

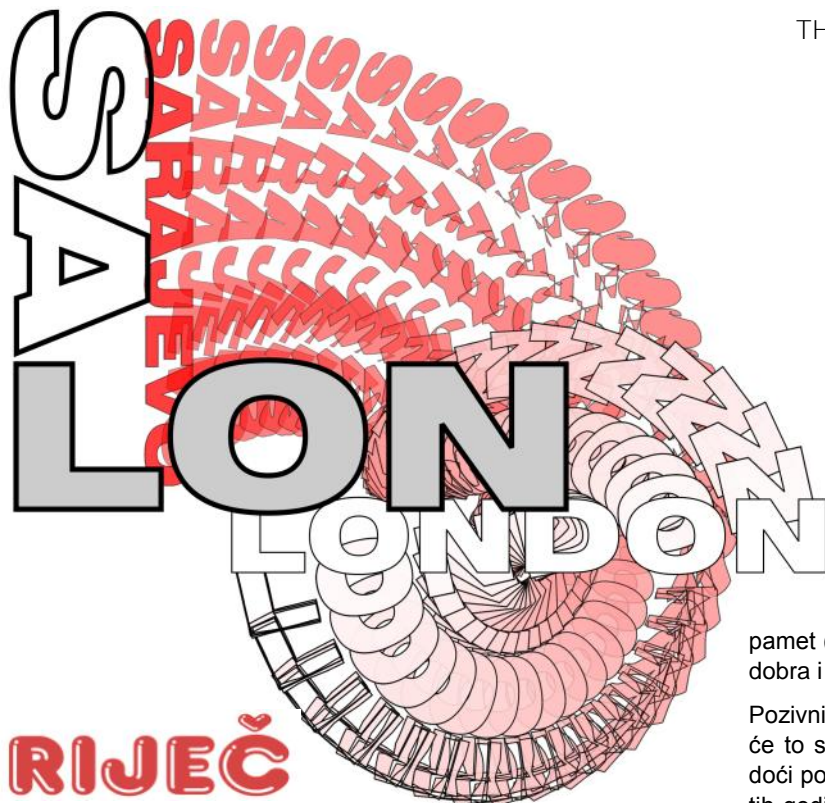


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BULLETIN OF JEWISH SOCIETY
"THE FRIENDS OF LA BENEVOLENCIJA"

BILTEN JEVREJSKE ZAJEDNICE
"PRIJATELJI LA BENEVOLENCIJE"



RIJEČ REDAKCIJE

Vrijeme leti. Ali kako godine nadolaze, leti sve brže i brže. Evo je još ljeto, ali bogami novembar samo što nije. Zbog uobičajenog sivila u koji nas taj mjesec zavijava, kiša... vjetrova... nikakav... zaslužuje da što kasnije dođe i što ranije ode i da se što prije zaboravi.

Ali ovoga puta to čini izuzetak za nekoliko nas "bloody foreigners"-a. To je mjesec u kojem obilježavamo 20 godina od našeg dolaska u novu domovinu. To je vrijeme tako proletilo, "kao da se jučer dogodilo". Značajan je to za nas događaj. Ako ništa drugo, dovoljno je značajna tema da zauzme prve stranice ovog Salona, i time poštedi uredništvo uobičajene glavobolje oko nalaženja teme za naslovnu stranicu.

Nekako od proljeća kada su počeli nemiri u bivšoj Jugi, pa sve negdje do idućeg proljeća sada već davne 1992/3 godine, trajalo je dokopeljavanje nekolicine nas, sveukupno stočetdeset duša, da nas "ugrije" ovo britansko sunce, kad već ono tamo nije htjelo. Neko je došao sa cijelom familijom, neko sam, neko sa starim roditeljima, neko sa mamom i tatom, neko sa djevojkom neko sa momkom, a bilo je i baka i deda...I tako, netom po dolasku, okupili smo se (ili bolje rečeno okupljeni smo) oko londonske "ispostave" sarajevske jevrejske organizacije "La Benevolencije", a sebe smo nazvali "Prijatelji La Benevolencije"

Sam razlog dolaska svakako više i ne treba ni spominjati, ali je sigurno za svakoga od nas manje ili više bio dramatičan, traumatičan, ponakad i pomalo komičan. I sve to do te mjere da bi svako od nas mogao ispričati svoju priču, napisati čak i roman vezan za to. Neki i jesu. Svaka im čast.

Dolazi, dakle novembar, a sa njim dan kada ćemo pokušati nas nekoliko preostalih iz te generacije "Prijatelja La Benevolencije", da evociramo uspomene, da ispričamo šta još ispričali nismo ili smo možda ispričali već neloliko puta, ali se zbog godina koje prolaze, i "krečane" u glavama, ne sjećamo da smo to ikada ispričali niti se slušatelji sjećaju da im je to ikada ispričano. E da se to ne bi dogodilo, da preduhitrimo stvaranje pomenute krečane (ili stručno rečeno- demencije), nekome je palo na

pamet (svaka mu/voj čast), da se napravi jedna vrsta almanaha-dobra i efikasna odbrana od zaborava.

Pozivnice se kreiraju, a i konture almanaha se već naziru. Biti će to sve u svemu, dobra pretpostavka da bude interesantno doći pogledati, čuti, doživjeti, jer sudionici i svjedoci dagađaja iz tih godina imati će što kazati. U tih dvadeset godina što šta se svakom od nas izdogađalo, nažalost više nas ni pola nema-neki su preselili gore, neki su jednostavno "odlepršali", ali nove generacije nailaze. Valjda im neće biti dosadno doći, poslušati naše priče, doživljaje, dogodovštine...

Treba napomenuti one koji su nam priskočili u pomoć u prvim mjesecima boravka ovdje, kad nam je ta pomoć najviše trebala. World Jewish Relief (bivši Central British Fund, ili CBF kako ovdje vole sve da krata), Jewish Care koji je neke od nas i uhljebio dajući nam posao (uključujući i moja melankost) kao i armija dobrotvoraca koji su se ponudili da na ovaj ili onaj način pomognu. Nekada je ta pomoć bila dosta originalna; jednostavno su nas pozivali na "žurke" (famosni party), izlete, nerijetko bi nas iznenadili sa kartama za pozorište, koncerte... Ti ljudi su zaslužili da nam budu gosti, da ih ponovo sretnemo, još jednom zahvalimo, te se već pripremaju prigodne pozivnice. Očekuje se nekoliko VIP- ovaca, nekoliko govorancija a i program se, čujemo, neki sprema.

Svakako, treba i ovdje napomenuti vrijedne ruke Branka Dagona glavnog u našoj udruzi "Prijatelji La Benevolencije", čovjeka od alfa do omega u pripremi ovog (I ne samo ovog) događaja, ali bogami treba pomenuti i ime Darije (Stojnić) od koje je potekla ideja, potom malu armiju nas, na ovaj ili onaj način učesnika u kreiranju svega toga, nas koji smo bez njih niko i ništa što se organizacije tiče, naravno (ali i oni bez nas), i tako to, da ne dijelimo više komplimente, trebalo bi to ispasti lijep i nezaboravan događaj.

Sada već znamo i datum , dakle četvrtak 15 novembar 2012, u centrali Jewish Care, u dijelu koji se zove Amelie House, uostalom mnogi to već znaju, a oni koji ne znaju dobiće već pomenute pozivnice na kojima će biti sve potrebne informacije.

Ono što neće pisati na pozivnicama je da će poslije sve te fertutme nekolicina nas preostalih, po dobroj staroj tradiciji pronaći kakav zgodan pub i po dobroj staroj tradiciji (koja traje već 20 godina) da se ohladimo i odmorimo od napornih mjeseci rada na pripremi dana-tog četvrtka, 15 novembra 2012.

Svakako: Everybody is welcome.

Dragan Ungar

Time flies. It flies ever faster as the years pile up. Although it is still summer, November is knocking on the door. Due to the usual grey colour together with the rain, the wind and the gloom prevailing during that month it deserves to arrive as late as possible and to be forgotten as soon as possible.

For once this will not be a typical November for some of us "bloody foreigners".



Seder večera 1995 u North Western Reform Sinagogue
Seder night u North Western Reform Sinagogue in 1995

During that month we shall mark twenty years since our arrival in our new homeland. Thinking back now it seems "as if it happened yesterday". This event means a lot to us, so much so that it figures on the first pages of this issue of SaLon, thus sparing the editors the usual headache when it comes to find a topic for the front page.

During the period from spring of 1992, when the unrests started in former Yugoslavia to spring of the now long gone 1993, we, some one hundred and forty souls had hard time trying to reach the "warmth" of this British sun, because the one we left behind betrayed us so bitterly. Some of us came with the whole family, others on their own; some with old parents, with their mothers or fathers, others with a boyfriend or a girlfriend; we also had grandparents among us. Not long after our arrival we started gathering, or should I

say we were gathered, around the London "branch" of Sarajevo La Benevolencija organization, under the name of "Friends of La Benevolencija".

The reason for our coming here should not be mentioned any more. It is certain, though, that for each of us it was a more or less dramatic, traumatic and in some cases even comical experience. Every person in our group

could tell us their different stories and even write a novel. Some have done so. Good for them.

Thus, the day in November is approaching in which a few people from that generation of "Friends of La Benevolencija" will try to evoke memories. We shall tell one another things that we missed out telling or which we already told several times but due to the passage of years and because our heads are like sieves we have forgotten that we had ever told them, and the listeners on

the other hand have forgotten that they had heard them. In order to prevent such occurrences in the fu-

ture, somebody (good for him/her) had a bright idea to compile a sort of almanac – a good, efficient protection against forgetfulness.

Invitations are being created and the outlines of the almanac are emerging. All in all it is a good prerequisite for an interesting experience in contact with the protagonists of and witnesses to the past years. Over these twenty years many things happened to all of us, regrettably less than a half are

here - some have gone up there, others left for other places, but, new generations are on their way. We hope that they will not consider it too boring to come and listen to our stories.

We, of course have to mention all those who came to our help during the first months here, at a time when we needed help most. World Jewish Relief (former Central British Fund or CBF as was its abbreviation), Jewish Care which provided some of us with livelihood by employing us in their various agencies (me included) and a whole army of benefactors who made themselves available to us in various ways.



Iako u društvu lijepih žena, Dragan ne izgleda sretno
Although surrounded with beautiful women, Dragan does not seem very happy

At times this help was quite original; they would invite us to parties, outings and very often they would surprise us

with theatre or concert tickets. We would like to welcome all these people as our dear guests and thank them again for everything they did for us. We expect to be hosts to a



U početku se naš podmladak držao skupa
In the beginning our young generation kept together

number of VIP persons, to hear a few speeches and enjoy the programme that is being prepared.

We have to mention again Branko Danon, the tireless head of our "Friends of La Benevolencija", and the alpha and omega man in the preparation of this (and not only this) event; credit should also be given to Darija Stojnic who initiated the whole idea but also to us, the small army of people who in different ways took part in bringing this idea to life.

The date for our celebration is set for Thursday, 15 November 2012. It will be organized in Jewish Care head office, Amelie House; many are already aware of the fact but invitations will be sent out, obviously, with the necessary information included. The invitations will not hold the information that after all the excitement a few of us will follow the good old tradition (lasting twenty years) to find a cosy pub to cool down and relax after all the efforts involved in the preparation of that day – Thursday, the 15th of November, 2012. And of course: Everybody is welcome.

By Dragan Ungar

Intervju sa Džudit Hasan, OBE

Specijalni savjetnik

Terapeutske usluge za preživjele i izbjeglice (Jewish Care)

Dvadeset godina sa nama

Godine 1992. u Ujedinjeno Kraljevstvo je došla grupa od 40 porodica iz Jevrejskih opština bivše Jugoslavija. Vremenom ste se približili ovoj maloj grupi. Kada ste prvi put čuli za nas i šta vas je motivisalo da se toliko zainteresujete za tu Grupu.

Prošlo je mnogo vremena od trenutka kada sam prvi put postala svjesna, a kasnije se i uključila u rad sa vašom grupom izbjeglica iz Bivše Jugoslavije-j. Zato se svih detalja ne sjećam potpuno tačno, pošto vrijeme koje prolazi utiče na sjećanje. Ipak, osnovna osjećanja ostaju.

Već sam imala savršene radne odnose sa World Jewish Relief i Jewish Refugee Committee koji su davali podršku mom radu sa preživjelima i izbjeglicama Nacističkog Holokausta. Mada su WJR i JRC imali veliko iskustvo sa prijemom i udomljavanjem izbjeglica iz različitih djelova svijeta, nisu imali specijalizovanog



iskustva sa dugoročnijim terapeutskim radom. U Jewish Care su me zamolili da preuzmem ovu ulogu 1992/93 godine pošto sam imala dugogodišnje iskustvo u Shalvati i Centru za preživjele iz Holokausta na olokaradu koji se odnosi na posljedice velike patnje i ratnih trauma. Smatrala sam da je to velika čast za mene da se uključim u rad sa vašom grupom i činilo mi se da je to izazov kod koga mogu da koristim svoje iskustvo na nov način. Činilo mi se, takođe, da je to prilika da se upražnjava jevrejska etika po kojoj treba pomagati „stranca“, a to je moje osnovno vjerovanje.

Kada ste se detaljnije upoznali sa našom nesrećom u kojoj mjeri vas je naša sudbina, mada ne tako drastična, podstakla da je uporedite sa sudbinom preživjelih Holokausta.

Radila sam sa izbjeglicama i preživjelim iz nacističkog Holokausta već oko 20 godina kada sam čula za nevolje izbjeglica iz bivše Jugoslavije. I porodica moje majke je bila isčupana iz korjena tako da sam i lično iskusila šta znači biti raseljen, isčupan i traumatizovan. Oba ova faktora su mi ulivala osnovno pouzdanje i pružala znanje potrebno da se latim ovog novog posla i nisam oklijevala. Bio mi je potreban pristanak Jewish Care-a i kada sam ga dobila Branko Danon je prešao iz WJR u Shalvatu i postao socijalni radnik za vašu grupu izbjeglica. Uloga Branka je predstavljala veliku prednost pošto je govorio

vaš jezik i bio potpuno upoznat sa vašim potrebama.

Smatram da ne treba porediti patnje pošto je svako iskustvo jedinstveno. Ipak, moje prvobitno reagovanje na vašu grupu se zasnivalo na onome što sam naučila u radu sa preživjelim iz Holokausta, a to je da je najvažnije da traumatizovani ljudi budu zajedno, da jedni drugima daju podršku i da imaju osjećaj pripadnosti i identiteta. Koristila sam ovo postojeće znanje kao smjernicu, ali sam istovremeno bila svjesna toga da moram da budem fleksibilna, da ne pravim nikakve pretpostavke i da sagledam razlike kad poredim novopridošle izbjeglice sa onima koji su živjeli u UK već toliko godina.

Sa tog stanovišta, da li je rad sa Bosanskom grupom izbjeglica predstavljao za vas novi izazov, naročito kad se zna da se u toj grupi nalazi i nekoliko preživjelih Holokausta? Da li ste smatrali da je bilo potrebno da pravite razliku u pristupu između njih i ostalih članova grupe?

Rad sa izbjeglicama iz Bosne je predstavljao novi izazov, ali sam se osjećala i kao majka sa drugim djetetom; imala sam više pouzdanja i manje sam bila zabrinuta nego kada sam prije toliko godina počinjala rad sa preživjelima/izbjeglicama Holokausta. Bila sam svjesna toga da je u grupi bilo izbjeglica i preživjelih Holokausta i da su prošli kroz dvostruku traumu, tako da je ova druga vjerovatno probudila sjećanja na doživljeno tokom drugog svjetskog rata. Na osnovu iskustva koje sam stekla u radu sa preživjelim Holokausta znala sam kako u poznijim godinama mogu da se vrate sjećanja na patnje i kako veliki gubitak koji se desi u sadašnjosti može da izazove emocionalne teškoće vezane za prošlost.

Činilo mi se važnim reagovati tako da se sagledaju određeni problemi sa kojima se suočavaju starije izbjeglice, na primjer učenje jezika i prilagođavanje i integracija u novo društvo. Preživjeli Holokausta iz Bosne su mogli da postanu članovi Centra za preživjele Holokausta (HSC), ali ih je problem sa jezikom sprečavao da lako učestvuju u društvenom programu. Sem toga, činjenica da su izbjeglice iz Bosne sefardskog porijekla i da govore ladino je značila da bi se osjećali manje kod kuće u HSC, aškenaskoj sredini u kojoj se uglavnom govori jidiš. Radeći zajedno sa Brankom uveli smo termin druženja za starije za vrijeme ručka. Svjesni mogućih emocionalnih repkusija ratne traume, odlučeno je da se član tima iz Šalvate također uključi u grupu i da ih pojedinačno upozna.

Sastanci ove grupe jednom mjesečno su bili značajni ali nisu bili dovoljni da omoguće velika prilagođavanja koju ova grupa starijih izbjeglica, kao u biti i sve izbjeglice, treba da prebrode kada su primorani da se presele u drugu zemlju. Osnivanje kluba Prijatelji La Benevolencije je predstavljao prekretnicu i cijela grupa, pa i stariji, se počela bolje osjećati.

Dodatni izazov u mom radu sa vašom grupom izbjeglica bila je raznolikost u političkim i religioznim stavovima koju sam trebala da uzmem u obzir u mojim reagovanjima.

U narednom periodu uspostavili ste mnogo bliže veze sa našom zajednicom i sve ste više i intenzivnije učestvovali u našim svakodnevnim aktivnostima i nastojanjima da se prilagodimo novim okolnostima. Kakvi su bili vaši utisci i šta ste iz toga naučili?

Kada sam započela posao sa vašom grupom morala sam da učim. Branko mi je pomogao da shvatim kulturnu podlogu vaše grupe i političke i vjerske razlike koje su postojale u grupi.

Morala sam da vježbam da izgovaram vaša imena i da se prilagodim zvuku nepoznatog jezika.

Mada me pitate o mojim utiscima moram da odam priznanje izvanrednom radu WJR u prihvatu i udomljavnju vaše grupe, u šta spada pomoć sa benefitima, finansijska pomoć, časovi engleskog, stambena rješenja, pitanja imigracije itd. Bez njihove pomoći ne bih bila u stanju razviti usluge koje se nastvljaju do današnjeg dana. Finansijska pomoć koju WJR pruža Prijateljima La Benevolencije kod zajedničkih izleta i izdavanja SaLona mi je pomogla da na pozitivan i kreativan način reagujem na traume kroz koje ste prošli.

Moje posjete nekim od sastanaka vašeg kluba opet su mi potvrdile vitalni značaj pružanja utočišta izbjeglicama. U klubu ste mogli da uživete u kulturi koju ste donjeli sa sobom, da jedete hranu koja je imala poznati ukus i da razgovarate na svom jeziku. Ovo je omogućilo postepen proces integracije u UK, a ne brzu asimilaciju. Vidjela sam kako ste davali podršku jedni drugima, kako ste razmjenjivali informacije, kako ste stvorili mrežu organizacija koja vam je mogla pomoći da obezbjedite sticanje iskustva na radu i zapošljavanje i u vezi sa pitanjima koja se odnose na judaizam. Sve vas je manje dolazilo na psihoterapeutska savjetovanja, mada sam i ja mnogo naučila od onih koji jesu dolazili.

Model Prijatelja La Benevolencije po mom mišljenju predstavlja šemu koja na odgovarajući način reaguje na potrebe izbjeglica i preživjelih. Naučila sam da naseljavanjem izbjeglica blizu jednih drugima, ne rasturajući ih po cijeloj zemlji, i osposobljavajući ih tako što im se pruža mjesto na kome će se sastajati, pripadati jendi drugima i pomagati jedni druge, omogućava postepeno prilagođavanje novoj i ponekad neprijateljski raspoloženoj okolini. Vremenom će postajati jasnije da li je uticaj kluba spriječio neke dugoročne emocionalne teškoće koje se pojavljuju kod azilanata/izbjeglica.

Kako sam vas upoznavala sve sam više uživala da budem sa vama i da učim o vašem svijetu i mjestu iz koga ste došli. Toplota koja je dolazila od vas i osjećaj da sam prihvaćena olakšali su mi da vam se približim. Tako sam shvatila koliko je teško biti

bez posla, prekvalifikovati se i početi život iz početka, živjeti sa nepoznatim a ipak se nadati boljem. Kao i sa preživjelima iz Holokausta i od vas sam naučila da ništa ne treba uzeti za sigurno, ni mir, ni stabilnost, ni zdravlje ni komfor. Izloženost tim osnovnim emocijama koje sam osjetila u vezi sa onim što ste vi doživjeli formirala je moja reagovanja.

Kad se uzme u obzir kompleksnost i sveobuhvatni pristup vašeg posla bilo je logično što ste nam ponudili da se smjestimo u luksuz HSC. Učestvovali ste u našem druženju. Šta mislite u kojoj mjeri smo se zbog toga osjetili prihvaćenim i koliko nam je to pomoglo u procesu prilagođavanja?

Tokom prvih godina postojanja vaše grupe bilo je potrebno da budete u prostorijama koje bi vam omogućile da kuhate hranu na koju ste navikli. Jasno je da je to bilo veoma važno, pa stoga



U početku, mnogo toga se čulo i naučilo

There was a lot to hear and learn in the beginning

niste mogli biti smješteni u HSC u kome se kašrut striktno poštuje. Uvijek sam, međutim, smatrala da taj prvi smještaj nije bio podesan da pruži dovoljno dostojanstva i dobrodošlice vama kao izbjeglicama. Sem toga taj prostor nije bio sredina u kojoj ste mogli pustiti korijenje, pošto su ga koristile i druge grupe i stoga nije bilo moguće da ga na bilo koji način prilagodite sebi. Prelazak grupe u HSC nije značio samo bolje prostorije, nego, nadala sam se, to je trebalo da bude poruka o sigurnosti i uključivanju u zajednicu.

U mom poslu mi je sasvim jasno da je jevrejska dimenzija fundamentalna u uslugama koje pružamo. Bez nametanja religije onim koji posjećuju, smatram da ako se usluga posmatra pozitivno to može da utiče na jevrejski identitet kod ljudi. Mislim da je interesantno to što je vaša grupa počela da traži predavanja o jevrejskoj istoriji i što se uključivala u jevrejske praznike i pored razlika u religioznoj podlozi u grupi. Smatrala sam da bi sastanci u HSC mogli pružiti onim izbjeglicama sa jevrejskim nasljeđem osjećaj povezanosti sa nekim djelom njih samih koji je možda bio izgubljen.

Ne znam da li ste se zbog toga osjetili prihvaćenim i da li je to pomoglo vašem prilagođavanju, samo vi možete da odgovorite na to pitanje. Ja se nadam da je to tako.

Dvadeset godina nikako nije kratak period. Pomno ste



Seder večeru smo proveli kako smo najbolje znali u "Mjesnoj zajednici"

We tried our best for seder nights in the "Old premises"

pratili grupu tokom tog vremena. Djeca su odrasla i borila se za svoju nezavisnost, potrebe grupe su se stalno mijenjale ali su još uvijek očite. Kakvu ulogu predviđate za sebe u budućnosti grupe?

Meni se čini da dvadeset godina nije dug period kada se uzme u obzir kroz šta ste prošli. Veoma poštujem sve ono što ste vi kao pojedinci i kao grupa postigli. Uprkos toga što je sve bilo protiv vas uspjeli ste da organizujete svoje živote, a neki od vas su morali da se suoče sa dodatnom traumom od kako ste došli da živite u UK. Jasni pokazatelj zdravlja neke grupe je to koliko su djeca uspješna. Veoma dobro su uspjeli oni koji su bili djeca kada je vaša grupa došla kao izbjeglice. Prednost djece je u tome što je žiot pred njima i sve izgleda moguće. Udobnost koju im pružaju njihove porodice ublažuje borbe sa kojima su se odrasle izbjeglice morale suočiti. Želja da se uklupe i da ne budu različiti je uobičajeno osjećanje kod djece, a vjerovatno je još izraženije kod izbjeglica. Zato nije čudo što se manje uključuju u vašu grupu izbjeglica, pa je to možda i dobro. Iz vašeg pitanja bi se moglo zaključiti da bi odrasle izbjeglice voljele da im se djeca više osjećaju kao dio grupe i da u budućnosti budu karike u lancu sjećanja i baštine.

Moje iskustvo sa djecom preživjelih Holokausta je da što se više vrši pritiska na njih da održe te veze, to manje oni sami to žele. Međutim kako djeca više zalaze u godine, često postaju više zainteresovana za svoje porijeklo.

Što se tiče moje uloge ja više nisam u Centru i imam novi posao. Sadašnja moja titula glasi Specijalni savjetnik, Terapeutske usluge za preživjele i izbjeglice u Jewish Care. Konsultant sam osoblju koje se bavi preživjelima i izbjeglicama izloženim traumama rata i unutar Jewish Care i van njega. Prema tome više se ne bavim tekućim pitanjima koja se odnose na vašu grupu niti rukovođenjem osobljem zaduženim za taj rad. Međutim i dalje održavam kontakte sa preživjelima iz Centra i prisustvujem nekim od njihovih sastanaka. Nadam se da će biti moguće naći neki način da i dalje dajem podršku vašoj grupi, a možda i vi imate neku ideju kako bi se to moglo učiniti. Sa moje strane ja ću koristiti ogromno iskustvo koje sam stekla sa vama da me vodi u mojoj ulozi sa drugim grupama izbjeglica za koje sam konsultant.

Ova grupa stalno nastoji da nađe načine kako da uključi mlađu generaciju u život i aktivnosti naše zajednice. Kakvo je vaše iskustvo i eventualna poruka?

Sem onoga što sam dala kao odgovor na prethodno pitanje, podstakla bih vas da ih nenametljivo pozivate na društvena zbivanja, da ih pitate šta bi željeli da rade, a možda da ih pozivate zajedno sa njihovim „novim“ prijateljima na razne događaje. Možda bi željeli da formiraju svoju vlastitu grupu pod različitim imenom i sa različitim programom.

Nije jasna percepcija doprinosa izbjeglica UK društvu. Kako biste vi ocijenili jevrejsku grupu iz Bosne u tom pogledu?

Mislim da bi trebalo skrenuti pažnju medija na jevrejsku grupu iz Bosne kao izuzetan primjer kao dobar primjer snaženja i integracije u UK. Razbijate mnoge mitove koje loša štampa pripisuje azilantima i izbjeglicama. Voljela bih da završim molbom da mi kažete šta mislite da vam je pomoglo da živite svoje živote i da nađete novu nadu u sadašnjoj situaciji i kakvu poruku možete da pošaljete drugima koji se bave izbjeglicama.

Darija Stojnić

Interview with Judith Hassan OBE

Special Advisor

Therapeutic Services for Survivors and Refugees (Jewish Care)
Twenty years with us

A group of ca. 40 families, members of Jewish Communities of former Yugoslavia arrived in the UK in 1992. With time you came close to this small group. When did you first hear of us and what motivated you to take keen interest in the Group

A long period of time has elapsed since I first became aware and later involved with your group of refugees from the Former Yugoslavia. This may affect the accuracy of the details as memory is shaped by the passage of time. Nevertheless, the key feelings remain.

I already had an established an excellent working relationship with World Jewish Relief and the Jewish Refugee Committee and they supported my work with survivors and refugees from the Nazi Holocaust. Whilst WJR and the JRC had vast experience in receiving and settling refugees from many different parts of the world, they did not have the specialist experience for longer term therapeutic work. On behalf of Jewish Care I was asked to take on this role in 1992/3 based on my long experience of working with impact of severe suffering and war trauma in Shalvata and the Holocaust Survivors' Centre.

I thought it a great honour to be asked to get involved with your group, and I felt that I could use my experience in a new and challenging way.

I also felt that it was a chance to practice the Jewish ethic of helping the "stranger" which is a core belief of mine.

- What were your reminiscences when you learnt in more detail of our misfortune. To what extent had our destiny, although not as drastic as, prompted you to compare it to that of the Holocaust Survivors?

I had been working with refugees and survivors of the Nazi Holocaust for about 20 years when I heard of the plight of the refugees from the former Yugoslavia. Also my mother's family had been uprooted and I had personal experience of what it meant to be displaced, uprooted and traumatized. Both these factors gave me the essential confidence and knowledge to take on this new work, and I did not hesitate to do so. I needed Jewish Care's agreement, and once this was received Branko Danon transferred from WJR to Shalvata to become the community worker for your refugee group. Branko's role was a major advantage as he could speak your language, and had a great awareness of what was needed.

I believe that comparisons of suffering are not helpful as each experience is unique. Nevertheless, my initial response to your group was based on what I had learned from Holocaust survivors, namely, about the vital importance of traumatized people being together, strengthening each other, and having a sense of belonging and identity. I used this background knowledge to guide me, but was aware that I needed to open my mind, to make no assumptions, and to see the differences in terms of newly arrived refugees compared to those who had lived in the UK for so many years.

- From that point of view was working with the Bosnian Refu-

gees Group a new challenge for you, especially with knowledge that within the group there is a number of Holocaust Survivors. Did you find it necessary to differentiate your approach to them as opposed to other members of the group?

Working with the Bosnian refugees was a new challenge, but I also felt like a mother with her second child, more confident and less anxious than when I began my work with Holocaust survivors/refugees so many years earlier. I was aware that there were Holocaust survivors in the group and that they had gone through a double trauma, the second one possibly re-activating memories of their experiences in WW2. I was also aware from my experience with Holocaust survivors how aging can bring back past memories of suffering, and that current experiences



of massive loss can trigger emotional difficulties linked to the past.

I thought it was important to respond by recognizing the particular issues that older refugees face, for example, in learning a new language and adapting and integrating into a new society. The Bosnian Holocaust survivors could have become members of the Holocaust Survivors' Centre, but the language problems excluded them from easily participating in the social programme. Also the fact that the Bosnian refugees are Sephardi background and Ladino speaking meant that they would feel less at home in the predominantly Ashkenazi/Yiddish speaking environment of the HSC. Working in partnership with Branko, we set up a monthly lunch time social group for the older Bosnian refugees. Being aware of the potential emotional repercussions of war trauma, it was decided that a member of the Shalvata team would also participate in the group and get to know

them individually.

The monthly lunch group was significant but insufficient in dealing with the massive adaptations that these elderly refugees, and indeed all refugees, have to make when they are forced to move to another country. The establishment of the social club The Friends of La Benevolencija was a turning point in promoting the well-being of the group as a whole, including the elderly.

Another challenge was working with your group of refugees whose political and religious backgrounds were so varied, and how to contain this in the responses I made.

- In the following period you developed much closer ties with our Community participating ever more intensively in our daily activities and our efforts in adapting to new circumstances. What were your impressions and what did you learn from that.

When I began my work with your group it was a learning curve for me. Branko helped me to understand the cultural background of your group and the political and religious differences represented in the group. I had to practice pronouncing your names and attuning myself to the sound of an unfamiliar language.

Although you are asking me about **my** impressions, I need to pay tribute to WJR's outstanding work in the reception and settlement of your group including its assistance with benefits, financial support, English lessons, housing, immigration issues etc. Without their work I would not have been able to develop the services that continue till today. Also WJR's financial support of the Friends of La Benevolencija, its payment for the social outings and for the magazine Salon, allowed me to respond to the trauma you went through in a very positive and creative way.

My attendance at some of the meetings of the club demonstrated to me once again the vital importance of offering a safe haven to displaced refugees. In the club you could celebrate the culture you had brought with you, eat food that tasted familiar to you, and speak in your mother tongue. This allowed a gradual process of integration into the UK rather than immediate assimilation. I saw how you supported each other, how you disseminated information, how you created a network of organizations that could help you with work experience/employment and with issues related to Judaism. Interestingly, very few of you came forward to ask for counseling, though I also learned a lot from those who did.

For me the model of the Friends of La Benevolencija is a blueprint of how to offer meaningful responses to refugees/survivors. I learned that housing refugees in close proximity rather than dispersing them around the country, and by empowering them by giving them a place to meet belong and support each other, allows for the gradual adaptation to a new and sometimes hostile environment. In time we will be able to see if the impact of the club will prevent some of the long term emotional difficulties of asylum seekers/refugees.

As I got to know you I really enjoyed being with you and learning about your world and where you had come from. There was warmth and a feeling of inclusion and acceptance that came from you that made it easier for me to get closer to you. As I did, I learned how difficult it is to be without work, to have to retrain and start life again, to live life with the unfamiliar, and yet to hold on to the hope that things will get better. As with the Holocaust survivors, I learned from you not to take things for

granted, including peace, stability, health and comfort. Exposure to these raw emotions that I felt in relation to your experiences shaped my responses.

- Following the complexity of your work and the integral approach, it was Only logical to offer us the luxury of the HSC as a domicile. You participated in our socializing. What do you think how much this attitude encouraged our feeling of inclusion and helped the process of adaptation

The early days of the group needed to be in premises which would allow you to cook food that was familiar to you. This was clearly paramount and could not be accommodated in the HSC with its strict laws of kashrut. However, I always felt that the early accommodation was not suitable to give sufficient dignity and welcome to you as refugees. It also did not provide an environment in which you could put down roots as it was used by other groups and so could not be personalized in any way. The transfer of the group to the HSC was not just about offering better premises, but also, I hoped, would give a message of permanency and inclusion into the community.

It is very clear to me in my work that the Jewish dimension is fundamental to the services we provide. Without forcing religion on those who attend, I believe that if the service is viewed positively this can impact on someone's Jewish identity. I found it interesting that over time your group began to ask for lectures in Jewish history and involvement in the Jewish festivals even though there is diversity in the group's religious background. I thought that meeting in the HSC may offer those refugees with a Jewish background a feeling of connection to some part of themselves that may have been lost.

I cannot say whether it helped your feelings of inclusion and adaptation, only you can answer that question. I very much hope that is the case.

- Twenty years is by no means a short period. You have closely monitored the group in this period. The children grew up and fought for their independence, the Group's needs were constantly changing but still obvious. What role do you envisage for yourself in the future of the Group?

Twenty years in my view is not long considering the experiences you all went through. I have the greatest admiration for what you as individuals and as a group have achieved. Despite all the odds against you, you have made lives for yourselves, and for some of you, had to cope with additional trauma since living in the UK. I believe that the litmus test for the health of a group is how well the children are coping. In your group those who were children when you came as refugees have done outstandingly well. Children have the advantage of having their lives in front of them, and everything seems possible. They had

the comfort of their families with them to act as buffers against the struggles that the adult refugees had to face. The wish to fit in and not be different is a common childhood feeling, and is perhaps even more so for refugees. It is therefore not surprising that they are less involved with your refugee group, and that is perhaps a healthy outcome. However from your question, it seems that adult refugees want their children to feel more part of the group, and in the future, to be the links in the chain in terms of memory and legacy.

From my experience of the children of Holocaust survivors and refugees, the more pressure that is put on them to maintain these links, the less they wish to do so. However, as the children get older, they may become interested again in their background.

As far as my role is concerned, I am no longer based at the Centre and have a new job. My current title is Special Advisor, Therapeutic Services for Survivors and Refugees for Jewish Care. I consult to staff involved in working with survivors and refugees from war trauma both within Jewish Care and outside. I am therefore no longer dealing with management issues that relate to your group or the supervision of staff involved. However, I continue my contacts with the survivors at the Centre

and attend some of their meetings. I hope that I could also find some way of continuing to support your group, and perhaps you have some ideas about how this could be done. I will also use the enormous amount I have learned from you all to guide me in my role with other refugee groups I consult to.

- This group is struggling with methods to involve their young generation in he life and activities of the group. What is your experience and a possible message

Apart from what I have answered to the previous question, I would encourage you to gently keep inviting them to social events, asking them what they would like to do, and perhaps inviting them along with their "new" friends to different events. They may wish to form a group of their own, with a different name and focus.

- There is ambiguity in the perception of refugees' contribution to UK society. How would you judge the Jewish Bosnian group in that respect

I believe that the Jewish Bosnian group should be brought to the media's attention as an outstanding example of how well you have coped and integrated into the UK. You dispel many of the myths associated with the bad press given to many asylum seekers and refugees. I would like end by asking you to tell me what you feel has helped you to live your lives, to find some hope in your current situation, and what message you can send to others who are dealing with refugees.

Darija Stojnic



Sjednica redakcije SaLon-a, nedostaje Dejan

Salon's Publishing Board in session. Dejan is missing

Naša priča je prilično stara, a istovremeno i prilično poznata. Naime, davne 1492, kada su španski katolički kraljevi Ferdinand i Izabela odlučili da prognaju sve Jevreje iz Španije, počeo je exodus. Neki su pošli za Kolumbom i završili u Americi, a neki su se okrenuli prema Balkanu i završili u Bosni. U šali kažemo da se još uvijek ne zna ko je otišao na krivu stranu.

Bosna je u to doba bila novoosvojena teritorija koju je Otomanska imperija pokušala da napuni stanovništvom,



uključujući i novopridošle Jevreje, tako da su tragovi jevrejskog prisustva vidljivi već početkom XVI vijeka, da bi 1565 godine i Jevrejska opština bila organizovana. Među prvim poslovima je bilo izgraditi sinagogu, koja je otvorena 1581 i u njoj je danas Muzej Jevreja Bosne i Hercegovine.

Miletski sistem u Otomanskom carstvu je dozvoljavao svakoj vjerskoj skupini slobodno ispovijedanje vjere, pa su Jevreji bili u istom statusu kao i svi drugi nemuslimani, što je u poređenju sa Evropom, njihovim getima za Jevreje, pogromima i drugim problemima, bio pravi mali raj. Sinagoga se tako rekući naslanja na obližnju džamiju, staru pravoslavnu crkvu i katoličku crkvu, što u krugu od 200 metara još jedino možete vidjeti u Jerusalemu. Nije onda čudo da je Sarajevo u jevrejskom žargonu dobilo ime "Mali Jerusalem".

Onda je došla 1878, Berlinski kongres i Bosna je stavljena pod jurisdikciju Austrougarske monarhije. Sarajevski jevreji su bili malo zbunjeni, jer nikada ne znaš šta nosi promjena vlasti, pa su se neki, zajedno sa Hadži Lojom i borili protiv ulaska Austrijanaca, ali kako sila Boga ne moli, Austrijanci su ipak okupirali cijelu zemlju.

Doveli su sobom i svoje državne činovnike, među kojima je bio ne mali broj Jevreja, bilo iz same Austrije, ili iz Češke, Mađarske, Poljske i ostalih dijelova carevine. Za lokalne Jevreje novi šok. Očito je da se radi o Jevrejima, ali o Jevrejima koji ne znaju jezik, jer zaboga, jevrejski jezik je Ladino, ili Judeo-espagnol ili lingu di diđoz, ko se to zvalo.

Naravno, već naredne godine je formirana Aškenaska jevrejska opština u Sarajevu i između ove dvije opštine nije nikada bilo otvorenih sukoba, sve do 1940. kada su se integrisale, misleći da će ih to spasiti od genocida i Holokausta u kome je nažalost stradalo preko 80% naših Jevreja. Svakako, bilo je međusobnog nadmudrivanja, poznata je priča iz tog doba da "Ovi Aškenazi možda su Jevreji, a možda i nisu, ali primičemo ih kao najbolje prijatelje Jevreja". U današnje vrijeme, zadržala se varijanta te šale da se na pitanje ko su najveći prijatelji Jevreja odgovara – naravno Židovi.

Sarajevska jevrejska čaršija je uskoro shvatila da nije dovoljno samo držati otvoren svoj čepenak i pomalo trgovati u čaršiji, jer se tako, bez škole, nikad neće postati neko i nešto u državnoj hijerarhiji.

Još u januaru 1892. sjela je grupa viđenijih ljudi i donijela odluku da formira društvo "La Benevolencija" za stipendiranje siromašnih a talentovanih sefardskih mladića (gender još nije bio tako popularan kao danas), bilo za zanate, bilo za visoke škole, koje tada u Bosni nisu postojale, ali bilo ih je u Carevini

na nekoliko mjesta. Koncem 1892. održana je i Godišnja skupština, izabrano rukovodstvo, donesena pravila i "La Benevolencija" je krenula u rad.

Već nakon desetak godina postignuti su impresivni rezultati sa desetinom jevrejskih studenata u Beču, Pešti i Pragu, sa blizu već 400 kalfi od kojih je nemali broj postao majstorima, jer je Benevolencija pored stipendije, organizovala za šegerte analfabetički tečaj, a nakon toga i obuku, pomalo iz korespondencije, malo računa i knjigovodstva, ili današnjim riječnikom pravi kurs menadžmenta.

Društvo je imalo stalne donatore, pa je iz tih sredstava kupljeno zemljište u tadašnjoj (i sadašnjoj) Miss Irbina ulici da se pravi upravna zgrada Benevolencije.

Već 1908 društvo je prestalo biti društvo za stipendiranje sefardskih mladića i postalo Jevrejsko društvo za prosvjetu i kulturu, čime se granica između Sefarda i Aškenaza sasvim uklonila, mada je i prije toga bilo i aškenaskih stipendista. Djelatnost je proširena na cijelu Bosnu i Hercegovinu, a značajne potpore su dobijali i Jevrejske studentske menze u Beču i Zagrebu.

Prvi svjetski rat je usporio djelatnost, jer su mnogi stipendisti otišli u vojsku, a nakon rata je u novoj Kraljevini naravno "La Benevolencija" nastavila da radi punom snagom. Formirani su pododbori društva u svim većim jevrejskim centrima u Bosni i Hercegovini (Banja Luka, Bijeljina, Tuzla, Mostar), a u manjim mjestima su postojali povjerenici koji su se trudili da sve teče besprijekorno.

Ne treba posebno ni pominjati saradnju sa jevrejskim opštinama u Zagrebu i Beogradu, gdje su stipendisti Benevolencije bili na studijama.

Biblioteka Benevolencije, sa preko 100.000 knjiga, postala je jedna od najvećih, ako ne i najveća u gradu, a saradnja je cvjetala i sa ostalim društvima sličnoga profila.

Polako, "La Benevolencija" je postala krovna organizacija za sve jevrejske djelatnosti u Bosni i Hercegovini, pa i za mnoge na širem području Kraljevine Jugoslavije.

Uvijek je to bila dobro organizovana, štedljivo vođena i transparentna organizacija, oko koje nije bilo niti problema, niti loših riječi.

Nažalost, sve što je dobro ne traje vječno, pa se tako i nad Evropu nadvio bauk novoga rata, a Jugoslavija je postala utočište izbjeglim Jevrejima iz Poljske, Češke, Austrije i Njemačke. Gotovo sva sredstva koja je imala na raspolaganju, organizacija je potrošila pomažući ovaj talas izbjeglica, koje su, što legalno, što ilegalno boravili u našoj sredini.

Na kraju, počeo je rat i u Jugoslaviji, i vrlo brzo je Sarajevo postalo sastavni dio Nezavisne države Hrvatske. "La Benevolencija" je, kao i druge jevrejske institucije, dobila svog "povjerenika", koji je u rekordno brzom roku rasturio sve što se moglo rasturiti, počevši od biblioteke koja je raznesena, pa do dokumentacije i ono malo gotovine što je još ostalo na računima i u kasi. Sve što smo imali je vrlo sistematski uništavano, tako da iz period neposredno pred rat ništa nije sačuvano, jer je sve još bilo u ormarima i fasciklama. Ostala je tu i tamo po kućama sačuvana Spomenica Benevolencije, izdana 1924 o 40 godišnjici društva, koja je, što je interesantno napomenuti, štampana naizmjenično, jedan članak latinicom, drugi ćirilicom, i tako redom. U Arhivu BiH je ostalo ono što je još Austrija počela da skuplja, sva zvanična dokumentacija o odobrenju rada, potvrdi Pravila društva pa kasnije Statuta Benevolencije, nešto poslovnih knjiga i to je to.

Nakon oslobođenja 1945, gotovo svi preživjeli sarajevski Jevreji su se vratili kući. Amerika je bila daleko i zatvorena, Evropa razorena, a država Izrael još nije postojala. Među prvim poslovima je bilo obnavljanje rada "La Benevolencije", ali kako

je tada rečeno, možda je bolje da je nazovete "Sloboda". Tako je jedno kratko vrijeme Benevolencija pod tuđim, a svojim imenom, pokušala da nastavi raditi, ali je sve to kratko trajalo, pa je 1948, kao i sva druga društva i organizacije sa nacionalnim predznakom jednostavno ugašena.

Sve ono što je radila "La Benevolencija", preuzela je na sebe Jevrejska opština, pa je tu bilo i kulturnih aktivnosti, bilo je i pomoći onima kojima je bila potrebna, ali sve to nije bila Benevolencija.

Onda su došle takozvane "demokratske promjene", slobodni izbori u novembru 1990, da bi već početkom 1991. ponovo bila registrovana "La Benevolencija" kao Jevrejsko kulturno prosvjetno i humanitarno društvo. Ciljevi su bili sačuvati i prezentirati jevrejsku kulturu, koju su Jevreji donijeli sa sobom u ove krajeve, te kulturu koju su stvarali u Bosni i Hercegovini i na taj način sigurno obogatili ovu zemlju, te humanitarni rad.

Početkom 1992. obilježili smo 100 godina rada Benevolencije, pred prepunom salom Narodnog pozorišta, a tokom Sarajevske zime iste godine održali sedmodnevni program "Shalom Sarajevo – Jevreji voljenom gradu".

Ništa nije pomoglo i u aprilu 1992. počeo je rat u kome je i "La Benevolencija" imala svoju ulogu. Naime, još pred početak rata, nakon opsade Dubrovnika, koja nam se sada čini kratkom, svega 90 dana u poređenju sa 1425 dana opsade Sarajeva, naučili smo da je najvažnije za starije i hronične bolesnike imati dovoljno lijekova. Sazvali smo jevrejske ljekare i farmaceute i napravili su nam za tili čas dugu listu lijekova neophodnih za preživljavanje 1.500, uglavnom starijih ljudi, u periodu od tri mjeseca. Što nije bilo na domaćem tržištu – kupio nam je JOINT. Za ostatak para kupili smo hranu koja može stajati, kao ulje, brašno, so, šećer, rižu, pastu, grah, konzerve i zaključili da će nam, ukoliko dođe do rata dobro doći, a ukoliko sve bude mirno, da ćemo to podijeliti kao tzv. "zimsku pomoć" ljudima slabijeg imovnog stanja.

Uz pomoć JOINT-a, Sohnuta i Jevrejskih opština Beograd i Zagreb, organizovane su evakuacije iz Sarajeva, prve tri avionom prema Beogradu, a zatim kopnom u Hrvatsku, prema Splitu i Pirovcu i kasnije Makarskoj. Evakuisano je iz Sarajeva preko 2.500 ljudi, od kojih oko 1000 Jevreja.

Nas oko 500 je ostalo u gradu i krenuli smo u aktivnosti Benevolencije. Prvo je bilo otvoriti apoteku, jer je sve u gradu (intersantno osim knjižara) bilo opljačkano, pa i apoteke. Komšija koji je imao radnju preko puta opštine nam je ustupio svoj prostor za apoteku i tako je osvanula firma "Humanitarna apoteka La Benevolencija". Nije to svima lako za izgovoriti, pa smo odmah dobili nadimak "Jevrejska apoteka", a uskoro je postalo poznato da ako nešto trebaš, traži u Jevrejskoj apoteci, ako tamo nema – nećeš to nigdje naći. Uvijek je pred apotekom bio popriličan red, a onda su počeli prigovori u smislu, da je jako opasno doći do naše apoteke, jer treba preći most na Miljacki, a mostovi su bili cilj za snajpere sa brda. Pa smo otvorili drugu apoteku, preko puta Narodnog pozorišta, a mjesto je postalo tako popularno, da je i danas u istom prostoru neka komercijalna farmacija.

Međutim, pošto smo mi i kulturno prosvjetno društvo, a niko nije radio, počeli smo sa drugim aktivnostima. Organizovali smo kurseve stranih jezika, učili smo hebrejski, engleski, francuski, njemački i arapski (jer je najbolji profesor arapskog bila Jevrejka), pa su odmah počele šale da optimisti uče engleski, a pesimisti arapski.

U septembru 1992. smo obilježili 500 godina izгона Jevreja iz Španije, na manifestaciji koja je trajala tri dana i koja je uz brojne okrugle stolove, koncerte i izložbe, zabilježena i u New York Timesu. Svijet je iznenada otkrio da pored Muslimana, Srba i Hrvata, u Sarajevu ima i Jevreja, pa smo postali meta

stranih novinara i TV ekipa koje su pokrivale naš nesretni rat. Te vijesti i reportaže su inicirale stvaranje oraganizacija u Evropi "Prijatelji Benevolencije Sarajevo", koji su počeli da skupljaju i šalju nam humanitarnu pomoć. Tako je "La Benevolencija" postala prva i jedina domaća humanitarna organizacija koja je potpisala ugovor sa UNHCR-om, te dobila registarske tablice i kartice saradnika najveće svjetske humanitarne organizacije, zahvaljujući tome što je kod podjele pomoći jedino pitanje bila "Šta vam treba?", a ne tada uobičajeno šta si i kako se zoveš.

Organizovali smo unos i slanje iz Sarajeva na stotine hiljada pisama, radio vezom smo povezali Sarajevo sa Beogradom i Zagrebom a telefonom preko Zagreba sa cijelim svijetom. U našoj kuhinji smo svaki dan u sedmici, svaki dan u godini osim za Jom Kippur dijelili po 320 – 350 toplih obroka. Čak smo uspjeli da odštampamo i nekoliko Biltena o našem radu i životu, na dva jezika, ovaj puta nije u pitanju ćirilica i latinica, nego na bosanskom i Engleskom jeziku, naravno kada bi se zvijezde poklopile pa je u isto vrijeme bilo i struje i papira i boje i moglo se nešto štampati.

A onda je napokon rat završen. Od evakuisanih Jevreja u Sarajevo se vratilo njih blizu 40%, procentualno najviše od bilo koje etničke grupe koja je napustila grad. Prestala je potreba za humanitarnim apotekama, humanitarna kuhinja je prerasla u mali restorančić, sa jednim brojem jela koja se i nadalje humanitarno dijele, od kurseva jezika donedavno je još bio kurs engleskog, ali smo sada i sa tim prestali, jer nema interesenata, ali zato imaju druge aktivnosti.

Umjesto da našim klijentima damo svaki dan po jednu ribu, naučili smo ih da pecaju ribu. Naime, organizovali smo kurs malog biznisa, gdje su u 60 časova nauče osnove knjigovodstva, marketinga, pravnih propisa, pravljenje biznis plana i sve ono što je neophodno za početak. Svakome kažemo da to nije garancija da će postati Bill Gates, ali i saobraćajne nesreće prave oni koji su naučili voziti za 20 časova, a ne samo oni bez dozvole. Na taj način smo pomogli da se otvori blizu 3.600 radnih mjesta i isto toliko porodica učini samoodrživim.

Otišli smo korak dalje i formirali Mikrokreditnu fondaciju "Melaha" (po imenu prve jevrejske štedionice u Sarajevu), koja takvim ljudima daje kredit za otpočinjanje posla i imamo nivo povrata kredita od 97%.

Vodimo brigu o starima, koji su ostali u Sarajevu, dok su im potomci negdje u svijetu i sjete se eventualno da jednom mjesечно nazovu i čuju jesu li još živi. Blizu 400 ljudi očekuje dva ili tri puta sedmično posjetu iz Benevolencije, gdje in njegovateljice pomažu u kućnim poslovima, nabavljaju hranu i lijekove, ili, što je najčešći zahtjev, samo sjede sa njima da zajedno popiju kafu, jer je to jedina živa riječ koju čuju. Sa TV aparatom je malo teže razgovarati.

Najviše brinemo o djeci i omladini, jer na njima sve ostaje. Želimo od njih da napravimo dobre ljude, svjesne toga da su Jevreji, ali ne da im to bude prednost, nego da to ne osjećaju kao manu i teret. Počeli su ljetovanjima u Pirovcu i Sarvašu da stvaraju mrežu prijatelja iz bivše Jugoslavije i šire.

Može se još mnogo pričati o aktivnostima, radu, uspjesima, a što da ne i promašajima, jer sigurno i toga ima. Ali, zaustavimo se ovdje za prvih 120 godina, i mada je to kod Jevreja ciljani kraj, mi se nadamo da će Benevolencija doživjeti i preživjeti još najmanje 120 godina.

Sve što smo uradili, uradili smo zahvaljujući prijateljima, ljudima među koje spadate i vi koji ovo čitate i svi oni koji su nam u prošlosti pomagali i vjerujemo da će to i nastaviti, jer bez Benevolencije (dobre volje) nije lako živjeti.

Sarajevo, August 2012

Jakob Finci

Predsjednik

AFTER THE FIRST 120 YEARS

Our story is both old and well known. To be exact, long ago in 1492, when the Spanish kings Ferdinand and Isabel decided to expel all the Jews from Spain, the exodus began. Some followed Colombo to America and some headed to Balkans and came to Bosnia. Jokingly we say that it is not still clear who went the wrong way.

At that time Bosnia was a newly conquered territory and the Ottoman Empire tried to fill it with population which included the arriving Jews. This means that it is possible to find here traces of Jewish presence going back to the beginning of the sixteenth century and we know that The Jewish Community was established in 1565. One of the first tasks was the construction of a synagogue which was opened in 1581. It houses today The Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina Jews.

Under the millet system in the Ottoman Empire religious communities were allowed to rule themselves under their own system, so that the Jews had the same status as the other non-Muslims. It was heaven in comparison to the rest of Europe – the ghettos for the Jews, pogroms and all the other problems. The synagogue was almost leaning against the neighbouring mosque, the old Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church. The only other place where you can see something like this within an area of 200 sq. m. is in Jerusalem; it is no wonder then that in Jewish jargon Sarajevo is referred to as “Small Jerusalem”.

Then, under the Berlin Congress of 1878 Bosnia came under the jurisdiction of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Sarajevo Jews were confused a bit, because it is difficult to say what a change of authority might bring with it. Some of them even fought together with Hadzi Loja to prevent the entrance of the Austrians but as they were stronger, the Austrians managed to occupy the whole country. They brought with them their government officials, among them quite a number of Jews from Austria, but also from the Czech Lands, Hungary, Poland and other parts of the empire. It meant a new shock for the local Jews. It was clear that these were Jews, but they did not know the language, because for God’s sake the Jewish Language was Ladino.

Sure enough, the next year an Ashkenazi Jewish community was formed in Sarajevo and there were never any conflicts between these two communities. In 1940 they integrated into one hoping that it might save them from genocide and Holocaust. Sadly, more than 80% of our Jews perished. Indeed, the two communities tried to outwit one another; a story from that period mentioned that “these Ashkenazim might or might not be Jews, but anyway we shall accept them as the best friends of Jews”. Some other forms of that joke exist even today.

Sarajevo Jewish business community soon realized that it was not enough to have their stores open and go on trading on the market place, because without education they would never ascend the state hierarchy.

At a meeting which took place as early as January of 1892 a group of prominent people decided to establish the La Benevolencija society. Its purpose was to provide scholarships for poor but talented Sephardi young men (gender was not as popular at that time as it is today) to be educated in various trades or at universities that did not exist then in Bosnia but there was a number of them at various places in the Empire. Late in 1892 Annual Assembly was held, the leaders were elected, the rules were passed and La Benevolencija started to operate.

Just ten years later impressive results were achieved with a dozen of Jewish students in Vienna, Budapest and Prague; with almost 400 of journeymen, many of whom became skilled craftsmen, because La Benevolencija organized literacy courses for the apprentices, to be followed by training in the

trade, some correspondence, some arithmetic and bookkeeping, or as we would put it today it was a course in management.

The society was supported by permanent donators making it possible to buy the site in Miss Irby Street and build the La Benevolencija head office. In 1908 La Benevolencija ceased to be a society providing scholarships for Sephardi young men and became Jewish Society for education and culture, thus removing completely the boundaries between the Sephardim and the Ashkenazim, although even before that Ashkenazim young people were awarded scholarships. The activities expanded to the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina and students’ canteens in Vienna and Zagreb were also financially supported.

First World War slowed down the activities because many of the scholarship holders went to army, but after the war La Benevolencija resumed its operations with full speed in the new Kingdom. Subcommittees were formed in all the major Jewish centres in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Banja Luka, Bijeljina, Tuzla, and Mostar) and in smaller places agents were appointed who made every effort to make things run smoothly.

There is no need to mention the cooperation with Jewish Communities in Zagreb and Belgrade where La Benevolencija scholarship holders were studying.

La Benevolencija library with more than 100,000 books became one of the largest if not the largest in the town, and there was good cooperation with other similar societies.

Gradually, La Benevolencija became an umbrella organization for all Jewish activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina; but also for many activities in the whole of The Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

It has always been a well-organized, economically run and transparent organization, with no problems or bad reputation.

Unfortunately, all good things do not last long. The threat of a new war hang over Europe, and Yugoslavia became a refuge for Jews fleeing Czechoslovakia, Austria and Germany. Almost all the funds available to the organization were spent helping this wave of both legal and illegal refugees.

Then the war started in Yugoslavia as well. Soon after that Sarajevo became part of the Independent State of Croatia. Same as for all the other Jewish institutions, an agent was soon appointed for La Benevolencija who did not lose time to demolish everything that could be demolished, starting with the library that was carried away, as were the documents and the little cash that was still left on the account and in the safe. Everything we had was systematically destroyed, so that nothing was saved from the period immediately before the war because it was not removed from the files and the shelves. Scattered in some houses it was possible to find La Benevolencija Commemorative Volumes issued in 1924 on the fortieth anniversary of the Society. It is interesting to mention that the articles were printed in alternating order in both alphabets – one was printed in Latin alphabet and the next one in Cyrillic. The Bosnia and Herzegovina Archives hold papers that Austria started collecting so many years ago – all the official documents authorising the beginning of activities, confirming The Society Rules; and from later on La Benevolencija Bylaws, some business reports and that is all.

In 1945, after the liberation almost all the surviving Sarajevo Jews came back home. America was far away and closed, Europe was closed, and the State of Israel did not exist yet. One of the first tasks was to restore La Benevolencija, but at that time it was suggested that it might be better to rename it to “Sloboda” (Freedom). Thus it happened that for a short time Benevolencija tried to operate under another name but then in 1948 its activities terminated as did the activities of all the other ethnically oriented societies and organizations.

Sarajevo Jewish community took over the operations of La Benevolencija; this involved also the

ANNIVERSARIES

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cultural activities and the help for the needy, but all that was not Benevolencija.

Then the so called "democratic changes" took place, together with the free elections of November 1990, and as soon as early 1991 La Benevolencija was registered as a Jewish Cultural, Educational and Humanitarian Society. The objectives were to preserve and present the Jewish culture brought with them to these parts of the world as well as the culture created by them while in Bosnia and Herzegovina thus certainly enriching this country; but also the humanitarian work.

Early in 1992 we marked 100 years of Benevolencija activities in the packed hall of The National Theatre: that same year during the Sarajevo Winter event we presented a seven-days programme under the title : Shalom Sarajevo – Jews to their beloved city.

This did not help. In April of 1992 the war started in which La Benevolencija had a role to play. Actually, even before the war started and after the siege of Dubrovnik (that seems short to us now – only 90 days as compared to 1425 days of Sarajevo siege), we learned that the most important thing is to have enough medication for the elderly and people with chronic illnesses. We gathered Jewish doctors and pharmacists and in no time they made a long list of medicines needed for the survival of 1,500 mainly elderly people over a period of three months. JOINT bought for us those drugs we could not find on our local market. We used the rest of the money to buy non-perishable food: oil, flour, salt, sugar, rice, pasta, beans and tinned food. It was decided that it might come in handy in case of war, and in case that it would remain peaceful we would distribute it as "winter support" to the needy.

Evacuations from Sarajevo were organized with the help of JOINT, Sohnut and Belgrade and Zagreb Jewish Communities. The first three were by plane to Belgrade, and later on land to Croatia - to Split and Pirovac and later to Makarska. More than 2,500 people were evacuated, out of which 1,000 Jews.

Some 500 Jews remained in Sarajevo and we started with the activities of La Benevolencija. The first job was to open the pharmacy because everything, including pharmacies was looted (except for bookshops – interesting). The neighbour who had a shop across the street gave us his space for our pharmacy and so the Humanitarian Pharmacy of La Benevolencija firm name appeared. It was not easy for everybody to pronounce it so that we were immediately nicknamed as The Jewish Pharmacy and very soon after it became known that "if you need something go and look for it in The Jewish Pharmacy and if you cannot find it there – you will not find it anywhere". There were always long queues in front of the pharmacy; then people started objecting saying that it was too dangerous to get to our pharmacy because it meant crossing the bridge over Miljacka River, and bridges were always targets for the snipers on the hills. Then we opened another pharmacy across the street from the National Theatre. The place became so popular that a commercial pharmacy stands there even today.

However, we are also a cultural and educational society. Since



Dovid Karalic, of a Jewish community bus leaving Sarajevo for safety, bids goodbye to his Muslim father, February 1992

nobody was working we started other activities as well. We organized courses in foreign languages: Hebrew, English, French, German and Arabic (because the best professor of Arabic is a Jewish lady). This immediately started the joke that optimists learn English and pessimists Arabic.

In September of 1992 we marked 500 years of Jews expulsion from Spain by a three days long event of round tables, concerts and exhibitions; this was mentioned even in New York Times. Suddenly the world realized that beside the Muslims, Serbs and Croats there are also Jews living in Sarajevo and so we became the targets of foreign journalists and TV crews covering our unfortunate war. Those news and reports initiated the creation of Friends of La Benevolencija organizations in Europe, who started to collect and send us humanitarian aid. La Benevolencija thus became the first and the only local humanitarian organization that signed an agreement with UNHCR and received number plates and association cards to the largest international humanitarian organization. As a consequence the only question asked when distributing aid was: "What do you need?" and not the usual: "Who are you? What is your name?"

Under our organization we received in and sent from Sarajevo hundreds of thousands of letters; Sarajevo was linked by radio with Belgrade and Zagreb, and

by telephone through Zagreb it was connected to the rest of the world. Every day in the year, except for Yom Kippur we prepared in our kitchen 320 – 350 meals and distributed them. We even managed to print two bilingual bulletins about our life and work (not in Latin and Cyrillic alphabet this time, but in Bosnian and English). This would be done of course when everything coincided and we had electric power, paper and printing ink all at the same time.

The war was finally over. Some 40% of the evacuated Jews came back. That is the highest percentage of any ethnic group



that had left the city. There was no more need for humanitarian pharmacies; the humanitarian kitchen became a small restaurant, but a number of dishes are still being distributed for the needy; until recently the English language course was

running but even that stopped because there is no more interest for it, but we are involved in other activities.

Instead of giving our clients a fish a day, we have taught them to catch the fish. Namely, we organized a course in small businesses. They are given 60 lessons during which time they learn the basics of bookkeeping, marketing, legal regulations, preparation of business plans and other things needed to start. We tell everybody that it is not a guarantee that they will become Bill Gates, but also that traffic accidents are caused by those who learn how to drive in 20 lesson and not only by those without licence. In this way we helped to create almost 3,600 jobs and to make as many self-supporting families. We went even a step further forming the Microcredit funding association Melaha (after the name of the first Jewish Savings Bank in Sarajevo) which offers to these people credits to start their businesses with. The level of credit return is 97%.

We take care of the elderly who stayed in Sarajevo, while their offspring living dispersed worldwide remembers to call them

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once a month to hear whether they are still alive. Almost 400 people expect to have two or three times a week visits by carers from La Benevolencija who help them with housework, food and medication shopping but in majority of cases they are happy to have somebody to talk to and share a coffee, because this is the only human voice they hear. It is difficult to talk to a TV screen.

We pay our utmost attention to the children and the young people, because they are the future. We want them to become good people, aware of the fact that they are Jews without looking at it as an advantage but also not considering it a handicap or a burden. In the Pirovac and Sarvas summer camps they started creating a network of friends from former Yugoslavia and elsewhere.

It is possible to go on about our activities, work, successes and why not failures which, sure enough, do exist. But let us stop here at the first 120 years, and although it is the targeted end for Jews, we hope that La Benevolencija will live to at least 120 more and beyond.

Everything we achieved we did so thanks to our friends, one of them is reading these lines now, and all those that helped us in the past; we believe that they will go on doing so because it is not easy to live without Benevolencija (good faith).

Jakob Finci
The President

**NAŠIM ČITAOCIMA I PRIJATELJIMA ŽELIMO SRETNU NOVU
5773 GODINU.
WE WISH OUR READERS AND FRIENDS A VERY HAPPY
5773**



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