In 1942, a Nazi officer tried to take the Bosnian National Museum's great treasure, the richly illuminated Sarajevo Haggadah. FLOC'H

When the Axis powers conquered and divided Yugoslavia, in the spring of 1941, Sarajevo did not fare well. The city cradled by mountains that Rebecca West once described as like "an opening flower" suddenly found itself absorbed into the Nazi puppet state of Croatia, its tolerant, cosmopolitan culture crushed by the invading German Army and the Croatian Fascist Ustashe. Hitler's ally, Ante Pavelic, who had headed the Ustashe through the nineteen-thirties, proclaimed that his new state must be "cleansed" of Jews and Serbs: "Not a stone upon a stone will remain of what once belonged to them."

The terror began on April 16th, when the German Army entered Sarajevo and sacked the city's eight synagogues. The Sarajevo *pinkas*, a complete record of the Jewish community from its earliest days, was confiscated and sent to Prague, never to be recovered. Deportations followed. Jews, Gypsies, and Serb resisters turned frantically to sympathetic Muslim or Croat neighbors to hide them. Fear of denunciation spread through the city, penetrating every workplace, even the imposing neo-Renaissance halls of the Bosnian National Museum.

The museum's chief librarian, an Islamic scholar named Dervis Korkut, was an unlikely figure of resistance, but he had already made his anti-Fascist feelings clear, in an article defending the city's beleaguered Jews. A handsome, dapper man with a neatly trimmed mustache, he wore well-tailored three-piece suits complemented by a fez. In early 1942, when Korkut heard that a Nazi commander, General Johann Fortner, had arrived at the museum to speak to its director, he immediately feared for the museum library's greatest treasure, a masterpiece of medieval Judaica known as the Sarajevo Haggadah. A Haggadah, from the Hebrew root "HGD"—"to tell"—relates the story of the exodus from Egypt, which Jews are commanded to tell to their children. It is used at the table during the Passover

Seder. (Wine stains on the parchments of the Sarajevo Haggadah testify that this book, though lavishly designed, was read at such family feasts.)

There were rumors, at the time, of Hitler's nascent plan for a "museum of an extinct race." Synagogues and community buildings in Josevof, the Jewish quarter of Prague, had been spared destruction so that, when all of Europe's Jews had been obliterated, it could become a caricature "Jew Town" for Aryan tourists to visit, populated by Czech actors in Hasidic garb. The museum's future exhibits would eventually fill fifty warehouses. The best of Europe's Judaica was being amassed as part of the general plunder under the authority of Alfred Rosenberg, the Reich Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories. Rosenberg's collection was intended to facilitate a new branch of scholarship: *Judenforschung ohne Juden* (Jewish studies without Jews). Hitler admired Rosenberg's impeccable Fascist aesthetics (Rosenberg had decried Expressionism as "syphilitic") and in 1940 had directed the Wehrmacht to extend all possible assistance to his unit. By the war's end, the Germans had looted more than thirty thousand items of Judaica—silk Torah mantles, prayer shawls, silver ritual cups and dishes, and portraits, kitchenware, and other domestic items that reflected centuries of Jewish life. And there were more than a hundred thousand Yiddish and Hebrew books. The Sarajevo Haggadah could easily have been one of them.

Korkut probably hadn't heard of Hitler's museum, but he had seen ancient Torah scrolls destroyed in Sarajevo's streets. When the museum's director, a respected Croatian archeologist who did not speak German, called for Korkut to act as a translator, a few minutes before his meeting with Fortner, Korkut pleaded to be allowed to take the Haggadah and keep it out of Nazi hands. The director was reluctant. "You will be risking your life," he warned. Korkut replied that the book was his responsibility as *kustos*—custodian of the library's two hundred thousand volumes. So the two men hurried to the basement, where the Haggadah was kept in a safe whose combination only the director knew. He took the book from a protective box and handed it to Korkut. Korkut lifted his coat and tucked the

small codex, which measured about six by nine inches, into the waistband of his trousers. He smoothed his jacket, making sure that no bulges broke the line of his suit, and the two men made their way back upstairs to face the General.

The man so determined to protect a Jewish book was the scion of a prosperous, highly regarded family of Muslim *alims*, or intellectuals, famous for producing judges of Islamic law. Dervis's brother, Besim, a professor of Arabic, made the first good translation of the Koran into Serbo-Croatian. Dervis, born in the old Ottoman capital of Bosnia, Travnik, in 1888, aspired to be a doctor, but his father insisted that he continue the family tradition of religious scholarship. He studied theology at Istanbul University and Near Eastern languages at the Sorbonne. He spoke at least ten languages and served for a time as the senior official in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia's ministry of religious affairs and as an honorary consul for France.

His interests were wide-ranging. He wrote papers on history and architecture, and a tract against alcohol abuse. But his abiding interest was the culture of Bosnia's minority communities, including Albanians and Jews. In 1941, after Yugoslavia tried to appease the Nazis by passing anti-Jewish laws, Korkut wrote a paper titled "Anti-Semitism Is Foreign to the Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina," in which he explored the benign history of Bosnia's intercommunal relations and pointed out that the Jews, rather than being the predatory financial manipulators of propaganda, were more likely to be found in the Bosnian underclass.

As a prominent Muslim intellectual, Korkut had come under intense pressure to join a Fascist-leaning group known as the Young Muslims, which served as a kind of proving ground for the Handjar, a Muslim division of the S.S. He refused. Later in the war, he also refused an order signed by Ante Pavelic, requiring him to relocate to "the Croatian People's Liberated Zagreb" to take charge of the library under the Ustashe government's control.

Korkut's passionate interest in Bosnia's cultural diversity manifested itself in his studies of the region's art and literature. He was fascinated by the myriad influences in Sarajevan writing—how a lyric poem composed by a Slav might use classical Arabic and yet echo Latin verse forms carried to Sarajevo from the court of Diocletian on the Dalmatian coast. Of all the treasures in his care, none embodied the possibilities of diversity—or the fragility of intercultural harmony—as exuberantly as the Sarajevo Haggadah. The little parchment codex, rich in gold and silver leaf, lavishly illuminated with precious pigments made from lapis lazuli, azurite, and malachite, was created in Spain, perhaps as early as the mid-fourteenth century, during the period known as the *convivencia*, when Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities lived in the *sol y sombra*—sun and shadow—of a shared existence. The illustrations resemble those of medieval Christian Psalters, but some of the decoration calls to mind an Islamic style of ornamentation. Quite apart from the opulence and artistry of the illustrations, the fact that they exist at all is extraordinary. Until the codex came to light, in 1894, art historians widely believed that figurative painting had been entirely suppressed among medieval Jews because of the injunction in the Ten Commandments, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or likeness of any thing"—a proscription echoed in many Islamic, and some Christian, societies. The content of the illustrations is often intriguing. In a scene that has mystified scholars, a depiction of a Spanish Seder includes a woman whose black skin and African features are in stark contrast to those of other family members around the table but who holds a piece of matzo—unleavened bread—and wears the costume of a wealthy Spanish Jew of the era.

The book's survival is remarkable. In 1492, Ferdinand and Isabella issued the Alhambra Decree expelling all Jews from Spain. If, as seems likely, the book left Spain with a Jewish family at that time, it was one of very few religious texts of its kind to escape confiscation and destruction. In Portugal, where many Spanish Jews found a brief refuge before being expelled a second time, ownership of Hebrew books became a capital offense. One man's account, from Lisbon in 1497,

tells how he "dug a grave among the roots of a blossoming olive tree" to hide his books, knowing that it was unlikely he would ever return to unearth them: "Yet, although a tree flourishing with lovely fruit stood there . . . did I call it 'Tree of Sorrow.'"

Sometime in the following century, the Haggadah found its way to Venice, where a polyglot Jewish community thrived on a tiny island that had previously served as the city's foundry, or *ghetto*. The first Jews, German loan bankers among them, had arrived in the early sixteenth century. Next came Levantine Jews, whose ties to the Ottoman Empire were valuable to the city's vast trading enterprise. The exiles from the Iberian Peninsula gradually increased the population, and the ghetto's tight-pressed multistory dwellings became the tallest in the city. Venice offered Jews property rights and legal protection rarely matched elsewhere in Europe at that time. Still, they had to wear a colored cap to identify themselves when they left the ghetto, and the ghetto's gates were locked each night. They were banned from most trades, including printing, and any Hebrew books that were not approved by an ecclesiastical censor of the Pope's Inquisition were destroyed in public burnings. Books could be destroyed or defaced for many perceived heresies —such as suggestions that the Messiah was yet to come, or arguments against the use of saints or any other intercessors as mediators between humans and an indivisible God, or any reference to Jews as "holy" or "pious." A Catholic priest, Giovanni Domenico Vistorini, inspected the Haggadah in 1609. Nothing is known of him beyond the books that bear his signature, but many of the Catholic Hebraists of the time were converted Jews. Vistorini apparently found nothing objectionable in the Haggadah. His Latin inscription, *Revisto per mi* ("Surveyed by me") runs with a casual fluidity beneath the last, painstakingly calligraphed lines of the Hebrew text.

How or when the book left Venice and came to Sarajevo is a mystery. It was acquired by the museum in 1894, when an indigent Jewish family named Kohen offered it for sale. Because Bosnia was then occupied by Austria-Hungary, the Haggadah was sent for evaluation to the empire's capital, Vienna, where it was

immediately hailed as a masterpiece, and then damaged by an inept conservator who cropped the parchments and bungled the rebinding. No one knows what the original covers of the Haggadah were like, but most books with such liberal use of gold leaf and expensive pigments also had elaborate bindings—hand-tooled kid, embossed silver, or mother-of-pearl inlay. The Viennese conservator discarded whatever binding was on the book in 1894 and replaced it with cheap boards covered in an inappropriate Turkish floral design.

This was the book hidden under Dervis Korkut's coat in 1942, as he translated for General Fortner. Fortner was greatly feared in Sarajevo: in addition to commanding his own Army division, he oversaw a Croatian Fascist regiment known as the Black Legion. Reputedly the most vicious of the Nazi allies, the Black Legion engaged in massacres of Serbs and Jews; it also tortured and killed those suspected of sympathizing with the partisan Resistance. (After the war, Fortner was tried for these crimes by a Yugoslav court. He was hanged in Belgrade in 1947.)

In the museum director's office, after a few minutes of small talk, which Korkut translated with what charm he could muster, Fortner got to the point: "And now, please, give me the Haggadah."

The museum director feigned dismay. "But, General, one of your officers came here already and demanded the Haggadah," he said. "Of course, I gave it to him."

Korkut translated.

"What officer?" Fortner barked. "Name the man!"

The reply was deft: "Sir, I did not think it was my place to require a name."

In scholarly articles about the Sarajevo Haggadah, there are conflicting accounts of what happened next. Some say Korkut hid the small volume within the library, simply misshelving it among the large collection of venerable tomes. The

most dramatic version of the story has him climbing out a window and sliding down a drainpipe to take the book into hiding. To reconcile the accounts, I sought out Halima Korkut, the wife of Dervis's nephew. Halima, who works in Arlington, Virginia, teaching Bosnian to State Department officials preparing for foreign postings, is immensely proud of her husband's uncle. She remembers him as "a walking encyclopedia, full of marvellous stories and information about everything." We sat at a large table in an unused classroom as she spread out the various photographs and documents that she had assembled. There were two small books in Serbo-Croatian that she wanted to show me, one of which Dervis had written, on the history and architecture of his birthplace, Travnik. The other was an admiring memoir, written by a former colleague and published in 1974. There were blurred photocopies of old photographs, showing Korkut family members in elaborate Ottoman costume, and a family tree tracing Dervis's lineage to Korkut Beg, a Turk who had arrived in Herzegovina in the sixteenth century. In the midst of translating a biographical sketch of her uncle, Halima paused suddenly and looked up, saying, "You know, if you really want to know about what happened during the war, you should ask his wife."

I was astonished to hear that the widow of a man who was in his fifties at the outbreak of the Second World War was still alive. Certainly none of the scholars who had written about the rescue of the Haggadah had mentioned her as a source of information. Soon after, I travelled to Sarajevo to meet Servet Korkut. Halima Korkut was also in Sarajevo, assisting a new contingent of American diplomats, so she offered to translate for me. Servet lives alone, on a low floor of a hillside apartment block in one of the least shelled neighborhoods of the shrapnel-torn city. An elegant and vivacious woman of eighty-one with lively, deep-set brown eyes and silver hair swept back from a still unlined brow, she greeted us warmly. Halima and I took off our shoes at the door, according to the Bosnian custom. Servet's sunlit sitting room was lined with shelves of art books. A watercolor of a village mosque and pastel drawings of Sarajevo's famous landmark water fountain hung on the walls. It was early spring; the birch trees outside the windows had not

yet begun to leaf out, and snow still flared on the summit of a nearby mountain. Servet offered us a glass of her homemade sour-cherry cordial and sat down to talk about the two brutal wars she had lived through.

When the Korkuts married, in 1940, less than a year before the invasion of Yugoslavia, Servet, an ethnic Albanian, was only sixteen years old; Dervis was thirty-seven years her senior. In Albanian families, arranged marriages were the norm. "But my father asked me if I liked Dervis, if I wanted to marry him," Servet said. "He looked much younger than his age. I couldn't tell he was older than me. I liked him very much. And I think he waited so late to marry because he was waiting for me." When I asked to see a wedding picture, Servet opened her hands in her lap. "All gone," she said. The home in which she kept the memorabilia of her marriage was close to the old city and was reduced to rubble by Serbs in 1994. The modern apartment that she now occupies belongs to her son, Munib, who lives in Paris. It was only at the height of the siege that Servet was persuaded to leave Sarajevo and stay with her son. As soon as the war was over, she insisted on returning. "I wasn't afraid," she said. "Not in that war, or the other one."

Servet remembers very clearly the day her husband came home for lunch with the Haggadah still under his jacket. "I knew he had a book from the library, and that it was very important," she recalled. "He said, 'Take care, don't tell. No one must know or they'll kill us and destroy the book.'" Over the midday meal, he pondered what to do with the Haggadah. That afternoon, he drove out of the city, to Visoko, where one of his sisters lived, on the pretext of visiting her. From there, he took the book to a remote village on nearby Trescavica, where his friend was *hodza*, or imam, of the small local mosque. There, Servet said, the Haggadah was hidden among Korans and other Islamic texts for the duration of the war. When it was safe, "the *hodza* brought it back to us, and Dervis returned it to the museum," she said.

When I asked the name of the imam, she tapped her head with an apologetic smile and made a fluttering gesture, as if the memories had flown away. Halima

sighed. "Two years ago, she knew it," she said. "She mentioned the name to me. But we didn't write it down."

The reason for that became clearer as the afternoon wore on. As I learned from Servet, and then from Munib, when I met with him later in Paris, the rescue of a Jewish book may be what Dervis is best remembered for. But what really matters in the Korkut family is another rescue—of a young Jewish woman. "In our family, the Haggadah is a detail," Munib told me. "What my father did for Jewish people—that is the biggest thing that we, in our family, have to be proud of." As Servet and I talked on into the fading light of that spring afternoon, she became increasingly engaged by her memories of that other rescue. It was a story of bravery, betrayal, and restitution that had shaped her life and the lives of her children, long after her husband's death.

In April of 1942, soon after the Haggadah had been taken to safety, Dervis once again came home from the library unexpectedly. This time, Servet recalled, it was a person he needed to hide, rather than a book. " 'This is a Jewish girl,' he said to me. 'We have to keep her safe here.' " Servet remembers a short, studious-looking young woman with spectacles who had been a high-school senior before the Numerus Clausus laws prevented Jews from attending state institutions. "Of course, I accepted her," Servet said. She gave her one of her own traditional Muslim veils (a *zar*), which conceal the body and most of the face like a chador. The girl's name was Mira Papo, but the Korkuts called her Amira, passing her off as a Muslim servant sent from a rural Albanian village by Servet's family to help with the Korkuts' infant son, Munib. "I told her if anyone came to the door she should go to the pantry." Servet said that the two of them, both just nineteen years old, became great friends. In spite of the immense risks, she told me, "I loved having someone my own age around. She called me Auntie Servet."

Mira Papo, like the majority of the ten thousand Jews in Sarajevo before the war, was from a family of Ladino-speaking Sephardim, descendants of

Spanish exiles who, over the centuries, had made the same journey as the Sarajevo Haggadah. As early as 1565, the first Jews had settled in what was then an Ottoman market crossroads. As the city grew to graceful, cosmopolitan maturity, they lived largely unmolested, little-noticed lives, with very few rising to positions of wealth or influence. By the time the Austro-Hungarian Empire occupied Bosnia, in the late nineteenth century, and Sarajevo began to receive a small influx of Yiddish-speaking Ashkenazi Jews, the city was known for its tolerance. The Muslims' mosques, the churches of the Serbian Orthodox, and the Croatian Catholics occupied the same city blocks as the synagogues, and residential neighborhoods were mostly mixed. Yet had it not been for the accidents of war there is little chance that Mira would ever have known the Korkuts. The Papos were neither prominent nor prosperous: Mira's father, Salomon Papo, worked as a janitor at the Finance Ministry; her grandfather was a laborer who sold seeds at Sarajevo's outdoor market.

Not long after Croatian Ustashe forces began ethnically cleansing Sarajevo of Serbs and Jews, Mira's father was rounded up along with other Jewish men and sent to a so-called labor camp. These camps were little more than way stations of starvation and brutality en route to Bosnia's notorious death pits. Bosnia-Herzegovina sits on a limestone lacework of underground caves. The geology, as Brian Hall wrote in "The Impossible Country," is "a mass-murderer's dream come true, a mighty necropolis of empty mass graves, high and dry, waiting to be filled." Jews and Serbs—Salomon Papo most probably among them—had their throats cut before they were pushed off the edge. Then grenades were hurled in.

The women were taken later that year. Mira defied an order to assemble at a Jewish community center. When she found that her mother and two of her aunts were being held there, she climbed in through a back window and urged them to try to escape from the city with her. When they refused, she said that she would stay with them, but they insisted that she get away and survive. From a hiding place, she watched as the women were loaded onto trucks.

Mira managed to escape from Sarajevo and joined the Communist partisan Resistance. Before the war, she had been a member of the Young Guardians—Hashomer Hazair, in Hebrew—a socialist Zionist youth movement based on the Scouts but designed to encourage migration to Israel. Mira had to slip away to the group's twice-weekly meetings because her father did not approve of its modern, secular bent. The Young Guardians fostered an ethos of idealism and self-sacrifice, qualities held to be necessary to future Zionist pioneers. The group had hiked in the Sarajevan mountains and learned outdoor skills and first aid, which were now useful to the partisans. At the beginning of the war, when Josip Broz Tito—who was to become Yugoslavia's leader in the Communist era—called for Yugoslavians of all ethnicities and political persuasions to rise up against the German occupation, members of Mira's youth group joined an *odred*, or partisan unit. Generally outnumbered by the German forces, they used classic guerrilla tactics, conducting hit-and-run strikes and then retreating to the mountains, where local people could be counted on to help them hide. Throughout the brutal mountain winter of 1942, Mira Papo served as muleteer and medic as her unit harassed the Germans. The mule was essential to the *odred's* survival, carrying ammunition and medical supplies. Memoirs by British and American officers who, at a later stage in the war, conducted daring parachute drops into partisan territory, romanticize the partisans as bands of high-spirited boys and girls who might dance late into the night in a farmer's barn before setting out to blow up a bridge. Reportedly, they wore grenades on their belts, which they would use to commit suicide rather than risk capture, torture, and betrayal of their comrades.

At this early stage of the Resistance, there were two anti-Fascist forces, Tito's Communist partisans and the mostly Serbian group known as the Chetniks, anti-Communists who sought the restoration of the exiled Yugoslav king, Peter II. For a while, the two groups buried their ideological differences, but eventually the Chetniks turned on the partisans, and by March, 1942, the partisans were in disarray, with high casualties and increasing numbers of deserters. Tito ordered a ruthless reorganization of his forces. Mira's depleted *odred* was commanded to

gather in a wide field, where for two or three days the unit was culled of "ballast." Thirty youths—students, laborers, farmers, and even a few Communist Party members, all of them Jews from Sarajevo—were told that they weren't tough enough to face the coming hardships, or skilled enough to wage a highly mobile war. They were stripped of their weapons and instructed to wait in the field for half a day, until the reorganized units got clear of the area. Then they were to return to Sarajevo. Anyone who disobeyed would be shot.
The abandoned Jews split into small groups of three or four to increase their chances of eluding German patrols. For days and nights, the young Jews moved through the forest unarmed, hunted constantly by Germans and their dogs. Those who were discovered often died gruesomely. One account tells of captured partisans being tied up on a roadway and repeatedly run over by German trucks. Of the thirty partisans, only a handful made it back to Sarajevo alive. Mira was one of them.

"I entered Sarajevo at dawn of a spring day. The streets were still empty," Mira later wrote. She was carrying a few eggs tied up in a scarf that had been given to her by the family of one of her comrades, whose mother had also supplied her with papers allowing her to enter the occupied city.

Exhausted and preoccupied, Mira drifted toward the center of the city, "thinking about what to do, who to go to." Lost in these thoughts, she suddenly realized that she had come to the Finance Ministry building, where her late father had been a janitor. The only light in the building at that early hour came from the porters' room. Mira heard footsteps, and a man emerged from the shadows. She recognized him. The porter was a decent, honorable man who had been her father's friend. "I called out his name and the traditional Bosnian greeting, 'God help us.'"

He did not recognize her after her year of hardship. "Then he said, 'Are you Salomonova?'"—Salomon's daughter—"I nodded my head and then I started to cry."

The porter took her to a cloakroom, and she told him her story of flight and survival. At the end of it, she said, "Save me if you can. If not, then give me to the Ustashe." Taking her by the hand, he led her to the porters' room of the nearby National Museum, where she waited for what "seemed like an eternity." The porter had spoken "not one word," and she had no idea what his intentions were.

He finally returned with a distinguished-looking gentleman wearing a fez, who led her out of the museum by a back door and drove her to his home. For four months, Mira lived in hiding with the Korkuts. Then, in August, a stranger arrived with an envelope for her containing false identity papers and a rail ticket. An aunt who was married to a Catholic had arranged for her to hide in a family house on the Dalmatian coast, where there were no Germans. She stayed there until the end of the war.

After the war, anyone who had served with the partisans was well placed in the new Tito regime. Mira returned to Sarajevo, and was commissioned as an officer in the Army medical corps. She became engaged to a fellow Army officer, also a former partisan, named Bozidar Bakovic. Their future in the Communist era seemed assured.

But one day in June, 1946, as Mira later wrote, she was walking in the city when "an unknown woman fell under my legs" begging help for her husband, who was being tried as a Nazi collaborator. Mira had no idea who the woman was. "I asked her how she knew me. She took off her black veil, and instantly I recognized Dervis Efendi's wife. She held the hand of a boy of four, whom I had left an infant in 1942."

In postwar Yugoslavia, as Tito strengthened his hold on power, he used war-crimes trials to silence dissident voices. Dervis Korkut had proved just as unwilling to bow to Communist excesses as he had to Fascism. He had become an outspoken critic of Yugoslavia's oppressive attitudes toward religion, and of its new

Prime Minister's plan to raze the old Ottoman buildings of Sarajevo and replace them with Soviet-style modernist blocks. He had also compiled a list of people who had been executed by Chetniks in eastern Bosnia. For Tito's regime, which had granted amnesty to many of the defeated Chetniks (though not to the Fascist Ustashe) and saw the suppression of intercommunal rifts as crucial to the consolidation of the unified Communist state, such list-making was inconvenient. Before long, Dervis Korkut's name appeared among those who had aided the Fascists. At the notoriously harsh prison in Zenica, he was placed in solitary confinement.

On the afternoon that Servet talked with me about Mira, she recalled that desperate day in downtown Sarajevo. "I don't remember kneeling," she said wryly, as I read to her from Mira's later account. "I'm not the kneeling type." Still, the situation was grave. She was relieved to have found a firsthand witness to her husband's anti-Fascist activities, and overjoyed when Mira assured her that she would testify in court on his behalf.

But Mira did not show up for the trial. Her fiancé feared that the wrath of the Party would be turned upon her, perhaps even lethally, if Mira, as a member of the military, appeared as a witness in what was clearly a politically motivated trial. He refused to let her leave their apartment and give evidence for the man who had saved her life. In the years to come, even as Mira came to experience further hardships and difficulties, she was haunted by the thought of Korkut. She assumed that he had been executed, and imagined her friend Servet bringing up her son alone.

Mira's husband died just two years later, from a brain infection contracted while digging mass graves for the war dead at Sutjeska. Having lost her entire family in the war, Mira found herself alone with two infant sons, Daniel and Davor. Recently demobilized from the Army, she lost her right to military housing and was homeless until a friend of her parents offered her a room. Mira lobbied with great determination until the Army took her back as a medical officer, in charge of

public health on the Dalmatian coast and its islands. Davor, now a wiry man of sixty, recalls going by boat with his mother on her rounds, and having soldiers as babysitters. Eventually, they settled in Rijeka, on the northern coast. The town had a Jewish community center, and Davor remembers his surprise when, for the first time, his mother, anti-religious and a committed Communist, took him there to celebrate Hanukkah. He became attached to his Jewish heritage. In 1969, after completing his Army service, he happened to meet the captain of an Israeli freighter, and, on impulse, he boarded the ship. He settled in Israel, first joining a kibbutz and later moving to an agricultural coöperative, or moshav, in the Judaean hills, where he now works as a metalworker and sculptor. Mira followed him to Israel in 1972. She learned Hebrew and soon joined Davor's kibbutz, working in the laundry and helping to run the community center. In 1978, she moved to Jerusalem to be closer to Israel's small community of former Sarajevans. During the breakup of Yugoslavia and the siege of Sarajevo from 1992 to 1996, Israel offered temporary shelter to Bosnian refugees. It was likely one of them who left behind an out-of-date newsletter that Mira came across in 1994. The newsletter was printed in Serbo-Croatian and featured items of interest to Jews in the former Yugoslavia. In it was an article commemorating Dervis Korkut. Spellbound, Mira read about the good deeds of the man she had failed. The article related Korkut's role in saving the Sarajevo Haggadah, which had once again been rescued during war by a Muslim. (In 1992, when the museum was being shelled by Serb forces, who later burned the city's libraries to ashes, a librarian named Enver Imamovic retrieved the book and took it secretly to a bank vault.) As she read the account, Mira realized that Korkut had not been executed, as she had always assumed. She learned that he had died an elderly man, from natural causes, in 1969. Davor's wife remembers her mother-in-law, after finding the article, weeping and murmuring to herself in Serbo-Croatian. It was the first she or Davor had heard of Dervis Korkut.

The teen-ager Korkut had rescued in 1941 was now seventy-two years old. She decided to give the testimony she had failed to deliver at Korkut's trial. On a winter day in 1994, Mira sat down to write a three-page, single-spaced letter to

the Commission for the Designation of the Righteous at Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust memorial and study center. Inexpertly typed in Serbo-Croatian, with accents added by hand, the letter states in a rather formal preamble that what follows is "my true story, how Dervis Efendi Korkut saved me from certain death." In stilted, formal phrases, Mira unflinchingly details her failure to help Dervis Korkut. When she learned that he had survived despite this, she wrote, "it was as if a stone fell from my heart."

By describing what really happened, Mira wrote, she hoped to make amends: "Perhaps this modest material will help to clarify his identity as a great friend of the Jews of Bosnia long before World War II. I remain as a solitary witness that Dervis was indeed so, even in a time when we had few true friends." Mira died in 1998, just a year too soon to see how completely her belated testimony would accomplish the restitution she desired.

At the time that Mira was writing her account, Servet Korkut was in reluctant exile from Sarajevo; after suffering a minor heart attack, she was living with her son, Munib, in Paris. She was astonished when an Israeli diplomat called to tell her that she and Dervis had just been named Righteous Among Nations. Their names would be inscribed in the gardens of Yad Vashem, not far from the trees planted in memory of famous rescuers of Jews, such as Raoul Wallenberg and Oskar Schindler. Because Servet was unable to travel to Israel to see their names inscribed, a ceremony was held for her at the Israeli Embassy in Paris. She was presented with a certificate of honor and a medal, and told that she had the right to Israeli citizenship. She was also awarded a monthly stipend from the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous, a New York-based organization that provides material support to some thirteen hundred elderly rescuers.

"Mira called me in Paris," Servet told me. She explained why she had failed to appear at the trial, and how tormented she had been by that failure. Servet said she tried to soothe her old friend, telling her that, even if she had testified, it would

have made no difference, because the court was just a tool of the regime and the regime had already made its decision. "Mira said that ever since she left Yugoslavia she had wanted to get in touch with me, to apologize, but that she wasn't able," Servet told me. "'It's O.K.,' I said to her. 'I understand.'"

Others had come forward to testify for Dervis at his trial. "But nobody wanted to listen to them," Servet told me. Convicted of Fascist associations, he served six years of an eight-year sentence, most of it in solitary confinement. "They kept him alone because they considered him dangerous," Servet said. His ideas could too easily infect and inspire other prisoners. Family accounts say he endured his imprisonment with uncommon fortitude: he never complained or asked his jailers for mercy, and eventually the prison guards came to regard him with awe. Despite the hard conditions of the prison, he managed to keep himself clean and well groomed, and he occupied his mind by reading whenever he was allowed.

Because Servet was now the wife of a convicted enemy of the state, her apartment was confiscated and her food ration rescinded. With Munib, now five years old, and a two-and-a-half-year-old daughter, Abida, she was forced into the streets. Dervis's large and prosperous family proved unwilling to risk the opprobrium of association with her. It was left to her own relatives to offer shelter, so she went to stay with one of them, a shoemaker who lived in Kosovska Mitrovica, in the province of Kosovo. Servet arrived there with her children in the middle of a meningitis outbreak. Abida became infected, and fifteen days later she was dead.

It was a two-day journey from Servet's town to the Zenica jail, and visitors were allowed to spend only five minutes with prisoners. When I visited Munib Korkut in his apartment in Paris recently, he recalled making the journey to the jail with his mother. An imposing man in a black Lacoste shirt, Munib bore a strong resemblance to the photographs I had seen of his father. He spoke in a rumbling baritone, expressing great bitterness about his mother's suffering and the failure of so many relatives to help her. "I am like the Albanians," he said. "We never pardon. Never." An engineer and designer who manages large projects for Technip, a

French firm active in Kazakhstan, he said that his father had given him a love of languages—he speaks six—and a curiosity about other cultures that had shaped his career.

He said that he would never forget the trip to the prison with his mother, and seeing his father, separated from them by a wooden partition. "The first thing he said to my mother was 'Where is Abida?'" Munib recalled. "My mother said, 'Abida died,' and I saw my father cry."

After he was released, Dervis was allowed to resume his old job, but life was not entirely easy. His passport was never returned to him, and he was denied citizenship rights. In 1955, a daughter, Lamija, was born. Dervis, then sixty-seven years old, had not wanted to have another child after his long jail term. "He didn't want, but I wanted," Servet had told me, adding, "Women always find a way." Lamija, thirteen years younger than her brother, was shielded from the family's difficult past, and doted on by her father. Munib told me, "Even though he was an old man when she was born, my sister is completely the product of my father. He connected so much with her." Dervis and Lamija were very close until he died, when Lamija was fourteen years old. "I always felt I could ask him about anything and he would explain it patiently to me," Lamija told me. "When I was a small child, afraid before going to sleep, he would tell me a story, over and over. I could visit him at work, anything, and he always had time for me—except when he was watching the news," she added with a laugh. "When he died," Lamija recalled, "so many people came to the house, saying, 'He helped me find a job,' 'He gave me loans,' 'He guaranteed my credit,' 'He found a flat for me.' Then I realized how he was a good person and how many good things he did and never mentioned." One thing he had never mentioned was his rescue of Mira Papo, just as Mira had never mentioned it to her children. Lamija learned in vague terms that her parents had sheltered a Jewish woman in their house during the siege of Sarajevo: Sarajevan

Jews, unaffected, for once, by the ethnic hatreds of the war, had arranged a convoy out of the city, and Servet was given a place in it.

Lamija became an economist. She married an electrical engineer who was an Albanian, like her mother, from Kosovo. The couple settled in the provincial capital, Pristina, and had two children. By 1999, just as the Dayton Accords were helping to bring a semblance of normalcy back to Sarajevo, Kosovo had started to slide toward war. The Albanian majority in Kosovo had been politically suppressed by the Serbian government, and in 1998 a campaign of ethnic cleansing began in earnest. As Peter Hellman wrote in "When Courage Was Stronger Than Fear," alarming reports filtered into Pristina of brutal attacks on Albanian villages and of the public rape of young women.

In March, 1999, when NATO, spurred to action by stories of widespread atrocities, started bombing Serb positions, Servet was in Pristina visiting her daughter. "My mother left on the last bus to Bosnia," Lamija told me. "I said to her, 'I don't want you to go through another war.'" After Servet's departure, Lamija and her husband spent days on the phone trying to get visas that would allow them and their children to leave the country. While her husband called relatives in Sweden, Lamija contacted Munib, who pulled every string he could with friends in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris, but to no avail. Next, she tried to evacuate her daughter and her son, aged nineteen and sixteen. With great difficulty, she managed to get them out of the city.

Soon after the children left, the power to Lamija's apartment was cut off. Then their phone lines went down. Through a wall of the apartment, Lamija could hear the phone next door ringing. The neighbors were Serbs, and she was disturbed to realize that the lines were being cut on the basis of ethnicity.

On April 2nd, Lamija heard Serbian militiamen banging on the door of the neighbors downstairs, ordering them to leave. She and her husband joined thousands of refugees surging toward the train station. They considered

themselves lucky to be packed aboard an overcrowded train—"twenty-seven people in a carriage made for six," Lamija recalled—even though they had no idea what their destination would be. At dusk, they arrived at the border with Macedonia. In the press to disembark, they lost the small bags they'd managed to carry from their apartment. But Lamija still had her pocketbook, and it contained a folded photocopy of her parents' certificate of honor from Yad Vashem.

They were herded into an open field occupied by thousands of refugees. Lamija looked around her at the strangely silent, huddled people, whose boots had churned the soft ground of the meadow into mud. Sanitary conditions were unhealthy: there were no proper latrines, and a rank smell hung over the camp. Lamija told me, "There was a hundred litres of water for thousands of people. People were fighting for water. There was no food, no blankets, no shelter. People were sick. Some were already dying." There were rumors, too, of meningitis in the camp—the disease that had killed her sister after the war. As night fell, the temperature dropped sharply. When a few food packs were given out, the distribution turned into a riot. "People were grabbing from each other," Lamija said. She had managed to get two packs, but a frail old woman's plaintive crying moved her to give one away.

That night, Lamija and her husband decided that staying in the camp was too dangerous. At three in the morning, taking advantage of the camp's disorganization, they crept out of the muddy field and walked in the dark toward the Macedonian border. When they encountered a border guard, they concocted a story about having left a car on the other side. They lied about the direction they'd come from and denied having been anywhere near the refugee camp. Whether he believed the unlikely tale or took pity on them, the guard let them cross.

From the shelter of a relative's house, in the town of Kumanovo, Lamija resumed the frantic phone calls. First, she tried to contact her children, and was relieved to find that they had made it to safety in Budapest. But they had been refused admission at all the embassies where they'd gone to seek help. "There were, by

then, almost a million refugees from Kosovo," Lamija said, and most doors were closed to them. Her husband's family had been able to do nothing for them in Sweden, and, from Paris, Munib also reported no hope.

"Why don't you go to the Jewish community in Skopje and see if they'll help you?" Munib suggested. "Why not try?"

Lamija and her husband tracked down the head of the local Jewish community and produced the crumpled photocopy that Mira Papo Bakovic's testimony had provided for them. The certificate bears a Biblical epigraph in English and Hebrew: "Whoever saves one life is as though he had saved the entire world." The Macedonian Jews, delighted by the opportunity to repay a debt from the Second World War, went into a frenzy of lobbying and organizing. Four days later, Lamija and her husband flew to Tel Aviv; their children, they were promised, would join them there two days later.

They arrived in the terminal at Ben-Gurion Airport, blinking in the strong Mediterranean sunlight and the flash of reporters' cameras. The story of how Dervis, a Muslim, had saved Mira and Mira, a Jew, had saved Dervis's child proved irresistible to the Israeli media, and to its politicians. The Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, was at the airport to welcome them. "Today, we are closing a great circle in that the state of Israel, which emerged from the ashes, gives refuge to the daughter of those who saved Jews," he said.

"Are you happy to be in Israel?" a reporter shouted. Exhausted by the journey and the ordeal that had preceded it, missing her children, anxious about the unexpected attention, uncertain of her future as a refugee in an unknown, very foreign place, Lamija hardly knew how to answer.

Then, in the midst of all the chaos, someone addressed her in Serbo-Croatian. "It was a good feeling, to have someone speaking your language," she said. But she had no idea who it could be, greeting her so warmly. Pushing through the crowd

was a slender, wiry man she had never seen before, with a shock of dark hair and a mustache. Opening his arms, he introduced himself, and Lamija fell into the embrace of Davor Bakovic, the son of Mira Papo. ♦

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Geraldine Brooks is the author of five novels, including the 2006 Pulitzer Prize winner, "March," and three works of nonfiction, including "Nine Parts of Desire: The Hidden World of Islamic Women."

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