

# WORLD NEWS

## Sarajevo's Multi-Ethnic Elite Gather in Act of Defiance

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SARAJEVO, Bosnia, Sept. 11—The elite of this besieged city did something defiantly normal today.

To commemorate a Jewish anniversary, prominent Muslims and Croats and most of the city's 1,000 Jews got all dressed up, made some speeches and had a cocktail party.

Scores of ethnic Serbs, city residents who have chosen to support the primarily Muslim government of Bosnia-Herzegovina, also joined the party. Small talk in the hotel's lobby was accompanied by the distinctive Velcro rip of guests, guards and journalists taking off their bulletproof vests.

Ostensibly, the gathering was to mark

the 500th anniversary of Spain's expulsion of its Jews, who then began to filter into Balkan cities like this one. But the larger point of the meeting was to show the besieging Serbs in the encircling hills that this city, however battered, remains proudly multi-ethnic and multi-cultural.

The gathering, in effect, was a celebration of survival and an admonition to radical Serbian nationalists that "ethnic cleansing" cannot work in a city where Muslims, Jews, Roman Catholic and Orthodox believers have lived together for more than 400 years.

"This is a time of contrasts, between good and evil, hatred and friendship, one against the other," Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic said in opening the three-day event. "Our moderate celebration in the

middle of this destroyed town is another of the contrasts."

The gathering of about 500 artists, politicians, clerics and business leaders took place in the Holiday Inn, a high-rise built in 1984 for the Winter Olympics. It has been hit hundreds of times in the past five months by Serbian bullets, artillery and mortar shells, wounds that have turned the south side of the structure into a gouged-out ruin.

Bodyguards for the assorted dignitaries in attendance checked their pistols, machine guns and shotguns at the hotel's pizza parlor, on the well-protected north side of the hotel. As usual, the hotel's main entrance, exposed to the Serbs in the hills, was locked.

The president of the Jewish community here had sent out scores of invitations to

Jewish dignitaries lying in the United States, Spain and Israel. No one outside of Sarajevo responded, and no invited foreign guests showed up.

"It seems to me you need a lot of personal courage to come here," shrugged Ivan Ceresnjes, a Sarajevo architect who leads the Jewish community and organized the celebration.

There was, as usual, sound reason for fear.

Snipers from the southern hills practiced their art during the pre-cocktail performance of Sephardic music by a group called Etno-Akademik. Bullets whizzed through the trees near the hotel and ricocheted off nearby apartment blocks.

It was noted here with sardonic smiles that the favorite firing position for the Serb snipers is the city's old Jewish cem-

etry, dating from 1630 and located on the south hill. Large gravestones have been uprooted and are being used as cover for the snipers.

"After the night comes the dawn, after the rain comes the sun," said Ceresnjes in his moderately upbeat speech to the assembled movers and shakers of Sarajevo.

Indeed, after a long summer of shelling and shortages, there were a few scattered reasons today for hope. For the first time in more than a month, a significant percentage of Sarajevo's 350,000 residents had both electricity and running water today.

Pressure from the U.N. peace-keeping operation has, for the moment at least, moved Serb forces to allow repairs to power lines and water pipes. Restoration

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# Sarajevo's Elite Hold Multi-Ethnic Meeting

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of power and water should help the city cope with an epidemic of gastroenteritis.

Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic said Thursday he is willing to discuss putting the city's water and power systems under U.N. control.

On the military front, Bosnian military commanders announced they have moved to within about a half mile of breaking through the Serb lines that maintain the siege.

On the political front, two key Serbian leaders in Belgrade today promised U.N. peace brokers Cyrus Vance and Lord David Owen that Yugoslavia, now made up of Serbia and Montenegro after the disintegration of the former six-republic nation, would honor commitments made at a peace conference in London last month to stop the war, halt the shelling of Bosnian cities and close detention camps.

For the tiny Jewish community here, however, these tentative signals of the beginning of an end to the siege of Sarajevo are colored by bitterness at influential Jewish organizations outside Yugoslavia.

"I am very angry," said Ceresnjes. "In April, May and June I called Jewish community centers across the United States and Europe to explain what was happening to us and to ask for help," including, he said, several Jewish groups in the Washington area.

"I begged for someone to send us a satellite telephone so that we could keep in contact with the world," said Ceresnjes, referring to the city's isolation when Serb forces cut all international phone service

at the end of July. "But the only answer I got from the Jewish centers was that they were concerned about the security implications of a satellite dish. They were afraid the Serbs would see it and bomb the Jewish Museum. Who cares if they bomb a building?"

Because of Serb shelling that killed at least four Jews in the city, the community center here organized the evacuation of all Jewish children and old people. About 600 were loaded on buses during the summer and driven to Croatia; most went to Israel.

"The adults have all stayed," said Ceresnjes. "We will stay on as living proof that common life is possible with all others in this city."

In the past, Sarajevo was one of the few cities in Europe in which Jews were not required to live together in ghettos, he said, noting that about 100 local Jews are currently fighting in the Bosnian army or serving in the police.

Death camps in World War II claimed about 8,000 of the estimated 12,500 Jews who lived in Sarajevo before the war. Most of them died in Jasenovac, a camp run by the wartime Croatian state that collaborated with the Nazis. But after the war, ethnic tolerance returned. A brief history of the 426 years that Jews have lived in this city says that "post-war Yugoslavia showed no traces of anti-semitism. Jews never felt as second-class citizens."

Ceresnjes is planning to travel to Israel next week, if he can get out of the city. He wants to win support for Bosnia, which, he said, has a lot to teach Israel on the subject of Jews and Muslims getting along together.