dramatic incidents marked a vast turning point in European and world history: the central period of the Renaissance.

And what was the Renaissance? In geopolitical terms, the transformation of European and, eventually, world culture, was marked by conflict along two axes, north/south and east/west. In the former, we see the global rivalry between the Catholic powers led by Spain and the rising Protestant nations, headed by England. Along the east/west divide, the Christian rulers of the western Mediterranean – an alliance of Spaniards, Catalans, Genoese, and Venetians – sought to halt the maritime expansion of the Ottoman Turks.

The Renaissance is defined above all as the period in which modern commerce emerged, and in which free enterprise began to assume a greater influence than feudal privilege, thus creating a new model of society. Parallel to this massive economic transformation came the better-known revolution in Christian theology, revival of the sciences and arts, and peasant uprisings in northern Europe. But in geographical and political terms the era is best symbolized by two great sea battles; Lepanto in 1571, which heralded the end of Turkish expansion into the Mediterranean, and the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, beginning the long decline of Spain. Yet, however eloquently the poets of the time sang the glories of commanders and seamen in these mighty clashes, in reality commerce and intellectual exchange continued, often *sub rosa*, between Spain and England, on one hand, and between the western Mediterranean and the Muslim east, on the other. Such was the Renaissance; trade had become an unstoppable force.

In the maintenance of economic and cultural links between these rival societies, the expelled Spanish Jews and *conversos* played a unique role. They were nearly everywhere, often in disguise or in small numbers, but present nonetheless. They were necessary intermediaries between kingdoms and empires at war.

The Jewish contribution to the Renaissance bore the deep impress of the Spanish past. The Arabs had swept across the peninsula from 711 C.E. onward, and the Christian reconquest took almost 800 years until its completion in 1492; that is, the Muslims ruled in Spain longer than have the Christians since.

The pre-expulsion societies of the Peninsula had offered an anticipatory vision of the latter Renaissance consciousness: under both Arab and Catholic rule, the three communities, Muslim, Christian, and Jewish, mainly lived in a civil coexistence.

During most of the period of Arab domination of the peninsula, Jews and Muslims enjoyed a unique partnership in commercial, intellectual, and even spiritual life. Islamic conceptions transformed Jewish religious practice; Islamic philosophy and Greco-Arab science profoundly influenced the Jewish mind. Rabbis and secular Jewish scholars translated Arab works into Hebrew and Latin, serving as an indispensable element in the transmission of classical thought to the medieval Christian world.

Spain long remained a borderland, and an extremely fecund one in intellectual terms. On both sides of the frontier, in Muslim and Christian Spain, Jews were central to every intellectual development. Most importantly, the Jewish mystical school of Kabbalah emerged. Kabbalah was saturated with the form of Islamic mysticism known as Sufism – so much so that Kabbalah may be legitimately described as Sufism in Jewish dress. But Kabbalah produced many of its outstanding early exponents in Catalonia and Provence, north of the Islamic–Christian dividing line, and not in the Jewish communities under Arab rule; a classic borderland phenomenon.

During the long and slow reconquest, while Christians increasingly resumed political and military control over the Iberian cities, large Jewish and Muslim communities remained in place. Until the Muslim power was finally driven out of southwestern Europe altogether, the Christian rulers were forced to tolerate the presence of the non-Christians, both in the interest of the economy and because they lacked the capacity to effect their expulsion. In such cities as Toledo, even the Catholic church authorities favored the Jews.

Official Christian efforts to expel the Spanish Jews and Muslims

did not begin until the reconquest was nearly complete, at the end of the 15th century. The first serious anti-Jewish disturbances in Christian Spain, and accompanying demands for conversion, occurred in the 1390s, produced by class resentment among the Christian poor. (Similarly, a wave of Islamic fundamentalism had previously spread through Arabic Spain, reflecting the fanaticism of Berber rulers who had come north of the straits of Gibraltar from the Saharan regions.)

Yet a real disaster was near. Pressure against the Jews continued building in Christian Spain through the 1400s, and it was soon based on something new: the sense of an approaching triumph. As Christian nobles and rulers gained possession of the commercial centers of Andalucía, which, with a considerable Jewish presence, had become rich under Arab rule, the *conquistadores* still pledged tolerance toward non-Christians.

As total victory approached, the Catholic monarchs, Fernando of Aragón and Ysabel of Castile, reneged on their promises to allow the Arabs and Jews to remain on Spanish soil. Beginning in 1474, the Spanish National Inquisition emerged in Castile. However, the majority of believing Jews were able to remain in Spain until 1492.

That fateful year was marked in the Iberian peninsula by three “birth traumas.”

Early in 1492, the last Muslim kingdom in Spain, that of Granada, fell to the Christian armies. The terms of the city’s surrender called for its Jewish and Muslim residents’ religions to be respected. But as spring arrived and turned to summer, the Catholic monarchs issued an order for the immediate expulsion of all professing Jews. By the time Christopher Columbus left on his exploratory voyage into the Atlantic, the ports of southern Spain were so clogged with refugee shipping that he was forced to leave from a small, obscure location, Palos de la Frontera. Tradition has it that, like the Albanians who fled Kosova in 1999, many Jewish refugees took the keys of their Spanish homes with them into exile.

The fall of Granada marked the birth of a unified Spain. In the second trauma, the expulsion of the Jews and departure of numerous Muslims initiated a new era in the history of Morocco,

where Arabs and many Jews went to live, as well as commencing the broader saga of the Sephardim.

Both of these events had vast consequences, over centuries, while the most dramatic, as well as the most destructive chapter in the history of the time came with Columbus's landfall in the New World and the beginning of the end of the indigenous cultures in the Western Hemisphere. The *conquistadores* of Castile and Andalucía repeated their bloody exploits in Mexico and Peru.

The Catholic monarchs, Fernando and Ysabel, had gained a Spain unified only in the crudest geographical sense. The country spoke six languages and, at the time of the final seizure of Granada, included three religious communities. The National Inquisition was the only body that existed to impose cultural homogeneity; thus, it was less a religious than a political institution. Issues of religious loyalty soon gave way to a political pretext: "purity of blood," a sanction from which no descendant of Muslims or Jews could escape. Religious extremism had generated political racism.

The attempt to create a single Spanish nation began with the most vulnerable minority: the open Jews, who totaled in the hundreds of thousands. But that number was exceeded by that of the believing Muslims, who may then have numbered two million people in Andalucía, Murcia, and Castile. The Catholic monarchs were hesitant to proceed against the bulk of the Spanish Muslims directly and immediately, out of fear that the North African Arabs would invade Spain in defense of their coreligionists. The Spanish Jews, by contrast, had no potential external allies.

The situation of Jewish and Muslim refugees, leaving the peninsula *en masse* in 1492, was frightful. Amid scenes of indescribable chaos that anticipated the Holocaust and the Balkan "ethnic cleansing" of the 20th century, thousands of non-Christians fled Spain. Forced to sell their possessions, robbed *en route* to the seaports, terrified that they would simply be murdered, swindled and robbed again by ship captains, they became a refugee flood. Many committed suicide; women and young girls suffered rape; fathers and brothers were killed in attempting to defend the honor of their wives and sisters. Libraries accumulated over generations were destroyed; prayer and

lamentation rent the air as Jews, in particular, sought an explanation for the horror that had befallen them. Muslims often expressed a different but no less painful anguish, recalling that there had been a time when the sword of Islam had held the Christians in fear.

The terror of the expulsions deeply marked the Jews, who began to see in them a divine punishment. Many took comfort, however slender, in mysticism, and the theosophy of Kabbalah gained new adherents. In addition, the Jews carried the Kabbalistic classics into exile with them, notably the *Zohar*, or *Splendor*, considered the third great Book of the Jews after the *Torah* and *Talmud*. Jewish printers, who had established some of the first Iberian printing houses, disassembled their presses and loaded their fonts onto the ships, to revive their trade wherever they might land.

The expulsion of the publicly believing Jews was followed by the persecution of open Muslims, although the tempo of the latter attacks was much slower. Nevertheless, the Inquisition needed victims. Like the totalitarian secret police of modern times, it required enemies to justify its existence.

For this reason, after forcing the open Jews to leave – many to Morocco, more to the Ottoman countries – the Inquisition purged numerous open Muslims from Sevilla and the other cities of Andalucía and Castile. But they then turned to investigating the religious habits of the “New Christians” and their offspring. Their methods of inquiry centered on physical torture.

The inquisitors relentlessly persecuted alleged secret practitioners of Judaism and Islam among the converts, along with Protestants, so-called witches, bigamists, and other victims. The violence of the Inquisition increased after the revolt of the remaining Spanish “Moors,” or descendants of converted Muslims, in 1567–70. In 1568, the Inquisition had condemned the entire population of the Netherlands as heretics.

Throughout the 1500s, *converso* families like that of Alonso Nuñez de Herrera departed Spain. Some did so out of fear of arrest and maltreatment, some out of guilt because they or their forebears had abandoned Judaism.

Alonso Nuñez de Herrera was in many respects a typical

representative of the generation whose fathers and mothers fled the Spanish Inquisition. Some of the expelled Jews of 1492 had gone no further than Portugal, where they were tolerated until 1497. This itinerary was also followed by many of the *conversos* who came afterward. But after proceeding from Spain to Portugal, the Herreras chose to settle in Italy. As we can see, such a decision was anything but accidental. Above all, the family was committed to commerce, and Italy was the best place to develop business relations; the Herreras became major figures in the great expansion of Renaissance trade in the Mediterranean.

His parents having officially become Christians, Herrera was instructed in that faith. But he and other children of *conversos* were caught between multiple worlds. The possibility has been noted that some *conversos* in Italy deliberately held back from completely affirming their Jewishness, perhaps to enjoy the social advantages of remaining Christians in an environment mainly free of Inquisitorial terror. Observers with a better understanding of collective and religious psychology can comprehend that the road to the renewal of their Judaism was not an easy one, and that many individuals, as well as whole families, had slowly to feel their way back to their full heritage. But rabbinical authorities held that a Jew converted under compulsion, who did not take advantage of every opportunity to return immediately to the faith, should be considered as a Gentile and excluded from any association with the Jewish communities, including any consideration by family members that remained publicly Jewish.

Yet in their daily lives, many of the refugee *conversos* continued to attend masses and to have their children taught in Catholic religious schools, even as they joined and contributed to Jewish community institutions. Indeed, it may be one of the great ironies of the Spanish Jewish experience that “crypto-Judaism,” or private Judaism accompanying public Christianity, seems to have been much more prevalent among those who had left Spain for safety in Italy, as well as those who later resided in the Netherlands, than those who remained in the Peninsula. The historian Ben-Zion Netanyahu has argued that those who converted in Spain could

return to Judaism immediately only if they hastened to a Muslim country like Morocco or Turkey, as indeed many who held to Judaism did. According to Netanyahu, “crypto-Judaism” was an impossibility, indeed, an invention of the Inquisition, in Spain itself, and open return to Judaism inconceivable in Christian countries. But the long and slow process of re-Judaization in Italy and the Netherlands shows that there were places outside both the Iberian peninsula and the Islamic world where a “middle ground” long existed.

If there was a dominant trait in the early life of Nuñez de Herrera, it was that of ambivalence. Somewhere within his soul was a desire to be Jewish. But at the same time, he could not surrender the habits of life as a Christian.

If he was not brought up in the religious bosom of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Herrera was, nonetheless, gifted with a place at the center of the Mediterranean culture of his time. In the final analysis, the survival and success of such families depended on the maintenance of subterfuge. In addition to their public identity as Christians, “crypto-Jews” like the Herrera family carefully and cautiously preserved their links with relatives who had remained behind, above all in Portugal, which remained a major *entrepôt* for trade with Spain. They formed partnerships with open Jews living in the Islamic countries, and together these groups sent their commercial representatives, of which Alonso Nuñez de Herrera is a notable example, all over Europe. In Florence, the Herreras flourished.

The Conversos of Florence

By the time Herrera was born, the Sephardic Jews of the Islamic Eastern Mediterranean and the “crypto-Jews” of Italy had already had a kind of revenge on their Christian torturers. They had established major trading networks that spanned the entire known world, even including the Spanish colonies in the New World, from which the descendants of converted Muslims and Jews were

statutorily barred. They played almost no role in the importation of silver and gold from the Western Hemisphere to Europe, but that proved no handicap, in that the precious-metals commerce was controlled by the state, and did not reward entrepreneurship; indeed, the wealth pillaged from the New World proved an obstacle for the development of commerce in the Spanish dominions.

The nobility and Church in Spain gorged on the riches of the New World, which eventually choked Iberian society nearly to death, while the expelled Jews and “crypto-Jews” developed immense mercantile enterprises linking Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, England, the rest of northern Europe, North Africa, Turkey, and such distant realms as Persia and India.

Notwithstanding the civil and religious sanctions imposed on European Jews, these men (and even some women) carried out an amazingly extensive traffic between the Christian and Islamic worlds, between northern and southern Europe, and nearly everywhere in the Mediterranean. As merchants, they came to know intimately the entirety of European civilization. Sephardim resident in Turkey as open Jews went to Germany and Poland where they traded with Ashkenazim. *Conversos* from Portugal travelled regularly to England and the Low Countries. Sephardim crossed the Atlantic, to live and work without hindrance in the Dutch colonies in Brazil.

The Renaissance also fostered a thriving, parallel subculture of rabbinical commentators, correspondents, and editors, in collaboration with Hebrew- and Aramaic-language printers, both in Catholic Italy and Muslim Turkey. Indeed, it was as much a Renaissance for the Jews, and even for the Balkan Muslims, as for the Christians. Jews had established major presses in Spain and Portugal before the expulsion. They then did the same in Italy, and also founded the first printing businesses in Africa (in Morocco) and in Asia (in Turkey). The first book printed in Turkey in any language, the *Arba Turim* [Four “Rows,” or Orders of the Code of Law] by Yakov ben Asher, was produced in 1493, using fonts probably brought from Hija in Aragón.

The re-Judaization of the Sephardim stimulated the expansion

of Jewish typography. Since they knew no Hebrew, many of the refugee “New Christians” learned the Jewish prayers in Spanish. For some of them, the experience of reversion was intellectually, as well as psychologically and socially arduous. The development of Renaissance Jewish printing reflected these problems.

In 16th-century Italy, Rabbi Shmuel Aboab held in his collection of *Teshuvot*, or *Responsa*, entitled *Devar Samuel*, that Jews are permitted to pray in languages other than Hebrew. This served to accommodate those who had recently returned to Judaism and did not yet know the sacred language. But R. Shmuel Aboab further noted that sermons were preached in Castilian in Salonika, for the benefit of women in the congregation. His argument fostered the translation and printing of prayerbooks and related works in Judeo-Spanish, using Hebrew letters, in the Ottoman lands, and in ordinary Castilian, in Christendom.

Two generations before Herrera, one of the greatest Hebrew publishing houses emerged in Venice, run by a Gentile, Daniel Bomberg. A remarkable figure in the history of Christian–Jewish relations, Bomberg operated his press from 1516 to 1549, and he produced the first complete printed *Talmud* in 1520–23. Even earlier, Hebrew printing in Naples had begun with the issuance of the *Psalms* in 1487. A family of Jewish printers in the tiny Italian village of Soncino, near Cremona, founded a typographical dynasty that became “the Soncino press,” which migrated from Italy to Turkey, producing exquisite volumes. In 1564 the first book printed in Spanish using Hebrew letters, the *Regimiento de la Vida* of Moses Almosnino, appeared.

Jewish printing provides an amazing view into the Renaissance. Throughout the Jewish Italy of that time, new energies were developing, and the Herrera family enjoyed great opportunities for personal and intellectual enrichment.

In the middle 1500s, Florence was one of the leaders of European commerce. Most Jews of the Herreras’ status lived in Oltrarno, then a new, green suburb on the south side of the Arno River, of which the Medici were the most prominent residents. The

Medici had supported the coming of the Spanish Jews to Florence, beginning in the year 1551, on the advice of a legendary Sephardic entrepreneur, Shmuel Abrabanel. But Cosimo de Medici, out of political motives, turned against most of the Jews after a score of years as their protector.

Although the Spanish National Inquisition did not operate against the Jews and *conversos* of Italy and other European countries, the situation of the latter was not necessarily safe and tranquil. In northern Europe, Jews were blamed for the spread of plague, and suffered local outbreaks of anti-Semitic violence, from which even Protestant England, later honored as the home of a new concept of freedom, was not spared. Ghettos had been established in most European cities, with a compulsory curfew after dark; Jews were typically ordered to wear distinctive garments or badges when they ventured outside their walls. Although Jewish typography became a major industry, the *Talmud*, after it was printed, was ordered burned in Rome. Involvement in such activities as money-lending could be extremely risky, as Christian princes often chose to liquidate their debts by physically liquidating their creditors.

In 1567, the Florentine Jews were commanded to wear an identifying badge, and four years later, those living in Florence and other nearby Tuscan towns, San Miniato, San Gimignano, Monte San Savino, and Volterra, were forced into a ghetto. It was established in a seedy market, the “Frascati,” bounded by the via Roma and the via Brunelleschi, between today’s piazza della Repubblica and the piazza dell’Olio, directly behind the Duomo and the Battistera, off the piazza di San Giovanni.

A massive, labyrinthine structure was created in the Jewish district by the great Florentine architect Bernardo Buontalenti, who also designed the Belvedere fortress, the bulwark of the Medici in San Miniato. In the new ghetto, existing buildings were linked by narrow streets and arcades, with a piazza at the center. Although rich Jews settled in ghetto structures that had formerly belonged to the Medici and other powerful clans, they were barred from trading in jewels, silk, wool, and other valuable items. They prayed in two small synagogues, one Italian and the other Sephardic.

But a small number of families evaded these sanctions. They were permitted to settle in Oltrarno, on the *via dei Giudei*, or Jews' Street (now the *via dei Ramaglianti*), a narrow roadway close to the Pitti Palace, which allowed the Medici easy access to them for quick loans. However, Alonso Nuñez de Herrera lived his early life in Florence as a public "New Christian," free of the ghetto.

As a young man learning commerce, Herrera journeyed extensively through North Africa, to remote communities, both Muslim and Jewish, in the mountains. At a relatively young age he was awarded great responsibility. The formal schooling of such men was brief, and by the time they had reached 16 or 18, they were considered mature. The family and its commercial enterprise were more than a home; they served as a university and often as a religious school as well.

The story of Herrera is that of Jewish commercial travel in the Renaissance-era Mediterranean, by ship, by donkey, by coach, and on foot. Indeed, a whole unrecognized history of Jewish travel during the Renaissance deserves to be chronicled. But for the *conversos*, such sojourns were made easier by the lack of the restraints often imposed on the open Jews.

A new chapter opened in Herrera's life at the end of the 1590s, during one of his many trips to Morocco, commissioned to go there by his Florentine uncle. The Sultan of Morocco depended on the family of Juan de Marchena and Herrera for operation of the bulk of shipping between Morocco and England. Morocco exported textiles, leather, brassware, and specialized commodities such as perfumes and cosmetics produced nowhere in Europe, and increasingly wealthy customers in Elizabethan England paid handsomely for such consumer goods. The trade was lucrative, but the English knew nothing of the Islamic world, and seldom learned languages.

In such an environment, Jews and "crypto-Jews" like Herrera found many opportunities. But these business relations, while extremely attractive to the Herreras, could also prove difficult; indeed, there were more dangers in so simple an economic relation than in many other aspects of Herrera's life.

A Jewish Captive in Elizabethan England

In 1596, Herrera had gone to Morocco, and then proceeded to Spain, on a commercial mission for the Moroccan Sultan. He was captured by English forces that sacked the port of Cádiz. An ancient Phoenician trading place on the Atlantic, Cádiz had always been known for commerce; but at the end of the 16th century, it was the richest harbor in the world. Cádiz and Sevilla were designated the sole ports for trade with the Spanish colonies in the New World, receiving a constant flow of precious metals and other commodities. They had driven out most of the *conversos* and, of course, the open Jews. The *conversos* and their descendants were prohibited from immigrating to the Spanish possessions in the New World, as noted.

Rivals to Cádiz and Sevilla, the Spanish Mediterranean trading ports of Barcelona, Valencia, and Palma de Mallorca resisted the Inquisitorial persecution of the *conversos*, who were key to the commerce between Catalonia, Italy, and Turkey. And in reprisal by the Crown and Church, the merchants of Catalonia, Valencia, and the Balearic Islands were also banned from trading with the Americas.

Cádiz was an especially tempting prize for English seamen, in the aftermath of the ignominy suffered by the Spanish Armada. The English-Spanish rivalry was at its height, and Spain was dangerously overextended. England stood amid the achievements of the Elizabethan age, exemplified by Spenser, Shakespeare, and Donne. England and Spain competed for the future of the Atlantic, a rivalry symbolized in the destruction of the Armada by, among others, Sir Francis Drake.

The English drive outward into the northern seas involved more than imperial competition for control of shipping routes. The long conflict between these two nations reflected differing attitudes toward religion, toward commerce in general, and even about seamanship and the art of navigation.

England had become the leading Protestant nation, while Spain viewed itself as a Catholic “heavenly kingdom on earth.” For

the English, the destiny of their nation was bound up with the doctrine of free will and intellectual choice in religious life, while the Spanish believed that their hierarchical faith, based on control over ignorant and weak men by priests, reproduced a celestial order in which souls were guided by angels. The defeat of the Armada prevented the Catholic states from maintaining their influence in northern Europe, and strengthened rising Protestantism in the Low Countries, Germany, and Scandinavia.

In addition, English commerce was based on individual enterprise, rather than the mercantilist pillage that the Spanish fostered. This attitude was exemplified by Drake's "piracy" (according to the Spanish), which led him into the Pacific, then a virtual Spanish lake, to raid treasure vessels. English seamen were often less concerned with trade than with raiding the gold- and silver-laden ships operated by the Spanish colonial authorities. But notwithstanding their avidity for raiding Spanish commerce, English shipping had already come to dominate trade with German and Baltic ports, and English merchants had an eye on Muscovy.

Finally, the English and Spanish differed in their attitudes about ships and men. The English sailed into a North Sea that was dangerous to navigators, and in which survival depended on the skill of the master and his officers. Crews for such voyages could not be taken from among galley slaves, such as plied the more tranquil Mediterranean; English ships were then manned by sailors who signed free contracts, willingly sharing the risks of each voyage. By contrast, Spanish commerce was based on compulsion: their trade consisted, in the main, of transporting precious metals robbed from the natives of the New World, and ships were operated by aristocrats accustomed to subservience, rather than decision-making, on the part of their crews. English sailors were frequently more experienced than their Spanish counterparts in the lore of the sea; Spanish crewmen were often drawn from prisons.

Nevertheless, the wealth of Spain in that era was not unproductive, and the country then enjoyed its Golden Age of Castilian letters. Fray Luis de León (1527–1591), a descendant of *conversos*, was one of the greatest Castilian stylists, but was persecuted by the Spanish

National Inquisition for rendering *The Song of Songs* into Castilian (with an important commentary). The era also included Cervantes (1547–1616) and the superlatively inventive poet Luis de Góngora (1561–1627).

The same period in Spanish literature encompassed the works of St. Teresa of Ávila (1515–1582) and St. John of the Cross (1542–1591), also descendants of *conversos* and victims of the Inquisition. It was finally the epoch of Velázquez, that is, of the apex of Spanish artistic greatness. And while English seamen were demonstrating to Spanish imperial governors the power of individual enterprise, English poets looked to Spanish authors for their models.

In 1596 an English fleet landed in Cádiz and sacked the town. The English struck just as the Spanish imperial fleet arrived in port from the Americas. The raiders were led by Robert Devereux, second Earl of Essex (1567–1601), an ill-fated favorite of Queen Elizabeth I.

Herrera was one of 40 hostages taken to England by Essex's party; the English demanded that the King of Spain pay 120,000 ducats for their release. The hostages were transported to the Hertfordshire town of Ware. For the next four years, Herrera experienced England at the height of its competition with Spain, in which he was isolated and unsafe. The period saw some of the most dramatic events of the Elizabethan era, London being a center of the vast European process of religious and economic transformation.

Following Herrera's capture, the Moroccan Sultan immediately petitioned Queen Elizabeth for his freedom, on behalf of Herrera's uncle. Given the importance of Moroccan shipping to England and the closeness between the Sultan and Herrera's uncle, this is not surprising. The Sultan even offered to pay Herrera's share of the group ransom.

In September 1596 Herrera himself wrote to the Earl of Essex, asking that he be allowed out of Ware to London on parole. He argued that he should not be subject to the ransom because he was, he said, neither born in Spain nor a Spanish subject, but was, instead, loyal to the Duke of Tuscany. He declared that he had

received a certificate from the authentic Spaniards in the group, stating that he “was not born in Spayne, nor am subjecte of that King,” but had gone to Cádiz as “noe other sorte but as mercant stranger factor for my uncle” (as a foreign merchant serving his uncle).

Queen Elizabeth’s answer did not reach the Moroccan Sultan until June 1599, or nearly three years after his letter was sent. The communication was written in Spanish. The rest of the Spanish prisoners had, she said, obstructed the release of any individuals among them. The hostages “had much difficulty agreeing on the manner of collecting the money which had been agreed on, so as to meet certain conditions they had made with our Generals; and many months went by (during which they wrote to Spain and received replies) in this confusion, and they did not allow that anyone be set free in the interim but only when everyone agreed about the money and what portion of it fell to each of them.”

A messenger sent to Morocco with an earlier response had to turn back at sea after receiving news of a plague on the African mainland so severe that the Moroccan ruler had to flee his palace and remain in the field with his armies. Finally, however, the Queen hoped the Sultan would be “quite satisfied as regards both your request in the matter of Alonso Nuñez de Herrera and safe conduct for Juan de Marchena’s ships.”

In the meantime, the Earl of Essex’s fortunes turned bad. After Herrera’s release in 1600, the Earl was charged with an attempt at revolution against the Queen who once loved him, and he was beheaded in 1601.

The invasion force in the sacking of Cádiz and kidnap of Herrera included the poet John Donne. Donne, like Herrera, was a young man in search of adventure and affirmation; but while Herrera chose the account book as his weapon, Donne took up the sword. Donne’s experiences as a raider stimulated the writing of his earliest poems.

The two men’s religious vocations were curiously alike in their ambivalence: Herrera was the descendant of Jewish *conversos* but eventually returned to Judaism, while Donne was a child of

English Catholics who himself converted to Anglicanism. More importantly, however, Donne was a fanatic for all things Spanish, particularly language and literature, a passion he shared with the Iberian Jews.

Herrera's residence in England may have led to his transformation into Shakespeare's "Shylock," the "merchant of Venice." However, the model for Shylock has more typically been claimed for Dr. López, a Spanish *converso* surgeon denounced by the Earl of Essex for an alleged conspiracy to poison Queen Elizabeth. This offers much to think about in the life of Herrera. Jews had been excluded from England since their expulsion in the 14th century, and those who lived in London, like López, were forced to maintain the *converso* mask; indeed, López may well have been sincere in his Christianity, though it did not save him. López was publicly tortured and executed in a distinctively ghastly episode of Elizabethan-era cruelty.

For Herrera, Florence was the city of ambivalence, while Cádiz was the city of fear, and London a place of utter terror. The Florentine Christians had told the Jews they would be tolerated, at least occasionally; but in Cádiz, under Inquisitorial rule, no Jew could appear openly. And in London the Jews were forced, during the time Herrera was there, into a quasi-underground existence. The case of López was an ever-present reminder of their vulnerability. Yet in England, Herrera sought a parole so that he might risk walking abroad.

In *The Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare expressed sympathy for Shylock, who is presented as, after all, human. Yet Shylock remains a tribalistic usurer, morally and personally trapped in the irrational demands of his faith. By contrast, a real "merchant of Florence," Herrera, was a genuine Renaissance man, dominated by curiosity and a spirit of adventure; he was anything but a Shylock. Shakespeare was, unfortunately, seemingly incapable of understanding the real life of a *converso* such as Herrera, and when one views the image of Shylock, as well as the terrible fate of López, the escape of Herrera from Elizabethan England seems nothing short of miraculous.

Nevertheless, a fresh attitude was barely perceptible in England.

The development of Protestant theology rested on readings of the Old Testament, and Protestants began identifying themselves with the Hebrews of ancient times. A new phenomenon, that of Christian intellectual philo-Semitism, would become a major feature of the Renaissance.

It is no wonder that at this point in his life, Herrera, still in his late 20s, began to turn his attention, for the first time, to the serious consideration of his Jewish roots. He came to Judaism not as an heir of tradition, but as a newcomer to it. His forefathers had converted to Christianity; if he were now to become a Jew he would have to undergo a new conversion.

On the Ragusan Shore

While in England as a captive, Herrera pursued an interest in Kabbalistic mysticism that had begun prior to his ill-fated visit to Morocco and Spain. Soon after his ransom was paid and he was freed from house arrest in England, he went to Dubrovnik and to study with Sarug. There his study of mystical philosophy would become his bridge to authentic Judaism. Kenneth Krabbenhoft, the authoritative academic commentator on Herrera, points out that in his writings he directly refers to only two places in which he had resided: Amsterdam and Dubrovnik. Of the latter, Herrera writes that he was first introduced to a particular concept in Kabbalah “in Ragusa, a city of the province of Illyria.” Those who know and love these two cities today recognize in them symbols of free inquiry almost beyond compare.

Thus, while Herrera acquired an entirely new world view, that of Lurianic Kabbalah, from Sarug, it must also be said that he gained much from the unique environment of Dubrovnik. In some respects the Balkan frontier in that period reproduced the Spain of the 13th–14th centuries, when cultural interchange had bloomed. Many fruitful comparisons are to be drawn between the relationship of Western Europe to the Arabs, on the one hand, and of Central and Eastern Europe to the Ottomans. As the Arabs declined, the

Turks rose in power. The Ottomans gained dominion and wealth far beyond anything the Arabs had attained in the west.

Dubrovnik attracted Sarug and Herrera, although it had only a slender Jewish community of no more than 30 households, originating with a group of “Ponentines” or Westerners, Italian Jewish merchants who had come in 1352, and had gained legal recognition in 1407. The “Ponentines” occupied a street very near the center of the town, off its main avenue, or “Stradun.” Although referred to as a ghetto, and (formerly) gated, the Jews’ Street is no narrower than the others that parallel it. Dubrovnik Jewry was strengthened by the arrival of a small group of “Levantine,” or Spanish Jews, who had come there via the Ottoman realm, beginning in 1502.

Important intellectual developments were then taking place in Turkish-ruled Bosnia. Sufi mysticism attracted a widespread following and mystical works composed there included an important commentary on the great Spanish Muslim poet and philosopher Ibn al-Arabi, who also influenced Jewish mysticism. Bosnia had become a separate, stable *pashaluk* of the Ottoman dominions in 1580. One major element that Herrera and the Sufis shared was an interest in the outstanding Muslim philosopher al-Ghazali (d. 1111), who had long influenced the Kabbalists. Herrera, having served as a merchant in Morocco, spoke Arabic. He may have purchased Arabic manuscripts in Dubrovnik or in Bosnia.

Bosnia in that era offers us a unique example of the development of an Islamic tradition in a European culture, simultaneously with the Renaissance. The first half of the 16th century was greatly shaped, throughout Europe and the Orient, by the reign of the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (d. 1566). More importantly, a series of Muslims born in Dalmatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Albania, who were of non-Turkish ethnicity and were familiar with the lands of the Christian West, occupied the post of grand vizier in Istanbul, including a distinguished Slav, Mehmed-paša Sokolović (ruled 1565–79). In the stimulating environment of Dubrovnik, returning to the glories of his forebears’ religion, Herrera participated in one of the crucial moments of Jewish history: the rebirth of the Sephardic soul after the period of Christianization.

Luria's insights into the mystical nature of the universe, as transmitted by Sarug, so revolutionized Herrera that he began writing a series of extraordinary works in his flawless Castilian. He first produced a manuscript seeking to reconcile neo-Platonism, the dominant philosophical trend of the time, and Kabbalah. He titled this work *Puerta del Cielo*, or *Sha'ar Ha-Shamayim* [Heaven's Gate]. Completed around 1620, it had a major influence in both the Jewish and Christian intellectual environments.

In *Puerta del Cielo*, Herrera described the cosmic emanations, or *Sefirot*, as perceived in Lurianic Kabbalah: "emanations from the primal simple unity; making known His good which is without end; mirrors of His truth, which share in his nature and essence, which is above all, and that He is Himself the necessary being; structures of His wisdom and representations of His will and desire; receptacles of His strength and instruments of His activity; treasures of His bliss and distributors of His grace and goodness; judges of His kingdom, bringing His judgement to light; and simultaneously the designations, attributes, and names of He who is the highest of all and encompasses all."

The second and longer work of Herrera, *Casa de la Divinidad*, or *Beit Elohim* [House of Divinity], presents a further exposition of the "new" Kabbalah of Luria, also in Castilian. This text was translated into Hebrew and printed many times, becoming an outstanding Kabbalistic work, with an influence visible even today. The texts' titles are derived from *Genesis* 28:17, which evokes the terror and awe of Jacob in the Lord's presence, ending, "This is none other than the abode of God, and that is the gateway to heaven."

Herrera's Castilian manuscripts were not printed until their later translation into Hebrew. But they were also translated and printed in Latin. Indeed, they appear among the first Jewish religious works originally composed in "Christian" languages. Although an immense rabbinical literature previously existed in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic, there was nothing in Greek or Latin in the Jewish sacred canon. However, this brings up another great question about Herrera: why write in Castilian?

Superficially, it is certainly of compelling logic that, having been

raised as a Christian, Herrera's upbringing reinforced his use of Castilian rather than introducing him to Hebrew and Aramaic. Further, Castilian was the language of the mass of the Sephardim in exile and had been approved as a means to teach them.

In addition, however, his message may be interpreted as an ecumenical one. Unlike other Kabbalists, he did not primarily depend on Jewish sources to support his theory of Kabbalah; rather, the greater part of his argumentation drew on the philosophic literature then commonly known among Western European Christians.

Herrera doubtless felt more at home in Castilian. But also, Luria's conception was radical, and Herrera clearly wanted to reach as wide an audience as possible, among Christians as well as Sephardim. Another issue is that of the *conversos'* status, according to rabbinical decisions, as Gentiles. Introduced to Kabbalah in Castilian, they might find a greater incentive to return to Judaism. Herrera had become, in effect, a propagandist of revelation.

Herrera wrote in Castilian in the Golden Age, when that language had reached its maximum refinement as a literary medium. In expelling the Sephardim, the Christians had actually facilitated the Jewish engagement with Christian culture by encouraging their religious use of Spanish.

Jewish liturgical works from Herrera's time otherwise reflect the influence of Christian Spain. The practice even developed of rewriting Spanish Christian secular songs so as to make them into Hebrew religious songs, or *ẓemirot*. *Zemirot* of the 17th-century poet Israel Najera, originating in such "Hebrew-Spanish punning," have been adopted in the standard Jewish ritual, even though rabbis of the past condemned the habit. Najera's *ẓemirot* include *O Creator* [*Kab ribon*], sung at the Sabbath evening meal after the *Arz's This Day for Israel* [*Yom Tẓekb L'Yisbrail*]. *Kab ribon* is sung again with the Sabbath-day meal.

His life in Dubrovnik made Herrera a public Jew and Kabbalist, and his relationship with Sarug led him to the drama of Luria's messianism. These encounters made him famous among the Jews of his time. However, when another widespread wave of anti-Semitism swept Dubrovnik at the end of the first decade of the

17th century, Herrera was propelled to the next great center of Jewish thought in the Renaissance: Amsterdam, in Holland.

Jewish Amsterdam in the Age of Rembrandt

Amsterdam's Christian residents nickname the city "Mokum," and legend has it this is a Hebrew word for "the best." From the time of Herrera's arrival there, Amsterdam became one of the outstanding centers of Renaissance thought, Jewish as well as Christian.

After returning to Judaism in Dubrovnik, Herrera emerged from his personal, internal journey to a greater participation in the broader Jewish world. He had the option of moving deeper into the Balkans and joining the Sephardic communities of the Ottoman empire. In 1602, he was appointed the commercial agent for the Duke of Tuscany in the French city of Rouen. However, around 1605 he finally chose to go to Amsterdam, where he would live with his wife, Sarah.

The Sephardic community of Amsterdam, made up of former "New Christians" like himself, had been founded in 1602, and in going there Herrera served as one of its leading pioneers.

Amsterdam soon became the greatest Sephardic city in Christendom. Its relationship with the Jews is symbolized by many items of local history and custom in addition to its nickname. Rembrandt van Rijn illustrated scenes from Jewish life, and some of his etchings were printed at a Hebrew press. Amsterdam became a major global trading center in spices, products from the Dutch colonies in the New World and East Asia, and goods imported both from southern Europe and England. In addition, like England, it rose to prominence as a center of Protestant thought.

But Protestantism in Amsterdam proved more enlightened than in England, Germany, or Scandinavia. It was not enough for the Dutch to throw off Spanish rule, and then to wrest Portuguese colonies in Asia from Catholic control; not enough to promulgate a more rigorous doctrine of personal responsibility in their divinity studies; not enough to develop the basis for modern constitutional

democracy. Something extraordinary was present in the city that had been built on a swamp and which still lived on canals; the Dutch spirit transformed art and science in ways the English and Germans could only envy, and of which the Scandinavians, in their bleak latitudes, could only dream. In addition, the Dutch Protestants were far more tolerant, even affectionate, in their relations with the Jews than their English or German counterparts.

To emphasize, the Netherlands, like Italy, was a place where many *conversos* returned to Judaism slowly, often maintaining a Christian identity for years. Herrera became the personal mentor of the outstanding Jewish leader of that epoch in Amsterdam, the previously mentioned Menasseh ben Israel. A scholar, author, diplomat, and printer of Portuguese origin, born Manuel Dias Soeiro, Menasseh ben Israel founded the first Hebrew press in Amsterdam in 1626. His *Conciliador*, a book that sought to resolve apparent contradictions in *Torah*, became one of the most influential Jewish books of the time, read by Christian scholars no less than Jews. It was accompanied by an approbation from Herrera, signed “el Senor Haham [Rabbi] Abraham Coen de Herrera Philosopho, Teologo, y Cabalista Insigne.” The first volume appeared in 1632. Menasseh ben Israel’s portrait was rendered in an etching by Rembrandt, and in 1651 he composed his letter to Cromwell. This event marks the beginning of the modern quest of the Jewish people for social equality.

A successor of Menasseh ben Israel as an Amsterdam Jewish printer, Joseph Athias, was granted an exclusive patent to print English-language Bibles; he claimed to have sold a million such volumes in England. The Jewish libraries of Amsterdam remained intact even during the Holocaust of the 20th century, and today provide an irreplaceable resource for Sephardic studies and general Jewish scholarship today.

With occasional trips back to Dubrovnik and elsewhere, including Vienna, where his presence was noted in 1617, Herrera remained in Amsterdam for the rest of his life. He became the leading spiritual figure in the community just as Amsterdam was becoming the “Jerusalem of the North.”

Herrera's views were widely heard and respected among the Amsterdam Jews, and he was asked to compose "approbations," or *haskamot*, special texts endorsing religious works, in addition to that attached to Menasseh ben Israel's *Conciliador*. His writings were read throughout the Jewish world, and were also taken up and appreciated by philo-Semitic Dutch Protestant theologians.

He completed a short work on philosophy, *Epítome y Compendio de la Lógica o Dialéctica* [*Epitome and Compendium of Logic or Dialectics*]. The *Epítome* and another like it, *Libro de Definiciones* [*Book of Definitions*], were printed in Holland between 1632 and 1635. These volumes were also widely read among Christians as well as Jews.

His life was now that of a learned elder among the Hebrew faithful, a role far from that of the ambivalent young man who had sought a destiny while traveling as a merchant adventurer. Above all, years after his passing, his Kabbalistic works came to be read far and wide; they were among the earliest "bestsellers."

Herrera died in Amsterdam in 1635.

A later leader of Amsterdam Jewry, Isaac Aboab de Fonseca, translated Herrera's works into Hebrew and had them printed in 1655. However, although he served as a chief Sephardic rabbi, like many other rabbis of his time, Aboab had been trained in Christian colleges, and his Hebrew was extremely poor. His translations failed adequately to express many of the philosophical concepts Herrera had derived from non-Jewish sources.

Herrera was later attacked as the purported source of the "pantheism" of Spinoza, which led to Spinoza's expulsion from religious school and from the Jewish community of Amsterdam. (Spinoza was condemned by none other than Rabbi Aboab, whom Spinoza in turn attacked for his insufficient Hebrew; Spinoza asked how any rabbis who did not write Hebrew well could claim such authority, a reproach that could also be leveled at Herrera.)

Herrera's authority was cited, a century after his death, in opposition to the revival of the heretical views of the Islamized Kabbalist and "false messiah" Sabbetai Zvi (1626–1676), whose adventures belong to the generation directly after Herrera. Following Sabbetai Zvi's death in Dulcigno, today in Montenegro, known

as Ulqin in Albanian and Ulcinj in Serbian, and in consequence of his apparent embrace of Islam, the Jewish world profoundly anathematized his doctrines. However, in the first half of the 18th century his anthropomorphic concept of Kabbalah, in which mystical aspects of the divine nature of human existence were taken literally, was defended by Nehemiah Hiyya Cajón (c. 1655–c. 1730), scion of a notable Sarajevo Jewish family. In the ensuing uproar over Cajón’s heresy, Herrera’s philosophical outlook played an important role, also contributing to the emergence of Hasidic mysticism in Poland. Thus, his legacy remains significant, if neglected, today.

Jewish scholars, dominated by Ashkenazi concerns, have unfortunately ignored the extremely interesting “geographical” nature of this period in Jewish mysticism: that Herrera’s Kabbalism was a product of Dubrovnik, that Sabbetai Zvi died in Ulqin, and that Nehemiah Cajón originated in Sarajevo. The Balkan “borderlands” of the Ottoman empire, in which Jewish, Islamic, and Christian influences met and mingled, as in old Spain, served as the intellectual laboratories of Renaissance Jewry.

Abraham Kohen Herrera is especially important as an exemplar of fruitful religious introspection: although he returned from Christianity to Judaism, he did not inhabit a closed intellectual universe. His works were intended for the enlightenment, indeed, the practical “healing” of the world.

* * *

This text could not have been written but for the pioneering work of the outstanding American scholar on Abraham Kohen Herrera, Professor Kenneth Krabbenhoft of New York University. Professor Krabbenhoft has published an English edition of *Puerta del Cielo*, titled *Gate of Heaven* (Leiden and Boston, E. J. Brill, 2002), which includes in its bibliography numerous other works that it would be superfluous for me to cite here. Professor Krabbenhoft also authored an unpublished doctoral dissertation on Herrera. I would add to his magnificent work only a correction: while he

described *Epítome y Compendio de la Lógica o Dialéctica* [*Epítome and Compendium of Logic or Dialectics*] and *Libro de Definiciones* [*Book of Definitions*] as “lost,” both have been reproduced on microfiche from Dutch imprints, and are now available from IDC Publishers, Leiden, in their indispensable series “Sephardic Editions, 1550–1820.” In addition, the former has reportedly appeared in Italy: A. C. Herrera, *Epítome y Compendio de la Lógica o Dialéctica*, edited by Giuseppa Saccaro della Buffa.

Manuscript and printed editions of the major works of Herrera in the original Castilian and in Latin translations may be consulted at the Columbia University Library in New York and at the British Library in London. In addition, the Library of Congress in Washington has a present-day Hebrew edition of *Casa de la Divinidad*, titled *Sefer Bet Elohim*, apparently issued in the U.S. The volumes of Menasseh ben Israel, including *Conciliador o de la conveniencia de los Lugares de la S. Escripura que repugnantes entre si parecen* and *To His Highnesse The Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland and Ireland*, may be consulted in the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana at the University of Amsterdam. Other important sources include works of Gershom Scholem such as *Kabbalah* (Jerusalem, 1974) and *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, 1945). On the Jewish standing of the *conversos*, I have followed the line of B. Netanyahu, *The Marranos of Spain* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1999). The great Balkan Sephardic rabbinical encyclopedia *MeAm Lo’ez*, although its composition was begun a century later, after the Sabbetaian crisis in world Jewry, is useful for a basic study of the normative religious environment of these intellectual developments. Also see Gaon, Haham Solomon, ed., *The Sephardic Journey: 1492–1992* (New York, 1992) [see page 14 of the present collection]; Švob, Melita, *Jews in Croatia* (Zagreb, Jewish Community, 1997); and Stulli, Dr. Bernhard, *Jews in Dubrovnik* (Zagreb, Jewish Community, 1989).

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The False Messiah's Lost Tomb

With Ivan Čerešnjek

I

In summer 2001, the two of us, an American author and a Bosnian Jewish academic living in Israel, made a journey of a kind many Jewish historians and scholars must have pondered in recent decades. Funded by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Massachusetts-based Harold Grinspoon Foundation, we traveled to a small port on the coast of Montenegro, Dulcigno, now known as Ulqin in Albanian – the latter being the language of the great majority of its residents. Our goal was to investigate monuments reportedly associated with the “false messiah,” Sabbetai Zvi (1626–1676). These structures include his purported *turbe*, or Ottoman-style tomb, and a tower in which he is said to have lived.

In making this trip, we sought to fulfill a pledge we made to one

another in Sarajevo late in 1999: to follow the steps of the false messiah to his end. Both of us – Čerešnješ professionally and I as a volunteer – had dedicated ourselves to locating, inventorying, and otherwise recording the existence of synagogues, graveyards, and Jewish public buildings throughout the former Yugoslavia. We were vividly aware of the impact of the Sabbetaian experience on the culture of Balkan Jewry, and we had read and reread Gershom Scholem's masterpiece, *Sabbetai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah*.¹ Scholem was convinced the tomb of the messianic pretender was to be found in Ulqin – a place relatively accessible to us from Sarajevo.

In 1999, of course, emphasis would have belonged on the word “relatively;” a more accurate phrase might have then described the site as “theoretically” accessible. At the best of times, Ulqin is an eight-hour drive from Sarajevo. But with Slobodan Milošević still in power in Belgrade, and NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia only just having ended, travel by an American citizen (myself) from Bosnia-Herzegovina through Montenegro to Ulqin was still risky. And Čerešnješ lacked the resources to make another trip all the way from Israel, without prior advance work by someone on the ground. In the following two years, however, we managed to learn just about all there is to know about Sabbetai Zvi, and accumulate what appeared to be solid leads toward his tomb. Finally, the fall of Milošević from power removed the biggest barrier to our search.

Sabbetai Zvi remains a fascinating figure for the Jewish conscience even at the beginning of the 21st century of the Common Era. Gershom Scholem may be the greatest Jewish intellect of the previous hundred years, and his meditations on Sabbetai Zvi represent the quintessence of his thought. Scholem was not only a masterful historian of Kabbalah, the mystical tradition from which the pretender emerged; he also understood, and counterposed his own religious position to, the threat of an intoxicating radicalism and rebellion to the very survival of the Jewish people. Although in his own life Scholem opposed the influence of Bolshevism, with its modernist pretensions, he found in a 17th-century Sephardic Jew from Turkey an extraordinarily fitting symbol of the revolutionary temptation and its devastating consequences.

Sabbetai Zvi's mass movement had all the characteristics seen later in Marxism: belief in an imminent world transformation, a doctrine of transcendent but esoteric insight, the charisma of defiance, the euphoria of willfully trespassing established laws and customs, and, eventually, the dissolution of Jewry in universalism. In Sabbetai's case, the latter was achieved through an apparent Islamization that was demoralizing (to many of his followers) but benign. By contrast, a century later, one of his most wayward acolytes, Jakov Frank of Podolia (1726–1791), promoted conversion to Catholicism and ended up preaching blood libel accusations of Jewish ritual murder.

Scholem's study has doubtless been read by hundreds of thousands of contemporary Jewish intellectuals who, if they perceive it, have failed to respond to its implicit warning about the extreme left in our time. But Sabbetai Zvi's destiny also remains a topic of reflection among those concerned exclusively with religious doctrine. Traditionalist resistance to Sabbetaianism figures in present-day rabbinical education.² Rabbi Yakov Emden (1697–1776) is honored for his struggle against the Frankists and other Sabbetaian tendencies. But to defy fashionable radicalism was seemingly unpopular then as now; Rabbi Emden was driven from his home in Altona, Germany, and his printing press shut down by allies of another of his adversaries, Jonathan Eybeschuetz. Attacks on Zionism as a Sabbetaian revival were rife a century ago but are now largely forgotten. Still, belief in the messianic promise of Menachem Schneerson, the deceased Lubavitcher *rebbe*, has been criticized as uncomfortably close to the Sabbetaian frenzy.

Many details of Sabbetai Zvi's life are well established, until his final exile and death. He was born in Smyrna (Izmir), a center of the Jewish emigration in the Ottoman domains, to a commercial family of Ashkenazi descent, enriched by trade with the English and Dutch. From early youth, as documented by Scholem, his personality evinced a textbook example of manic-depressive psychosis or, as it has come to be known, bipolar syndrome. He alternated between maniacal exaltation, marked by blasphemous and other antinomian behavior, and the lowest reaches of depression.

His messianic tendencies began openly to be manifested in 1648, when news of the Chmielnicki massacres of Jews in Poland swept Turkey; his preaching may be seen as a response to the bloodshed in Christian Europe. After almost two decades of adventures and scandals, in 1665 he came under the influence of his main disciple, Nathan of Gaza (1643/44–1680), whose own extreme mystical fantasies aggravated Sabbetai Zvi's delusions.

Soon he publicly asserted his messianic pretensions, with an explosion of popular hysteria among Jews – already stirred by rumors about him – all over Europe, North Africa, and more distant parts of Asia, in addition to Turkey. A conflict with the Ottoman authorities may have been inevitable, given their concern for public order in an empire comprising numerous excitable adherents of varying faiths and sects, but Sabbetai Zvi and Nathan of Gaza aggravated the situation by declaring that the messiah would quickly supplant the Sultan at his seat of power. Early in 1666 Sabbetai Zvi proceeded to Constantinople, where he was arrested; however, unlike numerous Islamic rebels in Ottoman history, he was not put to death but jailed. After several months in prison, he was conveyed to the then imperial capital at Adrianople, where, after a series of encounters with high Turkish officials, he reputedly announced his willingness to become Muslim. The circumstances of this transformation have not been established. Some traditions hold that this alleged gambit was a response to the threat of execution, others that it had a mystical significance. The purported messiah's apostasy was deeply traumatic for the whole Jewish world of the time, but certain of his followers and their heirs, even after the passing of many decades, followed the same course.

Was compulsion the only cause of Sabbetai Zvi's alleged Islamic turn? He may have come under the influence of Turkish dervishes very early in his youth, and his career as a pretender was enacted entirely in the Ottoman territories. Hope for a new war between the Sultan and the Poles, which Jews may have viewed as a punishment for the Chmielnicki atrocities, might also have complicated the Jewish mystic's involvement with his Muslim environment.

Between 1666 and 1672, he seems to have maintained an Islamic public identity while continuing to preach his messiahship to the Jews, without much obvious concern on the part of the Turks. This dissimulation became customary among his disciples, who, whether they remained Jews or embraced Islam in public, typically felt compelled to keep their own counsel about him. However, he was rearrested by the Turkish authorities and exiled to Ulqin in 1673. There he remained until his last days, keeping links with and agitating the Jewries of Salonika and other Ottoman cities. He died in 1676.

II

Sabbetai Zvi's apparent place of death, Ulqin, was a small city-state on the frontier of Venetian-ruled Dalmatia and Albania. It never had a Jewish community – neither before nor any time after Sabbetai Zvi's arrival did the town ever include a synagogue or Jewish graveyard, unlike virtually all the nearby cities. The great Renaissance center of Ragusa, now Dubrovnik, no more than 160 kilometers north of Ulqin, had recorded the presence of an influential community of Italian Jews from the middle of the 14th century, and Dubrovnik municipal records show major commercial contacts with Jewish merchants from Lezha in northern Albania, less than 50 kilometers south of Ulqin. However, Dubrovnik archives show no record of any nearby uproar over Sabbetai Zvi.

In the age of navigation by sails and oars, distances between these cities could be covered in a day. Jewish history in Skopje, the first major inland terminus of Dubrovnik trade, also dates from the 14th century and was long distinguished; Nathan of Gaza was buried there.³ On our trip we examined a neglected Jewish cemetery in Cattaro (Kotor), the *entrepôt* between Dubrovnik and Ulqin, and we have found traces of Jewish residence in Shkodra, the great north Albanian trade hub, and the nearest major city to Ulqin. But in the latter town, nothing. Scholem, in *Sabbetai Sevi*, cited the 18th-century Rabbi Leib ben Ozer, a major source on the



Jewish grave marker in Kotor, Montenegro, 2001.
(*Photograph by Stephen Schwartz*)

life of the pretender, who said he had been sent “where no Jew had ever set foot before.”

Yet Ulqin has its own distinctive history. It was once the seat of an Albanian–Slav aristocratic clan, the Ballshas or Balšići. Well fortified by the Venetians, Ulqin was not conquered by the Turks until 1571; areas to the north had succumbed to the Ottoman wave at least a century before. Under the latter, the town’s maritime fleet grew large but was almost entirely devoted to piracy and slave trading; legendarily, Cervantes, captured by an Albanian pirate, is supposed to have been sold on the block there. The slave trade



The *Kulla e Ballshajve* or Ballsha tower, reputed residence of Sabbetai Zvi, Ulqin, 2001.
(*Photograph by Stephen Schwartz*)



Southern niche in the *Kulla e Ballshajve*, Ulqin, 2001. (Photograph by Stephen Schwartz)

left Ulqin with another notable demographic characteristic: a small community of Black Africans who remained into the present, although they are not easy to find. It was a difficult place to live in, but Sabbetai Zevi seems to have survived comfortably in Ulqin.

Scholem was confident that Sabbetai Zvi died and was most probably buried in Ulqin, but the absence of Jews in the town seems to have encouraged an alternate theory – that the pretender was interred in Berat, in Albania proper. To this day, Berat has a “Jewish quarter,” and it played an exemplary role during the Holocaust as a shelter for Jews, although nearly all its Jews left after World War II. I have yet to visit Berat, but we agree with Scholem in rejecting the thesis of Sabbetai Zvi’s burial there. While Scholem supported the Ulqin argument in documents, the Berat claim was argued with considerable tenacity by the Israeli politician Yitzhak Ben-Zvi (1884–1963), who wrote that an Israeli diplomat had not only confirmed the site, but found Albanian dervishes of the Bektashi Sufi order guarding the tomb. Ben-Zvi even intimated

the existence of a Sabbetaian remnant among Albanian Jews, a theory he later abandoned.⁴

After extensive readings and interviews in Albanian sources and with Albanian scholars, we concluded that claims for burial in Berat, as well as for modern Bektashi associations, are chimerical. Authoritative Albanian Islamic figures, chief among them the Bektashi leader in Kosova, Baba Mumin Lama, have disclaimed any knowledge of Sabbetai Zvi in the printed literature and oral teachings of the Bektashis. Further, in a recent e-mail, Professor Avraham Elqayam of Bar-Ilan University pointed out, "at least some of the members of the Albanian Jewish community in the 1950s had never heard Sabbetai Zvi's name, and knew nothing about Sabbetaianism. Moreover, Ahmet Mihtar Dede, head of the Bektashi order in Albania in the 1950s, did not know of him."

However, belief among Jewish experts in a Bektashi connection or parallel with the Sabbetaian movement has assumed something of a life of its own. It is clear that Sabbetai Zvi had contacts among Turkish dervishes; how systematic these may have been is unknown. In addition, as the centuries went by, more Sabbataeans in the Ottoman domains outwardly became Muslims, the best-known being the so-called *Donme* sects in Salonika and, later, Istanbul, both past centers of Bektashism. But, beginning with Scholem, considerable wider speculation about the Bektashis has been put in print, very little based on serious research into Ottoman and Balkan cultures. At the time of Sabbetai Zvi's movement, the Bektashi Sufi order was one of the most powerful Turkish institutions, closely associated with the Janissaries, the imperial military élite; as late as the early 19th century, the Bektashis had millions of adherents in Turkey and comprised a quarter of all Albanians. It should also be noted that the Janissaries had special relations with Jewish merchants, who satisfied their continuous need for various kinds of provisions, and Sabbetai Zvi may have come into contact with them through his family.

With the suppression of the Janissaries in the early 19th century, and that of the dervish orders by Mustafa Kemal a century later, the Bektashis moved to Albania, where today, recognized as a

separate religion, they continue to account for a quarter of the population, or two million people. Their sacred symbols and much of their liturgy now include Albanian patriotic elements, and sources on them and their history are almost exclusively limited to publications in Turkish and Albanian. It should therefore not be surprising that few Jewish scholars have been equipped adequately to study Bektashism and its possible links with Sabbetaianism. Only one English-language volume on Bektashism, dating from the late 1930s, is widely known.⁵ The sect was severely repressed under the Albanian Communist regime of Enver Hoxha. One of its great later figures, Baba Ali Tomorri, was executed in 1947 by Hoxha's secret police as a "British spy," and its intellectual centers moved to Kosova, Macedonia, and Detroit, Michigan.

Islamic mysticism – Sufism – has often had a deeply heterodox character, and among the dervish orders none is better known for nonconforming behavior than the Bektashis. Indeed, some Muslims view them as outside Islam altogether. They are Shia rather than Sunni Muslims, but perhaps their most controversial practice is the free consumption of alcohol. Scholem assembled a list of elements common to Bektashism and the Sabbetaian movement. He noted, in both cases, the practice of dissimulation about their beliefs when dealing with "ordinary" believers – although this habit, known as *takiyya*, is widespread in Shia Islam and Sufism. Further, Scholem argued that both Bektashis and the Sabbetaian faithful were characterized by syncretic borrowings from other faiths as well as the continuation or revival of some pagan customs; the belief in a deity incarnate in human form – deeply shocking to traditional Jews and Muslims alike; nonconformity, rebellion, and alleged libertine behavior, and a common geographic locus in Asia Minor and the Balkans.⁶

A reputation for scandalous sexual rituals is a remarkable aspect of both Sabbetaianism and Bektashism. Scholem wrote on the Sabbetaian ritual of "extinguishing of the lights" and the "orgiastic exchange of wives." I was amazed, while in Kosova in 2000, at the constant repetition by certain Albanians of almost exactly the same words about the Bektashis: e.g., "I'd like to be

there when the lights go out and they mix up the women.” I have elsewhere indicated some other similarities between the two sects: deliberate violation of dietary laws, singing as a means to ecstasy, esoteric readings of *Torah* and *Qur'an*, collective cooked meals, tendencies toward equality of women, and historical relations with reform movements in politics.⁷ Yet another possible link neglected of study is the influence on the Bektashis of *Hurufiyya*, or Islamic divination based on the correlation of numbers and letters, which is virtually identical to the kabbalistic *gematria*. In addition, the Bektashis were subject to serious attack by Muslim fundamentalists in Turkey in the decades leading to Sabbetai Zvi's appearance, especially for their wine drinking. Finally, the Bektashis have gained recognition even in modern, secular Turkey for their dedication to composition in the Turkish language when the vast majority of Ottoman poets and mystics wrote in Arabic and Persian, and their comparable commitment to the Albanian language as a cultural medium contributed to their standing within that nation. Similarly, the Sabbetaian *Donme* sectaries wrote religious verse in Judeo-Spanish, the vernacular of the Sephardic masses. Nevertheless, regardless of these resemblances, any memory of contact with Sabbetai Zvi among Bektashis is now lost.

III

Other Albanians, at least in the isolated town of Ulqin, where there is no Bektashi presence, know – or think they know – a great deal about Sabbetai Zvi. Indeed, Sabbetai Zvi is by far the most famous Jew ever to have lived in the Albanian lands.⁸ As this was written, a month after our trip, a Kosova Albanian monthly, *Ekskluzive*, printed an article on tourism in Ulqin including the throwaway line, “In the New Town are found the graves of such visitors as Sabbetai Zvi, the well-known Jew and reformer of the *Talmud* [sic].” With such hints in the atmosphere, so to speak, our quest began in earnest. In Kosova at the beginning of 2000 I had encountered, in an Albanian-language bookshop, a 1991 volume

of local history, *Ulqin Through the Centuries* by Ruzhdi Ushaku, that fell open to a reproduction of the classic 1669 engraving of the pretender serving as a frontispiece to Scholem's book.⁹ In Ushaku's study, the portrait is accompanied by a paragraph describing Sabbetai Zvi as founder of a Jewish mass movement in Turkey, aspiring to "reform of the Hebrew *Talmud*." But the commentary goes on, "it is believed that his grave stands in the courtyard of a Muslim house, as a *turbe* with a holy character." A *turbe* is a type of Muslim mausoleum found all over the Balkans, sheltering the remains of mystics as well as dignitaries known for exemplary religious conduct. The same book stated that "two Hebrew altars remain in the Ballsha Tower," the tallest structure in the old town, used by the pretender during his local residence.

We were, then, on the trail, but of course we were not the first. In the 1930s, an American diplomat stationed in Albania, Herman Bernstein, who was among the great Jewish leaders of his generation, reported in the New York Jewish press that he had visited Ulqin and met Muslims in the town who knew of Sabbetai Zvi's life there but claimed not to know the location of his tomb. Scholem cites the Tel Aviv daily *Davar*, dated 17 Nisan 5725 (1965), in which "a declaration of the 'Elders' of Dulcigno-Ulqin from May, 1962, is quoted, according to which anonymous visitors used to come from far away and put stones and flowers on the grave of an unknown 'holy man.'"

I encountered more clues in Kosova. In mid-2000, a Kosovar Albanian journalist and expert on local Jewish history, Myrteza Studenica, went to Ulqin and was unable to visit the tomb, but learned the name of the Muslim householder mentioned in Ushaku's book. In fact, the same description of the tomb had appeared earlier, in an official guidebook to Ulqin printed in French and Serbian in 1989, which also included the standard engraved image of the pretender.¹⁰ The vision of Sabbetai Zvi as a "reformer," and therefore a forerunner of modern revolutionism, had gained him retrospective approval in the culture of Yugoslav Communism. The guidebook also mentioned that a Serbian author, Erih Koš, had composed a novel, *In Search of the Messiah*, about Sabbetai Zvi.

Koš's work, published in 1978, is little more than a fictionalization of Scholem, but Koš in turn generated an article by a Serbian writer, Miodrag Popović, identifying the owner of the house with the *turbe* as one Qazim Mani, still living in Ulqin.

Studenica insisted that the situation in Montenegro remained, with the Milošević regime still in power, too dangerous for me, as an American, to travel there. However, I had repeatedly gone to the interior of Montenegro, and thousands of Kosovar Albanians had resumed their pre-1998 habit of taking their holidays in Ulqin, going "the long way around" through Montenegro. (A trip from Kosova across north Albania, where the highway was rehabilitated by the U.S. armed forces, would have been shorter, but Kosovar Albanians clearly preferred to spend more time travelling, through Slav territory, than to risk driving in Albanian territory where they might contend with Albanian bandits.) Meanwhile, I met with more dervishes in Kosova, who offered no new information but promised, often quite touchingly, to assist in the search.

In Israel, Čerešnješ found a printed account by Paul Fenton, of the University of Lyon, describing a 1982 visit to Ulqin and a discussion with a local imam, Mehmed Barjaktarević, including photographs of a tomb and further arguments for the town as Sabbetai Zvi's place of burial. Fenton identified a tomb with two sarcophagi as the probable burial site.¹¹ But having visited this monument, correctly described below, we do not concur.

With the fall of Milošević in October 2000, the way to Ulqin was open for us. Collecting funds for our basic expenses was relatively easy, and by June 2001 all was in place. Čerešnješ had identified some useful Serb contacts in Ulqin, and I had re-established communications with the Kosova Sufis. At the end of the month, we flew in from Washington, D.C., and Jerusalem, and set out from Sarajevo, with a car and driver hired from *La Benevolencija*, the charitable organization of the Bosnian Jews. We went south through Hercegovina, stopping at Mostar to view a new Holocaust memorial in the city's large Jewish cemetery. We then detoured to the nearby town of Stolac to inspect the grave of the 19th-century Bosnian *tzaddik*, Rav Moshe Danon, whose sarcophagus has been

the focus of innumerable Balkan Jewish pilgrimages. In the 1980s, Čerešnješ had overseen the rehabilitation of Rav Danon's tomb. Crossing into Montenegro, we stopped in Kotor to locate and record the inscriptions on a handful of Jewish memorial stones.

On the narrow road beneath the jagged, black mountains for which it is named, Montenegro seems empty and neglected – its historic pattern of underpopulation and deprivation aggravated by the chaos of the Milošević era. As one approaches the Albanian frontier, the hills turn a bit greener, and minarets appear. Ulqin, its population around 25,000, is a shabby resort that has clearly suffered from the undercapitalization of the local tourist industry in recent years. The sea is clear and the beaches decent, but the big old Yugoslav hotels, intended for package tours of Serbs and Kosovar Albanians, were closed, and no banks would exchange American travelers' checks. Credit cards were a fantasy of the future. The cultural apparatus one might expect to find, in a town of which the most prominent feature is a Venetian citadel of white stone, was also clearly deficient. Almost none of the Renaissance structures in the old town has been converted to tourist use – there are no restaurants, galleries, or shops as are found in Dubrovnik and the other eastern Adriatic resorts. The City Museum had almost no exhibits, and its director, Mrs. Mileva Nikolaidis, had gone unpaid for months.

Mrs. Nikolaidis had searched for further documents about Sabbetai Zvi in local institutions, but found none. Still, reflecting the common understanding in Ulqin, she insisted on the authenticity of the tomb on the property of Qazim Mani as that of the messianic pretender. This *turbe* is a wholly different one from that photographed by Professor Fenton, known as the Fani *turbe*, located along the city's main beach beneath the walls of the Venetian fortress, and a well-known public monument. The Fani *turbe* has the character more of a civic than a religious site: legend describes it as the tomb of two Muslims, Ljud and Jahja Fani, who fought the Venetians.

Mrs. Nikolaidis took us to Mr. Mani, who is now 80 and the proprietor of a successful hardware and paint store in a strip mall.

The Mani home and courtyard, with the *turbe* on its outer edge, are found behind the little mall, fenced off from the street in the usual pattern of an Albanian family compound, which accommodates multiple generations. The address is number 1, November 26th Street (commemorating the liberation of Ulqin by Partisans in World War II). The Mani family were, as we later learned, among the richest in Ulqin before the arrival of Communism, their wealth based on pressing olive oil. Under the Tito regime, the family suffered expropriation of its property and repression for their Muslim faith.

A Balkan *turbe* is typically a small, rectangular, one-storey, stone structure with a wooden door and window frames painted green, the color associated with the prophet Muhammad. That ascribed to Sabbetai Zvi by local tradition in Ulqin is otherwise undistinguished. Mr. Mani unlocked the door for us and allowed us entry, and the interior was cool, damp and a bit moldy – a relief from the near-tropical Mediterranean summer. Close to the door, offerings of coins are piled. At the center stands the sarcophagus of a man no taller than five feet, draped with *tespih*, or Muslim prayer beads, and prayer rugs. At one end, the sarcophagus is crowned by a fez, indicating the position of the head, pointing, from the Balkans, to both Jerusalem and Mecca. In a corner aligned in the same direction, candles are stacked for lighting by visitors. The walls are decorated with embroideries of Islamic calligraphy and prints of Mecca and similar motifs. The wooden ceiling, carved in Turkish style, is fairly new.

But it was obvious that this structure does not attract the numbers of pilgrims that go to other such sites, even though it is listed in the above-mentioned 1989 guidebook as the 18th-century *turbe* of one Murat Dede. Unlike the Fani *turbe* examined by Professor Fenton, the Murat Dede site is noted in the guide but not marked on tourist maps of Ulqin, including that in the guide. The city has two more prominent memorials of this kind, aside from those of the Fani and Murat Dede, and they are close to the latter: they are known as the Resulbegović *turbe* and Pulti *turbe*, and are also said to date from the 18th century. Many such monuments in the Balkans are

open to passers-by and tended daily by devotees, and candles are kept permanently alight within them. Countless strollers stop and look into the Fani *turbe* with its permanently burning taper, every day and night in Ulqin. One might understandably wish that, with its view of the sea and frequent visitors, it were indeed the tomb of the false messiah.

By contrast, the *turbe* in Mr. Mani's courtyard is neglected. Mr. Mani is its sole custodian, and he claims to have opened it only to members of his own family. The most recent visitors, he said, have been his granddaughters, grand-nieces, and more distant female relatives, praying for good luck as they prepared for marriage. A common wedding gift among certain Muslims is an ordinary, small bath towel "blessed" by hanging in the *turbe*, and presented to newlyweds for use in ablutions before prayers. In addition, Mr. Mani pointed out to us a damaged corner of the wooden sarcophagus from which women have removed pieces as amulets. However, unlike most other *turbe* keepers, Mr. Mani is no Sufi; he expressed a position of strict Muslim piety to us, adding that residents of Ulqin view dervishes poorly.

Mr. Mani also disclaimed any association of the *turbe* with a Jew. He insisted that it housed the remains of Murat Dede, whom he described as an Albanian, but he was unable to provide any information about who such a person might have been or when he might have lived, and denied any family link. He also admitted no knowledge of when the *turbe* was built. At first he opposed our taking photographs of the sarcophagus, commenting that, according to his mother, photographs would appear in newspapers or magazines, which in the Balkans often end up used as toilet paper. Eventually, however, he relented, and we photographed the entire *turbe*, including the sarcophagus, and a small graveyard outside.

This graveyard, lacking other evidence, may be a key to authenticating the tomb of Murat Dede as that of the Jewish messianic pretender. It contains some half dozen graves, one of them belonging to a Mani relative who died in the 20th century, others much older, and marked by the traditional, slender Turkish

markers called *nishans*. Several of these are capped by the stone turbans and fez that indicate the resting place of an official or cleric. Some are inscribed in stone, in old Turkish script. These inscriptions should be recorded and translated, as the most reliable item of evidence about the *turbe*.

From the *turbe*, we went to the Ballsha Tower, in the old town. In the third, top storey, an open space the size of a suburban bedroom in America, we found the two previously mentioned “Hebrew altars,” more accurately described as niches. One, facing north, has tiles with six-pointed stars on either side of an opening in the wall, but at the time of the messianic pretender the *Magen David* was not considered a Jewish symbol, and the niche itself has no apparently Jewish form, although Čerešnješ has observed a similar feature in a pre-1850 Polish synagogue. However, in the opposite wall, facing south – the direction of prayer in Balkan Sephardic synagogues – the niche has the form of tablets of the Law, flanked by representations of flames, and we believe it sheltered a *ner tamid* (eternal flame) placed by Sabbetai Zvi.

IV

The question of who is actually buried in the *turbe* of Murat Dede is, then, unresolved. Jewish researchers have yet to complete a necessary survey of all the relevant documentary holdings and monuments in Macedonia, and, even more importantly, Albania proper, where national and university archives were rigorously closed under Communism.

Is a fuller authentication of the *turbe* possible? Obviously, we must analyze the Turkish graveyard inscriptions and exhaust all archival options before arriving at a final judgement. A DNA or other test would probably be viewed as halakhically and, from the viewpoint of Qazim Mani, unacceptable. And even if we authenticate the *turbe* in Mr. Mani’s courtyard as that of the pretender, we would still wonder at its guardian’s reticence toward us. He asked nothing of us, although we made a small “spiritual” donation of cash at the

end of our talks with him. One of our dervish contacts noted with considerable unease the arrival of Arab “Islamic” missionaries in the neighborhood, preaching against the Jews and Israel, and there might be some danger in an Albanian Muslim’s making too much of Sabbetai Zvi. But we are convinced that Mr. Mani knows a great deal more than he told us, that being, of course, a Balkan tradition, and that the process of research will take a much longer time than we thought.

Why should anybody care? Well, we care, but we have both spent a great deal of time caring about the remains of Yugoslav Jewry, both living and dead, in Slav, Albanian, and Hungarian precincts, and we are used to some indifference about these concerns among others. Aside from the mystery of Sabbetai Zvi’s actual burial place, there is also the enigma of popular memory in Ulqin, where, literally at the end of the world, and without Jews, the messianic pretender is known.

Notwithstanding Mr. Mani’s own reserve, numerous other local personalities insistently defended to us the presence of the messianic pretender’s remains in his courtyard. These include a dentist, Muhamed Myrteza, who said his grandmother described the tomb as that of a famous Jew who became Muslim. The city attorney, Sadik Pelinko, a gentleman with the manners typical of Balkan descendants of the Ottoman beys or landlords, and one of a few dervishes in Ulqin – thus giving the lie to harsh judgements on Sufis forthcoming from Mr. Mani – also affirmed the local attribution of the *turbe* to the Jewish pretender. Other informants asserted that Sabbetai Zvi had come to Ulqin as Ottoman *dişdar*, or keeper of the citadel, and resided in the Ballsha Tower as a figure of authority, with full freedom of the city. Late in 2001, I received a document composed by two Albanians living in Australia, Sami and Naim Flamuri, arguing for the authenticity of the Mani or Murat Dede *turbe* as that of Sabbetai Zvi. They claimed, as had others before them, that the correct name was “Mehmet Dadaj,” and that “Dadaj” was derived from “Sabbetai.” They also wrote, “The people of Ulqin still remember how Mehmet Dadaj revived a dead child. Legend has it that he told the child not to climb a fig

tree, but the curious child did not listen. He fell from the tree to his death. Mehmet (Sabbetai) felt extremely sorry for the child, and even felt guilty for what had happened. He asked God to take his life and revive the little child. Generation after generation, the people of Ulqin remember this incident, and the miracle of how the little creature came back to life.”

What might explain these beliefs? Cynics have suggested to us that crafty Montenegrins and Albanians look forward to some future enterprise in cultural tourism. But nobody we encountered in Ulqin gave the slightest indication of any ulterior interest in our inquiries. Nobody asked us for money or proposed any further activities to us, such as has been frequent in our dealings with other Eastern Europeans with whom we have investigated the traces of lost Jewry. On the other hand, Balkan Muslims typically observe a respectful discretion about all religious monuments.

In sum, our interlocutors in Ulqin were mildly enthused to be able to discuss the only historical figure associated with their city and known to the outside world. After all, the Ballshas and other medieval local nobles are hardly a major drawing card. But the recent Balkan wars have been a most powerful disincentive to tourist investment in Montenegro; perhaps, then, a fantasy about the importance of Sabbetai Zvi is a predictable response to an apparently unending perspective of isolation and anguish. While the Jews may no longer believe in Sabbetai Zvi, he retains, ironically, the capacity to excite bizarre hopes in conditions of desperation.

It is a paradox that such delusions might persist after 325 years of Balkan conflicts culminating in Communism and its collapse, which has been, for Jews as well as for Slavs and Albanians in Yugoslavia, deeply traumatic. For our part, we believe the story of Sabbetai Zvi's Ulqin *turbe* is, simply, the truth, preserved collectively as if by a miracle, the only miracle that may be ascribed to the false messiah.

Note: During our visit to Montenegro, on June 28, 2001, Slobodan Milošević was arrested, in transit to The Hague.

Notes

1. Princeton, 1973.
2. For a recent commentary, see Naor, Bezalel, *Post-Sabbetaian Sabbetaianism*, Spring Valley, N.Y., 1999.
3. On visiting Macedonia following our trip, Čerešnjek found that the grave of Nathan of Gaza, along with the rest of the old Jewish Cemetery of Skopje, had been destroyed in the earthquake striking that city in 1963.
4. "The burial ground of Sh. Zvi and the Shabbatean community of Albania," in *Studies and Documents*, Jerusalem, 1966.
5. Birge, J. K., *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*, Cambridge, 1937.
6. Scholem, Gershom, "Barukhyah, Leader of the Sabbetaians in Salonika," in *Researches in Sabbetaianism*, Tel Aviv, 1991.
7. See Ehrlich, M. Avrum, "Sabbetaian Messianism as Proto-Secularism: Examples in Modern Turkey and Zionism," in *Turkish Jewish Encounters*, ed. Mehmet Tutuncu, Haarlem (Netherlands), 2001, citing Schwartz.
8. See, for example, Kotani, Apostol, *Hebrews in Albania Through the Centuries*, Tirana, 1996.
9. Ushaku, Ruzhdi, *Ufqini në Gjurmët e Shekujve*, Ulqin, Art Club, 1991.
10. Rečica, Abaz, et al., *Ulinj*, Zagreb, Turistkomerc, 1989.
11. "Kivro shel Meshiah Ishmael," *Pe'amim*, 25, 1965.

[A draft of this text was presented to the IVth International Conference on the Social and Cultural History of the Jews on the Eastern Adriatic Coast, Dubrovnik, 2002.]

Jews in the Albanian Lands

Albanian Jewry has never been large, and that is one reason it possesses so little historical literature. There is another: Albanians and Jews, even when living in close proximity, in Macedonia for many generations, almost never clashed. History is conflict; no conflict, no history.

During the 47-year Enver Hoxha dictatorship in Albania, nothing was known of Jewish life in the country, either past and present. Under Hoxha's "first officially atheist state in the world," Judaism became no less a forbidden subject than Christianity or Islam. Jewish monuments were ignored, or, like Christian churches, mosques, and Sufi *teges*, were turned over to secular use. The Jewish legacy in Kosova received somewhat more attention in the less repressive intellectual atmosphere of former Yugoslavia. Paradoxically, although the south Slavic Communist state subjected its Albanian subjects to savage political and police repression at its beginning and its end, Albanian religious and intellectual life was much less regimented in Yugoslavia than under the Tirana regime.

At the beginning of 1991, news was broadcast of the flight of

700 Albanian Jews to Israel and the U.S. via Italy. The migration comprised most of the Jewish community of the country; about 200, mainly professionals, remained, including 75 state functionaries. It offered the first opportunity for media and other observers to learn the fate of this tiny component of world Jewry.

The story of the Albanian Jews is fascinating, however, not only because of the obscurity of the community but because of the Albanian social context. Their experience became more relevant with the visit to America, also in 1991, of the Catholic leader Rev. Simon Jubani, who, in his struggle against Marxist antireligious extremism, fiercely defended the spiritual liberty of Jews as well as Christians and Muslims. Jubani was imprisoned for 26 years, spending one sentence in the company of two Jews; one of his cousins married a Jewish man and emigrated to Israel. In an interview with the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Jubani said of the Jewish emigrants, "We are sorry they left. The Jews are our brothers as believers in One God."

Albanians in Albania proper are roughly 68 percent Muslim, broken down into a Sunni majority and a Bektashi (Shia) minority, 19 percent Albanian Orthodox (mainly in the south), and 13 percent Catholic. Yet in the words of the 19th-century patriot Pashko Vasa Shkodrani, "the religion of Albanians is the Albanian nation," as all share a common history, linguistic tradition, and general culture. Soon after the fall of Communism, Jubani's associates in newly liberated Albania took an important step, which was unfortunately thwarted. While many favored the revival of a Catholic-oriented Albanian Christian Democratic Party, Jubani and others attempted to organize a multiconfessional "People's Party of the Religious Communities." The authorities refused to register the new organization.

Gjon Sinishta, the authentic "Albanian Solzhenitsyn" as intellectual leader of the Albanian Catholics in America, noted that the Catholics did not wish "to contribute to the religious division of the country. One of the propaganda claims of Hoxha was that faith separated the Albanians rather than uniting them." Nevertheless, the Albanian Catholics, centered in the north of the

country and the metropolis of Shkodra, enjoy long-term moral and political credibility because of their extensive cultural and educational efforts, as well as the sufferings they underwent.

Albanian Jewish history dates back at least to the late Roman and Byzantine period, when Greek-speaking Jews proliferated throughout the southern Balkans, including in classic Illyria, the Albanian land. A mosaic with a fragment of a *menorah* has been found in the southern coastal town of Saranda, and remnants of 2,000-year-old synagogues are known in Dardania, ancient Kosova. Surviving records of a Jewish presence in Albania proper date to the end of the 12th century. Communities in the ports of Durrës and Vlora and the inland towns of Berat, Elbasan, Prishtina, Prizren, Peja, Gjakova, and Shkup/Skopje, made up of Greek-speaking or Romaniot Jews, were strengthened by the arrival of Sephardic exiles from Spain and Portugal in the 15th and 16th centuries, when the region was under Ottoman rule. The port of Lezha then acquired a Jewish community. Jews in Kosova maintained active links with the communities to the northwest in Ragusa (Dubrovnik) and Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as southward in Macedonia. A Jew served as Ragusan consul in Vlora, which was reputed in the 17th century to have had a population half Jewish; Lezha and Vlora were the main southern ports for Ragusan Jewish commerce. One historian called the Vlora of that era “a preponderantly Jewish town.”¹ This growth of Jewish activity reflected the massive expansion of Ottoman trade with Christendom, in which the Adriatic ports played a most significant role.

At the beginning of the 19th century, however, Albanian Jews were subjected to punitive measures by Ali Pasha Tepelena, the usurping Ottoman governor of Janina, and the community began to diminish in what would become the independent Albanian state. (The Ottoman authorities eventually executed Ali Pasha for his cruelties to the populace in general.) Nevertheless, the adjoining regions of Macedonia, Kosova, and the Sandjak of Yenipazar, seized by Serbia and Montenegro during the Balkan Wars of 1912–13, sheltered a Jewish population of 6,000 as late as 1921.

In the decades preceding the Holocaust, Albanian authorities

protected Jews. The monarchy of Ahmet Zogu aided Jewish refugees from Nazi-controlled Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. At least 350 Jewish families were saved in Albania during World War II, with the country under Axis occupation. Michael Berenbaum, director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, has declared, "Albania was the only country in Europe in which the Jewish population at the end of the war was larger than it was before the war ... The Albanian people showed extraordinary courage in hiding Jews from the Nazis' campaign aimed at exterminating an 'inferior race.'" A remarkable memoir of one such salvation is the autobiography of Irene Grünbaum, *Escape Through the Balkans*. Mrs. Grünbaum, a German Jewish woman married to a Serbian Jew, fled from Belgrade through Macedonia to Albania in 1941. Until 1945, she disguised herself as an Albanian Muslim woman, assuming the false identity of Fatima Nova. Wearing full Islamic covering, she was never molested. Her husband died in Nazi hands, but she escaped to Brazil.²

It should be noted that the Macedonian Jews, almost entirely Sephardim, were brutally betrayed, handed over in their great majority to the Nazis by Bulgarian occupation authorities. Of a Macedonian Jewish population of 7,762 before the war, 6,982, or 90 percent, were killed. However, Albanians in the Macedonian cities of Shkup, Manastir, and Tetova actively sheltered Jews. The Albanian consulate in Manastir issued documents for a significant number of Jews to escape to Albania. On the other hand, some 210 Jews were delivered to the Nazis in Prishtina, the Kosovar capital. However, of the Kosovar Jews, numbering 550 in 1941, 62 percent survived the war, the second highest rate of survival of the Holocaust in former Yugoslavia, according to official statistics.³

An Albanian historian, Apostol Kotani, a Ph. D in history, has assembled much information on the role of Albanians, most of them Muslim, in rescuing Jews. His book *The Hebrews in Albania During [the] Centuries*,⁴ sold throughout the Albanian lands, is a worthy effort, bringing together much significant information, marred only by the uneven quality of its translations into English. Kotani's work includes a general sketch of Albanian Jewish history,

filled with interesting details, many of them dealing with economic activity. For example, he notes 13th- and 14th-century documents on Jewish trading between Durrës and Ragusa, including transactions in salt; later, Jews controlled the export of limes from the coast of Himara. In 1565 the town's Christian dignitaries reproached the Catholic bishop of Lezha for openly playing cards and dice in public with Jews and Muslims, in classically ecumenical Albanian fashion. How easy it is for anyone who has spent time among Albanians to imagine such a scene, under the Mediterranean sun; I have so far been unable to confirm my suspicion that the indignant Catholic elders must have been foreigners, perhaps Venetians. The Turks were then in the saddle in Lezha, and a gracious game or two, however dangerous to the soul of Catholic or Muslim, might have been as wise a habit as it was sociable. Albanians teach us that sociability is a form of wisdom.

Kotani also describes an exquisite example of the way in which multireligious governance worked under the Ottomans. In 1685 a Christian fleet attacked the port of Vlora, and the numerous Vlora Jews fled to Berat in the interior. The Turkish authorities in Berat demanded that the new residents pay local taxes. As impoverished refugees, the Vlora Jews had no way to do so, and their share of tax was imposed on the Berat Jews, who revolted at what they considered a gross injustice, and refused to pay. The conflict was settled by the mediation of a rabbi, who advised that the Vlora Jews owed the money. In the intervening period, the Vlora Jews had regained a better economic position, and were better able to pay.

Another tradition holds that the Vlora Jews, much later, left the town, taking their Torah scroll to Janina, after the kidnapping of a bride at a wedding. Part of the Vlora Torah scroll was still in the hands of the Janina Jews at the end of the 1930s. Janina was known for the Jewish casting of bells for the use of goatherds, "Jewish bells" that figure in Albanian folklore. Jews retained an affection for Vlora; the largest concentration of Jews in Albania in 1935 was found there, counting 12 families with 77 members. Their names were Matathia (three families), Solomoni (three families), Kantoz

(two families), David, Jakoel, Gani, and Levi. All of these families had come from Janina at the end of the 19th century. In 1920, when the Italians seized Vlora and were driven out by Albanian patriotic forces, the Jews Nisim Levi, Rafael Jakoel, and Jakov Solomoni were prominent donors to the anti-Italian campaign. During the anti-Nazi struggle of 1943, the same Jewish individuals actively supported the Partisan movement in Vlora.

The Albanian Jews of the Renaissance era had also maintained trade with Ancona, one of the great Italian cities in Jewish history. Silver and other minerals were exported from the Kosova towns of Novobërda and Trepça, by Jewish merchants who shipped these commodities to Lezha, Vlora, Ragusa, and Ancona. Six Jewish families had settled in Novobërda at the end of the 15th century. The Novobërda community grew so large that it had a cemetery with 300 graves, which was still the object of caretaking visits early in the 20th century, long after Novobërda was abandoned. Other Jewish cemeteries existed in Prishtina, Mitrovica, and Prizren. In the middle 19th century, a French diplomat recorded 1,000 Jews in Prishtina, who then made up nine percent of the city's population, while 600 Jews lived in Gjakova. The main trade routes, as Kotani notes, were Pazar i Ri–Vushtrri–Prishtina–Prokuple–Sofia; Prishtina–Shkup–Manastir–Diber–Vlora; and Peja–Gjakova–Prizren–Shkodra, among others.

Edith Durham, the greatest of the Albanologist travelers, commented on the situation of Jews in Albania and Kosova at the beginning of the 20th century.⁵ She noted the curious prevalence among Albanians of a legend that the country had once been ruled by Jews. She estimated 200 Jewish households in Prishtina when she visited, then an overwhelmingly Muslim town, with no visible Catholic presence, and a Vlach, rather than a Serbian majority among the Orthodox. She encountered an aged Jewish couple traveling by way of Sarajevo to Jerusalem, where the husband expected to die, and described the patriarch as “a splendid old man of seventy years,” adding that she trusted he had “found peace in the Promised Land of his dreams.”

Kotani's volume is mainly important, however, for its

Holocaust documentation. It includes a grand roster of 863 Jews who immigrated to Albania between 1850 and 1944, and records biographical data on Jewish refugees registered in 1938–39, consisting of 55 in Tirana, 48 in Durrës, and 3 in Korça. After the Nazi occupation had begun, when the Germans arrived in Mitrovica, they demanded that the local Italian occupation administration collect and turn over the Prishtina Jews. The Albanian authorities of Prishtina went to the Italian commandant and demanded that the Jews be allowed to flee, or be deported, to Albania proper. Kotani prints the biographies of 23 of these Jews, almost all of whom were Macedonian. At the direction of the Prishtina prefect, Hysen Prishtina, the municipal secretary, Preng Uli, issued false documents for the Jews to use in escaping the Germans. Doctors in the Prishtina hospital fabricated cases of typhus as a pretext for the removal of 60 Jews to Albania proper.

A particularly dramatic incident occurred in Prishtina in April 1944. A Jewish woman, Mrs. Jozef Bahar, who had returned to the city from Kavaja in Albania, to see her parents, was arrested by the Nazis. She escaped prison and made her way through garden after garden in the city until she found the house of Riza Çitaku, her schoolmate and a judicial employee. He protected her in his house, then turned her over to Hysen Prishtina, who saved her by arresting and releasing her, bypassing the Germans.

The villages of Shupal and Shën Gjergj in Albania proper also played a distinguished role in the rescue of Jews. When the Germans issued an order for punishment of anyone assisting Jews to escape, the district authorities reported no Jews were present in its boundaries, even though Jews were being concealed in several locations. In Shën Gjergj itself, a man with the intriguing name Islam Trimi, which means “Islam Hero” in Albanian, sheltered two Jews. But all the Albanian local administrations assisted in this work, and each city found places in the country to hide Jews. The town of Berat became famous for protecting Jews, such that a Jewish child hidden there asked, when they were moved to a rural sanctuary, “Is there another Berat for us to go to?” An Albanian municipal official answered, “Yes, of course. Berat is everywhere,

because wherever you go Albania and the Albanians are there to protect you.” When Vlora was raided by the Nazis at the beginning of 1944, hundreds of its Albanian citizens were deported, many to their deaths. Not one Jew was discovered, as the Albanians had decided to save the Jews ahead of their own children, according to Josef Jakoel, a Jewish survivor.

Kotani lists 98 Albanian families who saved Jewish families during the Holocaust. It is an incomplete catalogue. Some of the rescuers carry Albanian aristocratic names, such as Frashëri and Toptani. Atif and Ganimet Toptani were decorated by the state of Israel and their names inscribed at Yad Vashem for sheltering Jews on their estates. Similarly, the state of Israel decorated the family of Stavri and Nora Sheko for sheltering the Macedonian Jew Josef Kamhi, on whose forehead the Nazis had branded a letter *J*. They are not alone; several more families are similarly recognized. Four towns have been singled out for praise: the villages of Zall Herr and Shën Gjergj, and the town of Berat and a village near it, Molisht. It is interesting to note that Berat was a town whose Jewish quarter, surviving today, housed sympathizers of the “false messiah,” Sabbetai Zvi, and that Molisht has a tradition that its citizens are descended from Jews who became Muslim.

Kotani’s documentation is impeccable, mainly based on Albanian and Kosovar archival materials, as well as interviews, affidavits, and similar evidence, including many reproductions of documents and photographs. However, it would be useful for his book to be re-edited to perfect its English, and issued in Western Europe or the U.S.

At the end of World War II, Yugoslav Jews surviving on Albanian territory produced a statement affirming, “In the Balkans there was one nation that rose up against any form of racism ... the hospitable and heroic people of Albania ... the Albanian people remained faithful to their traditions of hospitality, and remained determined to honor in every individual the human greatness we all possess, without distinction of religion or nationality.”

In January 1992, the Kosovar Albanian journal *Zëri* published a reportage on surviving Kosovar Jews, by the reporter Valentina

Saraçini. She interviewed Llain Adizhes, a Sephardic Jew, who commented, "We have always gotten along well with the Albanians ... With the Albanians we are spiritually closer; we have a similar mentality and character."

Saraçini also publicized the discovery of a halakhically Jewish Albanian-speaking head of household, Nexhat Fetah, the son of a Jewish mother and a Turkish father. Fetah, of Islamic faith, lives in Prizren. His mother was the widow of a Prishtina Jew killed at the beginning of the war. She escaped to Berat, but returned to Prishtina and was seized by the Germans and deported to a concentration camp. She could not nurse Nexhat when he was born, because the Nazis had cut off her breasts. So he was breast-fed by an Albanian neighbor, a woman named Gjylizare Sopa.

At the end of the 1999 NATO intervention, the family of Nexhat Fetah founded a new Kosova Jewish Community, recognized by Israeli representatives.⁶

Notes

1. Švob, Melita, *Jews in Croatia*, Zagreb, Jewish Community, 1997, and Unsigned, "The Jewish Community of Vlor-Valona-Avilona..." at www.sefarad.org, including a considerable amount of interesting but not necessarily reliable information.
2. Grünbaum, Irene, *Escape Through the Balkans*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1988.
3. Goldstein, Slavko, ed., *Jews in Yugoslavia*, Zagreb, Muzejski Prostor, 1989.
4. Tirana, Dituria, 1996.
5. Durham, Edith, *High Albania*, London, Phoenix Press, 2000.
6. See International Crisis Group, *Religion in Kosovo*, Brussels, 2001. I also wish to call attention to the short survey of Sarner, Harvey, *Rescue in Albania*, Cathedral City, CA, Brunswick Press, 1997, with an Albanian edition, *Shpëtimi Në Shqipëri*, Tirana, Koha, 1999.

Vlora

Give me, Vlora, the freedom of your lips;
Teach me the idioms of your mouth.
No, not your language, which I know so well,
But the harmonies of your voice, as you speak
So like the music of birds, in the mountains,
And so like the sweet singing of the mystics.

Instruct me in the grammar of your kisses, Vlora.
Take me, sign by sign and inch by inch,
Along the roads, the geography of your passion,
From the highest peaks of your thought and ambition
To the lovely southern region of your landscape,
Never conquered, always rebellious, always brave.

Jews do not pray when depressed, Vlora.
In a foreign land, like your folk who went to Sicily,
Immortalized by Zef Skiroi,
In a foreign tongue, like the Balkan Sephardim,
Immortalized in *MeAm Lo'eẕ*,
I offer my joy, this song of love, to you.

1997

[*Revised from materials published in the Albanian Catholic Bulletin, San Francisco Chronicle, and Illyria, 1991, 1992, 1994, 1997, 2002.*]

Five Yugoslav Classics

In ex-Yugoslavia, literature matters. The world knows that the former country boasted numerous good writers, just as it produced remarkable films and, recently, even more notable ethnic demagogues and frightful wars. And, as in Russia, south Slavic authors are widely known and read in their own territories, although in the decade following the disintegration of the country most considered theirs, those alive today have lost much of the public influence they once enjoyed. Yet the fact persists: among Slovenes, Croats, Serbs, Bosnians, Macedonians, and Kosovar Albanians, writers of the past and present often count as much as or more than politicians, pop singers, or sports stars.

Living in Sarajevo, I can cite considerable evidence for this claim. I have frequently heard people who survived the 1992–95 siege of the city describe with nostalgia the hundreds of days they spent reading in basement shelters. Sarajevo is also strewn, on fair-weather days, with impromptu sidewalk businesses where scavengers in destroyed houses offer books for sale. And even under Communism, the school curriculum included challenging classics

with the result that virtually every basically educated individual can discuss the main south Slav authors.

The importance of literature in the region was well illustrated at the end of 1999, when *Sarajlije* were treated to a series of arguments in mass-circulation weeklies over who deserved recognition as the greatest Bosnian writer of the century. The scandal sheet *Dani* [*Days*], which appears to pride itself on its lack of journalistic ethics, led the way for several issues, finally settling on the 1961 Nobel laureate Ivo Andrić (1892–1975), a name certainly recognized, if not very well known, among foreigners. *Dani* contributors identified Andrić's novella *Prokleta Avlija* [*The Damned Yard*] as the outstanding Bosnian work of fiction. The runner-up was *Derviš i Smrt* [*Death and the Dervish*] by Meša Selimović (1910–82), who is largely unknown outside the former Yugoslavia.

As is often the case with *Dani* and other Bosnian journals, however, this discussion had little to do with the merits of the writers. Rather, the two authors and their works were symbols of something else, immediately obvious to all local readers. Andrić, a Bosnian Croat who redefined himself as a Serb, has been criticized by certain Bosnian Muslim intellectuals for his hostility to Balkan Islam and its adherents, both Bosnian and Albanian. In upholding Andrić over Selimović, whose very name bespeaks Muslim influence and whose main works feature Muslim protagonists, *Dani's* editors sought to make a point about politics in Sarajevo today – that they would defend the quality of literature against the nationalist criteria allegedly imposed by the Bosnian Muslim political leadership.

This game is a popular one in Sarajevo, where people can instantly indicate their political orientation by the use of literary banners. For some young intellectuals, including Muslims, the defense of Andrić really does mean an insistence on writerly independence. For many other others, it betokens a stand for tolerance toward Serbs, as well as affection for the dead Yugoslavia, socialism, and Tito. To be for Selimović is, then, ostensibly to be a Muslim chauvinist.

In fact, such considerations involve a considerable dose of bad faith, for although the main boulevard in Sarajevo is named for Selimović, and his memory is treasured by Bosnian Muslims, he,



Danilo Kiš (1935–89).

like Andrić, also wanted to be remembered as a Serb. After all, Belgrade, the Serbian capital, was also the capital of Yugoslavia and the center of the literary scene in the country. But sadly, Selimović, all of whose work bespeaks an obsession with the independence of the individual and the autonomy of conscience – themes barely present in Andrić – ends up being treated as an Islamic *apparatchik*, while Andrić, whose career included at least one undeniable fling into extremist Serbism, is honored as a hero in the cause of artistic integrity.

The main competition for *Dani* is another weekly, *Slobodna Bosna* [*Free Bosnia*]. *Slobodna* is viewed with considerable irritability by many older *Sarajlije* as a sensationalist rag virtually indistinguishable from *Dani*. But where *Dani* offends by attacking religion and accusing prominent politicians and intellectuals of outlandish crimes, *Slobodna* provokes more by its sense and taste, which involve offering substantive political reporting alongside columns on punk rock, in a format dominated by screaming headlines.

In any event, *Slobodna* won the competition for literary seriousness. Rather than insulting Islam and the Bosnian Muslim leadership under the pretext of literary criticism, *Slobodna* offered a balanced appraisal, not just of Bosnian fiction but of all south



Miroslav Krleža (1893–1981).



Miloš Crnjanski (1893–1977).

Slavic writers in the 20th century. In arguments summarized by the outstanding critic and journalist Ozren Kebo, *Slobodna* offered a list free of demagoguery, in which the real Bosnian spirit was evident. In its pages, the best Yugoslav fictional work of the century was identified as *Grobnica Za Borisa Davidovića* (*A Tomb for Boris Davidovich*), by Danilo Kiš (1935–89), a writer of Serbian and Hungarian Jewish origin who is widely read and appreciated in the rest of Europe and the United States. Selimović's *Death and the Dervish* was ranked second, followed by two volumes of Andrić, *Na Drini Čuprija* [*The Bridge on the Drina*] and *Travnička Hronika* [*Days of the Consuls*, also translated as *Bosnian Chronicle*]. Next came *Povratak Filipa Latinovića* [*The Return of Philip Latinovicz*] by the Croatian author Miroslav Krleža (1893–1981), and a book by the Serbian writer Miloš Crnjanski (1893–1977), *Roman o Londonu* [*A Novel about London*].

Although Krleža and Crnjanski are known in the West mainly among transplanted Croats and Serbs, all of the foregoing books except the last have been translated into English and are in print. And while Crnjanski's *Novel about London*, a highly idiosyncratic work, will probably never see the light of English translation, his most famous book, *Seobe* [*Migrations* – actually the first volume

in a series of the same title], has been published in the United States and Britain. Thus the lists can be evaluated, even if one knows nothing at all about the Balkans aside from what may have appeared on the television news.

One crucial fact must be stated: none of these five authors saw himself as a local nationalist. Kiš addressed himself to the world. Selimović and Andrić, as noted, were non-Serbs who adopted a Serb identity. Krleža treasured and defended Croat linguistic traditions, and Crnjanski wrote about a quintessential Serb hero. All five saw themselves as Yugoslavs first.

Danilo Kiš's work has gained the largest international audience of these five writers – and, to give the devil her due, Susan Sontag was instrumental in introducing Kiš to English-speaking readers. He has frequently been compared with Jorge Luis Borges, to whom he explicitly admitted a debt. *A Tomb for Boris Davidovic*,¹ the lead novella in the collection of the same title, is unquestionably a Borgesian work, but it is also much more.

The narrative describes the life of a Russian revolutionary and victim of the Stalin purges, Boris Davidovich Novsky. In what might seem authentically Borgesian fashion, the tale begins with a reference to a book, the *Granat Encyclopedia*, said to include “246 authorized biographies of great men and participants in the Revolution.” But Novsky's name, we are told, is missing from this source. Further, Kiš writes, “in his commentary on this encyclopedia, Haupt notes that all the important figures of the Revolution are represented, and laments only the ‘surprising and inexplicable absence of Podvoysky.’” Even Haupt, we are told, ignores Novsky, “whose role in the Revolution was more significant than that of Podvoysky.”

Here, in a manner undetectable to the great majority of his readers, in Yugoslavia as well as the rest of the world, Kiš trumped Borges. For unlike the noted “*Tlön encyclopedia*” invented by Borges, the *Granat Encyclopedia* is real, the biographies are real, Haupt is real, and Podvoysky was, as Haupt noted, inexplicably omitted from them. The *Granat Encyclopedia* was a reference work famous in the Russia of the 1920s. Its biographical essays of the

main Bolsheviks have been translated and published in English under the title *Makers of the Russian Revolution: Biographies of Bolshevik Leaders*, edited by Georges Haupt, a French historian. (In reality, N. I. Podvoysky was obscure but not unimportant; he was a member of the original committee that organized the Bolshevik insurrection in St. Petersburg in 1917, and later served as an assistant military commissar under Trotsky.)

The *Granat* biographies are known today only to the most assiduous researchers on the Bolsheviks, but they are extremely vivid, thorough, and fascinating to read. Kiš, who seems to have stumbled on them, was obviously charmed by their literary qualities, for his invented protagonist, Novsky – and, rest assured, there was no such person – is assembled out of details drawn from the *Granat* profiles. In this way, Kiš arrived at an extraordinary creation: by “lifting” the most characteristic details from the lives of the Bolsheviks, he created a collective memorial for a whole generation of radicals who were utterly destroyed by the regime they had brought into being. Virtually every significant aspect of the life of Novsky is based on fact, making a continuous counterposition to Borges. As Kiš seems to be telling us, the inventions of Borges are nothing compared to the conceits of verifiable history. While Borges is occasionally unnerving, Kiš is, finally, terrifying.

Thus, Kiš's Novsky uses pseudonyms employed by the actual Bolsheviks, such as “Parabellum,” named after a pistol and made famous by the Polish Bolshevik Karl B. Radek. He becomes “a functionary of the powerful union of Jewish hatmakers in Paris,” an item borrowed from the life of the Soviet trade unionist Solomon A. Lozovsky. His lover is a beautiful woman revolutionary, Zinaida Maysner, based on an easily identified personage, Larissa Reisner, who was the companion of a Soviet diplomat, Fyodor F. Raskolnikov. Kiš's Maysner falls for A. D. Karamazov, as the author's method becomes increasingly explicit.

It would be unfair to Kiš and to readers to expose all the underpinning in this tale. Suffice it to say that Kiš knew exactly what he was about. Reisner, a kind of Bolshevik amazon, died young (her double, Maysner, is said to have expired before thirty,



Meša Selimović (1910–82).

of disease in a faroff place). Radek was a victim of the show trials of the mid-'30s, Lozovsky was killed in the anti-Jewish purge of 1952, and Raskolnikov, who defected to France, was probably murdered by Soviet agents. The fate of Boris Davidovich Novsky is appropriately dreadful.

Kiš's *Boris Davidovich* is a story about history and its effect on Central and East Europeans, but it is also an examination of a life lived in the service of an esoteric philosophy. It is in this regard that Kiš is truest to his mentor, Borges, for Kiš, like Borges, was also obsessed with Kabbalah. In the Western cities that Borges evokes, occult wisdom is benevolent; as others have noted, the "universal history of infamy" that the Argentine genius spun out seldom exceeds the criminality of pickpockets and petty swindlers. In Kiš's half of Europe, which is also that of Lenin and Hitler, Stalin and Tito, the Croat autocrat Franjo Tuđman and the Serb tyrant Slobodan Milošević, infamy was and is deeper and more lethal. These concerns also inform the author's second best-known book, *The Encyclopedia of the Dead*. It and *Boris Davidovich* seem much weightier, however fragile their form as collections of short stories, than his more traditional novels, such as *Hourglass*, although the same issues still appear.

Meša Selimović's *Death and the Dervish*² is also about esoteric

knowledge. Set in Bosnia in the 18th century, it is the story of a Sufi, or Muslim mystic. The parallel between the life of an Islamic spiritualist and that of a Bolshevik revolutionary is obvious to local readers of Selimović's work; just as the work of Danilo Kiš serves as a literary coda to the legacy of Lenin and his cohort, so too Selimović's is replete with references to the Sufi classics, such as the Spanish Muslim writer Ibn Arabi. This origin in belief and its illusions is not the only element of Selimović's work that bespeaks a similarity to that of Kiš. Both were experimenters with narrative form. While Kiš mastered the Borgesian art, involving the merger of history, essay, and fiction, Selimović refined the technique of the internal monologue, crafting a limpid discourse that makes his *Dervish* an exquisite poem in prose, if not a literal representation of the higher means of expression to which the Sufis aspire.

Yet the tale told in *Death and the Dervish* is hardly occult. Rather, it is a parable of injustice, power, and moral weakness in the face of both, drawn from the tormented experience of the author himself. The dervish of the title, Ahmed Nuruddin, must contend with the arrest of his brother by the implacable Ottoman authorities. Similarly, Selimović's own elder brother Sefkija was arrested in the aftermath of World War II. A Communist Partisan, Sefkija was found guilty of an exceedingly minor violation of "socialist morality." Placed in charge of a storehouse of confiscated goods, he had borrowed some small pieces to furnish his own dwelling. He was accused of malfeasance of "the people's property" and done to death as a warning to the masses.

In *Death and the Dervish*, Selimović obviously wrestles with his own sense of guilt and cowardice in the wake of this terrible episode. The greatness of the book, especially for foreign readers, resides less in its broader lessons about human personality, or even its marvelous evocation of Bosnia-Herzegovina under Turkish rule, than in its sensitive and elegant use of language.

Here is the beginning of Selimović's extraordinary description of the impact of a surviving pagan holiday – in which young girls, to celebrate the beginning of summer as well as to enhance their own fertility, bathed naked in rivers and mill races – on the pious

Muslim mystic, a resident of the *kasaba*, or settlement, of Sarajevo: “Broken night whispered between houses as young people moved excitedly in the streets and courtyards. Giggling, a distant song, and murmurs were heard, and it seemed that on this Saint George’s Eve the whole *kasaba* trembled in fever. Suddenly, for no reason, I felt separated from all of it. Fear crept into me unnoticed, and everything around me began to acquire strange proportions – the people and their movements, the *kasaba* itself no longer seemed familiar. I had never seen them like this before, I had not known that the world could become so disfigured in a day, in an hour, in a moment – as if some demon’s blood had begun to boil and no one could calm it. I saw townspeople in couples, heard them, they were behind every fence, every gate, every wall. Their laughter, talk, and glances were not like on other days: their voices were muffled and heavy. A scream cut through the darkness, like lightning in an impending storm. The air was permeated with sin, the night full of it.”

It would be difficult to compose a more faithful and eloquent invocation of the dangerous exhilaration of Sarajevo, a city built along a rushing alpine stream, in which nature and civilization seem uniquely melded, and in which passions always seem held in check, but ready to erupt. Selimović also possessed a unique ability to express the internal conflict in Bosnian Muslims, between the near wilderness in which they live and the rigors of the faith they profess. His work is obviously the best available for foreign comprehension of Bosnian Muslim identity, in the past and present, as well as in the future.

Ivo Andrić, a Bosnian Croat by birth but a Serb by conviction, took as the major theme of his writing the conflict between Islamic discipline and Bosnian wildness or, as he always seemed to see it, tyranny and the ensuing propensity, over centuries, for the country to suffer violence. The “damned yard” in the work of that title is the central courtyard of an Ottoman prison. Of the five authors under consideration here, he was the most traditional, and the only one who did not identify with a broader European modernism. His novels are purely descriptive and rather pedestrian in their

composition – his defenders always praise him as a storyteller of the old school – with an undeniable sheen of nationalist ideology. They are very much a product of the Slav Romantic upsurge against the Habsburg and Ottoman empires, and Andrić himself was imprisoned in 1914 for involvement in the Mlada Bosna [Young Bosnia] conspiracy that took the life of the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie, and brought about the First World War.

Andrić is an author of “big books.” Sarajevo is replete with copies of *The Bridge on the Drina* that members of the international community employed there have bought and put aside after an attempt at the first chapter. Although it is absurd to argue, as his promoters do, that a reading of Andrić suffices to educate a foreigner in Balkan reality, one needs to make his acquaintance. *The Damned Yard*,³ as a novella, is the best introduction to him.

Although Andrić was never a literary experimenter, *The Damned Yard* evinces an effective but somewhat precious formal structure. A story written by a storyteller about stories told by storytellers, it describes the recollections of a young Bosnian Franciscan about the reminiscences of a recently deceased friar, who rambled repetitively about the things he had seen and heard in the world. The elder cleric, Fra Petar, was once imprisoned in Istanbul, and in “the damned yard” of the Ottoman lockup he heard one particularly affecting tale from another teller of tales, a Turkish political prisoner.

The chain of recounting proceeds from 20th-century Bosnia to 15th-century Istanbul and Rome, reinforcing the sense of the proximity of history in the Balkans. In the “damned yard” men from throughout the empire – Fra Petar, the Croat Catholic priest; Haim, a Jew from Smyrna; and Krikor, an Armenian, in addition to various Turkish characters – have been assembled, and each has his own way with language and truth. This sense of epic as the central fact of existence, as well as its trail of human transmission, has made *The Damned Yard* popular.

The Damned Yard also has its weaknesses. It is too short, a novella that should have been a novel. Its main narrative artifact,

the story told to Fra Petar in the prison by the political suspect Kamil Effendi, is surprisingly flat, being an account of the conflict between the two sons of Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror, the victor at Constantinople in 1453, who remains alive in the Balkan collective memory even now at the beginning of the 21st century. It has rather bald nationalist clues: one son, who loses his influence, leaves the Ottoman domains, and becomes a hostage to the pope, is said to be born of a mother “of Serbian royal blood.” This is not the only instance where Andrić treats a Muslim hero as, in effect, a Serb struggling to free himself from an alien legacy – and this conception has played a ghastly role in the bloodletting that has marked Yugoslav history in this century, the Serbs often demanding that Balkan Muslims acknowledge their “inner Serb” or die. Kamil Effendi, who narrates the story of the defeated son, with whom he identifies, is also said to be half Christian in origin.

The central declaration of *The Damned Yard*, which justifies the tale, is equally redolent of nationalist oversimplification. After Kamil Effendi has related the history of the rival brothers, the author comments, “it all amounted to the same thing: there are two worlds, between which there can never be any real contact or possibility of understanding, two terrible worlds condemned to eternal war in a thousand forms. And between them was a man who, in his own way, was at war with both these warring worlds.”

The two worlds are, of course, those of Christianity and Islam. And, illogically, the author seeks to have it both ways: the worlds are locked in combat, without the possibility of mutual comprehension, but tragic individuals combine them in a single personality. Many Bosnian Muslims and other residents of the former Yugoslavia cannot forgive Andrić’s emphasis on the former point, for the idea of “eternal war in a thousand forms” is not very distant from the propaganda of Radovan Karadžić, the Bosnian Serb chieftain indicted as a war criminal, who insisted that asking Muslims and Serbs to live together in Bosnia-Herzegovina was the same as asking dogs and cats to cooperate.

Andrić undeniably evinced a certain Balkan “whiggery,” recasting his historic Bosnia to flatter the Serb nationalists of a

later generation. In any event, whatever their differences and frictions, Muslims, Serbs, Croats, and Jews did live together in Bosnia-Herzegovina for centuries, and the country has had the same borders since the early 18th century, longer than any other European state. And while the experiment in transborder country-making called "Yugoslavia" failed, its literature comprises both of the "warring worlds" of Andrić's purview. The five authors presented here are proof of that.

For these writers borders are porous, and empires are impermanent. Yet one seems to proceed along a hall filled with echoes when reading Kiš, Selimović, and Andrić in succession: always, there is the obsession with oppressive rulers and the helplessness of men and women faced with them. Whereas Kafka and other subjects of the Habsburg empire characterized power in terms of baffling bureaucracies, in these authors' works power is more than arbitrary and heedless; it is vindictive and brutal. That is the Islamic and Orthodox heritage. The remaining authors on our list, Krleža and Crnjanski, also deal with irrevocable human destiny, but their stories are set in the Catholic west, and the lives of their protagonists are free of the iron hand of extreme despotism, though not of overbearing government, and not of a greater eternal fate.

Miroslav Krleža created a universe, out of his own insights and his command of language, that is an exact representation of that in which he lived, and we live, in the glittering cities of the Western Hemisphere no less than in rural Slavonia. His work reminds one of the great painters: it is our common reality, but only he can show it to us as he does. An adulation of Krleža among Croats is predictable and understandable, for he is among the finest European writers. Numerous Yugoslavs, and not only Croats, thought he deserved the Nobel that was presented to Andrić. Ex-Yugoslavs often ascribe the granting of such recognition to official lobbying, and many believe Krleža was done out of a Nobel for political reasons. This is, above all, because although he was extremely proud to be considered a Yugoslav, he would never have Serbified himself the way Andrić did.

In addition, Krleža, although a Communist, was a dissident long before the term was popularized, indeed, before the idea of dissident Communists was much heard of in the broader West. He was extremely lucky to have made it through the Stalin era at all. And he was a lifelong doubter. He loved his Croatian idioms as much as his Yugoslav identity, but he detested nationalism, and he hated what flags and symbols had done to the lives of ordinary people over the centuries. Indeed, we may even say that while the peace of the Yugoslavs died with Tito in 1980, their conscience died with Krleža a year later. For me, Kiš at his most incisive, Selimović at his most poetic, and Andrić at his most exotic are very small alongside Krleža, yet he was free of arrogance, and would have put the interest of any of them ahead of his own. He would even have given his life for their freedom to write, their freedom to be. It is immensely frustrating that foreign readers can scarcely comprehend his achievement, since so little of his work has been translated.

It is unlikely that the early books that made Krleža famous, *Hrvatski Bog Mars* [*The Croat God Mars*], his outcry against the waste of Croatian manhood by military service to foreigners, or *Glembajeva* [*The Glembajs*], a series of portraits of a typical family of ambitious Croats, will be translated soon. They are simply too marginal to the interest of the foreign public, and are now too old. Nor will his *Dijalektički Antibarbarus* [*The Dialectical Antibarbarus*], a polemic against Stalinism, which could have lost him his head, see the light of English soon, although in a better world it would be studied by every Anglo-American Slavacist and historian of Communism.

Nevertheless, we are lucky to have two of his greatest works in English: *Na Rubu Pameti* [*On the Edge of Reason*] and *The Return of Philip Latinović*.⁴ The former is a short book, and a delightful excursion for readers who can surrender themselves to an unfamiliar milieu. It tells the Candide-like tale of a respectable lawyer who, in the middle of his life, commits a social error: he speaks candidly at a party to the boorish host. (This is not a unique situation in south Slavic literature: Meša Selimović's second great work, *Tvrđava* [*The*

Fortress], focuses on a similar incident, but with a very different outcome.) The narrator's resulting fall from grace, prominence, and prosperity propels him to the bottom of European society in the late 1930s, and on the way he meets exemplars of every form of political and social pretension and pathology in evidence at that time. *On the Edge of Reason* is one of Krleža's great expressions of protest against nationalism and totalitarianism. Nevertheless, the existing translation cannot be recommended, mainly because, having been done during the Tito era, it was printed, according to the Yale south Slavicist and Krleža expert Ivo Banac, with its sharp comments about the Communists of the 1930s excised.

By contrast, nothing should prevent an educated American reader from enjoying *Philip Latinovicz* to the fullest. It is more than a novel; it is an encyclopedic examination, a dissection, of Croatian society after World War I. Tinted with a black humor of deadly seriousness, it is reminiscent of Rembrandt's *Anatomy Lesson* with, say, the comic Jack Benny as the head surgeon. Yet it is never vulgar or superficial.

Latinovicz describes the memories, inner turbulence, and environment of a successful modernist painter who, after more than 20 years out in the world, has returned to his original home, a rural Croatian hamlet. His intent is obvious: "To live for a while amidst mares and cats, amidst village rumors, to feel a rough calf's tongue on one's palm, to watch plants growing, from day to day ever increasingly green and lush, with mathematical precision adjusting themselves to the maximum amount of light and sunshine, those were soothing things for Philip's neurasthenia."

But, of course, the way back from maturity and the city brings him, another Croat Candide, to nothing like a rural idyll. Rather, the place is a provincial hell. The artist and his mother hold each other in contempt; the setting is dominated by ludicrous, failed personalities stuck in the Habsburg glories of a previous generation. *Latinovicz* feels himself to be going mad, and is driven in that direction by another refugee from the city, a poseur named Kyriales. No more should be said: the rest is left to the reader.

All of the works discussed so far were produced for an

audience that knew, and knows, how to read. The last, Crnjanski's *Migrations*,⁵ should perhaps stand first in a group offered to foreigners. Unfortunately, however, its author is so little known to the world outside the former Yugoslavia that his name was rendered as Tsernianski when the book was published in English in 1994, and it seems to have made no money for Harcourt Brace, which issued it. That edition is correctly labeled "volume I," which is somewhat misleading. The first book in Crnjanski's *Migrations* series was published in 1929, the rest decades later, and the first can stand on its own.

Migrations is a book that almost any reader may enjoy. It is the rousing, romantic story of Vuk Isaković, a Serb mercenary soldier fighting in the Rhineland in the early 18th century in the service of the Austrian empress Maria Theresa. Crnjanski was a serious literary modernist and a great stylist, yet it is conceivable that *Migrations* could satisfy fans of Tom Clancy. The story is fast-paced, but never surrenders to action for its own sake. Its level of detail is exceptional; like Krleža, Crnjanski was a gifted observer of people as well as an expert on the time about which he wrote.

Vuk Isaković, the book's hero, is potbellied, has lost his youthful looks, and has become exhausted and querulous after years as a paid combatant. His wife is at the end of her tether. His soldiers must forage for food, and are hanged as thieves; his fellow-commanders are fools. But these characters possess an essential vitality that is amazing to behold. The underlying power of *Migrations* comes from its transmutation of popular consciousness; for generations of Serbs, the military profession abroad was the only honorable alternative to submission to the Ottomans. In Vuk Isaković, Serbian military honor has its greatest literary exemplar.

Crnjanski was an authentic Serb patriot, but unlike Andrić, whose Serbism was adoptive, Crnjanski never felt called to enunciate nationalist rhetoric or to rationalize primitive hatred. Vuk Isaković makes no fancy claims for the superiority of Christian to Islamic civilization, or of the Orthodox East over the Catholic West. His situation is, in a sense, hopeless; he must fight to survive, but in the service of others. His only hope is his religious Orthodoxy and

the loyalty it inspires to a mystical conception of Russia, where he intends some day to flee, thus ending his migrations.

The Orthodoxy of Vuk Isaković is simple and pure, untainted by demagogy. Throughout the book he feels pressured by the Austrian authorities to convert to Catholicism, yet in a memorable passage, he tells himself, “Just as my sweet Orthodoxy did reside forever within my mother, so shall it reside forever within me and those who come after me. Our Russia is also sweet. I pray to God the creator to show me the way there! Russia! R for the Resurrection, U for the Universe, S for the Slavs, S for Salvation, I for the Immortality of Christ, A for ...”

The fictional Vuk Isaković is therefore a worthy counterpart to the spiritual Muslims in Selimović's books, who reside on the other side of the imperial borders of that time, and, like Kiš's *Boris Davidovich*, he is a true believer, but an unselfish one, turned toward an ideal Moscow. Crnjanski's work is the most important in moral terms of those under discussion, for his vision of Serbian patriotism, although intense, is sane and even noble, which is saying something when one considers the uses to which Serbian pride has been put in recent times.

Readers would be correct in perceiving a pattern here, and it is heartbreaking. South Slavs, Yugoslavs, Bosnians, Croats, Serbs, all have been terribly susceptible – to big words, big ideas, big promises. The landscape is tragic, but its writers have, on more than one occasion, transmuted the materials God gave them – as he gave them to the peasant, the dervish, the mercenary, the revolutionary, the artist, the petty functionary, the usurper, the martyred, and the decadent – in a way that makes great literature. Suffering has its rewards.

Notes

1. *A Tomb for Boris Davidovich*, by Danilo Kiš, translated by Duška Mikić-Mitchell; New York, Penguin Classics, 1980.
2. *Death and the Dervish*, by Meša Selimović, translated by Bogdan Rakić and

- Stephen Dickey; Evanston, IL, Northwestern University Press, 1996.
3. *The Damned Yard and Other Stories*, by Ivo Andrić, translated by Celia Hawkesworth; Chester Springs, Pa., Dufour Editions, 1992.
 4. *On the Edge of Reason*, by Miroslav Krleža, translated by Zora Depolo; Scranton, Pa., New Directions, 1995; *The Return of Philip Latinovicz*, by Miroslav Krleža, translated by Zora Depolo; Evanston, IL, Northwestern University Press, 1995.
 5. An edition of *Migrations*, translated by Michael Henry Heim, was published in 1994 by Harcourt Brace, New York.

[This article, which appeared in The New Criterion, issue of May 2000, does not deal with Sephardic issues, but one of the main authors discussed here, Danilo Kiš, is universally considered a major 20th-century Jewish writer. I have therefore chosen to include it in this collection.]

Isak Samokovlija and the Iron Rose

The Bosnian classic writer Isak Samokovlija, a Sephardic Jew, is almost completely unknown outside the former Yugoslavia. However, his family remains a distinguished one, and I heard of them as soon as I went there. They migrated from Samokov in Bulgaria to Bosnia-Hercegovina in the 19th century, thus being called in the Turkish manner “those from Samokov.”

Samokovlija is a great Sephardic writer, and many of his stories deal with Sephardic life in Sarajevo, but he is not an exclusively Jewish author. He wrote in Serbo-Croatian. His most famous work, the short story “Hanka,” deals with Bosnian *Cigani* (Gypsies). It was made into a classic film in 1955, directed by Slavko Vorkapić from a screenplay by the author. The motion picture introduces a “Jewish” element that only people who know the old Yugoslavia would recognize: the narrator is a physician, a common Jewish profession on that terrain, and serves as a medical examiner of the dead. “Hanka,” as a story and later as a film and in other adaptations, has become an outstanding component in the Bosnian canon.

Samokovlija was born in Goražde, in eastern Bosnia on the Drina, in 1889. His father was a grocer. At high-school age, he



Isak Samokovlija (1889–1955).

was sent to live with his mother's family in Sarajevo. He studied medicine in Vienna, the common route of brilliant Balkan Sephardic youths. He graduated in 1917 and served as a doctor in Goražde and Fojnica before settling in Sarajevo. He worked in the Koševo hospital, and began collaborating with the newspaper *Jevrejski Život* [*Jewish Life*]. His first collection of stories appeared in 1929.

I encountered his work thanks to publication of *Tales of Old Sarajevo*, a selection of his stories translated into English.¹ I was captivated. Samokovlija furnishes us an honest, detailed, and moving portrait of Sephardic life in Bosnia-Herzegovina. I became especially fond of two of his best stories, "From Spring to Spring" and "The Blonde Jewish Woman." In heartbreaking fashion, but showing no trace of the bathetic, both deal with romantic transgression of the religious and ethnic "membranes" separating Muslims, Jews, Serbs, and Croats in the old Bosnia. In the former tale, a Sephardic woman abandons her good but impotent and

sterile husband, who is also Jewish, for a Muslim lover; in the second, a Jewish woman must pay the price for falling in love with a Christian.

Samokovlija's work is culturally rich. Particularly affecting is his evocation of the Muslim call to prayer, or *adhan*, as heard by the non-Muslim inhabitants of Sarajevo. As the sound of the *adhan* regulated the life of Jews and Christians as well as Muslims, so it appears repeatedly in Samokovlija's work:

"When the evening sky turned red up in the *mahala* [neighborhood], the voice of the *mujezin* would spill out from the minaret as softly and quietly as a whisper, the fragrance of the roses would fill the courtyards, a child's thin, wavering voice would ring out, a demure female tone would be answered by a powerful male song, interlaced with the sound of the *zurle* [a musical instrument]; the dogs would be barking, with fires crackling in the gardens, calls echoing in the air, the tambourine beating out its rhythm, the accordion stretched to its limits, while people would stroll down the streets reborn, vibrant and young, swinging long white lanterns in their hands." ("From Spring to Spring")

"Darkness had gathered and the *mujezin*'s voice rang out. *Aksham* [the evening prayer call]. Luna quickly pulled herself together and shut the window curtain. She stood in front of the candelabrum, her trembling hand barely managing to light all the wicks. She was unable to say her prayers or fold her hands on her chest. She stood there as the *mujezin*'s prayer echoed clearly through the air. Luna listened, and something made her silently repeat his every word. When the *mujezin* stopped, a silence spread around Luna like a huge, vast space, empty and distant." ("From Spring to Spring")

"From the white mosque came a voice pure as silver shining in the silence. It flew up and like a white bird spreading its wings rose high over the rocks. '*Aksham, aksham!*' it whispered feverishly in her. '*Aksham!*'" ("The Blonde Jewish Woman").

Samokovlija also describes frictions between individuals from different communities, and between them and their destinies. In "From Spring to Spring" the Muslim lover Alija tells Luna, the unfaithful Sephardic woman, "I'll wait in the street for that miserable

husband of yours and beat him to a pulp. He won't move a finger, no; he won't have time to know what hit him. The swine, he'd keep you and let you die without knowing what it's like to be a woman, without your ever knowing the meaning of life and pleasure! That son of a bitch!" In "The Blonde Jewish Woman" the Sephardic Miriam is condemned for her involvement with a "*Vlah*," a term considered hate speech in post-Dayton Bosnia-Herzegovina. And therein lies a tale worthy of a digression (but not of a whole short story.)

Vlah, or Vlach, refers to a scattered nation of Romanian-speaking peasants found at various locations south and west of the Danube, from Istria on the Adriatic through Albania to Macedonia. They predate the arrival of the Slavs in the region. In Serbia and Croatia, the Vlachs were assimilated into the invading Slav communities (in Serbia they are known as Tzintzars). In Albania and Macedonia, they have remained distinct. Although the original Vlachs may have been ethnic cousins of the ancestors of the Bosnian Muslims, "Vlah" is used among the latter as a term of contempt for Christians. Among Bosnian Sephardim it refers only to Croats.

The Balkan peoples are notable for their vocabulary of ethnic deprecation; Bosnian Jews also referred to Muslims by the more-or-less neutral nickname of *almejas*, or "almonds," a term of unknown origin, and to Serbs as *ratones*, or "mice." The latter also has a history as a Sephardic nickname for Armenians, another Christian Orthodox people. The Sarajevo Sephardim, founders of the now-forgotten movement of *Sephardismo*, were also known for their dislike of the Ashkenazim who had come to Bosnia-Herzegovina under Habsburg rule. One of the most famous jibes, endlessly repeated, holds that "some of the Jews' best friends are Ashkenazi."

These linguistic matters suddenly became public issues when the international authorities in Bosnia-Herzegovina, after the recent war, decided that a ban on "hate speech" was a constitutional necessity. On one occasion, I read aloud citations from Samokovlija's work to illustrate my argument that words like "Vlah" were part of the

common culture, and that suppression of them in Bosnian media would increase ethnic conflict, not alleviate it.

The semiotics of successful, if contradictory and challenging coexistence in Sarajevo underpins Samkovlija's work written before World War II. After the war, he became much more concerned with the fate of Sarajevo Jews at the hands of the wartime fascists. He was, naturally, deeply affected by the destruction of the old Sephardic style of life and the physical end of the teeming populace that had crowded such Jewish neighborhoods as the *mahala* of Bjelave. He died in 1955.

The editors of *Tales of Old Sarajevo*, however, did Samokovlija a considerable disservice, in my view, by attaching to the book a text on the author by Ivo Andrić, a Bosnian Croat who became a fanatic for Great-Serbian imperialism, and who was a schoolmate of Samokovlija in high school in Sarajevo. Andrić, the Nobel laureate, experienced a Sarajevo entirely different from that of the Sephardic chronicler. Andrić's essay "Isak Samokovlija and the Bosnian Sephardim" mixes inaccuracies with prejudicial clichés. According to him, the Sephardim were "isolated in a foreign land," when in reality the Sephardic community of the Balkans represented a vibrant civilization based on local and international commerce. Andrić declares that the Sephardim "had to cope and bend with the wind even more than the Christians," i.e. that they were even more degraded by Muslim governors than were, according to anti-Ottoman legendry, the Serbs.

Andrić, throughout his work, portrayed Balkan Muslims in a negative light. In his essay on Samokovlija he asserts that the Sephardim about whom the latter wrote were "crowded into a kind of ghetto," and that they were "oppressed and exploited by the ruling Ottoman caste." However, there is no sense of this dark night of Turkish power in the selections from Samokovlija included in *Tales of Old Sarajevo*. Andrić further claims that the Sephardim had to "retreat behind the rampart-like wall of their own Jewish and Spanish traditions, beliefs and prejudices." But this is not how Samokovlija, or I, or others view the long history of Balkan Sephardic culture. Perhaps Andrić thought that, like the

Vlachs, it would have been better for the Bosnian Jews to become Serbs.

Andrić even defames the Jewish believers of Sarajevo by alleging that, “in Turkish times, their spiritual life, like that of our other peoples, was largely confined to a relative knowledge of religious texts (in this case Hebraic) and to the rote performance of ritual.” This outrageous remark contrasts dramatically with the real history of religious commitment and excellence in theological training found in Sarajevo, which was a cradle for great rabbis. Possessed with his burning hatred of everything Ottoman, Andrić asserts that the Sephardim “lived without real schools or any real possibilities for a cultural life of their own. Under Ottoman rule, and later under Austro-Hungarian occupation, the law virtually denied them access to higher public and state office.” It is impossible, if one believes this nonsense, to explain the career of Moshe ben Rafail Attias, “Zeki-Effendi” (see pp. 49, 168 and 290).

It is an unfortunate fact that to understand the Sephardic legacy in Bosnia-Hercegovina one must make one’s way through wide strata of Serbian-fueled propaganda, much of it disguised as scholarship. Finally, according to Andrić, “the only remaining trace of Bosnia’s Sephardic Jews” after the Holocaust was the “Spanish” cemetery. In an afterword written by the controversial Bosnian literary scholar Zdenko Lesić and also attached to *Tales of Old Sarajevo*, the claim is repeated: “They disappeared ... vanished.”

Andrić was wrong. The Bosnian Sephardim and their culture did not disappear from the earth. In Sarajevo, *Sephardismo* is an iron rose; it persists in its survival, however attenuated, even in the worst circumstances.

Note

1. Translated by Celia Hawkesworth and Christina Pribičević-Zorić, London, Vallentine Mitchell, 1997.

[Published in Walter (Sarajevo), November 11, 2003]

In Bucharest

Sloshing through flooded streets in a shabby neighborhood of Tulcea, a Romanian city of 100,000 on the Danube River delta, we hunted for the elusive Tulcea synagogue. Our only knowledge of it came from a passing guidebook reference. It was mid-July, 1995, semi-tropically hot, and raining. One street was dangerously flooded, with a major whirlpool forming in the middle of the intersection, but we pressed ahead, asking for directions from the townspeople.

All the Romanian Orthodox churches as well as the 19th-century Aziziye mosque, which we passed by, were beautiful but neglected. In contrast, as we approached the synagogue on the city's main street, the building appeared bright and clean – testimony to the fact that Jews, however persecuted in Romanian history, had refused to surrender to Communist atheism. The synagogue's twin domes and constellation of six-pointed stars, its blue doors, and iron fence held out the possibility of dignity and hope.

Romania, dusty and poor, is filled with hidden curiosities, some beautiful, some ugly. Its impoverishment cannot be understated after 45 years of Communism culminating in the rule of Nicolae and

Elena Ceausescu – the most bizarre of the declining Communist dictatorships in East Europe and, until the rise of Milošević, the most criminal.

Bucharest, the capital, is extraordinarily dismal at first glance. I arrived there, also, in the rain. The first sight, as the airliner sloped down through the stormy sky over the Carpathian Mountains, was Ceausescu's grandiose People's Palace, a neo-Stalinist horror of columns upon columns.

On the ground, passing through empty streets, I felt I had arrived at the developing world's lowest end. Between green but unkempt swaths of park land, tasteless Communist dormitories arose, their balconies already sagging. Nineteenth-century baroque and rococo palaces displayed their ruined faces, and there seemed to be few shops or other attractions to break the lugubrious spell.

In the bright sunlight of the following days, however, even Bucharest took on a certain magic, with people on the streets, obviously trying their best to create a new life. Women promenaded hand in hand, some in dowdy dresses, others in see-through blouses approximating Italian fashions. Romanian is a Latin language, related to Italian, Spanish, and French, and its people, notwithstanding their Eastern Orthodox faith, have an easygoing manner and even a certain flair.

To get to Tulcea from Bucharest, one crosses the Danube into Dobrudja, a notably cosmopolitan area once under Roman and later Ottoman rule. As elsewhere in the former Communist zone, Romania has been swept by tides of resurgent nationalism, but the kind of resentments that led to the tragedy of former Yugoslavia seem distant from Dobrudja.

"Thirteen ethnic groups live in Dobrudja," said Eugen Tarhon, governor of the Danube Delta ecological protection zone. "But it is only recently that they have become aware of their division into 13 groups. People have lived together in Dobrudja for centuries." Tarhon is working to save a vast area filled with rare bird species, but he and his staff emphasized that the balance of the region's human inhabitants is no less worth saving.

Pleasant reassurances from idealists and Romania's president, Ion



The Bucharest Choral Temple, 1935. (Photograph by Stephen Schwartz)



The 1846 Sephardic synagogue, Bucharest, 1995. (*Photograph by Stephen Schwartz*)

Iliescu, notwithstanding, other elements of the cultural panorama are less promising. Anti-Jewish humor is a national pastime, and any indulgence in anti-Communist jokes leads inexorably to cruel jabs in pseudo-Yiddish dialect about alleged Jewish avarice and dishonesty. A violently Jew-baiting journal, *Romania Mare* [*Great Romania*], filled with crass cartoons and headlines about “Powerful Jewish Stalinists,” may be found on the streets, though it is absent from the main kiosks. The extremist Greater Romania Party, or PRM, which publishes it, is a low-level partner in Iliescu’s government, although he has criticized its strident anti-Semitism.

Iliescu himself, though vastly more accessible than Ceausescu might ever have been, has yet to free himself from his Communist past. An interview, such as I had with him in Bucharest, becomes an opportunity to listen to him speak in bureaucratic generalities. When it comes to the Jews, Iliescu is friendly but vaporish: the president said he felt at home in Israel, which he recently visited, hearing Romanian spoken by a community there that numbers 400,000. “We have very good relations with the Jewish community here,” he said.

Nonetheless, no Romanian Christian I met had heard of Paul Celan, a Jew and one of the greatest 20th-century poets, who was born Paul Antschel in 1920 and who lived in Bucharest until 1947. Few recognized the name of the surrealist painter Victor Brauner, born in the northeast of Romania in 1903, whose canvases now fetch enormous sums from Japanese collectors. Perhaps had their names been more “Romanian-sounding,” like Bratianu or Calinescu, Romania would be prouder of their genius.

Brauner’s greatness is honored, however, in a most appropriate place: two of his works hung in the office of Nicolae Cajal, physician and president of the Romanian Academy of Sciences, and president of the country’s Federation of Jewish Communities. Cajal, the son of a Sephardic–Ashkenazic marriage, whose forebears spoke Judeo-Spanish, received visitors in a complex of buildings surrounding the Bucharest Choral Temple, a 19th-century, neo-Moorish Ashkenazic wonder, sparkling in the sun of Sf. Vineri (“Holy Friday”) Street near the middle of the city.

Compared with Jewish communities in other post-Communist lands, Romanian Jewry has in some ways been lucky. Jews, totaling somewhere between a registered total of 16,000 and a more flexible estimate three times that, still live in 150 Romanian cities and towns. The community maintains four old-age homes as well as 24 medical dispensaries for the aged. Many who have stayed have also stayed religious. The Choral Temple enjoys a *minyan* every day. In Cajal's words, the community is "old but not senile."

I visited the Choral Temple on Friday, July 7, 1995, and as the Sabbath eve approached, a small crowd – a *Chasid* in black, a family, some older men in *kippot* – began to file into the courtyard, past the Holocaust memorial built in 1991 after Ceausescu's fall.

Abruptly, one of the older men waiting for sundown approached me and asked, "Sephardi?" I am not, but I am always interested in Sephardic matters. We left the Choral Temple and proceeded a couple of blocks, into a dusty, empty street, dodging rickety streetcars, through rubble-filled lots. On one side, scrawny dogs foraged; on the other, a crippled Gypsy woman sat, staring blankly, against a ruined wall. Younger folk picked their way across the devastated expanse that was once a Jewish district. Across the square stands another Ashkenazic synagogue, now a museum of Jewish history.

Then, through a jagged hole in a wall, my guide led me into a shaded courtyard. He had placed a handkerchief on his head; I had brought a *kippah* from the Choral Temple. Suddenly, I was facing a tablet reading, "This synagogue, built in the year 1846, has been declared a major architectural monument by the Romanian Academy." In front of me stood a gorgeous, blue-walled building that served the Bucharest Sephardim even as it was being repaired; but it remained in use. In a tiny prayer room next door, a single Jew was praying. Some part of me was home.

* * *

Notes from 2002–03: *Bucharest, Friday, July 7, 1995: Some part of me was home. But there was a hole in my heart, and another side to this reverie. The*



The Aziziye mosque in Tulcea, Romania, 1995. (Photograph by Stephen Schwartz)

night before I had seen a headline in a Romanian daily: Srebrenica was falling. I let out a cry of alarm, surprising my companions.

On the way to Bucharest, flying from Vienna, I had looked south as we passed the meridian of east Bosnia, and somehow I knew something was afoot there. Contrails in the sky revealed air patrols ... by whom? The Europeans? Later I realized I was flying over people dying.

Srebrenica fell, and I telephoned the San Francisco Chronicle begging for authorization to proceed from Bucharest there, a distance smaller than that between San Francisco and Los Angeles. But to get there would require an expense budget and other complications, and the Chronicle said no.

I wondered how many Bosnian Muslims died in Srebrenica at each moment while I flew from Vienna, and while, in Bucharest, I discussed Celan, who lived through the Holocaust; and how many might have been slain as I pressed the shutter to photograph the Aziziye mosque in Tulcea, a reminder that Muslims had once been present throughout the Balkans. Later I learned that the Albanian national hero Ismail Qemali Vlora had been Ottoman governor at Tulcea, 125 years ago. I imagined him praying in the Aziziye mosque; I saw him; I felt I became him, walking in his footsteps through an era that, like his, saw continuing ethnic terror in the Balkans.¹

Ismail Qemali Vlora had used the power of the Ottoman state to assist the Jews of Romania, who were persecuted by their Christian rulers beyond measure. He wrote of "the respect all [Muslims] owe to the race from which sprang the truth of all religions and all the intelligence possessed by humanity through revelation, which urged us to try to remedy the misfortunes of the [Romanian] Jewish population." His were acts of human solidarity that commanded a similar action in return.

Paul Celan had disproved the argument of the German Adorno, who claimed that poetry could not survive in a world after Auschwitz. I wrote the following poem when I returned to San Francisco. Later, when I went to live in Bosnia, I read this work at the 1999 Sarajevo Poetry Days. I also served as a volunteer researcher for the Netherlands Institute of War Documentation, on their inquiry into Srebrenica.

Although this sequence of events weighed upon me, I never thought of a rather obvious matter: the Romanians are Orthodox Christians, like the Serbs and Greeks. Later it was revealed that the Greeks had been present in the Serbian terror offensive at Srebrenica.² There were occasionally similar rumors about Romanians, but in Bucharest, when Srebrenica fell, there was no sense of engagement with the "Orthodox cause," or jubilation, or hatred expressed against Muslims. I knew this then, better than I could have known any Slavic opinion, because the Latinic Romanian language was easy for me to read. Thus the Romanians remain, in my esteem, a decent and civilized nation, notwithstanding their crude Judeophobia.

I edited the present volume after the events of September 11, 2001, and there was nothing I thought to change in the wake of that horror. I would only add the comment of H. E. Mustafa efendija Cerić, chief of the Bosnian Muslim clergy, at the unveiling of the Srebrenica memorial, in 2002: "We pray for sorrow to become hope, for revenge to become justice, and for mothers' tears to become a reminder so that Srebrenica and New York will never happen again to anyone, anywhere."

In Bucharest

In Bucharest when Srebrenica fell
 Talking of Paul Celan and Victor Brauner,
 I felt a shock, knowing what would come:
 The Drina Muslims had nowhere else to flee.



Ferida Osmanović, who fled from Srebrenica, hanged herself near the UN base at Tuzla, 1995. (*Photograph by Darko Bandić* © Darko Bandić, used by permission)

There is no darker night than Bucharest's;
My companions and I groped through broken streets,
Laughing and flirting, guided by Gypsy boys.
But from nearby Serbia, darkness was made complete.

I remember Croatia at war. Romania was calm;
But on all sides friends of my friends lay tortured and dead.
Mortar shells destroyed Mostar's beauty.
Slashed and blackened corpses stank, unburied.

At Srebrenica, Dutch “peacekeepers” ran away.
 Like a wolf upon sheep, the Serbian *četniks* fell
 Upon the refugees of Srebrenica
 For the “crime” of armed resistance on the Drina.

Like wolves the Serbian *četniks* came from the hills
 To kill and rape men, women, and children.
 In Bucharest, I thought the Romanian language
 Had finally, fully opened the Balkans to me.

The *četniks* entered Srebrenica like wolves,
 And when I flew back home, a few days later,
 First in Frankfurt, then in San Francisco
 I saw the image that best defines our era:

A Muslim woman had hanged herself in despair,
 From a tree, by the road, somewhere near Srebrenica,³
 After the Dutch “peacekeepers” ran away,
 After I talked of Celan in Bucharest.

And her picture was in all the papers, and on television;
 She was young and beautiful, even in death.

Notes

1. See his irreplaceable volume *The Memoirs of Ismail Kemal Bey*, London, Constable [1920], reprinted as *The Memoirs of Ismail Kemal Vlora and His Work for the Independence of Albania*, Tirana, Toena, 1997.
2. See the immensely important work on this topic of Takis Michas, whose book I tried to get published in London. For an anticipatory comment on the “Greek problem,” see my article “Greece Wants Religions Stamped on New I.D. Cards,” *Forward*, February 19, 1993.
3. Much later, I learned the victim killed herself near the United Nations base at Tuzla, where she had fled.

[Published in *Forward*, July 28, 1995]

To Elias Canetti: A Memorial for the Balkan Sephardim

In Zurich, on August 13, 1994, the Nobel Prize literature laureate Elias Canetti died, aged 89. He was the greatest literary exponent of the Balkan Sephardic civilization of which he was the most distinguished latter product. Canetti once commented that he had “succeeded in grabbing this century by the throat.” If this is true, the motion was rather like that of a drowning man who escapes oblivion by a last convulsive act. He left this life at a time when Serbian snipers threatened to obliterate the collective memory of the Bosnian Sephardim, having seized Sarajevo’s old “Spanish” cemetery as a firing post.

Canetti was a Jew proud of his Sephardic legacy. He was born and raised in a household where Judeo-Spanish was spoken, in the Bulgarian town of Rushchuk, on the Danube. Rushchuk, with 33,000 inhabitants at the time of his birth, was old: founded by the Romans, it was famous for its Ottoman mosques as well as for its role in the Russo-Turkish wars, in which it was coveted by the tsar’s troops. Since 1878, Bulgaria had been independent from the

Ottoman empire, but “Oriental” influences remained strong.

Rushchuk was also known for its Sephardim, who as elsewhere throughout the Balkans, maintained their Iberian speech in private life, but above all in romantic and mystical songs and popular sayings. The town was visited by European linguists recording Judeo-Spanish culture in the late 19th century.

As the son of a prosperous Sephardic merchant family, Canetti was taken away from the Balkans as a youth, first spending a brief period in Britain, then beginning an education in German-speaking countries as was typical of the Sephardic elite. He studied in Zurich and Frankfurt, but like thousands of promising adolescents from the Balkan borderlands, he was drawn to the University of Vienna, where he received a doctorate in chemistry, and then to that city's sparkling literary scene during the 1920s.

As a writer he would dedicate himself to the German language, in which his Romanian-born Ashkenazic colleague, Paul Celan, also excelled. What an irony that two of the greatest German authors of the 20th century should be Balkan Jews, from communities wiped out by Nazism! But at home Canetti and his wife, Venetia Toubner-Calderón, known as Veza and also Sephardic (and a writer of some distinction herself), spoke Judeo-Spanish until her death in 1963. In this sense Canetti was a living monument to a part of the Eastern European past hidden, so to speak, in the folds of German and Austrian history: the time when the Danubian frontier thrived with Sephardic as well as Ashkenazic Jewish culture.

The Judeo-Spanish world of the Balkans seems, to later generations that know only the tradition of Sephardic singing, as a “lost paradise” of lyricism and faith, centered on the great cities of Vienna, Istanbul, and Venice, as well as the regional capitals of Sarajevo, Skopje, Salonika, and Izmir. There and in those cities' hinterlands the Sephardim, in synagogue and family, preserved and recreated their Spanish past.

The radical destruction of that culture by war, in a way that had loud echoes in the later Balkan conflicts, began almost coincidentally with Canetti's birth in 1905. Hundreds of thousands of Sephardim lived in Bulgaria, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Serbia



Elias Canetti (1905–94). (*Photograph courtesy of Getty Images*)

when the Turkish empire's Balkan possessions began to slip from its grasp. A wholesale uprooting of the Macedonian Sephardim began in 1912, with the onset of the 20th century's first cycle of Balkan wars. The destruction of these ancient communities was an "invisible" chapter in the overall Holocaust of European Jewry. And, of course, nearly all trace of them vanished in the later, main act of the Holocaust. Then, although the Bulgarian authorities protected Jews within the borders of Bulgaria proper, they helped the Nazis deport and exterminate 7,000 Jews living in what is now the Macedonian republic.

Although Canetti wrote with exceptional originality about his

Sephardic origins – which he considered eccentric and troubling, particularly in the close grip of his mother and his pious relatives – little of the Sephardic Holocaust appears directly in his work. That very silence in the presence of personal catastrophe is intensely Balkan. As a representative of the Sephardic intellectual élite from the old southeast European frontier, his mission was transcendent: to perfect his command of a culturally dominant linguistic medium, namely German, and to introduce into that language and literature a nearly mystical questioning of human motives, habits, and fate.

It is also very Central European that Canetti's fundamental work should have been set out in two definitive books from his early years. Their theme, as described by the critic Alfred Kazin, was "the plight of the self in our century of intimidation and totalitarian domination."

They were the novel, *Die Blendung* (1935), titled in English *Auto-Da-Fe*, and a prose study, *Crowds and Power*, published in 1960. *Auto-Da-Fe* is the grim tale of a China expert, Peter Kien, whose brutal housekeeper takes over his life and who suffers a nervous breakdown, leading to the burning of his magnificent library. Like the Balkan Sephardim from which Canetti sprang, who were destroyed in a maelstrom of violence, the obscure and contradictory Kien is destroyed by a hostile environment. The book was been widely interpreted as a parable of fascism in Germany and Austria during the 1930s.

Along with Veza and others who shared his origins, the young Canetti was something of a radical socialist. *Crowds and Power*, on which he labored for three decades, originated in his experience during an uprising of Vienna's socialist workers in 1927. It is a philosophical inquiry into the role of frenzy and mass excitement in human psychology – a topic that, as the massacres in Bosnia show, retains its Balkan relevance.

His memoir *The Torch in My Ear* (published in English in 1982) shows too that he identified strongly with the radical social criticism and humor of Vienna's coffeehouses, symbolized by the satirical journalist Karl Kraus, editor of *Die Fackel* [*The Torch*]. A similar gravitas and wit inform many of his other books: *The Voices*

of Marrakesh (1967), *The Human Province* (1972), *The Conscience of Words* (1979), *Earwitness: Fifty Characters* (1982), *Kafka's Other Trial* (1988), *The Secret Heart of the Clock* (1989), and *The Agony of Flies* (1994). Two further volumes of memoirs appeared: *The Tongue Set Free* (1979) and *The Play of the Eyes* (1986).

Canetti's memoirs were so detailed that he was unable to cover much more than the first third of his life in the books finished before his death. In 1938, with the arrival of Hitler's armies, Canetti fled Austria for England, where he took up citizenship and long remained. He thus escaped the ultimate horror of Nazi genocide.

As a major representative of the old Sephardic Balkans, Canetti seems also to have been the last survivor of a kind of versatile and extraordinary productive man of letters – also typical of Central Europe – who produced plays, travel writing and aphoristic collections in addition to his brilliant and difficult fiction and essays.

He did not tell all he knew, yet will remain as a challenge and model for future writers, in other languages as well as German.

[*Published in Forward, November 4, 1994*]

Bibliographical Notes on Religious Judaism in the Balkans

[The writings collected in the present volume are concerned much less with the continuity of “standard” Jewish observance in the Balkans than with Judeo-Spanish popular traditions and their relations with the broader culture of the region. However, three normative topics are worthy of brief notice here: the rabbinical history of Sarajevo, Judaica Croatica, aspects of Triestine and Slovenian Jewry, and the publication of Haggadot for Seder use in the aftermath of the Yugoslav collapse.]

One of the most controversial figures in late Jewish history is very likely the most famous rabbi associated with Sarajevo: Nehemiah Hiyya Cajón (c. 1655–c. 1730) (see also Appendix). Gershom Scholem, who writes definitively on him (as Hayon) in his collection *Kabbalah* (New York, Meridian, 1978), cites Cajón’s own claim that he was born in Egypt, but the historian of Bosnian Jewry, R. Moritz Levi, insisted on his birth in Bosnasaray. He is reported to have played a leading role in Jewish affairs in many Balkan cities, including Belgrade, Skopje, and Vlorë, as well as in Italy, before travelling to Prague, Berlin, and Amsterdam, and later in Turkey and North Africa.

Cajón, after serving as a rabbi in Sarajevo, became notorious as an

alleged “second-wave” enthusiast of Sabbetai Zvi. Scholem describes him as reflecting the “enlightening” aspects of post-Lurianic Kabbalah as well as the Sabbetaian movement and as having “argued ... that it is lawful to learn Kabbalah from everyone, not only from those who conform to traditional Orthodox criteria.” Cajón’s writings came under intense fire from a leading anti-Sabbetaian polemist, Haham Zvi Hirsch ben Yakov Ashkenazi (1660–1718), who was also rabbi in Sarajevo. The latter personage, although born in Moravia, to which his father had escaped from Cossack massacres, adopted Sephardic religious customs including the Sephardic rabbinical title *haham*. Thus, for a time, world Jewry was convulsed by an argument between two scholars who happened to be *Sarajlije*. Its consequences continue to be felt in Jewish religious life, and a biography of Cajón is long overdue. In 2003, the excellent website Virtual Judaica offered for sale a copy of Cajón’s *Oz Le-Elolim* [*Strength of the Lord*], printed in Berlin in 1713.

Haham Zvi is memorialized in “Sarajevski Rabini,” an important roster assembled by Dr. Haim Kamhi and published in a memorial to the Bosnian Jews.¹ However, more attention is given therein to a man who holds a higher position among religious Jews today: R. David Pardo, “the *gaon* of Sarajevo,” who served as rabbi in the Bosnian metropolis from the 1760s to 1781. Born in Venice, he also resided in Dubrovnik and Split; his first book, *Shoshanim le-David* [*David’s Roses*], was written in Split and printed in Venice in 1752. It and his other works were very influential in the development of Jewish religious thought. Liturgical poems and prayers he authored were adopted in the Sephardic prayerbook for daily and festival observances, and his commentaries on the *Tosefta*, a compendium of the Oral Law considered a supplement to the *Mishnah*, are the standard.

A copy of *Shoshanim le-David* was also offered for sale by Virtual Judaica in 2003. It was described on the site as follows: “The Author’s first work, a commentary on the *Mishnah*. The somewhat sharp language employed in the first part in criticizing contemporary scholars gave rise to friction between the Author and R. David Corinaldi and R. Mas’ud Rokeah in Leghorn. But after he mitigated his language in the second part and published an apology, a reconciliation took place.

“R. David Samuel b. Jacob Pardo (1718–1790), rabbinical author and poet, was born in Venice. He went to Sarajevo for a time as a result of a dispute over an inheritance, and from there to Spalato [Split], in Dalmatia. From approximately 1738 he was appointed rabbi of the town. From 1760 he was rabbi of Sarajevo. From 1776 to 1782 he traveled to Erez

Israel, settling in Jerusalem where he served as head of the yeshivah *Hesed le-Avraham u-Vinyan Shelomo*. Pardo was regarded as one of Jerusalem's great rabbis. Of his many works his series of commentaries and novellae on tannaitic literature are especially original."

Eliezer Segal, in *Holidays, History, and Halakbah*,² notes with regard to celebrations of the holiday of *Simchat Torah*: "when asked to rule on the use of fireworks in the synagogue of Sarajevo (a fashion that had lately been introduced from Venice), Rabbi David Pardo reminded the opponents that the rowdy activities were inspired 'by the joy of [the] commandments, and were for the glory of the Lord's perfect *Torah*, which has always sustained us and our forefathers, and which can be counted on to be forgiving ...'" Few comments seem more obviously *Sarajli* in spirit. Pardo founded a dynasty of Sarajevo rabbis, including his successor, Isak Pardo, who also published various significant works, and his sons Jakob and Avram Pardo. The commentator on the Virtual Judaica site points out that the latter son of David Pardo married the daughter of R. Hayyim Joseph David Azulai, known as Chida (1724–1806), and another pillar of Judaism in his time.

A detailed study of the Sarajevo rabbis, their *Yeshiva*, and their legacy would be an immensely important contribution. Purchase of Hebrew collectanea by Sarajevo rabbis and their donation to Bosnian libraries would be commendable, to say the least.

* * *

Croatia does not consider itself part of the Balkans, and, aside from Dalmatia – Split and Dubrovnik – its Jewry was mainly Ashkenazi and "Neolog" (i.e. Reform, originating in Hungary). Croatian Jewry deserves a separate study, above all because of its remarkable history since the collapse of Yugoslavia. For example, Croatia is the only former Yugoslav republic to have founded a "new," i.e. a revived, historic Jewish community, in the town of Koprivnica. I have written about the synagogue of Dubrovnik; Split also possesses a remarkable Jewish history, exemplified by its synagogue, its "Jewish Street," and a historic bookstore identified with the Morpurgo family, famous in Jewish chronicles all over the Adriatic. All these monuments are located near the walls of Diocletian's Palace, the most famous Roman structure on the eastern Adriatic. Split had been the main transfer point for relief efforts dedicated to Sarajevo during the late war, and I visited the Jews of Split in 2000. At the same time, I went to the related

establishments in Rijeka and Osijek, which I had not previously seen.

Croatian Jews have been as tormented by political alignments as their ex-Yugoslav peers. In 2001, I reported in the *Forward* on a controversy after the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum announced that it would return to the Croatian authorities exhibits and archives from Jasenovac, the Ustaša concentration camp maintained during World War II. Nineteen cases of documents and relics had been stored in Banja Luka, in the Serb-occupied zone of Bosnia-Herzegovina, after Jasenovac was seized by the Serbs during the 1991–95 fighting. U.S. military personnel removed the hoard from Banja Luka to Washington with signing of the Dayton Agreement and the return of Jasenovac to Croatian control.

When the officials of the Holocaust Museum announced their intention to hand the materials back to the Croats, for display at a refurbished museum in Jasenovac, the Croatian ambassador to Washington, Ivan Grdešić, commented, “We want to emphasize our common history, which lasted for generations. The Holocaust represented a terrible human loss for Croatia, the loss of outstanding leaders in our community.” However, Bosnian Serb representatives argued against handing the Jasenovac artifacts back to the Croats.³

In the Croatian capital of Zagreb, the Jewish community (JCZ) and one of its main associated institutions, the Miroslav Šalom Freiburger Cultural Society, have carried out an extremely useful publishing program since the end of the Communist regime. A fine documentary pamphlet appeared in 1993, *Jewish Heritage in Zagreb and Croatia*. Among later titles, I would indicate two collections of papers: *Anti-Semitism Holocaust Anti-Fascism*, published in English as well as Croatian (1997), and *Dva Stoljeća Povijesti i Kulture Židova u Zagrebu i Hrvatskoj*, issued in Croatian only (1998). In addition, two important books issued by the JCZ with extensive English summaries are noted elsewhere in the present work: Melita Švob’s *Jews in Croatia*, and *Jews in Dubrovnik*, by Dr. Bernhard Stulli.

Gallery and museum expositions on Jewish life have been a regular occurrence in Croatia since 1990. One such was *Discovery of America: Sephardim and the Republic of Ragusa*, organized by Matica Hrvatska, the leading Croatian cultural foundation, along with the Jewish Community of Dubrovnik and the Dubrovnik Historical Archive.

The JCZ held an excellent show in 2000 on 19th-century synagogue architecture in Croatia. The catalogue includes considerable information on local Jewish communities in rural Croatia: *Arhitektura Sinagoga u Hrvatskoj u Doba Historizizma*, edited by Zlatko Karać.⁴



The Morpurgo Bookshop, Split, the most famous Jewish cultural establishment in Dalmatia, 2004. (*Photograph by Stephen Schwartz*)

The JCZ has also printed items for practical and ritual use. These include an attractive annual pocket datebook, *Židovski kalendar*. In 1998, the JCZ printed a handsome new edition of the 434-page *Molitvenik* (*Siddur*) that was published in facing Hebrew/Aramaic and Croatian 60 years before, by Rabbi Miroslav Šalom Freiburger (1904–1943). R. Freiburger died in Auschwitz. His prayerbook is considered a bibliographical gem.

At the end of the 1990s, R. Kotel Dadon, who had taken over religious functions in Zagreb, produced a series of prayerbooks, on plasticized pages with colored illustrations, in the name of the Chief Rabbinate of Croatia. These new *seforim* include prayers in Hebrew and Aramaic with Latin letters, but with directions for completion of rituals in Croatian. They have also been adopted by the Sarajevo synagogue. Three in my possession are *Kabalat Šabat* (Iyar 5759), *Songs and Blessings for the Sabbath* (*Pjesme i Blagoslovi za Šabat*, Iyar 5759), and *Mahzor Za Roš Hašana i Jom Kipur* (Tišri 5760).

None of these publications is available, to my knowledge, outside Croatia. To purchase the prayerbooks, one must register at the JCZ.

* * *

The small alpine country of Slovenia has a limited Jewish history, entirely Ashkenazic except for the Italian Sephardic community in Trieste, a city considered “Slovene” by many although not included in the country’s territory.

Trieste, the capital of the northeastern Adriatic, and the city that drew, among others, so cosmopolitan a figure as James Joyce, represents yet another chapter of Jewish history deserving of particular and extensive study. Under Austrian rule, its Italo-Sephardim had considerable influence over the communities in Split and Dubrovnik. An exceptionally useful volume on Triestine Jewry and its religious and cultural importance is *The Port Jews of Habsburg Trieste*, by Lois C. Dubin.⁵

The Morpurgo family, also known in Split, were prominent in Trieste Jewish life for generations. Among its many distinguished members was Rachel Morpurgo (1790–1871), famous as the first woman known to have written poetry in modern Hebrew, and as a feminist.⁶ Born in Trieste, she was a cousin of another Triestine, Shmuel David Luzzatto (Shadal), an outstanding 19th-century Jewish scholar. Her poems included a commentary on the chaos of the 1848

revolutions in Europe, in which she commented, in words applicable to the atrocities of the Yugoslav collapse:

All, young and old, put on the sword,
 More voracious than the beasts of the forest;
 All cry for liberty, the wise and the ignorant;
 The fury of battle rages like the stormy sea.⁷

Revolution and war were not the only tribulations afflicting the Jews of Trieste, to which they responded with sanctified words. Disease was another powerful source of anxiety. I possess an example of Jewish religious printing from that city, a pamphlet in Hebrew and Italian. Issued in a single signature of 16 pages by the printing house of the Lloyd Austriaco shipping company, it is titled *Prayer Compiled by Sabbato Graziadio Treves, Chief Rabbi of Trieste, During the First Plague of Asiatic Cholera in 1836*. It was recited during two epidemics that followed, and translated into Italian by A. V. Morpurgo and A. Luzzatto in July 1855, for printing that year, to alleviate yet another such attack.⁸

The Treves family had migrated from Venice, where they were well known, to Trieste, toward the end of the 18th century. The prayer he wrote, like the poem of Rachel Morpurgo, included much that could have been addressed to the Creator by the Jews of Sarajevo, facing war and plague over the centuries. It was printed along with Psalms 91 and 20 and other scriptural citations. The main text reads:

“Hope of Israel, its salvation in times of anguish! Healer of broken hearts, who soothes sufferings, Oh Mighty One, look with your compassionate eye, because our hearts are throbbing, and fearful and trembling we are, now that your anger has poured out even unto this city, and death has begun to strike down your beloved people of Israel!

“We are here, all of us turned to You, because You are our Compassionate God, ready always to invoke you with sincerity, to beg of you with all our hearts! Look again at us from your holy throne, from heaven, and protect your people of Israel, freeing us from atrocious agony and from the murderous contagion; and from within your scorn bring clemency in favor of your people and all of the inhabitants of the earth, and above all the residents of this city; ensure that they do not succumb to cruel illness and that the epidemic be extinguished from their bodies; and for those not as yet taken as prey by deadly illness, Oh Mighty One, provide quick healing, restore and strengthen their vitality, rescue from death those chosen as victims, and bring

relief and balm to all their sufferings. Oh Eternal God of Israel! Have compassion on your people, and if we are charged with sins, let them not be an occasion for fear. Oh Mighty One, grant pardon through your great mercy, do not hide yourself from our miseries and pains, our wailing for our families, because death has entered our houses bringing slaughter and devastation. Merciful and compassionate God! Our penitent hearts are scarred, we repent of our sins, Oh Mighty One, do not ignore our prayers when we invoke you, and as a father to his children, so have mercy on your people and all people who are under the rule of our benevolent and generous Emperor and King⁹ (whose glory always increases); so that the epidemic does not advance beyond its bounds and enter ours, furiously attacking our people and their homes; and say to the angel-destroyer of the people: enough now! no more slaughter! since You the Eternal are good to all and your mercy extends to all your creatures. Remember, our God, your thirty attributes written in your law, as it is said: The Eternal God is omnipotent, merciful and compassionate, forbearing, of infinite benevolence and truth, who provides his grace to a thousand generations, pardoning crime, guilt, and sin.

“Oh Mighty One, save us, keep far from us the terrors of death, assure that dreadful events not afflict us, preserve us from all the plagues [of Egypt], from all calamities, that no scourge touch our wise men.”¹⁰

The prayer is accompanied by the following variation on *Yom Kippur* prayers, translated from Hebrew by S. D. Luzzatto:

Our Father, Our King, we have failed you.

Our Father, Our King, we have no heavenly King other than You.

Our Father, Our King, Oh Mighty One, we pray happily in respect for your Name.

Our Father, Our King, make us immune to harmful events.

Our Father, Our King, grant years of health to the sick among your people.

Our Father, Our King, lift all deadly threat from the nation that calls on you.

Our Father, Our King, lift from the children of your covenant epidemics, violent death, want, captivity, and ruin.

Our Father, Our King, strengthen us in our weakness.

Our Father, Our King, do away with the severity you have imposed on our fate.

Our Father, Our King, remove with all your mercy the memory of our guilt.

Our Father, Our King, grant pardon and remission for all our sins.

Our Father, Our King, erase from your record all our crimes and sins.

Our Father, Our King, act with compassion toward us and our little ones.

Our Father, Our King, hear our voice and have compassion and mercy on us.

Our Father, Our King, accept with clemency and grace our prayer.

Our Father, Our King, do not forget the young students in our religious schools.

Our Father, Our King, do not forget the babies still being weaned.

Our Father, Our King, do not forget innocent infants still at the breast.

Our Father, Our King, do not forget all whom we cannot watch over.

Our Father, Our King, do not forget, and save us.

Our Father, Our King, do not forget us with your mercy.

Our Father, Our King, do not forget that we carry the august, powerful, and prayerful name of your nation.

Our Father, Our King, graciously fulfill our prayers, although we are lacking in merit; treat us with charity and mercy, and make us to be saved.

The Morpurgos derived their name from Maribor (Marburg), a town in Slovenia. That country's most famous Jewish figure is probably Rabbi Yisrael ben Petachiah Isserlein (1390–1460), who also resided in Maribor. He was a correspondent of the “Maharil,” R. Yakov Moellin, and is recognized, with him, as a founder of later Ashkenazi religious practice.

The first Slovenian-language *Haggadah* was printed with the assistance of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (the “Joint”) in 2002; the community, credited by the “Joint” with 120 members, also issues a calendar.

Other *haggadot* have appeared in ex-Yugoslav countries. A good reproduction of the *Sarajevo Haggadah* has been kept in print by Svjetlost, Sarajevo, but is seldom actually used. A *Haggadah* in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Serbo-Croatian was issued in Jerusalem in 1996 under

the patronage of the “Joint” and the United Synagogue of America, a Conservative Jewish body.

Finally, a Hebrew/Aramaic/Serbo-Croatian *Haggadah* was issued by Ivan Ninić in 1994. Ninić had reprinted the 1823 Vienna *Haggadah* of Anton Schmid in Novi Sad in 1990, in Jewish typography only. The engravings in this edition, one of which is reproduced on page 44 of the present volume, were first printed in Amsterdam in 1695, and were standard in printed *Haggadot* for centuries. An extremely valuable catalogue of Jewish books printed in Serbia has also been published: Ženi Lebl, *Jevrejske Knige Štampane u Beogradu 1837–1905*.¹¹

Final Remarks on Nehemiah Hiyya Cajón

I have referred in the text to the “war” between one of the most controversial figures in late Jewish history, Nehemiah Hiyya Cajón (c. 1655–c. 1730), and a leading anti-Sabbetaian polemist, Haham Zvi Hirsch ben Yakov Ashkenazi (1660–1718), both rabbis in Sarajevo.

The “war” between Cajón and Haham Zvi, famous in rabbinical history, may have originated in an obscure, personal quarrel the two had in the synagogue and streets of Jewish Sarajevo. True *Sarajlije*, once they decided they hated each other, they became irreconcilable, unrestrainedly vindictive foes. A thorough account of the Cajón debate is to be found in Elisheva Carlebach’s *The Pursuit of Heresy: Rabbi Moses Hagiz and the Sabbatian Controversies*.¹²

Carlebach makes it clear that Cajón never openly professed Sabbetaian views, and cites the only open “messianic” reference in Cajón’s works: “Any person who dedicates his whole soul can attain the power to redeem Israel.” But Cajón was an authentic Balkan Sephard, a matter proven when, as Carlebach notes, he defended himself for publishing an Aramaic verse beginning, “in pronunciation and meter,” with words identical to a popular Spanish song, *La Bella Margarita*. Cajón admitted, “Most authors of sacred poetry in the Turkish provinces match the opening line of sacred works to a popular profane tune, so that the public can intone the words melodiously.” Cajón thus followed the custom described at the beginning of the present volume, in which the Hebrew poet Israel Najera, cited by Kalmi Baruh, engaged in “Hebrew–Spanish punning,” and evokes the habit of Sabbetai Zevi himself, who famously adored and often intoned the song *Meliselda*.

As a religious poet, Cajón also professed a lack of false modesty that might also be called *Sarajli*. He claimed that to read his work *Keter Ehyon* [*The Supernal Crown*] was equivalent to reading the whole *Zohar*! His passion for the dissemination of Kabbalah was such that, in Carlebach's words, reinforcing those of Scholem, his "open advocacy of individual inquiry into the most secret and sacred questions of religion, untrammelled by the bonds of tradition, obviated the obligations of submission to rabbinic authority and interpretation ... [The effect of his ideas] was to throw the doors of Kabbalistic inquiry open to all comers, to remove utterly every last vestige of esotericism that still accompanied study of the Kabbalah." Cajón declared, "the impulse to lay bare the truth came to him with 'the earliest blush of youth ... when I saw that even within the 'lore of truth,' so many versions abounded, no mind could tolerate them all." Carlebach affirms that Cajón "believed that this personal inquisitive imperative was incumbent upon all thinking men," and that the opening of Cajón's *Oz Le-Elohim* (Strength of the Lord) "is informed by the consciousness that he is advocating something bold and momentous."

The Cajón affair produced an immense quantity of religious polemics, of which only one book is easily accessible to readers today: *Esh Dat* [*The Fire of Faith*], by R. David Nieto (1654–1728), a leading persecutor of Cajón, which was printed in Hebrew and Spanish in London.¹³ The Spanish edition, subtitled *Fuego Legal*, has been republished in microfiche by IDC Publishers, Leiden. R. Nieto's arguments against Cajón, put forward in the form of a dialogue between Dan and Naphthali, are eloquent, in that he accuses Cajón of antinomianism, i.e. the denial of a distinction between good and evil. Nieto wrote, "Having for these purposes searched through, and examined all the Laws and Sects in the world, I find that not only the Christians and Muhammadans agree with us in the three Articles that consist in believing, *that there is a God; that he gave the Law to his People; and that he rewards the Just, and punishes the Bad.* [Although they differ from us in their explanation and application], yet the greater part of the Indians of the East and those of the West, or Americans, as also the greater part of the Africans, which are Blacks, and Barbarians, who worship the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, Domestic Animals as well as Wild Beasts, and Serpents and Lizards and all sorts of Insects and Vermin, and Idols of wood, and stone, all say, believe, and preach that after death, the Just are rewarded, and the Bad suffer excessive punishments, and torments for countless centuries."

It is curious to note that while an enemy of Cajón wrote and published in Spanish, Cajón himself did not; his arguments were clearly intended for the rabbinical elite, not the masses, notwithstanding his claims for the “personal inquisitive imperative” evoked by Carlebach. The consequences of Cajón’s radicalism continue to echo in Jewish religious culture, as seen by Carlebach’s irreplaceable volume, which deserves to be translated and printed in Bosnian.

Cajón’s work is extremely contradictory, especially when it is compared with contemporaneous developments in Islam and Christianity, and indeed, Carlebach cites an accusation that Cajón “confute[d] the Christian and Muslim religions.” Like certain Sufis, he wrote, “Who is wise? He who learns from all people. From this we learn that anyone who refuses to learn from *all* people is not wise, but foolish.” Like the Christians, however, he strayed into an anthropomorphic view of the Creator, mediated by his reading of Lurianic Kabbalah; Cajón’s critics anathematized his call for unrestricted mystical study as defiance of law, tradition, and morality, and therefore as a particular anthropomorphism, through which humans could imitate the attributes of the creator. To correct this error, his opponents cited the works of Abraham Kohen Herrera, previously mentioned, who equated the Kabbalistic divine emanations with the Platonic system of philosophy. Cajón condemned Platonism as alien to Judaism; but these are topics I have chosen to avoid in these writings, preferring to ponder the lives and adventures of these rabbis, rather than their doctrines. Theology is riskier than history. I reread the words of the Sabbetaian woman follower in Sarajevo, in the 17th century, as recalled by Haham Zvi: “Who wants me to give him the smell of paradise?” They remind me, after September 11, 2001, of the similar appeals made to Islamist extremists who infiltrated into Bosnia-Herzegovina during the late war, seeking martyrdom, and the others, who committed acts of suicidal terror. Yet the road to Sarajevo affirms life, not death.

Of one thing we may be certain: Jewry was a powerful element in 18th-century Bosnian life. The son of Haham Zvi, Rabbi Jacob Emden, referred to his father’s “post as rabbi of the community of Sarajevo in Bosnia, where very rich men lived,” intimating they were as wealthy as the Jews of Buda (Ofen) in Hungary.¹⁴

Vivid recollection of the controversy over Cajón, as well as the great works of David Pardo, animated the lives of the local Jews in the period of the “Sarajevo *Purim*”, centering on the experiences of

Rav Moshe Danon. So the life of Rav Danon and the pilgrimage to his grave have echoed in the chronicles of Moshe ben Rafail Attias, or “Zeki-Effendi,” of Moric Levy, and of today’s surviving remnant of Sarajevo Jews.

Notes

1. Kamhi, Dr. Samuel, ed., *Spomenica – 400 Godina od Dolaska Jevreja u Bosnu i Hercegovinu*, Sarajevo, 1966.
2. Jason Aronson, New York, 2001.
3. Schwartz, Stephen, “Serbs Protest Croats’ Claim to Holocaust-era Artifacts,” *Forward*, March 16, 2001.
4. Kulturno Društvo “Miroslav Šalom Freiburger,” Zagreb, 2000.
5. Stanford University Press, 1999.
6. Sources on Rachel Morpurgo include Kaufman, Shirley, Tamar S. Hess, and Galit Hasan-Roken, *The Defiant Muse*, New York, The Feminist Press of CUNY, 1999; also Slouschz, Nahum, *The Renaissance of Hebrew Poetry*, available as an ebook at <http://gutenberg.kkb.bib.dk/etext05/7rheb10.txt>, and Latz, Y. Levine, “The Woman Who Translated the Haggadah into Italian,” at <http://www.haderech.co.il/English5.html>
7. Adapted from a version in Slouschz, op. cit.
8. *Pregbiere che si Recitano dagl’ Israeliti di Trieste durante l’Invasione del Cholera Asiatico, Recate in Italiano per cura di A. V. Morpurgo ed. A. Luzzatto nel Luglio 1855*, Trieste, Tipografia del Lloyd Austriaco, 1855.
9. The Habsburg monarch.
10. Translated from Italian by Stephen Schwartz, collated with Hebrew version. Thanks to Gina Grandinetti for assistance with the former and to N. B. for help with the latter.
11. Dečje Novine, Gornji Milanovac, 1990.
12. New York, Columbia University Press, 1990. Also see Hayoun, Maurice-Ruben, translated from the Hebrew, *Mémoires de Jacob Emden*, Paris, Les Editions du Cerf, 1992. While Elisheva Carlebach argues that the original adversary of Haham Zvi in Sarajevo, known as Hiyya Cajón *ba-Arukeh*, was the same person as the later controversialist, Maurice-Ruben Hayoun appears dubious about the identification. Nevertheless, Hayoun notes that various opponents of Haham Zvi drove him out of Bosnasaray.
13. Nieto, David, [*Esh Dat*] *Es Dat o Fuego Legal, Compuesto en Ydioma Hebraico y Traduzido en Romance, por El Excelentissimo Sr. H. H. R. David Nieto, En Londres, Año 5475, Por orden de los muy Ilustres SS^{tes} del MAHAMAD, Impreso por Tho. Ilive*. London, 1715.
14. Hayoun, op. cit.