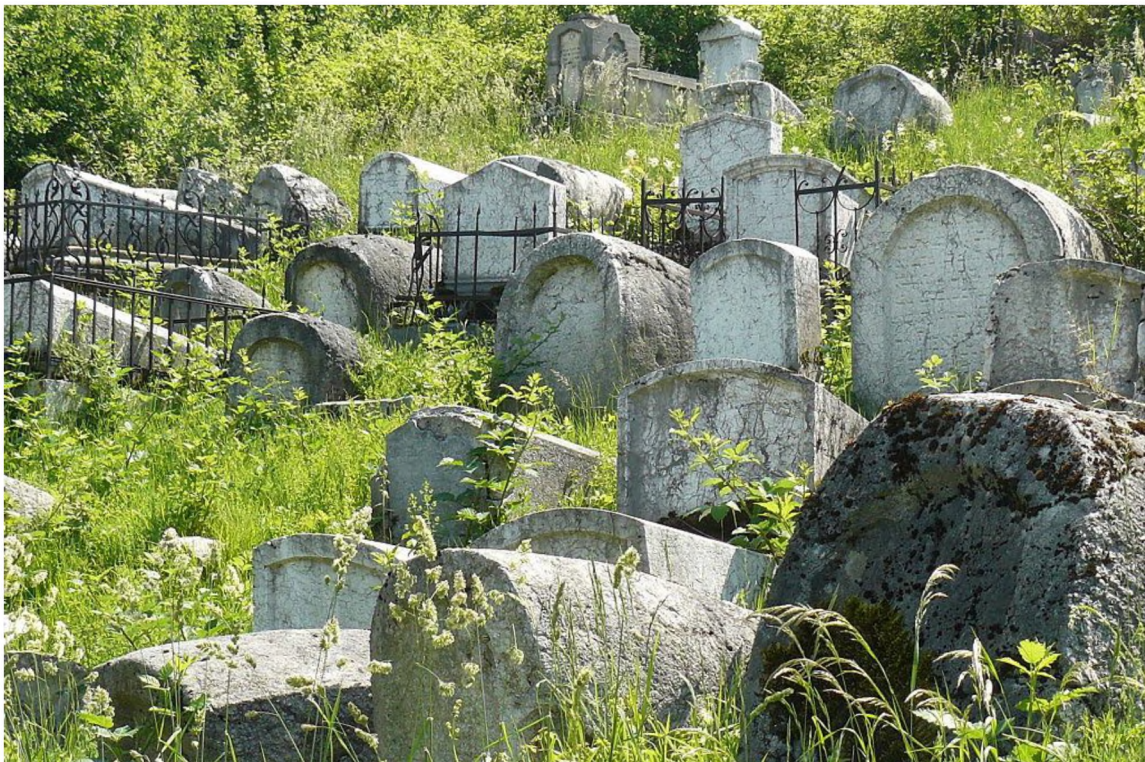




# GLASNIK

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Jewish Cemetery Sarajevo

# VOICE

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*Darko Fischer, urednik "Glasnika"*

**Uz posebni broj BB Glasnika**

**P**oštovane čitateljice i čitatelji,



**D**vadeset i sedmi siječnja godišnjica je oslobođenja ozloglašenog nacističkog koncentracionog logora Auschwitz. Taj dan proglašen je Međunarodnim danom sjećanja na žrtve Holokausta. Prošlo je 76 godina od oslobođenja tog logora, no sjećanja na strahote Holokausta i na šest miliona stradalih Židova i dalje su težak teret na savijesti čovječanstva. Toga dana nastojimo poslati opomenu cijeloj svjetskoj javnosti, da se takvi zločini više nikada ne smiju dogoditi. Tom prilikom i s tim ciljem objavljuju se i još manje poznate činjenice o raznim stradanjima i tužnim sudbinama u Holokaustu. U ovom posebnom broju našeg Glasnika donosimo do sada nepoznatu sudbinu grupe sarajevskih Židova među kojima je bio i Avram Levi Sadić, predratni vlasnik tvornice čarapa Ključ. Priču o njegovom skrivanju i stradanju od ustaša i Nijemaca u zločinačkoj NDH, kao i o potrazi za njegovim posmrtnim ostacima za naš list napisala je njegova rođakinja Berta Zekić – Belson koja danas živi u Izraelu.

*Darko Fischer, editor of "Voice of BB"*

***Editorial to the special issue of The Voice of BB***



**D**ear readers,

**J**anuary 27 is the anniversary of the liberation of the notorious Nazi Auschwitz concentration camp. This day was declared as International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust. It has been 76 years since the liberation of that camp, but memories of the horrors of the Holocaust and of the six million Jews who perished remain a heavy burden on the conscience of mankind. On that day, we are trying to send a warning to the entire world public, that such crimes must never happen again. On that occasion and with that goal, even less known facts about various sufferings and sad destinies in the Holocaust are being published. In this special issue of our Glasnik, we bring the hitherto unknown fate of a group of Sarajevo Jews, among whom was Avram Levi Sadić, the pre-war owner of the Ključ socks factory. The story of his hiding and suffering from the Usthas and Germans in the criminal NDH, as well as the search for his remains for our paper was written by his cousin Berta Zekić - Belson, who now lives in Israel.



## Zaboravljeni Avram Levi Sadić

Ova priča je istinita i lična ali isto tako i priča u kojoj će se mnogi pronaći.

Avram Levi Sadić trebao je biti zaboravljen. Nitko ga se više nije sjećao. Nitko nije znao kako je Avram izgledao. Nitko nije držao njegovu sliku u obiteljskom albumu niti je to koga zanimalo. Nije se znalo ni gdje mu je grob. Njegovo ime nije bilo čak niti na listi s milionima imena žrtava Holokausta u Yad Vashemu. Avram Levi Sadić trebao je utonuti u ono tamno more vječnog zaborava na čijem dnu počivaju milioni ljudi kojih se nitko više ne sjeća. Sve što se o njemu moglo saznati odnosilo se na ono nešto imovine što je preteklo razna komadanja. A komadali su svi. Prvo Nijemci koji su 1941. izbacivali bale čarapa kroz razbijene prozore tvornice čarapa Ključ, čiji je vlasnik Avram bio, te ih tovarili na kamione i otpremali vlakovima na razne frontove da bi grijale noge njemačkim vojnicima. Komadanje su nastavile ustaše koje su starog Avrama izbacile iz njegovog luksuznog stana, pa je do bijega u Mostar živio u nekoj neuvjetnoj rupi u ulici Magrabija. I Titovi komunisti zgrabili su u Avramovu imovinu pa su u ime naroda nacionalizirali sve što je nadživjelo Avrama. Samo što se se iz Avramovog luksuznog stana iselio ustaški časnik u isti taj stan uselio jenarodni heroj Vasa Butozan.



**Avram Levi Sadić i članovi židovskog dobrotvornog društva La Benevolencija iz Sarajeva**

se bavi pitanjima židovske imovine u Sarajevu. Rekao je još i da ima veliku bazu podataka o Avramu Levi Sadiću i o njegovoj pozamašnoj imovini te da traži njegove žive nasljednike, obzirom da je Avram bio je jedan od najmoćnijih, najutjecajnijih i najbogatijih ljudi u regiji u razdoblju prije Drugog svjetskog rata.

Taj telefonski poziv rasplamsao je nadu i maštu o velikom nasljedstvu i sreći koja samo što se nije osmjehnula. Amir Ibrišimović je poslao obimnu dokumentaciju koja je dokazivala da je Avram bio vlasnik četiri velike i klasične zgrade u samom centru Karlovih Vary, Tvornice čarapa Ključ iz Sarajeva u kojoj je u predvečerje Drugog svjetskog rata radilo 300 radnika, Tvornice trikotaže i galanterije Šik iz Sarajeva u kojoj je pred sami početak Drugog svjetskog rata radilo 120 radnika, nekoliko stambenih zgrada u Sarajevu, te brojnih stanova i tkozna čega još. Snovi o milionima bili su na dohvata ruke, jer je Amir Ibrišimović

posjedovao sudsku odluku o nasljeđivanju koja je moju pokojnu majku i njenu sestru proglasila zakonskim nasljednicama Avramove imovine.

Po riječima Amira Ibrišimovića najveće šanse za povrat imovine imali smo upravo u Karlovim Varima budući da je Češka kao kulturna i uređena država usvojila zakon o restituciji. Amir je sumnjao da će Bosna i Hercegovina onako jadna, siromašna i ratom opustošena ikada usvojiti zakon o restituciji jer nema od kuda isplatiti odštetu nasljednicima oduzete imovine. Rekao je „Pa svi u Sarajevu znaju da je „polo Sarajeva „ prije Drugog svjetskog rata bilo židovsko“.

Vrlo brzo se ispostavilo da od povrata četiri krasne i klasične zgrade u centru Karlovih Vari nema ništa jer je rok za prijavu povrata imovine u Češkoj bio do 2001. godine, a sve i da smo se i prijavili po redu i zakonu od povrata imovine ne bi bilo ništa jer je jedan od ključnih uvjeta za povrat imovine bio posjedovanje češkog državljanstva kojeg nitko u našoj obitelji nije imao.

Proteklo je oko godinu dana da bi se snovi o milionima raspršili jedan po jedan. Za imovinu u Češkoj nismo imali češko državljanstvo a propustili smo i rokove, za imovinu u Sarajevu nije bilo zakona o restituciji koji najvjerojatnije nikada niti neće biti usvojen. Tvornice Ključ i Šik su privatizirane a BiH mediji su opširno izvještavali o sudskom procesu i aferi u koju su bili umiješani Turković i najveći BiH kriminalci ovog vremena sve spominjući proces privatizacije i dionice tvornice čarapa Ključ. Novine su pisale o trgovini drogama, oružanoj pljački u sarajevskoj zračnoj luci i pljački 2 milijuna eura, o zazidavanju živih ljudi u zidove i čemu sve još ne. Iz dana u dan postajalo je jasnije da je od cijele te bombastične priče o velikom i iznenadnom nasljeđu, ostala samo gomila papira i dokumenata koji su svaki na svoj način pričali priču o jednom čovjeku koji je nekada živio, koji je nekada nekome nešto značio, koji je učinio mnogo i koji jekako se kaže u oporuci njegove najmlađe sestre Rifke Bulke Finci rođene Levi Sadić mučki ubijen u selu Dabar, zaseok Zapolje 5.2.1944. godine od strane neprijatelja i njegovih pomagača.

I eto tu na tom mjestu u tim dokumentima i nakon što su se raspršile sve nade o nasljeđivanju silnih miliona probudio se Avram Levi Sadić, čovjek, osoba koja je bila sazdana od krvi i mesa i želja da saznam tko je bio taj čovjek i što mu se zaista desilo.

Iz brojnih dokumenata koje je poslao Amir Ibrišimović moglo se doznati koješta...uglavnom kada je tko rođen i kada je tko umro i da li je imao djece odnosno nasljednika. Bilo je to kao sklapanje slagalice. Napipala bih tu i tamo po koje ime iz po kojeg dokumenta a onda zdravom logikom i sistemom eliminacije pokušavala sam razumjeti tko je bio taj čovjek i gdje da ga smjestim. Svašta sam doznala o svojoj obitelji. Mnogo zanimljivih ljudi ima u toj priči, mnogo zanimljivih sudbina, uglavnom sve su tragične.

Avram Levi Sadić imao je sedam braće i sestara. Malo se zna o sudbini osmero djece starog Solomona Levi Sadića i Done Levi Sadić rođene Pardo. Malo se zna o sudbini njihovih snaha i zetova, njihovih unuka i praunika. Tko od vatre, tko od vode, tko od bolesti, tko od noža, tko od metka, tko od tuge tek skončavali su jedan po jedan svatko na svoj način. Svatko je sa sobom u grob odnio svoju priču i sada nema više nikoga tko bi tu priču mogao ispričati. Možda bi se ponešto još dalo iskopati u knjigama Jevrejske opštine Sarajevo, ali tek to je put pun trnja, jer iz tko zna kakvih razloga i vođeni tko zna kakvim lokalnim politikama oni koji imaju uvid u te knjige ne dozvoljavaju drugima pristup knjigama nego im kažu, napišite što vas zanima i tko vas zanima a mi ćemo vam javiti. Nakon što čovjek napiše mail i navede imena članova porodice koji ga zanimaju redovno dobije isti odgovor da u knjigama sarajevske Jevrejske opštine nema ama baš nikakvih podataka o osobama pod tim imenima.

Bilo kako bilo, tek kada su sovjetski vojnici skinuli zastavu Trećeg rajha koja se vijorila iznad Rajhstaga, dok se Evropa radovala kraju rata, porodica Levi Sadić nije imala mnogo povoda za radost. Od mnogobrojne porodice koja je važila za jednu od najbogatijih i najutjecajnijih u regiji, izašla je šaćica prestrašenih,

oboljelih i nesretnih ljudi. Avramova najmlađa sestra Rifka Bulka Finci rođena Levi Sadić, koja je u času smrti imala 61 godinu, umirući u bolnici u Glini srpnja 1945. godine diktirala je pisaru svoju oporuku iz koje doznajemo da su njenog brata Avrama Levi Sadića mučki ubili neprijatelji i njegovi pomagači 5.2.1944. godine u selu Dabar, zaseok Zapolje. Rifka je znala i da su njen muž kao i dvojica njihovih sinova Šalom i Salomon ubijeni u Jasenovcu pa zato u oporuci ostavlja svu svoju imovinu svojoj kćeri i mojoj baki Berti Beji Kamhi, rođenoj Finci po kojoj nosim ime. Umirući u Glini Rifka nije znala da su i dani njene 39 godišnje kćeri odbrojani.



**Reklama Avramove tvornice čarapa Ključ**

Polju, tamo se pročulo da ima ustaških doušnika, pa su nastavili pješačenje kroz snijeg do Dabra. Tamo je jedna grupa ljudi ostala a veća grupa je nastavila pješačenje do Ličkih Jasenica. U toj grupi koja je ostala u selu Dabru bio je i sada citiram "dobro poznati građanin grada Sarajeva, vlasnik tvornice čarapa Ključ, Avram Levi Sadić. Taj čovjek nije ni slutio da će mu to malo selo biti posljednje mjesto u životu. Njega su jedne noći u Dabru zaklali Nijemci i ustaše". To se poklapalo sa onim što je pisalo u oporuci moje prababe Rifke Bulke Finci. Tih par rečenica koje su govorile o Avramovom kraju puta bile su kraj konopca za kojeg sam se mogla uhvatiti i koje sam sada evo čvrsto držala sve se nekako nadajući da će me baš taj konopac odvesti do drugog kraja a tamo se možda da još koješta doznati. Taj drugi kraj konopca bio je u Lici, u selu Dabru, u zaseoku Zapolje.

## Dabar

Neću sad dužiti o tome, kako to nije bilo jednostavno otići u Liku i kako se ne možeš tek tako pojaviti usred ličkog sela i tražiti ubijenog Avrama Levi Sadića. Valjalo je naći čovijeka koji poznaje Liku, koji je domaći

Ne znam što mi se desilo i gdje me je susrela ova priča i zašto, ali ja sam nakon što je bilo sasvim jasno da od sve te silne Avramove imovine nećemo vidjeti niti žute banke, postala opsjednuta željom da saznam tko je bio Avram Levi Sadić. A taj Avram bio je zarobljen dubokim mrakom i zaboravom. Izuzev dokumenata koje sam dobila od Amira Ibrišimovića nije bilo ničega više što je pripadalo Avramu Levi Sadiću. Sve je bilo onako trajno i temeljito uništeno, ubijeno, spaljeno, konfiscirano, nacionalizirano i kasnije preprodano. I dok drugi ljudi imaju ladice i ormare po kojim mogu da kopaju, u mom slučaju nema niti ladica, niti ima ormara, jer sve je odneseno, spaljeno, ubijeno, poumiralo ili u najboljem mogućem slučaju oboljelo od teškog oblika demencije... a ja gonjena nečim evo pipam po mraku i ponekad ponešto opipam pa onda pokušavam zamisliti što li bi to moglo biti i kako bi se moglo protumačiti.

Googlala sam satima internetom na raznim jezicima tražeći bilo kakav znak Avramovog života, pregledala sva svjedočenja u Yad Vashemu, raspitivala se među starcima koji su bili u logoru na Rabu ili su se skrivali po Lici, pretraživala arhive Sarajeva, Zagreba, Beograda, vojnog instituta u Beogradu, Jevrejskog muzeja u Beogradu, Otočca i Gospića, pročitala bogzna koliko knjiga o tom razdoblju ne bih li negdje ugledala to ime Avram Levi Sadić. A onda sam jednog dana naletjela na knjigu "Dolar dnevno" koju je pisao Danko Samokovlija. U toj knjizi Samokovlija opisuje život židovskih izbjeglica u Lici nakon što su napustili talijanski logor na Rabu nakon kapitulacije Italije u rujnu 1943. Između ostalog Samokovlija piše kako su bili u Petinjić



u tom kraju a kojem je opet stalo do Avrama. Profesor Ivan Šporčić rodio se i odrastao u Otočcu a njegov stric koji se isto tako zove i preziva je katolički svećenik u Dabru. Kada sam se javila profesoru Šporčiću i zamolila ga za pomoć on je vrlo ozbiljno pristupio poslu. Tražio je sve da pročita, da se pripremi, razgovarao je sa mještanima i na kraju izrazio sumnju da bi se nešto moglo naći budući da je razgovarajući sa mještanima shvatio da nitko ne zna ama baš ništa o Židovima koji su se u vrijeme II svjetskog rata skrivali u tom kraju. Rekao je još i da jedina nada u svemu može biti da nešto na licu mjesta doznamo, jer taj zaseok Zapolje broji svega nekoliko kuća i ako još ima živih staraca koji se sjećaju II svjetskog rata ili možda onih koji se sjećaju šta su njihovi stari govorili, postoji šansa da nešto o tome doznamo.

Sa profesorom Šporčićem sreli smo se u Rijeci. Vozili smo tragom knjige Dolar dnevno do Kraljevice gdje je svojedobno bio smješten jedan od italijanskih logora za Židove. Pa do Senja kamo su trabakulama prebačeni Židove nakon italijanske kapitulacije i oslobađanja iz logora na Rabu. Iznad Senja prijeteći se uzdizao Velebit. Gledala sam tu zastrašujuću ogromnu planinu i zamišljala svoju baku Bertu kako u naručju nosi svoju trogodišnju kćer a za ruku čvrsto drži svoju sedmogodišnju majku dok prti sniježnu stazu i pješice prelaze snijegom zavejani Velebit. Bio je to jedini izlaz iz Senja i jedino se tako moglo pobijći iz Senja u Liku pred nadolazećom njemačkom vojskom.

Sa knjigom Dolar dnevno kao vodičem stigli smo do Like gdje smo se prvo sreli sa svećenikom Ivanom Šporčićem a kasnije i sa Tomom Rukavinom koji je napisao knjigu o povijesti ovog kraja. Svi ovi ljudi otvorili su vrata, izdvojili vrijeme i nastojali pomoći. Nažalost nitko ništa nije znao o Avramu niti je itko ikada čuo o Židovima koji su se ovdje skrivali u Drugom svjetskom ratu. U momentu se činilo da sam uzalud dolazila i da je tražiti tragove Avrama Levi Sadića po Lici isto što i tražiti iglu u plastu sijena. Ali eto, ako smo već došli do Like odlučili smo da odemo i da vidimo taj zaseok Zapolje kod Dabra. Zvuči surealsitično, Avram Levi Sadić je ubijen 5.2.1944.godine i evo mene njegovog potomka 75 godina kasnije da mu tražim grob, jer nešto mi neda mira.

A selo je kao iz priče. Treba to vidjeti ...kao da je vrijeme stalo 1944. a opet prošlo.... Bio je novi rat, novi pokolj i nova se krv prolila 90-tih. Prve četiri kuće u selu su Hrvati, a ostalih 20 kuća su Srbi, ali nije ih ostalo sve ukupno desetak žitelja i Srba i Hrvata. I svi su stari. Mnoge su kuće porušene. Neke su obnovljene. Neke su stare brvnare vjerojatno još iz vremena dok je ovim selom prolazio Avram. Lavež pasa prati nas sve vrijeme dok hodamo selom. Psi poznaju mirise svih žitelja a mi smo im strani. I tako pridemo prvoj starici, obučenoj u crninu koja slaže drva i priprema se za zimu. Pitam je za Avrama Levi Sadića. Nikad čula, ali sjeća se baba da je njena svekrva pričala da je "držala u kući Čivute". No veli mi: "ja sam se samo udala u ovu kuću i samo sam iz priča to čula, ja nisam rođena u ovom selu niti sam živjela u Zapolju u to vrijeme". Njen sin koji je došao iz Srbije da majci pomogne oko drva i zimnice odveo nas je do pravoslavnog groblja. On se sjeća da je na groblju šest partizanskih grobova s imenima ljudi koji nisu iz ovog kraja. Uzbudjena sam. Nadam se da je jedan od grobova Avramov. No, druga su imena napisana na spomen ploči. Gledam okolo. Tražim neki znak. Mještani me uvjeravaju da je Avram vjerojatno pokopan tu, jer gdje bi inače mogao biti pokopan. Kažu ako je bio ubijen u selu, a onda su ga vjerojatno pokopali na groblju. Mještani vjerojatno žele da me utješe i da mi daju dobar osjećaj, da sam eto nešto našla, te da nisam uzalud toliki put prelazila. Na tom groblju ima i grobova koji nisu označeni. Gledam u te grobove bez imena, na nekima su križevi, na nekim nema oznaka "Ne", čini mi se da je Avram tu. Pitam da li je možda pokopan neko izvan zidina groblja. Veli mi sin staričin, "nema šanse, okolo je sami kamenjar tu nitko ne može kopati". Sliježemo ramenima. To je to. Krenuli smo prema autu. Dali su mi još vremena da zapalim svijeću na pravoslavnom groblju, ali dok sam palila svijeću znala sam da to mjesto nema veze sa Avramom.

Išli smo prema autu, profesor Šporčić, njegov stric svećenik iz Dabra, Tomislav Rukavina, sin staričin, moj muž Muki i ja. Opraštali smo se i zahvaljivali staričinom sinu, a onda su svi posjedali u auto. Mene je, tren prije nego li ću i sama ući u auto, nešto povuklo da idem prema jednom drugom kraju sela. Samo sam osjetila onom ženskom intuicijom koju ne mogu objasniti, da trebam ići tamo. Ljudi su već sjedali u auto a ja



sam kao povučena krenula u drugom pravcu. Znala sam da ako udjem u auto ova priča se ovdje završava. Zato sam bez riječi i objašnjenja samo krenula. Ubrzala korak neosvrćući se i udaljavajući se od auta, kao da im bježim. I tako hodam i hodam sama i gledam okolo. I pokušavam uloviti neki znak ili nešto i onda velim : "Evo Avrame ja sam došla do Zapolja, a gdje si ti , daj mi neki znak, sad je na tebi, ja sam došla do zida, pokaži mi izlaz". I dok ja tako u mislima pričam s Avramom vidim kako moj muž Muki ide prema meni jer se ostalima žuri i nije im jasno što ja sada hodam okolo. I tad opazih jednu staru ženu kako s balkona pokušava da priča s mojim mužem ali on ne zna dobro naš jezik i nešto nabada. Ubrzah korak prema njima, i pozdravih staricu a ona me pita: "Tko ste vi, što tražite..." Ja joj velim da tražim rođaka koji je bio Židov i koji je stradao u ovom selu. Žena mi kaže – čekaj sad ću ja sići.

Evica Vlajisavljević ima 86 godina i cijeli je život živjela u selu. Mršava, vitalna starica, bistre glave umotane crnom maramom ispričala nam je da je pet "Čivuta" zaklano od Nijemaca i ustaša izvan sela. Veli "bila je Sara, lijepa mala žena, nije znala divanit po naški pa smo je mi djeca učili. I bio je ovaj Avram kojeg se dobro sjeća kao dijete jer ga je viđala kako šeće po selu." Bio je žut, nosio kačket, bio je srednjeg rasta



**Evica Vlajisavljević, rijetki živi svjedok zločina**

kao ovaj – pokazivala je na profesora Šporčića. Došli su jedne noći Nijemci i ustaše iz Brinja i pohvatali ih u dnu sela te odveli iz sela i poklali. Ležali su tako zaklani u polju, jedan ili dva dana a onda su otišli ljudi iz sela iskopali rake i pokopali ih, baš tu na istom mjestu gdje su zaklani". Ona, kad je bila mala, čuvala je janjce a stari su im govorili "ne idete tamo djeco, tamo su poklali Čivute". Djetinjstvo je vrijeme velikih događaja a od svega najveći je svijet odraslih. Gledan dječjim očima svijet izgleda džinovski. To je mjesto u očima djevojčice Evice dok je čuvala janjce bilo strašno i džinovsko. Poslije naiđe život pa se taj svijet nekako smanji. Djeca odrastu, odu svojim putevima i svijet uđe u mnogo manje proporcije. I Evica je odrasla, prestala čuvati janjce, udala se, rodila djecu, progurala još jedan rat, ali nikada nije otišla nikuda iz Zapolja. Njen svijet se nije smanjio.

Ova bistra i vitalna starica, obučena u crninu pokušavala je dozvati daleka sjećanja i prisjetiti se još nečeg te nam veli: "A jesu li ih iskopali poslije ili nisu, e to ja više ne znam, toga se nesjećam , tko da se nečeg sjećam" - gledala je u daljinu starica, pokušavajući da dozove sjećanje, ali se uvijek vraćala na to da se ne sjeća je su li ih poslije iskopali ili nisu.

Molila sam Evicu da nas odvede do tog mjesta. Jedva je pristala, jer nije lako tamo doći. Pokušala nas je uputiti da idemo sami "Idite - veli nam - do zadnje kuće u selu pa uzbrdo, pa kroz visoko žbunje do jednog zidića, eto odmah iza tog zidića ima kosina, eto, tu su zaklani". Na kraju sam nekako umolila Evicu da pođe s nama. Dovezli smo je autom dok se moglo a onda je ova vitalna starica krenula uz brdo. Kroz visoku nekošenu travu, kroz trnje i žbunje Evica nas je dovela do nekuda jer joj nije bilo lako ići kroz to žbunje i trnje. A onda je starica u trenutku zastala kao ukopana i rekla "Evo samo vi idite do onog velikog žbuna a iza njega ima zidić, pa onda kosina, a iza zidića je izravnano. Eto tu je to bilo. Tu su zaklani".

Išli smo onako kako je Evica rekla, kroz žbunje i zapušteni travnjak. Tu gdje ljudska noga već dugo nije kročila. Profesor Šporčić se plašio zmija. Uz put su se Muki i profesor Šporčić naboli na trn. Došli smo do podzida. Na tom zidiću stajala je nekakva korodirana konzerva, sudeći po izgledu dugo je tu stajala. U

momentu sam mislila da je to svijeća zadušnica, onakva kakvu pale Židovi, – ali tko je tu mogao paliti svijeće zadušnice. Slikali smo konzervu da bi smo uvećali slova i možda pročitali što na konzervi piše. Na kraju smo otkrili da na konzervi na njemačkom piše : riba. Netko je tu bio. Jeo je ribu iz konzerve donesene iz Njemačke. Zašto? Kako ? Što je tu tražio?

I evo tu smo, prošli smo zidić, naišli na kosinu, na izravnano, točno onako kako je Evica opisala. Tu su ih zaklali. Stojim i gledam unaokolo u nevjerici. Da li je moguće. Prije sat vremena se činilo da sam uzalud dolazila u Zapolje i da je vjerojatnost da nabasamo na tragove Avrama Levi Sadića ravna nuli, a evo me sad stojim na mjestu gdje se Avram rastajao s dušom. Gledam u nevjerici, da li sam zaista tu? Da li je eto ovo drveće posljednje što su ugledale Avramove oči? Da li se ovdje opraštao od života. Što li mu je prolazilo kroz glavu dok su ih vodili ? Sigurno se bojao? Kakav li je smrtni strah? Je li znao da je to kraj? Je li se nadao spasenju? Na što je mislio dok se rastajao sa dušom? Je li se mučio? Što osjeća zaklani čovjek? Koliko dugo umire?

### Veljkovo svjedočenje

Tog srpanjskog dana išli smo zaseokom Zapolje i razgovarali sa starcima, sve pokušavajući da doznamo ima li netko tko se sjeća starog Židova koji se te 1944skriva u selu. Tomo Rukavina nas je uputio na 91 godišnjeg Veljka Čaturila koji se iz Srbije nedavno vratio u Otočac.



**Sofija i Veljko Čaturilo s autoricom B. Belson**

računu, ostavio je kuće, tvornice, stanove, veliko bogatstvo a kako je završio.”

Našli smo ga u njegovom novom stanu u centru Otočca gdje se skupa sa svojom ženom Sofijom vratio iz Petrovaradina. Veljko je porijeklom iz obližnjeg sela Bobinja točnije iz zaseoka Čaturilo koje je bilo susjedno selo, odmah iznad Zapolja. Ovaj vitalni i bistri starac dobro se sjećao Avrama. Priča nam “ Kao sad ovdje da ga gledam. Nosio je zimski kaput s nekim krznom i šetao selom “. I Veljko je pisao knjigu o povijesti ovog kraja ali o Židovima koji su se skrivali ovdje i o zaklanima iz Zapolja nije napisao niti riječi. Pitala sam ga zašto nije spomenuo i te događaje, a Veljko je odgovorio da nije želio da se u to petlja i da je ostavio Židovima da napišu o svojim. Što se Avrama tiče, Veljko kaže da ga je često spominjao s Markom Narandžićem koji je i prije rata bio političar. Taj lokalni političar, Marko Narandžić i Avram družili su se i često razgovarali u danima u kojima se Avram skrivao u Zapolju. Tražeći društvo u tom selu Avram se sprijateljio s nekoliko lokalnih predratnih političara. Veljko je tada bio pubertetlija. Kasnije, kad je Veljko stasao i sam postao političar, Veljko Čaturilo i Marko Narandžić su postali prijatelji. Marko je tada u njihovim razgovorima često spominjao Avrama i svega

što mu je ovaj pričao. I uvijek je govorio “Eto što su ti pare moj Veljko, eto sjeti se Avrama, ostavio je četiri vagona robe, ostavio je velike novce na tekućem

Veljko Čaturilo postao je političar u općini Dabar 50-tih godina 20. vijeka. Godine 1958. ili 1959. dobio je dopis od tadašnjeg predsjednika općine Otočac Dane Rupičića kojim se od Veljka tražilo da pruži svu potrebnu pomoć delegaciji židovske zajednice koja je trebala doći u Dabar kako bi se ekshumirala tijela pet Židova koji su zaklani 5.2.1944. iznad Zapolja. Veljko priča da je u Dabar došlo troje ljudi, on vjeruje iz Sarajeva, te da ih je predvodio dr. Stockhaimer. Veljko je našao snažne momke da iskopaju tijela i svih pet tijela s lubanjama je iskopano. Tijela su prebačena u limene sanduke i spremljena za transport. Tog dana za vrijeme ručka Veljko je ispričao trojici Židova i za grob Židovke koja je popila otrov nakon što su je Nijemci ranili u obje nego. Bojeći se da im živa ne padne u ruke žena je popila otrov. Nju su pokopali na Maloj Kapeli. Trojica Židova koji su došli po petoricu zaklanih bili su iznenađeni. Otišli su u Malu Kapelu te njen grob također ekshumirali. Onda su limeni sanduci s tijelima šest Židova odvezeni kamionima do Ličkih Jasenica a od tuda su vlakom otišli nekuda. Veljko nije znao kuda ali je nekako vjerovao da su tijela odvezena u Sarajevo. Nije bio siguran ni da li je to bilo 1957. ili 1958. ili 1959. godine.

Rekao je i da su mu kasnije za to iz židovske zajednice poslali zahvalnicu koju je potpisao dr. Stockhaimer kao i da će mi tu zahvalnicu dati jer njemu ne treba.

Veljko je objasnio da je u ratu 90-tih sve dokumente i pozamašnu arhivu prebacio iz Otočca u Petrovaradin i da se sve to danas nalazi kod njegovog sina u Petrovaradinu. Nadala sam se da ću dobiti ovu zahvalnicu ali ona nažalost nikada nije pronađena. Umjesto toga, po nagovoru profesora Šporčića, Veljko Čaturilo je na pisačkoj mašini, kao nekad, otkucao tri i pol stranice svjedočenja o Avramu Levi Sadiću i ekshumaciji ubijenih iz Zapolja.

U tom svjedočenju Veljko piše: „Dobro se sjećam svih tih zbivanja i ratih okršaja. Osobno sam rođen 1928. godine i tada sam navršio 15 godina i 3 mjeseca. (ušao sam u 16 godinu), Mjesni oslobodilački odmor imao je ovakvu mobilnu grupu mladića za sve lokalne potrebe i poslove kojih je bilo. Grupa od 28 Jevreja u kojoj su bile pretežno žene. Sjećam se da su bile svi pristojno odjeveni a imali su i nešto osobnog prtljaga. Među njima se isticao riječju pokojni Sadić kojeg je pretstavio jedan od članova mjesnog odbora. Naglasio je da je to čovjek iz Sarajeva, da je do rata bio vlasnik tvornice čarapa u Sarajevu i da je bio bogat. Avram se na to malo nasmješio te naglas rekao „imao sve a sad niti jedne čarape na sebi“. Ovaj Sadić je raspoređen kod Mate Krznarića u selu Zapolje. Mate je bio imućan i kao čovjek dobar. Bio je invalid u lijevu nogu ali se kretao i hodao uz pomoć štapa. Pokojni Sadić skoro svaki dan dolazio je u centar Dabra i tu se upoznao sa Markom Narandžićem (Tarajicom). Pod kraj mjeseca januara (22 ili 23) 392. njemačka divizija iz Ogulina i Josipdola provalila je otpor Partizanskih brigada 13 NOB divizije. Jedna njemačka regimenta i jedna ustaška satnija izvršile su od Brinjske strane silovit napad s ciljem da u Dabru zarobe partizansku tenkovsku čet. Borci tenkisti pružili su žestok otpor i izvukli tenkove van opasnosti. Nijemci i ustaše su zauzeli selo Zapolje. Imali su popis svih Jevreja koji su se skrivali u Dabru ali su uhvatili samo one koji su bili smješteni u zaseoku Zapolje. Uхватili su Sadića i 4 žene. Kad su ih vodili kroz selo seljak Mato Krznarić kod kojeg je bio smješten Sadić digao je galamu kuda vode Sadića jer da je to jako dobar čovjek. Ustaše mu odgovaraju da će ga samo salušati, što je bila obmana i laž. Za pola sata poslje ovoga svih pet ubijeni su zvjerski u Klisinskoj žljebi pored sela. Na ovaj zločin sav narod domaći dugo godina se zgražavao. Dok oni Jevreji koji su bili smješteni u istočnim selima zajedno sa narodom izbjegli su 7 km dalje u malu Kapelu. U toj grupi izjeglih i sam sam bio. Istog dana dok je trajala borba u selu Dabru grupa domaćih mještana i Jevreja sustigli smo dvojicu mladića koji su više nosili nego vodili jednu ženu Jevrejku koja je bila ranjena oko koljena i buta lijeve noge. Kada smo stigli u Malu Kapelu ovu ženu smo unijeli u kuću Vlajisavljević Janka gdje su već stigli oni Jevreji koje su preuzeli ovu ženu. Dobro se sjećam da je tu ranjenu ženu onaj Jevrejin Moci položio u kuhinji na jedan kućni duži sanduk, a zatim su došla još 2-3 muškarca Jevrejina i sa tihim razgovorom donijeli zaključak na njen prijedlog da joj se donese otrov i da ona ne želi dalje ovako nepokretna i ranjena da živi. To sam lično imao priliku gledati. Ispila je bez vode malu dozu tekućine i brzo umrla. Bila je u dobi od 45-50 godina života. Od ove kuće oko 150 metara nas šestorica iskopali smo grobno



mjesto, a potom je Moci sa nekim svojim drugovima donio mrtvo tijelo i sahranio je. U to vrijeme nije bilo nikave bolnice niti prihvatnog centra za ranjene“ – napisao je Veljko Čuturilo na svojoj pisačkoj mašini.

Čitala sam ovo svjedočenje, držeći u rukama papir ispisan ostarijelom i rasklimanom pisačom mašinom koja povremeno preskače po koje slovo što je onda Veljko ručno iskorigirao. Čitam opet i opet kao da u rukama držim neki iznimno rijetki sveti tekst. Nazvala sam Veljka. Pitam ga da li se sjeća Avrama. Veljko mi veli kako ga se ne bih sjećao kao evo sad da ga pred sobom gledam. Pa kako je Avram izgledao, pitam. „Nosio je kaput sa nekim krznom oko vrata, bio je srednjeg rasta, svijetao, uvijek nasmijan, pozitivan, vitalan“. Pitam Veljka kako je to bilo kad su Jevreji živjeli kod seljaka. Veljko još jednom objašnjava: „mjesni odbor ih je rasporedio po seoskim kućama. Jevrejske izbjeglice su živjele kod seljaka, jeli što i seljani. Živjeli su kao i svi ostali. Oni koji su imali od čega, plaćali su seljacima za hranu, oni koji nisu imali, radili su kod seljaka ili su se dovijali kako su znali i umjeli“. Medjutim u tom Veljkovom svjedočenju jedna stvar mi je ostala nejasna. Veljko piše:

„Onda je bila šesta ofanziva i partizani su se povukli iz Dabra. Iz sela Ogulina i Josip Dola iz pravca Brinja i Letinca u Zapolje je došla 392. njemačka legionarska divizija i ustaše. U selu više nije bilo partizana ali Njemci i ustaše imaju listu sa imenima svih 28 Jevreja i njihovih domaćina. Iz Veljkovog svjedočenja doznajemo i da Avramov domaćin Marko Krznarić „galami na Njemce i ustaše, pita ih kamo ga vodite, objašnjava im da je Avram dobar čovjek“. Iz Veljkovog svjedočenja doznajemo i da mu Njemci i ustaše odgovaraju na jeziku kojeg Marko razumije „da ga idu samo saslušati“.

Ova slika Njemaca koji razgovaraju sa seljakom, obmanjuju ga i lažu a kasnije nožem kolju nekako se nije uklapala u moja ranija saznanja i prestave o njemačkim vojnicima i njihovim metodama likvidacije Židova. Ustašku satniju sam još mogla smjestiti u kontekst pomenutih događaja ali nešto mi nije štimalo s ovom 392 njemačkom divizijom. Tu je bilo još nečega nedorečenog, čudnog što je odudaralo i odskakalo od logike pa sam osjetila da to vrijedi još istražiti i provjeriti. Wikipedija je dala momentalno i precizno objašnjene kako je bilo moguće da seljak Mato Krznarić razgovra s vojnicima 392 njemačke divizije i zašto „Nijemci“ nisu trošili metka na nedostojne židovske žrtve već su im presudili nožem.

Evo šta kaže Wikipedija : Ta 392. njemačka legionarska divizija bila je poznata još kao i Plava divizija, sačinjena od Hrvata i muslimana iz Bosne koji su služili u Njemačkoj vojsci. Nakon osnivanja NDH, u lipnju 1941. godine, Ante Pavelić je ponudio Hitleru dobrovoljce da služe na istočnom frontu. Ishod ove ponude bio je formiranje i slanje zračnih i pomorskih jedinica, koje su nakon obuke i opremanja u Njemačkoj bile zadužene za borbu protiv Crvene Armije. 17.8.1943. godine formirana je 392 hrvatska pješadijska divizija koja je bila prikupljena i obučavana u Austriji kao treća i posljednja divizija obrazovana za službu u Wermachtu. Sačinjavalo ju je oko 3500 pripadnika njemačkog kadra i oko 8500 vojnika hrvatskog domobranstva, redovne vojske NDH. Obrazovana je pod komandom Austrijanca general majora Johanna Mickla. Vojnici su bili Hrvati i muslimani iz Bosne dok je zapovjedni kadar bio njemački. Vojnici ove divizije nosili su uniforme Wermachta sa grbom NDH na desnom rukavu. Iako je prvobitno bilo planirano da ratuje na istočnom frontu, nedugo po njenom osnivanju Nijemci su odlučili da divizija neće ratovati izvan teritorija NDH.

Ovaj splet povijesnih okolnosti doveo je do toga da su ruke koje su prerezale grkljane Avramu i četiri žene u Zapolju te noći, nosile njemačku uniformu iako metoda klanja baš i nije bila uobičajena među Nijemcima.

Na You tube sam upoznala i 93 godišnjeg Josipa Markovića pripadnika 392 legionarske divizije koji 2014 godine u 40 minutnom interwievi govorio o svojoj vojnoj službi u 392 legionarskoj njemačkoj diviziji i svemu što ga je zadesilo prije i poslije te službe. Te 2014 godine stari Josip Marković s ponosom se sjeća „vatrene krštenja“ u selu Brinje u Lici kada su ih negdje u sječnju 1944 godine za vrijeme ručka napali partizani. On je služio u protiv tenkovskoj jedinici. O tim istim događajima, o toj istoj protutenskoj jedinici i pominjući gotovo iste datume govori i Veljko Čuturilo.



Ta svjedočenja ova dva starca koja su se u to vrijeme kao uostalom i sada našla na suprotstavljenim stranama govore o jednom te istom događaju i navode na pomisao da je baš Josip Marković čije se svjedočenje može čuti na You tube bio jedan od onih koji su u Zapolje došli iz pravca Brinja. U rukama su imali listu sa svih 28 imena Židova i njihovih domaćina u čijim kućama su Židovi skrivali. U tom video zapisu pominje bivši pripadnik 392 njemačke divizije da kada su partizani uhvatili i razoružali pripadnike divizije u čijim su redovima bili uglavnom Hrvati i Muslimani iz Bosne, vojni opasač jednog od njih bio je neobično težak. Partizanski komandant Dane Balenković rasporio je nožem taj opasač iz kojeg su izletili ušiveni i sakriveni zlatnici. Ja bih dodala ovom „vjerovatno židovski zlatnici“. Sasvim moguće zlatnici Avrama Levi Sadića. Naime, dugo godina nakon što su se vratili iz rata moj djed Hajim Kamhi mi je pokazivao jedan prsluk kojeg su nosili na sebi svo vrijeme rata. Sa unutrašnje strane tog prsluka bili su ušiveni zlatnici. Te zlatnike razmjenjivali su za hranu, za propusnice, za odjeću, za krov nad glavom ....Ti ušiveni zlatnici su im spašavali živote. Avram Levi Sadić bio je bogat čovjek. Sigurna sam da se prije nego li je krenuo da bježi iz Sarajeva i da glavu spašava u izbjeglištvu osigurao sa lijepom količinom zlatnika. Znao je stari Avram da zlato uvijek vrijedi i zapravo zlato je jedino što vrijedi kada i sve drugo ode k vragu. Znao je to Avram a znali su to i drugi Židovi koji su isto tako prije nego li su krenuli bježati ušili zlatnike na unutrašnju stranu svojih prsluka. Ti su se zlatnici po svemu sudeći obreli u Gospiću 1945. a našao ih je partizanski komandant Dane Balenović dok je razoružavao pripadnike 392 njemačke legionarske divizije.

## Ličani

Sutradan smo se vratili u Zapolje. Željelasam da vidim kuću Mate Krznarića u kojoj je posljednje dane proveo Avram. Ujedno sam donijela skromne poklone za sve dobre ljude koji su nam se prethodnog dana našli na putu i koji su nam pomogli da saznam nešto o Avramu.

Najprije smo otišli našem prvom domaćinu od prethodnog dana Tomi Rukavini koji nas je prvi primio, velikodušno počastio najboljim vinom, najboljom rakijom, najboljim pršutom, najboljom domaćom krempitom. On skupa sa svojom suprugom Verom sve više vremena provodi u rodnom zaseoku Lugu kod Dabra. Iako imaju kuću u Gorici kod Zagreba, te kuću u Rovinju Tomo kaže da je njemu i Veri u Lugu najbolje.

Tomo je zanimljiva ličnost. Bio je jedan od zapovjednika Tigrova u ratu 90-tih i cijeli rat je proveo na bojištu. Ponosan je na taj dio svoje prošlosti. No veli da su ljudi ovog kraja, Srbi i Hrvati, živjeli ovdje u slozi sve do ovog zadnjeg rata. Priča Tomo da je u II svjetskom ratu postojao dogovor između ustaša i četnika da ustaše ne diraju srpska sela a da četnici neće dirati hrvatska sela. Kaže, znalo se desiti da dođu ustaše iz nekog drugog kraja i tada bi ustaše iz Dabra upozorile Srbe da se sklone dok ovi ne prođu. Isto tako su i Dabarski četnici štitili “svoje Hrvate”

Obje strane su se držale tog dogovora do ovog zadnjeg rata a onda je puklo po svim šavovima.

Budući da smo Tomislava i Veru posjetili u dva dana za redom, drugog dana su nas već uveli u kuću. Kuća je bila puna hrvatskih simbola. Zastava, ratnih trofeja, slika pokojnih roditelja i raznih starih predmeta i uspomena iz davne i bliže prošlosti. Iz svega toga se moglo vidjeti koliko Tomo drži do povijesti ovog kraja ali i do svog hrvatskog identiteta.

Tomo se dobro sjećao Mate Krznarića. Kaže da je bio živ sve do kraja 90-tih i da je umro u dubokoj starosti u staračkom domu u Udbini, 1998. ili 1999. godine. O Mati kaže da je tragična figura na svoj način. Potiče iz jedne od najbogatijih obitelji u selu. Njegov otac Mićo bio je vrlo imućan. Najbolja i najplodnija zemlja njemu je pripadala. Stari Mićo je sagradio kuću koju su kasnije dijelili sinovi Mate i Milan. Mate Krznarić je dočekao duboku starost dok je njegov brat umro 50-tih godina 20. stoljeća. “A to da je u njegovoj kući živio Židov, uopće me ne čudi” – nastavlja Tomo – “Mate je bio oženjen Srpkinjom što je bilo vrlo neobično za to

vrijeme.". Imali su sina Miću. Mićo je živio u Gorici kod Zagreba i bio je policajac, a onda se propio. Napustio je ženu i dijete i otišao sa drugom. Mate se ljutio na sina, žena se ljutila na muža, unuka Matina nikada nije bila u zaseoku Zapolje. Nikada nije vidjela odakle joj je otac. Postoje isto i neriješeni imovinski odnosi između unuke Matine i sina Matinog brata Milana koji još uvijek živi u Otočcu. Sudeći po kući koja izgleda napuštena, zarasla u korov i opkoljena visokim šašom, ne čini se da je nekom stalo do te kuće.

Na ulazu u selo sreli smo Iliju koji je u dubokim gumenim čizmama vodio vezanu kravu. Upitali smo ga za kuću Mate Krznarića i on nam je pokazao jednu staru napola urušenu kuću napravljenu do polovine u kamenu a od polovine od tamnih drvenih dasaka. Kaže „ bila je to velika kuća, posebno za to vrijeme, jer sve ostale kuće koje su pretekle iz tog vremena bile su mnogo skromnije. Kuća je imala tri sobe. Mate je bio jedan od viđenijih ljudi u selu. Taj komad zemlje na kojoj je izgrađena njegova kuća je najplodniji u selu a imao je i veliko imanje koje je naslijedio od svojih roditelja”.

U napola obrušenu drvenu kuću u kojoj je proveo svoje zadnje dane Avram, ljudska noga već godinama nije kročila. Visoka trava i trnje obrasli su oko kuće a plodnu njivu ispod kuće već godinama nitko više ne obrađuje. Ilija klima glavom i priča kako je Mate bio dobar čovjek. Zapalila sam svijeću na obrušenim drvenim stepenicama na ulazu kuće. I Ilija i prof. Šporčić i Tomo Rukavina bili su zabrinuti da bi to moglo izazvati požar, pa smo zamolili Iliju da navečer tu svijeću ugasi. Otišla sam do Matinog prvog susjeda. Čini se da u tom selu ima dosta dugovječnih ljudi. Ili su se samo starci vratili na rodnu grud. Pitam susjeda da li je poznao Matu. Veli: “Kako nisam svaki dan smo kavu pili”. “Pa je li Mate ikada pričao da je kod njega u kući za vrijeme II svjetskog rata živio jedan Židov" pitam tog preživjelog Matinog susjeda. "Čovjek odmahuje glavom – kaže nije mi nikada ništa o tome pričao, a svaki smo dan kavu pili.” Prof. Šporčić se nadovezuje na to . “O tome se u našem kraju nije govorilo“.

Nakon toga smo otišli zahvaliti se Evici Vlajisavljević, koja nam je prva ispričala o pet zaklanih Židova. Primila nas je srdačno u svoju kuću. Ona živi u maloj staroj, mračnoj i trošnoj kućici u kojoj nitko već dugo nije otvarao prozore i koja pahne po dubokoj starosti. U toj kući je vrijeme stalo 70-tih godina 20. vijeka. Od narandžaste *formajka* kuhinje koja je bila popularna 70-tih godina i koju su kupovali svi narodi i narodnosti širom Jugoslavije na kredit, pa do limenih kutija za kavu, šećer, kocku itd. koje su krasile police u svim tim kuhinjama 70-tih, pa do pletenih čutura, vezenih stolnjaka, heklanih miljea itd. itd. Brojni detalji su me podsjećali na neko vrijeme u kome sam nekad živjela, na neke prostore s kojih sam potekla i za koje sam mislila da niti jedno niti drugo više ne postoje. Glavnu ulogu u toj mračnoj i neprozračenoj sobi igrao je starinski telefon jarko zelene boje koji je ležao na krevetu i čekao da zazvoni. Evica, čini se, živi za te telefonske pozive.

U dvorištu te kuće bila je sagrađena velika dvokatna kuća. Pretpostavljam da je bila namijenjena njenom sinu koji vjerojatno živi u Srbiji. Evica se vratila na istu priču koju nam je ispričala prethodnog dana – ali u osnovi te priče je njeno sjećanje da su ih kao djecu dok su čuvali janjce po tim livadama plašili da ne idu tamo jer tamo su zaklali Čifute. Pitala sam Evicu da li se ona sjeća Avrama Levi Sadića. Kaže da ga se sjeća. “Bio je tako srednjeg rasta, žut, nosio kačket. Šetao je ovuda po selu. Mi smo se djeca igrali ponekad sa čifutskom djecom. Oni su imali igračke. Mi nikada prije toga nismo vidjeli igračke.”

Pozdravili smo se od Evice. Ja sam željela ići još jednom na mjesto na kojem je zaklan Avram ali nitko za to više nije imao strpljenja jer je trebalo ići kroz trnje i granje i šipražje, spominjali su zmije i da nemamo adekvatnu obuću, niti odjeću, te da su se prethodnog dana i Muki i profesor Šporčić naboli na to trnje.

Prije nego li ćemo napustiti Zapolje zamolila sam da odemo do katoličkog groblja i obiđemo grob Mate Krznarića. Groblje se nalazi na jednom od najljepših mjesta koje sam u mom životu vidjela. Na vrhu brda sagrađena je katolička crkva, koja nije aktivna. Velečasni Šporčić tek povremeno dođe i otvori crkvu. Međutim pokraj crkve je groblje i s tog brda se pruža jedan od najpastoralnijih, najpitomijih, najzelenijih i

najljepših vidikovaca koje sam ja ikada vidjela. Selo Dabar, napušteno, ojađeno, razrušeno, raskomadano i okrvavljeno iz daleka izgleda čarobno.

Na katoličkom groblju nema groba Mate Krznarića. Pregledali smo sve grobove i ništa. Tome Rukavina vjerda je Mate sahranjen u grobu svog brata i snahe koji su umrli mnogo prije njega. Evo neko je donio neke plastične ruže na ovaj grob. I plastične ruže su već ostarjele, posivjele i usahnule.

Oprostili smo se od Dabra i Dabrana i krenuli kroz prelijepu šumu put Ličkih Jasenica. Taj dio kroz koji smo vozili, zove se Kapelsko Gorje. Tim putem su moja 7-godišnja majka Estera, njena 3 godišnja sestra Bulka, njihova majka Berta Finci, njihova baka Rifka Bulka Finci, bježale spašavajući glavu. U toj knjizi "Dolar dnevno" piše da su oni koji su se zbog doušnika bojali ostati u Dabru produžili kroz Saborsko prema Ličkim Jesenicama. Tamo su se smjestili u osnovnoj školi da bi još istog dana ta škola bila bombardirana od strane nacističkih aviona. Svima je bilo jasno da je ustaška obavještajna služba dojavila lokaciju izbjeglica i oni su opet morali na put.

### **Preživjeli se vraćaju u Sarajevo**

Moja obitelj dočekala je oslobođenje u Glini. Tamo u bolnici u Glini umrla je od raka moja prabaka i najmlađa Avramova sestra Bulka Rifka Finci u srpnju 1945. napuštajući ovaj svijet nije ni slutila da su dani njene kćeri Berte Finci Kamhi odbrojani. Moja baka Berta Finci Kamhi vratila se u Sarajevo zdrava i sretna što je preživjela rat. Umrla je 19. rujna 1945. godine nakon operacije. Liječnici su pogrešno dijagnosticirali rak. Rekli su joj da hitno mora na operaciju. Otvorili su je i javili joj radosnu vijest da je pogrešno dijagnosticirana i da nema rak te da je riječ o dobroćudnoj cisti koja je uspješno otklonjena. Bili su to dani odmah iza rata i higijenski uvjeti u bolnicama bili su loši. Moja baka po kojoj nosim ime, Berta Finci Kamhi, umrla je nekoliko dana poslije operacije od sepse. Operacija je uspjela, pacijent umro. Odlazeći na operaciju žena je slutila smrt, pa je molila svoju šogoricu Rifku Ećimović da uzme njene kćeri i da ih odgaja kao svoje jer Rifka nije imala djece. Rifka je odbila jer je svakog dana išla mužu u zatvor. Njenom mužu Branku Ećimoviću, bivšem vlasniku tvornice rezervnih dijelova za avione "Avia" sudilo se tih dana u Sarajevu. Bio je optužen za kolaboraciju s neprijateljem, za veleizdaju. Rifkin muž, Branko Ećimović bio je narodni neprijatelj. U njegovoj tvornici Avia proizvodili su se rezervni dijelovi za njemačke avione. On, raniji vlasnik tvornice bio je primoran od strane Nijemaca i ustaša da nastavi raditi u tvornici kao glavni inženjer. Po prešutnom dogovoru Nijemci i ustaše nisu dirale njegovu ženu Židovku Rifku koja se četiri godine skrivala u podrumskom skloništu njihove obiteljske kuće na adresi Ašikovac 2.

Dakle, odlazeći na operaciju sa koje se više neće vratiti, Avramova nećakinja Berta ostavila je u sirotištu svoje dvije kćeri, svoju majku 9 godišnju Esteru i 5-godišnju Bulku. U Sarajevu nije više imala nikoga svoga i nije ih imala kamo drugdje ostaviti. Kasnije, kada je Berta iznenadna umrla od sepse, Rifka je izvadila djevojčice iz sirotišta i odgajala ih u svojoj kući dok je njen muž Branko odsluživao doživotnu robiju. Bio je osuđen na smrt strijeljanjem pa mu je uz brojne intervencije Rifkine braće i potezanje brojnih visokih veza smrtna kazna preimenovana u doživotnu robiju sa trajnim gubitkom građanskih prava. Nakon mnogo žalbi, intervencija i potezanja visokih veza, Branko Ećimović je pušten iz zatvora a mirovinu je dočekao kao profesor Srednjotehničke škole u Sarajevu. Nažalost to dugogodišnje robijanje preobratiilo je Branka Ećimovića u ogorčenog, čangrizavog i mrgodnog starca koji nije propuštao priliku da nešto „lane“ protiv Tita i partije.

Moj djed Dr. Hajim Kamhi bio je tada predsjednik Jevrejske opštine Sarajevo. U to vrijeme vodio je savršeno knjigovodstvo života. Zapisivao je u debele teftere svakog dana sve što bi mu se tog dana dogodilo, sve što bi tog dana kupio, koliko je novaca tog dana potrošeno i u koju svrhu. Hajim je na taj način vodio neku vrstu dnevnika. Da su kojim slučajem sačuvani ti debeli tefteri, o Avramu bi se moglo doznati koješta. Nažalost ni iza Hajima nije ostalo ništa što bi svjedočilo o Avramovom pa niti o Hajimovom životu. Kada je

već bio dobro bolestan i zamućene svijesti, posljednjim trzajem razuma Hajim nam je poručio da je svu dokumentaciju o oduzetoj imovini pohranio u kasu. Vjerujem da je u toj ogromnoj tučanoj kasi koja je prenesena u djedov stan iz tvornice čarapa Ključ bilo još koje čega. Međutim te kase, dokumentacije kao i svega ostalog što je pripadalo svijetu i životu mog djede Hajima Kamhija, nestalo je kada su se u njegov stan na Marijindvoru u Sarajevu, 1992 godine uselile izbjeglice iz Vogošće.

Njihovo izbjeglištvo nisu preživjeli ormari a niti ladice, te sve što je u njima bilo pohranjeno. Ničeg nije bilo na tavanu, a ni u podrumu. Sve slike, uspomene, sve skulpture babe Berte Baruh, sve knjige, svi Hajimovi molitvenici, taliti, mezuze, menore (kome li je u Vogošći to trebalo) sav namještaj, sva posteljina, svi jorgani i jastuci, svi ćilimi i sve što su on i žena mu onako brižno nabavljali i čuvali cijelog života, nestalo je. Kada su se iz njegovog stana iselile izbjeglice iz Vogošće, ostali su goli zidovi. Sve je odneseno, uništeno nebrigom, spaljeno u hladnim sarajevskim noćima početkom 90-tih kada drugog ogrijeva i nije bilo do knjiga i papira koji su se našli u stanovima u koje su se uselile izbjeglice. U tom zagrijevanju stanova početkom 90-tih, vjerojatno su nestali i posljednji tragovi Avrama koje je moj djed Hajim još i čuvao. Možda se u djedinoj kući i govorilo o Avramu ali ja sam tada bila dijete i nisam to razumjela. No prije će biti da se o tome i nije govorilo djeci. Rekli su samo da je bilo strašno i da to treba zaboraviti.

I eto kamenčić po kamenčić sklapao se nekako mozaik Avramovog života. Čitavi dijelovi tog mozaika bili su nepopunjeni. Mnogo je toga nedostajalo u mozaiku. No unatoč svemu, kompozicija velikog i detaljima bogatog mozaika Avramovog života već se nazirala. Sada je trebalo naći mu grob. Ja sam nekako bila uvjeren da će to od svega biti još najlakše.

### **Potruga za grobom**

Sada kada smo znali da je napravljena ekshumacija i da su u Dabru boravili predstavnici židovske zajednice predvođeni doktorom Stockhaimerom te da su limeni sanduci s tijelima šest žrtava odvezeni vlakom iz Ličkih Jasenica, vjerovala sam da je doći do informacije o lokaciji groba stvar formalnosti. Mislila sam da će biti dovoljno uputiti jedan zvanični dopis Jevrejskog opštini Sarajevo putem emaila nakon čega će me iz sarajevske Jevrejske opštine obavijestiti o točnoj lokaciji groba. Tako sam mislila. Mislila sam, ekshumacija je ozbiljna stvar. Ekshumaciju je potrebno pripremiti, organizirati, dobiti dozvolu, bila sam uvjeren da postoji pozamašna dokumentacija vezana za ovu ekshumaciju i da ću za nekoliko dana doznati ostatak priče i preciznu lokaciju groba. Grdno li sam se prevarila. Tek tu je počela moja odiseja.

Prvo sam se javila predsjedniku Jevrejske opštine Sarajevo, Borisu Kožemjakinu i ispričala mu cijelu priču na što mi je on odgovorio da ne razumije moje motive i da mi ne može pomoći jer njeguje od Alzheimerova bolesnu ženu i uputio me na Danila Nikolića. Danilo Nikolić mi je pak odgovorio da je pregledao svu dokumentaciju ali da na žalost ništa nije pronašao.

Javila sam se mom dobrom prijatelju Aronu Albahariju iz Saveza jevrejskih opština Beograd koji je pokušao da pokrene svoje veze u Jevrejskom muzeju i Jevrejskom arhivu. Nakon što je pregledan židovski arhiv dobila sam odgovor da ništa nije nađeno i da savjetuju da se obratim Židovskoj općini Zagreb. U Židovskoj općini Zagreb nisu našli ništa. Tajnik općine Dean Fridrich je objasnio da oni posjeduju građu koja je vezana za Židovsku općinu Zagreb i da sumnja da bi se tu moglo nešto naći a da ukoliko želim dalje tražiti trebalo im je za to platiti. Na preporuku Arona Albaharija otputovala sam u Beograd i u Jevrejskom muzeju se srela sa gospođom Brankom koja mi je pokazala na stotine kartonskih kutija napunjenih dokumentima i rekla, eto tu bi sad trebalo kopati. Ona je kasnije pretraživala te kutije ali baš ništa nije našla. U Jevrejskom muzeju sam upoznala povjesničara Dragana Krsmanovića koji je u moje ime pretražio arhivu vojnog instituta u Beogradu vezano za napad na Dabar 5.2.2020. i o svemu tome nije našao niti jedne jedine zapisane riječi. Uz pomoć profesora Ivana Šporčića pokušali smo ući u trag ekshumacije u arhivi općine Otočac, ali nam je rečeno da je najveći dio te arhive uništen ili nestao u ratu 90-tih a da je dio arhive (uglavnom onaj koji se



odnosi na građevinske dozvole) prenesen u Gospić.

U arhivu Yad Vashema sam našla mnogo povijesne građe i brojna video svjedočenja onih koji su preživjeli izbjeglištvo po Lici, Baniji i Kordunu međutim o napadu na Dabar 5.2.1944. nitko nije rekao niti riječi.



**Grob s prenesenim posmrtnim ostacima žrtava na sarajevskom židovskom groblju**

Otputovala sam u Sarajevo i otišla u Arhiv grada Sarajeva ali tamo sam zatekla jedno šest ili sedam njih okupljenih oko kuhala kako prave kavu i puše. Rekli su mi “ ne može to tako gospođo, vi trebate podnijeti zahtjev ...znate bio je rat...ne znam je li što ostalo.” Pisala sam im, poslala im zahtjev ali nikada nisu odgovorili.

I da skratim cijelu ovu dugu zakukuljenu i zamumuljenu priču, duže od godinu dana sam tragala za grobom Avrama Levi Sadića, ali bilo je to kao da vozim auto pod punim gasom a u leru. Kao posljednji pokušaj da dođem do ljudskog srca, do nekoga kome će biti stalo do Avrama Levi Sadića obratila sam se Jakovu Finciju predsjedniku La Benevolencije i napomenula da je Avram Levi Sadić bio jedan od osnivača i prvi potpredsjednik La Benevolencije a upravo ova

organizacija je jedna od najzaslužnijih za procvat Židova BiH u periodu do II svjetskog rata. Na moj opširni i dugački mail Jakica Finci mi odgovorio da je s velikim zanimanjem pročitao mail, da je dirnut pričom te da je i sam razgovarao sa Danilom Nikolićem ali da se po njegovom mišljenju ovdje treba stati i prihvatiti da je grob Avrama Levi Sadića trajno izgubljen i da se više od onoga što sam ja doznala i ne može doznati.

Ja sam sa svoje strane bivala sve jače riješena da nađem grob. Pisala sam na sve strane i sa svih strana dobivala ili ne dobivala odgovore u stilu „brigo moja pređi na drugoga“. Zнала sam da grob negdje postoji, tijela su negdje prenesena, moralo je to proći kroz neke knjige, moralo je negdje biti evidentirano. Ali, nitko nije bio zainteresiran da kopa po knjigama i prevrće mrtve kosti. Zdrava logika mi govori da su tijela žrtava iz Dabra prenesena na staro Jevrejsko groblje na Kovačićima. Jer Avram je bio zaslužni član Jevrejske opštine Sarajeva i grada Sarajeva. A na groblju na Kovačićima se ukopavalo sve do 1966 godine. U neko doba mi je postalo jasno da ne mogu računati na arhive, židovske općine, muzeje itd i da mi je posljednja šansa da nađem grob otići na samo groblje, hodati među grobovima i pretraživati grob po grob u dijelu gdje se ukopavalo 1957. ili 1958. ili 1959. godine. No kada sam ja došla do zaključka da mi je preostalo još jedino da hodam među grobovima, bilo je to vrijeme korone i iz Izraela se nije moglo uopće izaći. Niti se u BiH moglo ući. Gledalno iz perspektive čovjeka koji sjedi u strogoj izraelskoj karanteni i kojem je dozvoljeno da se udaljava od kuće najviše 500 metara, Sarajevo je bilo na kraju svijeta.

Molila sam prijatelje iz Sarajeva da mi pomognu i da umjesto mene odu do groblja kako bi tražili Avramov grob. Molila sam mnoge i na kraju se sjetila Dragana Stanimirovića, koji mi je u nekom od naših whatsapp dopisivanja napomenuo da snimaju na Starom jevrejskom groblju na Kovačićima. Dragan je novinar Al Jazeera. On je prihvatio izazov i zaista otišao do groblja do Kovačićima. I to ne jednom. Svaki put kada bi otišao na groblje javljao se sa novim otkrićima i svaki put nam se činilo da smo na pravom tragu.

Hodao je među grobovima. Razgovarao sa čuvarem groblja. Pratio pogrešne tragove pa se ponovo vraćao traženju iz početka. I kao što to u Bosni i biva, sve što se u toj državi može nekako urediti uređuje se tako da zamoliš nekog Dragana, nekog Zijada, neku teta Minu ili neku Sabinu „da ti učine“, da ti pomognu i oni ti onako ljudski, bez interesa i zadnje namjere učine i pomognu. Tako je to u Bosni. Tako je bilo i sa mnom. Dragan je nekoliko puta išao na staro Jevrejsko groblje. Hodao među grobovima a onda je jednom krenuo

nagore pa ustranu i hop pred njim je stajao grob na kom je bilo uklesano ime Avrama Levi Sadića

Grob je oštećen u posljednjem ratu 90-tih, budući da su se baš sa ovog groblja i na ovom groblju vodile teške bitke i granatiranja. Velika većina grobova je oštećena, raznesena a nadgrobni spomenici razbacani naokolo tako da se više i ne može znati gdje je nekad bio grob i što je na nadgrobnom spomeniku pisalo. Ali grob na kom je bilo uklesano ime Avram Levi Sadić, iako oštećen bio je još u relativno dobrom stanju i na svom izvornom mjestu. Na grobu piše: „Prenesene žrtve fašističkog terora iz Korduna i Banije. Cabrieli Rifka (Bulka), Ernestina Jakov, Sarina Nada, Avram Levi Sadić, J. Finci zatim dio uništen granatom i na kraju Musafia Esperansa Izrael. Dakle pet žena i Avram, točno onako kako je ispričao Veljko Čuturilo. Grob je nađen 21. 8. 2020.

I evo to je to, tražila sam grob i našla ga. Što stvarno stoji u pozadini ove moje opsjednutosti Avramom Levi Sadićem. Što hoću od njega ili što li on traži od mene. Da se ne zaboravi. Da ne utone u vječnu tminu. Da mu se ne zatre svaki trag. Ja sam posljednja koja može ispričati ovu priču. Ako je ne ispričam, Avram će utonuti u vječni mrak.

Ne znam kako je Avram izgledao. Našla sam na Internetu slike s osnivačke konferencije La Benevolencije pa onda slike s proslave desetogodišnjice osnivanja La Benevolencije. Naišla sam i na sliku sa osnivačke konferencije Privredne Komore BiH. Jedan te isti uglađeni gospodin sjedi na svim tim slikama u centru pažnje. Je li to on? Nešto mi govori da jeste, ali nisam sigurna u to. Pipam i dalje po mraku, Imao je jednog jedinog sina. Salamon se zvao, kao i Avramov otac. Sjećam se kao kroz maglu da sam kao dijete slušala odrasle kako pričaju o djetetu koje nije bilo zdravo i živjelo je u nekom rehabilitacionom centru za mentalno oboljele u Grazu. Nešto loše mu se desilo na kraju ali ne znam što. Slušala sam i o njegovoj majci koja je umrla od tuge. Kasnije kada je Amir Ibrišimović poslao sve one silne dokumente naletjela sam na ugovor o poklanjanju jedne zgrade ženskom humanitarnom društvu La Humanidad. Tim ugovorom Avram poklanja jednu cijelu zgradu u srcu Sarajeva u ulici Ferhadija 2, ženskom humanitarnom društvu La Humanidad i u tom dokumentu se kaže da se od iznajmljivanja radnji i stanova u toj zgradi ima doživotno plaćati održavanje njegovog sina Salomona Levi Sadića ili njegovom staratelju u Grazu a ostatak prihoda je namijenjen, kaže se u tom ugovoru o poklanjanju zgrade, brinjanju i pomaganju siromašnih udavača, udovica, i siromašne djece. Ugovor je sačinjen 1931 godine. A to znači da je Avramov sin Salomon te 1931 bio živ i da se Avram vjerojatno brinuo za njegovu budućnosti. Ne znam šta je bila daljnja sudbina njegovog sina ali sumnjam da je mentalno oboljeli Salomon Levi Sadić koji je živio u Grazu u Austriji 30 tih godina 20. vijeka preživio II svjetski rat. Jedan od dokumenata koje je poslao Amir Ibrišimović bio je i smrtni list Simhe Levi Sadić, žene Avramove i majke Salamonove. Umrla je mlada 1915. godine. Kao dijete sam slušala od odraslih da je umrla od tuge. Avram se nakon njene smrti nije više ženio. Nije imao druge djece.

Mnogo je Avrama utonulo u tamno more vječnog zaborava na čijem dnu počivaju svi oni kojih se nitko više ne sjeća. Iza njih nije ostao nitko tko bi ispričao njihovu priču. Tko od vode, tko od vatre, tko od metka, tko od noža, tko u plinskoj komori, tko od tuge tonuli su u more vječne tame noseći sa sobom svatko svoju priču, kao i sve priče onih koji su ih poznavali, koji su ih se sjećali a kojih sada više nema. O svima njima se nikada više ništa neće znati. Ovaj naš Avram Levi Sadić spašen je od zaborava čudnim stjecajem okolnosti, igrom slučaja ili nekim providenjem sudbine, tko će to znati. Ali on je spašen, jer sve dok živi jedan jedini čovjek koji ga se sjeća, i kojem je Avram Levi Sadić važan, on neće potonuti u more vječnog zaborava. Zato valjda ovo i pišem. Sve se nekako nadam, da ću ga kada sve ovo zapišem, nekako spasiti.

*Berta Zekić Belson:*

## **Looking for Avram Levi Sadić**

Translated to English by Jessica James. Edited by Angela Tuck

This is a true story. This story is personal. It is also, I believe, a story that many will recognize.

Avram Levi Sadić ought to have been forgotten. No one should have remembered him. No one even remember what he had looked like. No one had kept his photo in their family album. It could be said that no one cared. Even the whereabouts of his grave was unknown. His name did not appear on any list of the millions of Holocaust victims, not even at Yad Vashem. Avram Levi Sadić should have sunk into that dark sea of eternal oblivion, at the bottom of which rest millions no one remembers anymore. The only thing that did remain, that was proof of his existence, was the evidence of his various properties, all of which have survived numerous dismantling. All that vast property empire has been variously taken apart by all. Firstly, by the invading Germans. In 1941 they were seen throwing bales of socks out of the broken windows, of Avram's Ključ Sock Factory. These bales were loaded onto waiting trucks. Those same socks, were transported by train to various fronts, and most probably warmed the feet of German soldiers.



**Avram Levi Sadić's bussines card**

Next came the Ustashas. They illegally appropriated his luxury apartment. He was then forced to live in a derelict property in Magrabija Street. From there, Avram eventually escaped to Mostar. The dismemberment continued, on behalf of the people, by Tito's communists. They nationalized everything that survived Avram. Following the Ustashas, the national hero and Communist Vasa Butozan moved into Avram's luxury apartment. Czech communists also nationalized the four luxury buildings in Karlovy Vary center. Culminating in Avram's whole portfolio, being confiscated and nationalized by Tito's Yugoslavia. The complete dismantling was finalized in the aftermath of the Yugoslav

disintegration. It is strange but evitable that the most recent owners of Avram's properties have used his name to attach a byword/ label of high quality and long tradition to their newly acquired ownership of his former property.

It all began one day when I picked up the telephone; I was at home in Israel at that time. The caller introduced himself as Amir Ibrišimović. Hesitated that he was calling in connection with the property of an Avram Levi Sadić. He then informed me of his extensive database detailing the vast assets of the said Avram Levi Sadić, and that he was looking for his living heirs, given that Avram was one of the most powerful, influential, and wealthiest people in the region in the pre-World War II period. Such phone calls can ignite hope, wild imaginations of a great legacy, and happiness just at one's fingertips. This call did precisely that. Amir Ibrišimović sent extensive documentation proving that Avram had had an impressive portfolio. He was the owner of four large classic buildings in the center of Karlovy Vary: the Ključ Socks Factory in Sarajevo (which employed 300 workers on the eve of World War II), and the Šik Knitwear, and a Haberdashery Factory in Sarajevo, which employed 120 workers (at the beginning of 1941). Also included were several residential buildings in Sarajevo. Dreams of inheriting millions seemed strangely within my reach. It was all too real as it was revealed that Amir Ibrišimović possessed a court decision that declared my late mother and her sister the sole legal heirs of Avram's property.

According to Amir Ibrišimović, we had the best chances to retrieve our inheritance with the properties in



Karlovy Vary, now situated in the Czech Republic. Since the Czech Republic, as a 'cultural and orderly state,' had adopted a law on restitution Amir doubted that Bosnia-Herzegovina, poor and war-ravaged, would ever pass a law on restitution. It lacked the finances to pay compensation to the heirs of confiscated property and probably would for a few generations to come. Concerning Sarajevo, he stated that, and I quote, "Well, everyone in Sarajevo knows that half of Sarajevo was Jewish before the Second World War."

It quickly became evident that there would be no restitution or even compensations for the four beautiful classic buildings in the center of Karlovy Vary. The deadline for lodging an application property repossession in the Czech Republic passed in 2001. Even if we could have legally applied in time, we would still be disqualified from repossession as a key condition necessitated the applicant to be of Czech citizenship, citizenship no one in our family held.

In about a year, all our dreams of millions had dissipated one by one. We did not have the required Czech citizenship for property inheritance in the Czech Republic.

**Members of La Benevolencija Jewish humanitarian organization in Sarajevo.  
Avram Levi Sadić, sitting second from left**



Bosnia lacked a law on restitution, which was not likely to ever be adopted. The Ključ and Šik factories had been privatised. To muddy the waters further, BiH media reported extensively on a major criminal trial involving very nefarious, illegal activities surrounding the privatization process and shares of the Ključ sock factory, involving a certain Mr.

Turković's and co-defendants, all being contemporary Bosnian criminal kingpins. The newspapers also noted Mr. Turković's connections with the drugs trade, the armed robbery at Sarajevo airport of some 2 million euros, and the practice of 'bricking in' live people into walls during building construction.

Day by day, it became more apparent that this bombastic story of a great, unexpected legacy would ultimately lead to merely a pile of papers and documents, each demonstrating in its own way the story of the man Avram Levi Sadić. This was all that was left to prove the existence of a man who once lived, once meant something to someone, and who achieved much. As it is said in the will of his youngest sister Rifka Bulka Finci (born Levi Sadić), he was brutally killed within the village of Dabar, in the hamlet of Zapolje on 5 February 1944, killed by the occupying enemy and their local helpers. After all, our hopes of inheriting



millions were dashed, slowly while reading all these documents, a picture of Avram Levi Sadić slowly started to galvanize. A man, a person of flesh and blood seemed to be reaching out across the years, inspiring me to find out who he was, and what had really happened to him.

From the numerous documents sent by Amir Ibrišimović, it was possible to find out some basics. Mostly routine information-his birth/death details, family/children details, and other possible relatives. It was like assembling a puzzle. Using common sense and an elimination system, I discovered many previously unknown facts about my family. These papers revealed the stories of many interesting people. They also showed their fascinating destinies, most of which proved tragic. Avram Levi Sadić had seven brothers and sisters. Little is known about the fate of these eight children of Solomon Levi Sadić and Dona Levi Sadić (nee Pardo). Little is also known about the fate of their daughters-in-law, sons-in-law, grandchildren, or their great-grandchildren. Some were fated to die from fire, some from water, some from diseases, some from knives, some from bullets, even some from sorrow. All of them have left this life, one by one, each in their own way. Each one took their story with them to the grave, leaving no one who could tell their stories. Maybe something more could be gleaned from the books of the Jewish community of Sarajevo. That avenue proved to be lined, not with trees but thorns. For whatever reasons, guided by who knows what local politics and policies, those who have custodial rights of these books do not allow others the right of personal access. Even for legitimate enquiry. Even for family information. All applications for any information about a current or former member of the Sarajevo Jewish Community, including personal family ancestry, must be submitted in writing. You are then told that the requested details will follow. After a person writes numerous emails/lists naming family members/lists of the ancestral family names, they regularly receive the same stock answer; there is no information about any persons under those names in the Sarajevo Jewish community's books.

When Soviet soldiers tore down the Third Reich flag at the Berlin Reichstag, it ignited the signal for all of Europe to begin rejoicing in celebration of the end of hostilities. However, the fates of the family Levi Sadić did not leave much grounds for rejoicing. A once large, prosperous family, considered one of the richest and most influential in the region in 1939, had been reduced to mere handful of frightened, sick, and depressed people. Avram's youngest sister Rifka Bulka Finci (nee Levi Sadić), aged 61 years, was dying at the hospital in Glina in July 1945. Before her death, she had dictated her last will to a court clerk. From this document, we learn that her brother, Avram Levi Sadić, was brutally murdered by the enemy and their locale liaison on February 5 1944, in the village of Dabar, at the hamlet of Zapolje. Rifka also knew that her own husband and two sons, Shalom and Salomon, had been killed in Jasenovac. Therefore, her will stated that she would leave all her property to her daughter, my grandmother, Berta Beja Kamhi (nee Finci). Up to her last days in Glina, Rifka did not know that her thirty-nine-year-old daughter's days were numbered.

This story is my odyssey. Was it always fated to be too little, too late? I do know that after the realization that not a single penny of Avram's quite considerable wealthy assets would come back to his descendants, I became obsessed with a need; a need to find out just who Avram Levi Sadić was, in the hope that he could be liberated from that deep dark trap of oblivion. Apart from the documents received from Amir Ibrišimović, I held no other evidence of his life, nothing else that had belonged to him. Everything was permanently, thoroughly destroyed. It had been killed, burned, confiscated, nationalize, and later, privatized by other people. While other amateur family historians have drawers and closets to rummage in, older relatives to talk to, evidence to shift through, I had nothing tangible. No drawers. No closets. No older relatives, nothing. Any material that could have been was variously confiscated, removed, destroyed, or 'sold'. Anybody who I could have spoken to was dead, or at best, living with severe dementia. I was left with a feeling of being drawn to find out more by something which was not easy to explain. It felt as if I was groping in the dark. Catching hold of something here and there. Trying to then work out what that could mean, like a blind man

through touch. And then having to attempt an interpretation by which it could be placed, sorted, stored, and related. It was all so random, too disjointed too often.

I spent long hours on the internet, googling in various languages looking for any sign of Avram's life. I reviewed all the testimonies in Yad Vashem. I made enquiries about the camp survivors at Rab and read any other written testimonies that existed. The same as those who were in hiding in Lika. I searched the archives of Sarajevo, Zagreb, Belgrade, the military institute in Belgrade, the Jewish Museum in Belgrade, Otočac, and Gospić. I even took to reading books reporting that period, hoping to see the name Avram Levi Sadić somewhere, anywhere.

One day I came across the book "Dollar a Day," written by Danko Samokovlija. In that book, Samokovlija describes the lives of Jewish refugees in Lika after they left the Italian camp, Rab, following Italy's capitulation in September 1943. He states that they were in Petinjić Polje, where there were rumors that there were Ustasha informers present. This being so, they continued walking through the snow until reaching the village of Dabar. It seems that one group of people stayed in Dabar, and a larger group continued walking to Ličke Jasenice. Among the group that remained in the village of Dabar was, and I now quote, "a well-known citizen of Sarajevo, the owner of the Ključ socks factory, Avram Levi Sadić. This man had no idea that this small village would be the last place he would ever be in his life. One night he was slaughtered by Germans and Ustashes. "That exactly coincided with what Rifka Bulka Finci would have said. The will of my great-grandmother and Avram's youngest sister clearly stated that her brother was brutally killed on 5 February 1944 in the hamlet of Zapolje near Dabar. The vivid descriptions of Avram's road's end within this book informed my decision to travel to Rab, then later to Lika in the footsteps of Avram Levi Sadić.

## Dabar



### **B. Belson speaking to the witness of the crime**

I will not try to explain why it was not so simple to just go to Lika. How you cannot just appear in the middle of this village to look for a murdered man. I approached professor Ivan Šporčić, who was from that area, to help. His uncle, a Catholic priest in Dabar, connected us with Tomo Rukavina, who had written a book about the history of this area. All these people opened their doors to us, invited us in, and dedicated their time to helping us. Unfortunately, no one knew anything about Avram. Neither had anyone even heard of the Jews hiding here in World War II. At that moment, it seemed to me that my trip to Dabar was in vain. Looking for traces of Avram Levi Sadić in Lika was beginning to resemble looking for a needle in a haystack. As we have already reached Lika, we decided to visit the hamlet of Zapolje (near Dabar). Prof. Šporčić believed that it was possible to find out something in that village. Avram Levi Sadić was killed in that village on 5 February 1944, and here I was, his descendant, more than 75 years later, looking for his grave.

The village looked like it came directly from some definitive part of the story. It should be seen as if time stood had stood still in 1944; but there had been a new war, a new massacre, and new blood had been shed in the 1990s. The first four houses in the village belonged to Croats and the other twenty houses to Serbs. But the sum population is less than a dozen inhabitants, both Serbs, and

Croats. They are all old. Many of the houses have been demolished. Some have been restored. Some of the old wooden log cabins probably date from the time when Avram passed through this village. The sound of barking dogs accompanies us all the time as we walked through the village. Dogs know well the smell of the village inhabitants, our scent made it clear that we were not of their village. We approached the first old woman we saw, dressed all in black, the *rigueur* clothing custom in these parts. She was stacking wood in preparation for the winter. I asked her if she knew anything about Avram. She had never heard of him. She remembered that her mother-in-law had told her that she "...kept Jews in the house." An old woman added: "I got married into this house, and I only heard it from the stories. I was not born in this village, nor did I live in Zapolje at that time." Her son, who was visiting from Serbia, said he remembers that there were six partisan graves in the cemetery. All with the names of non-local people. I hoped that one of them was Avram's.

We then went to the Serbian orthodox cemetery only to discover those 'other' names were written on a memorial plaque. The villagers were trying to convince me that Avram was probably buried at this cemetery. Where else could he be buried? They shrugged. They reasoned that if he was killed in the village, he was probably buried in the cemetery. I believe that the locals were keen to promote this explanation to afford comfort, so that I would have something tangible to hold onto. There were some unmarked graves in that cemetery. I surveyed all those graves without names, some marked by crosses, some with no markings. Just looking at those graves did not give me closure. I knew, I just knew somehow, that Avram was not there.

I asked if someone could be buried outside the cemetery walls. The old woman's son answered, "No way, all around this is rock, no one can dig there. "That is it then. I lit a candle in the Orthodox cemetery. Even as I lit the candle, I knew that that place had nothing to do with Avram. We went back to the car. That is, professor Šporčić, his uncle, the priest from Dabar, Tomislav Rukavina, the old woman's son, my husband, Muki, and me. We said our goodbyes and thanked the old woman's son. Everyone got into the car; everyone but me.

At that moment, something pulled at me; it seemed to be telling me to go to the other end of the village. Maybe it was feminine intuition, a sixth sense. Or perhaps it was a familial shout across the generations. Call it what you like. I cannot explain this. But I knew that I should go over there, to that other part of the village. With the rest of my group already sat in the car waiting for me I walked off in the opposite direction. I understood that if I got into that car, this story would end right there. I said nothing to anyone. I just left. I quickened my pace. Moving away from the car, as if running away. I walked and walked. Alone, continually looking around. Trying to catch a sign, something, anything. I remember thinking, "Here I am, Avram, I have come to Zapolje, and where are you? Give me a sign, now it's up to you; I've come to the wall, show me the way out." And while I was talking to Avram in my mind, I noticed my husband, Muki. He had been sent by the others to look for me. They were waiting to leave. They did not understand my sudden unexplained walkabout. I noticed an old woman trying to talk to Muki from a balcony, but his Serbo-Croatian is very limited, so he was having difficulty understanding her. I quickened my pace towards them. I greeted the old woman, and she asked me, "Who are you? What are you looking for?" I replied that I was looking for my Jewish relative who perished in this village. The old woman responded, "Wait, I'll come down now."

Evica Vlaisavljević is eighty-six-years old, and has lived in this village all her life. A thin, vital old woman, with a clear head and the obligatory black scarf. She informed us that five "chivuts" (Jews) had been slaughtered by Germans and Ustashas at the village outskirts. She continued, "... there was Sara, a beautiful little woman, she didn't know how to speak our language, so we children taught her. "It was my Avram that she remembers well because she often saw him walking around the village. "He was a bright man, always wearing a cap, of a medium height just like him (she pointed at professor Šporčić). One night the Germans and the Ustashas from Brinje came and caught them at the bottom of the village. They took them out of the



village and slaughtered them. Their bodies lay in the field for a day or two, and then people from the village went there and buried them, right there at the same place where they were slaughtered. ” When she was little, Evica and other children looked after the sheep. She remembers being told by the adults not to go to that field because the Jews were slaughtered there.

Childhood is a time of significant events. Yet the biggest of these is the world of adults seen through children's eyes. That adult world looks enormous, giant- like. Then life happens, and that big adult world somehow shrinks. Children grow up, they go their own way, and the world appears much smaller in proportion. Evica also grew up; she stopped looking after the sheep. She got married, had children, went through another war, but she never left Zapolje. Her world has not shrunk. This bright and vital old woman, dressed all in black, tried to evoke distant memories and recall something else. She added: "...whether they dug them up later or not, I don't know anymore. I don't remember that, as if I remember something, but I am not sure." This old woman looked into the distance, trying to recall the memory, but she kept repeating that she was not sure.

I begged Evica to take us to that place. She reluctantly agreed because it would not be easy to get there.

She wanted to direct us so we could go alone. "Go." - she told us –“to the last house in the village and uphill, and through the high bushes all the way up to the wall, there you will see a slope right behind that wall, that is where they were killed. In the end, Evica agreed to come with us. We drove her as far as we could. Then this wily old woman headed up the hill. Through the tall uncut grass, through the thorns and bushes. It was not easy for her to go through those bushes and thorns. And then this old woman stopped for a moment and said, “Just go to that big bush, there is a wall behind it, then a slope. Behind the wall, there is leveled ground. That is where it happened. They were killed there. ”

We walked in the direction indicated by Evica. Through the bushes and the neglected lawn, where no human foot had stepped in a long time. Professor Šporčić stepped tentatively as he was afraid of snakes. Along the way, Muki and professor Šporčić bumped into a thorn bush. Finally, we reached the sub-wall. There we found a rusted can on the wall, just by its appearance; one could tell it had been standing there for a long time. Initially, I thought it was a memorial candle, the kind Jews light — but who could light a memorial candle there? We took a picture of the can to enlarge the letters and read what was written on the can. Finally, we discovered that the sign on the can said fish in German. Someone had been there. He ate canned fish brought from Germany. Why? How? What was he looking for there? We passed the wall; we came across the slope, exactly as Evica had described. Here were the slaughter grounds. I stood and looked around, almost stunned. Was it possible? It seemed that I came to Zapolje in vain just about an hour ago and that the chances of coming across the trail of Avram Levi Sadić were zero. Yet here I was, standing where Avram parted with his soul. I looked around in disbelief. Am I really here? Are these trees the last thing Avram's eyes saw? What was going through his head as they led them uphill? Surely, he was afraid. What is the fear of death? Did he know it was the end? Did he hope for salvation? What was he thinking as he parted from his soul? What does a slaughtered man feel?

### **Veljko's testimony**

On that July day, we had walked through the hamlet of Zapolje talking to the older people trying to find out if there was anyone who remembered an old Jew who had hid in the village in 1944. Tomo Rukavina referred us to ninety-one-year-old Veljko Čuturilo, who had recently returned to Otočac from Serbia. We found him in his new apartment in the center of Otočac, where he had returned from Petrovaradin with his wife, Sofia. Veljko is originally from the nearby village of Bobinje, more precisely from the hamlet of Čuturilo, which was a neighboring village, just above Zapolje. This hearty and bright old man remembered



Avram very well. He told us, "I remember him so well. He wore a winter coat with a fur collar and walked through the village, "Veljko had also written a book about the history of this area. However, he had not written a single word about the Jews who hid there or about the slaughter in Zapolje. I questioned him about why he had not mentioned these events, and Veljko replied that he had not wanted to get involved and that he had left the Jews to write about their own people. As for Avram, Veljko says that he often mentioned him with Marko Narandžić, who was a politician even before World War II. That local politician, Marko Narandžić and Avram often talked during those days when Avram was hiding in Zapolje. Seeking company in the village, Avram befriended several local pre-war politicians. Veljko was a teenager at the time. Later, when Veljko grew up and became a politician himself, Veljko Čaturulo and Marko Narandžić became friends. At that time, Marko often mentioned Avram and everything that he told him in their conversations. And he always said, "That's what your money stands for, my Veljko, remember Avram, left four wagons of goods, a lot of money in the current account, he also left houses, factories, apartments, great wealth, and do you remember how he ended up."

Veljko Čaturilo became a politician in the municipality of Dabar in the 1950s. In 1958 or 1959, he received a letter from the then-mayor of Otočac, Dane Rupičić, asking Veljko to provide all necessary assistance to a delegation of the Jewish community that was to come to Dabar to exhume the bodies of five Jews slaughtered on 5 February 1944 above Zapolje. Veljko told us that three people came to Dabar, he believes from Sarajevo, led by dr.Stockhaimer. Veljko found several strong men to exhume the bodies. All five bodies with skulls intact were located. The bodies were transferred to tin crates and stored for transportation. On that day, during their lunch, Veljko told the Jewish delegation about an additional grave of a Jewish woman who had drunk poison after the Germans wounded her in both legs. Unable to escape and fearing falling into Germans or Ustashas hands, the woman had drunk poison. She was buried at the village called Mala Kapela. The Jewish delegation was surprised to hear about this additional victim. They went to Mala Copeland exhumed her body. Then the tin boxes with the bodies of six Jews were taken by lorries to Ličke Jasenice. The rest of the journey was by train. Veljko did not know precisely where they took the bodies, but he believed that they were taken to Sarajevo. He was not even sure of the exact year-1957, 1958, or 1959. He also mentioned that a few months later, he received a thank you letter from the Jewish community signed by dr.Stockhaimer.He offered that letter to meas he did not need to keep it. Veljko explained that during the war of the 1990s, he transferred all the documents, including a large archive from Otočac to Petrovaradin, and it remains with his son in Petrovaradin today. I was hoping to collect that letter, but it was never found. Instead, Veljko Čaturilo typed on a typewriter, as it had been originally committed to history, three and the half pages of testimony about Avram Levi Sadić and the exhumation of those killed in Zapolje. I asked Veljko where Avram lived. He said that Avram spent his last days in Mate Krznarić's house. Once again, Veljko mentioned that he remembers Avram very well and that his memory of him is very much alive. Avram, it seems, was a man possessing a certain something memorable. There was something impressive about him Veljko volunteered. According to his testimony, Avram was calm, optimistic, always smiling. Talking about Mato Krznarić, Veljko Čaturilo says, "...that he was a good man even though he was a Croat." When the Ustashas and the Germans captured Avram, Mato begged the Ustashas to spare him. They promised him that nothing bad would happen to Avram.

From the beginning of January until 5 February 1944, twenty eight Jews hid in the villages of Dabar municipality. Dabar and Otočac were within the liberated partisan territory at that time, and the people of the village were given directives to accommodate Jews in their homes. After Italy's capitulation and the liberation from the Italian concentration camp, Rab, most of the healthy Jewish men, joined the partisans. A Jewish battalion was formed and quickly disbursed. The Jewish members were scattered among the non-Jewish partisan units. Elderly Jewish men, women, and children left the liberated Italian camp Rab and were transferred to Senj. When the Germans took Senj, they fled across the Velebit Mountain to Otočac, which was still under partisan control. The partisans billeted these refugees among the villager's homes. Jewish refugees then lived with them, eating the same food, living the same lives as their local hosts. Those refugees

with money paid for the food. Those without money worked for their village hosts or managed some other way. Later, following six German offensives, the partisans withdrew. The villages of Brinje and Letinac to Zapolje witnessed the arrival of the 392 German Legionary Division allied with the Ustashas. They came deliberately at night. They had only one order: one goal; to eliminate all the Jewish refugees. Were they tipped off? They seemed to know that Jews were hiding in these villages. This German Division, also known as the Blue Division, was manned by Croats and Bosnian Muslims then serving in the German army. Following the creation of the Independent State of Croatia, in June 1941, Ante Pavelić offered Hitler volunteers to serve on the Eastern Front. This offer translated into the formation of air and naval personnel units, trained, and equipped in Germany, primarily to serve on the Eastern front fighting the Red Army. On 17 August 1943, the 392nd Croatian Infantry Division was formed. It mustered and trained in Austria. It proved to be the third and last division formed for service in the Wehrmacht. It consisted of about 3,500 members from the German cadre enhanced by around 8,500 soldiers of the Croatian Home Guard (part of the regular army of the Independent State of Croatia). The division was led by the Austrian Major General Johann Mickl. The soldiers were primarily Croats and Muslims from Bosnia, while the commanding staff was German. Soldiers of this division wore Wehrmacht uniforms with the Independent State of Croatia's coat of arms on the right sleeve. Although initially intended to fight on the Eastern Front, shortly after its founding, this changed. The German High Command decided that this division would be limited to operations within the Independent State of Croatia territory. This combination of historical circumstances led to the fact that the hands that cut Avram's throats along with the four women in Zapolje wore German uniforms, although the method of slaughter was not very common amongst Wehrmacht soldiers.

Those Jews who were situated in the houses that sat higher in the villages managed to escape. However, those in lower valley sited homes such as Zapolje and were unfortunate to be at the lower end of those settlements were caught. The house of Mato Krznarić, where Avram lived, was at the bottom of the village. Veljko said that after these five Jews were captured and slaughtered, the other Jews did not return to Dabar because they were afraid. Only one family returned, and they returned to the house of a Janko.

The next day we returned to Zapolje. I wanted to see Mate Krznarić's house, where Avram spent his last days. At the same time, I brought modest gifts for all the good people who had assisted us the day before. Those who had helped enhance our slim knowledge of Avram. Firstly, we went to the house of Tomo Rukavina. Tomo generously opened his doors, sharing the best wine, the best brandy, the best prosciutto, and the very best homemade crempita. Together with his wife Vera, he now spends more and more time in his native hamlet of Lug near Dabar. They also own a house in Gorica, near Zagreb, and a house in Rovinj. Tomo says they feel the best in Lug. Tomo Rukavina is an interesting person. He was formally one of the commanders of the Tigers and spent the entire 1990's war on the battlefield. He is proud of that part of his past. He noted that people of this area, both Serbs and Croats, lived here in harmony until the latest war. He explained that there was a local agreement between the Ustashas and the Chetniks during World War II. Ustashas would not touch Serbian villages, and the Chetniks would not touch Croatian settlements. However, on occasions, it did happen that Ustashas from other areas would come, and then the Ustashas from Dabar would warn the Serbs to take shelter until they passed. Likewise, Dabar Chetniks also protected "their Croats". Both sides stuck to that agreement until the last war in the 1990's, when all those time-honored woven seams tore apart.

As we had visited Tomislav and Vera for two consecutive days, they invited us into their house the next day. Their house was full of Croatian symbols, festooned with flags, war trophies, pictures of deceased parents, and various old objects and memories from an ancient, and more recent past. From all this, it was possible to see how much Tome cares about the area's history and his Croatian identity. He remembered Mate Krznarić well. He says that he was alive until the end of the 90s and that he died at a very old age in a nursing home in Udbina in 1998/9. In describing Mate Krznarić, Tomo indicated that he was a tragic figure in his own way. He came from one of the wealthiest families in the village. His father, Micho, was very rich. The best and

most fertile land belonged to his father. Old Micho built a house that was later shared by his sons Mate and Milan. Mate Krznarić reached an old age whilst his brother died younger in the 1950s. "And the fact that a Jew lived in his house does not surprise me at all," Tomo continues. "Mate was married to a Serbian woman, which was very unusual at the time. They had a son, Micho, named after his father. His son Micho lived in Gorica near Zagreb, and he was a policeman. All was good until he started to drink. He left his wife and daughter and set up another home with another woman. Mate was angry with his son; the wife was angry with her husband, so Mate's granddaughter never visited the hamlet of Zapolje. She never saw her father's village. There were unresolved property issues between Mate's granddaughter and Mate's nephew, the brother of Milan's son, who still lives in Otočac. Mate's house that once sheltered Avram Levi Sadić now looks neglected. Deserted, overgrown with weeds, and surrounded by tall unclipped hedges. Judging by its appearance, no one seems to care about that house anymore. Not enough, anyway.

It was at the entrance to the village earlier that we had met Ilija. He was leading a tied cow wearing his deep rubber boots. When asked about Mate Krznarić's house, he showed us a deserted old half-ruined house; made half in stone and half in dark wooden planks. He told us that "...it was a big house," especially for that time. All other houses that preceded that time were smaller, much more modest. Mate was one of the most prominent people in the village. That plot of land on which his house was situated on the most fertile land in the village. Mate also owned a "large estate that he inherited from his parents". In this half-ruined wooden house in which Avram spent his last days, no human foot had stepped for years. Tall grass and thorns have grown around the house, as no one had cultivated the fertile field under the house. Ilija nods and tells how Mate was a good man. I lit a candle on the collapsed wooden stairs at the entrance of the house. However, Ilija, professor Šporčić, and Tome were concerned about the fire risk, so I asked Ilija to put out that candle in the evening. I went to Mate's nearest neighbor. There seem to be a lot of long-lived people in that village. Or perhaps this older population has been swelled by many old men who returned to their homeland. I asked the neighbor if he knew Mato Krznaric. He says: "Surely I knew him; we drank coffee every day together." I pushed my point further. "So did Mate ever say that a Jew lived in his house during World War II?" The man shook his head - "He never told me anything about it, and we drank coffee every day." professor Šporčić adds, "People rarely talked about such things in our area."



**B. Belson with local people in the village where Avram and other Jews were killed**

After that, we went to thank Evica Vlaisavljević, who was the first to tell us about the five slaughtered Jews. She received us warmly into her house. She lives in a small old, dark, and dilapidated house in which no one has opened the windows for a long time. The smell of old age permeates the interior. In that house, time has stood still. The orange plywood kitchen was popular in the '70s and bought by all peoples and nationalities throughout Yugoslavia on credit. Tin boxes for coffee, sugar, and tea adorn the shelves, as did all those types of kitchens in the '70s. The knitted flasks, embroidered tablecloths, crocheted pods, all screamed 1970's Yugoslavia. Along with other numerous details, it reminded me of a time when I once lived in this country. It was a place that I did not think existed anymore. The old bright green telephone

placed on the bed played a prominent role in that dark and unventilated room; its ring would bring news of life happening somewhere else. Evica seemed to exist for these phone calls. A sizeable two-story house had been constructed in the backyard of her house. I assume this was intended for her son, who probably lives in Serbia. Evica went back to the same story she had told us the day before - but at the heart of that story was her memory that as children, while watching over the lambs in those meadows, they were afraid to go where



the slaughtered Chifuts were. I asked Evica if she remembered Avram Levi Sadić. She says she remembers him. He was of medium height, bright, and wearing a cap. He was always walking around the village. We kids sometimes played with “chifut” kids; they had toys. We had never seen toys before. “We said goodbye to Evica. I again wanted to go to the place where Abraham was killed. None of my party had the same inclination. They could not face wading through branches and bushes again. They mentioned snakes, our inadequate shoes and clothing, and the aches still felt by Muki and professor Šporčić from the previous days’ encounters with the thorns. So we did not go.

Before we left Dabar, I asked to visit the Catholic cemetery, more specifically the grave of Mate Krznarić. The cemetery is in one of the most beautiful places I have ever seen. A Catholic church built on top of the hill, now without an active congregation. Reverend Šporčić only occasionally comes to open the church. The cemetery is next to the church building on that hill. You can see the most pastoral, rural, greenest, and most beautiful landscape that can ever be seen from the hill. The village of Dabar, once abandoned, tormented, ruined, dismantled, and bloodied, looks magical. There is no grave of Mate Krznarić in the Catholic cemetery at Dabar. We inspected all the graves. It was not there. Tome Rukavina believes that Mate was buried in his brother’s grave along with his daughter-in-law, who died long before him. Someone before us had visited that grave. The evidence was still lying in situ, probably exactly where they had left them, plastic roses. Already aged, grey, faded, and withered.

We said goodbye to Dabar and Dabrans and headed through the beautiful forest towards Ličke Jasenice. The part we drove through is called Kapelsko Gorje. On that same route, my seven-year-old mother, Esther, her three-year-old sister Bulka, their mother Berta Finci, and their grandmother Rifka Bulka Finci, had escaped, saving their lives. The book, *Dollar per Day*, states that those who were afraid to stay in Dabar fearing Ustasha informants continued through Saborsko towards Ličke Jesenice. There they settled in a primary school only to be bombed by Nazi planes that same day. Everyone rightly realized that the Ustasha intelligence service had reported the refugee’s location, forcing onward travel, again.

### **The survivors return to Sarajevo**

My family was liberated while in Glina. In the hospital in Glina, my great-grandmother and Avram's youngest sister Bulka Rifka Finci died of cancer in July 1945. Leaving this world, she had no idea that her daughter’s days on this planet were also numbered. My grandmother Berta Finci Kamhi returned to Sarajevo healthy and happy to have survived the war. She died on 19 September 1945, after surgery. Doctors misdiagnosed an apparent cancer. She was told she needed urgent surgery. The operation went ahead. Only afterward was she told the good news that she had been misdiagnosed; there was no cancer. A benign cyst had been successfully removed. That period immediately after the war was not the best of days for hospital conditions. By later standards, the prevailing hygiene levels in hospitals were poor. My grandmother, after whom I am named, Berta Finci Kamhi, died a few days after that surgery from sepsis. That apparently successful procedure directly resulted in her death. Going into that operation, that poor woman sensed her death. She begged her childless sister-in-law, Rifka Ećimović, to take her daughters and raise them as her own. Rifka refused. She was engulfed in her own family’s tragic drama. She was visiting her husband, Branko Ećimović in prison every day, as he awaited trial.

Branko stood accused of collaboration with the Nazis. The charge was one of high treason. His trial was held in Sarajevo. Prior to World War II, he was indeed the owner of the Avia factory, which did produce spare parts for aircraft. The German occupation of Sarajevo saw the nationalization of that factory. As Branko was a qualified senior engineer, he was forced by the Germans and their local allies, the Ustashes, to continue working at the factory in the role of chief engineer. Branko’s personal life complicates this simplistic view of treason. His wife was Jewish. She was hiding in the basement of their family house, Askikovac 2, during the four years of occupation. Neither the Germans nor their allies, the Ustasha, ever came to arrest or even



search for her. It is believed that some form of unspoken, unwritten agreement must have been understood. Branko worked in the factory as the chief engineer, and they never asked about his wife.

These were difficult days for the Kamhi family. While everyone's attention was on this momentous capital trial, few noted that Berta Kamhi, one of few surviving members of the once large Finci/Levi Sadić family, was being operated on in a most unhygienic hospital, destined never to return home. My mother, the now nine-year-old Esther, and her five-year-old sister, Bulka, were now alone. They had been deposited at the local orphanage. Berta, their mother, had had no choice. She had no family left to care for her daughters whilst in hospital. Her sudden, unexpected death within days of sepsis changed the whole situation. Branko's wife, Rifka, assumed guardianship of Esther and Bulka and raised them in her own home as her family. Her husband was later found guilty of high treason. Initially, he was sentenced to death by hanging. Following much outcry and interventions, the sentence was changed to execution by the more, apparently, honorable firing squad. Further outcry resulted in the sentence being commuted to life in prison. In the event following many more complaints and interventions, Branko Ećimović served many years in prison. A few years before his death, he was released. After release, this indignant, grumpy, and roguish old man did not miss any opportunity to rage against Tito and the party.

My grandfather dr. Hajim Kamhi was at one time the president of the Sarajevo Jewish community. In his time, he kept a perfect bookkeeping account of his life. He would scribe in thick notebooks daily everything he purchased, how much money was spent, and for what purpose. Hajim kept a kind of diary in this way. If these thick notebooks had been preserved by any chance, we could have had much more information about Avram. Unfortunately, these testaments were never found. Hajim Kamhi, for all his meticulous accounting detailing, left no trace of his or Avram's lives. Towards the end of his life, with his mind existing in a blurred sort of consciousness, with the last twitch of his mind, Hajim told us that he had stored all the documentation on the confiscated properties in the safe. I believe there were many other artifacts and documents locked in that huge brown box. That box was transferred to my grandfather's apartment from the Ključ sock factory. That documentation, along with the cash register and all the artifacts that belonged to the life of Hajim Kamhi, is lost. My Grandfather's meticulous notes recording his world disappeared when his apartment in Marijindvor, Sarajevo, was settled by refugees from Vogošća in 1992.

On leaving, they left nothing. Not in the attic. Not in the basement. All the paintings and mementos. All the sculptures of Haim's second wife, Berta Baruch. All Haim's prayer books, tallits mezuzahs, menorahs (who needed them in Vogošća?), all the furniture, bedding, quilts, and pillows. Even all the carpets. Everything that Hajim and his wife had cared about. All their memories were lost. All that was left from their life was gone. When the refugees from Vogošća moved out of Grandpa's apartment, only the bare walls remained. Everything was removed. Destroyed. Probably burned trying to heatherapartment during those cold 1990's winters in Sarajevo. The last traces of Avram, which my grandfather Hajim may have still kept, was probably lost forever.

I carefully examined every old family picture hoping to come across Avram's photo. And I still do not know what Avram looked like. However, while searching online, I did find some photos from the founding conference of LaBenevalence. In addition, some more photographs from its' tenth anniversary celebrations. One of those members is certainly Avram. By cross-checking a photograph taken at the Bosnian Chamber of Commerce's founding conference, I note that the same dignified gentleman sits in the center of the group in all these pictures. Is that him? I really want it to be him. I am not sure.

He had only one son Solomon, named after his father. I recall a long-buried memory of my childhood. I remember being a child playing under a table. The adults talk above me, about a child who was not healthy. This child lived in a rehabilitation center for the mentally ill in Graz. Something bad had happened to him, but I do not now recall what. I also remember hearing about his mother. She was said to have died of grief.

Among the documents sent by Amir Ibrišimović, I came across a donation contract. Avram Levi Sadić was donating the whole building to the Sarajevo's women humanitarian society LaHumanidad. That building was situated at the very heart of Sarajevo in Fehadija Street. Avram had donated an entire building with this contract, both its' shops and offices on the ground floor, and the upper floor apartments to rent out. Interestingly, one of the contract clauses, stated an unusual condition. Part of the monies received from these rentals was to be used to pay his son's bills, that is, Salomon Levi Sadić's expenses, or was to be paid to his guardian in Graz. The remaining income was to be used to support the poor widows, widowers, and children. The contract was dated 1935. This proves that Avram's son Solomon was alive in 1935, and this leads me to believe that Avram was concerned about his son's future. I do not know what fate met his son. I doubt that the mentally ill Solomon Levi Sadić, who lived in Graz, Austria, survived into the early part of World War II. Another of the documents sent by Amir Ibrišimović was the death certificate of a Simha Levi Sadić. She was Avram's wife and Solomon's mother. She died young in 1915. Again, I can recall another memory of adults talking about a Simha who died young. They said that she had died of grief. My younger self could not comprehend just how someone could die from grief. Avram never married again and had no other children.

### **In search for the grave**

Despite the setbacks, the composition of the great and richly detailed mosaic of Avram's life began to emerge.

Next, I needed to find his grave. I was somehow convinced that finding the location of his grave would be the easiest of all. With all that we then knew; that an exhumation had taken place, that representatives of the Jewish community led by dr. Stockheimer had stayed in Dabar, and that tin boxes with the bodies of six victims had been taken by train from Ličke Jasenice, I expected finding the exact location of the grave was just be a matter of formality. I presumed a formal request sent via email to the Jewish Community of Sarajevo would suffice. I expected the Sarajevo Jewish Community to reply fairly promptly and that they would inform me of the exact location of Avram's grave. That is what I expected. Exhumation is a serious matter anywhere. Or so I thought. Protocols must govern the preparations. Permits must be obtained. I was convinced that some documentation related to this exhumation must exist. I felt that I was within touching distance of the final parts of the story. I thought I would know the location of the grave within a few days. How mistaken I was. It was here that my odyssey truly began.

Firstly, I contacted Mr. Boris Kožemjakin, the president of the Jewish community in Sarajevo. Upon hearing my whole story to date, Mr. Kožemjakin declared that he could not understand my motives. He was unable to assist as he was caring full time for his wife, who had Alzheimer's. He referred me onto Danilo Nikolić. Mr. Nikolić did respond. He told me that after reviewing all the documentation, he had not found anything, unfortunately. So, I next turned to my good friend Aaron Albahari from the Association of Jewish Communities in Belgrade. He approached all his connections in the Jewish Museum and the Jewish Archives. After searching the Jewish archives, he also found nothing of use. I was then advised to contact the Jewish community of Zagreb. They, in turn, found no records. Their secretary, Dean Fridrich, explained that they only owned material relating to Zagreb's Jewish community and that he suspected that nothing could be found there. He further advised that if I wanted to look further, that would probably involve some expenses. On a recommendation from Aaron Albahari, I travelled to Belgrade. There I met Mrs. Branka from the Jewish Museum. She showed me hundreds of cardboard boxes filled with documents. She searched these boxes and found nothing. At the Jewish Museum, I met the historian Dragan Krsmanović. On my behalf, he had searched the archives of the Military Institute in Belgrade in connection with the attack on Dabar on 5 February 1944. Not one single written word was found concerning the incident. With the help of professor Ivan Šporčić, we tried to trace the exhumation in the archives of the Otočac Municipality. It seems that most of that archive was destroyed or disappeared in the war of the '90s. The only existing archives

(mostly the ones related to building permits) were transferred to Gospić. In the archives of Yad Vashem, I found many historical artifacts, documents, and numerous video testimonies of those who had survived the exile in Lika, Banija, and Kordun. Interestingly none mentioned anything about the attack on Dabar on 5 February 1944.

I travelled to Sarajevo and visited the archives of the city of Sarajevo. There I found six or seven clerks gathered around the stove, making a coffee and smoking. They informed me that, "...it can't be done that way, ma'am, you need to send us an official request ... you know there was a war... I don't know if there's anything left." So I sent them an official written request. I am still awaiting their response.

This odyssey, all this searching for Avram Levi Sadić's last resting place, had taken well over a year so fruit did not feel unlike driving a car at full throttle but going nowhere fast. For my final attempt to get somewhere with this, I resolved to make an emotional request, something to tug at the heartstrings. I needed to find someone who would have a personal reason to care about Avram Levi Sadić. With that, I addressed my next communication to Jakov Finci. The presiding President of LaBenevalncia, the Jewish welfare charity. I stressed that Avram Levi Sadić was one of the founders and first vice president of this organization. Indeed, during Avram's influential tenure, this charitable body proved instrumental during the flourishing period of the Jews of BiH in the pre-World War II period. Jakov Finci replied that he had read my comprehensive email with great interest. He had been touched by the story and had spoken with Danilo Nikolić himself. However, in his opinion, he felt that I should stop searching. I should accept the fact that the grave of Avram Levi Sadić was most probably permanently lost. Moreover, he did not think that more information could be found. I had learned all that there was to know. He felt that there was no more that could be done. For my part, I felt there must be more to discover.

I was so determined to find the grave that contacted anyone, everyone. I waited on responses, if they came at all. The replies basically passed the buck. "Please accept my apologies...try someone else.... I've passed on your enquiry. "I knew the grave had to exist somewhere. Those exhumed bodies were transferred somewhere. I knew that the whole process had to be registered. It had to have been recorded somewhere. It seemed that I now faced the age-old bureaucratic wall. No one was interested enough to dig through books, to turnover long-dead bones; this was becoming all too evident. Common sense rationalized that the victims' bodies from Dabar were probably transferred to the old Jewish cemetery in Kovačići. The Jewish cemetery of Kovačići was still 'active' until 1966.

I slowly realized that the usual research points of contact could not be counted on. All the archives, Communities, organizations, museums had resulted in little being discovered. My last, best, and only real chance to find a grave was to go to a cemetery. Hopefully, the right cemetery, and walk among the graves themselves, checking each tombstone, with a date in 1957, '58, or '59. When I came to this conclusion, Covid 19 was raging, and it was impossible to leave Israel. Or to enter BiH. I begged my friends in Sarajevo to go to that cemetery and look for Avram's grave. Dragan Stanimirović, an Al Jazeera journalist, said he would.

He visited the old Jewish cemetery in Kovačići several times. He walked among the graves. He spoke with the Cemetery Guard. Initially, his attempts proved fruitless. He had followed the wrong clues. He followed his journalistic instincts, retraced his steps, starting again from the beginning. In Bosnia, as it happens, everything that can be arranged is arranged simply by asking someone. Some Dragan, some Zijad, some aunt Mina, or some Sabina, "to do it for you", to help you. And usually, these 'someones' really do help, without ulterior motives or malignant intentions. They do help you, just like that. This is how it goes in Bosnia. This is how it went with me. Dragan went to the old Jewish cemetery several times. He walked among the graves. On one occasion, he missed his footing and fell sideways, and found himself in front of a grave with the name of Avram Levi Sadić engraved upon it, in marble. The grave had been damaged in the 1990's war. Hard battles had been fought in and around this cemetery. Most of the graves were left damaged. Graves had



been blown apart with their tombstones scattered. As a result, it was no longer possible to locate where many tombs originally lay, nor what was written on them. How fortunate then that the grave bearing the name Avram Levi Sadić, although damaged, was still in relatively good condition and in its original place. Nearby an engraved plaque read "Victims of fascist terror, transferred from Kordun and Banija. Cabrieli Rifka (Bulka), Ernestina Jakov, Sarina Nada, Avram Levi Sadić, J. Finci". The space following this name had been destroyed, probably by a grenade. Lastly, the name "Musafia Esperansa Israel." Five women and Avram, exactly as Veljko Čuturilo said. The grave was found on 21 August 2020.

So I had arrived. The one specific grave that I had searched for had, against all the odds, been found. So why, after all that effort, did I find myself without closure? I was left wondering what really stood behind my obsession with Avram Levi Sadić. What did I want from him? What, if anything, did he want of me? Not to be forgotten, perhaps. Not to sink into that eternal darkness, not for history to erase every trace of his existence. I am aware that I am the last one who can tell this story. If I do not tell history, Avram Levi Sadić will sink into eternal darkness.

Many people, like Avram, sink into the dark sea of eternal oblivion. At the bottom of which rest all those whom no one remembers anymore. They sink into the sea of eternal darkness, each of them carrying their own story. They also carry all the other stories which they remember of other people. These are the forgotten stories of the forgotten. Nothing will ever be known about almost all of them ever again. This Avram Levi Sadić, one of my family, has been saved from this oblivion. By a most improbable set of circumstances. A strange coincidence, some providence of fate, who knows. Neither the less, he is saved. If single person remembers Aram Levi Sadić he will not sink into that sea of eternal oblivion. Maybe, that is why I have stuck with this endeavor. Somehow, I hope that by writing his story, I will somehow save him.