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RELEASE

## Publication News from The Foundation for the Advancement of Sephardic Studies and Culture

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### **Newly-published work by a highly-decorated Jewish Partisan from Yugoslavia recalls the Sephardic Jewish Community of Monastir (Bitola) during the Holocaust, and the role of Jewish Partisan in the Yugoslav-Macedonian Resistance**

**New York City, March 7, 2008** – The Foundation for the Advancement of Sephardic Studies and Culture (FASSAC) proudly announces the publication of the personal memoir – *MONASTIR WITHOUT JEWS - RECOLLECTIONS OF A JEWISH PARTISAN IN MACEDONIA*, by Jamila Andjela Kolonomos, translated by Isaac Nehama and Brian Berman and edited by Robert Bedford.

*MONASTIR WITHOUT JEWS* is the passionate story of the fate of the Monastir's Jewish Community, before, during and after the Holocaust. It is also a unique, eyewitness memoir of the Jewish presence in the Yugoslav-Macedonian Resistance, as recalled by a highly-decorated Jewish Partisan from Yugoslavia.

Author Jamila Andjela Isak Kolonomos was born in Bitola, previously known as Monastir, a city in the province of Macedonia, of the then-Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The city had a small, but prominent community of roughly 3,500 Ladino-speaking, Sephardic Jews, descendants of the Iberian Jews expelled from Spain and Portugal during the Spanish Inquisition in 1492.

After more than four centuries under Ottoman rule, the city was transferred to Serbian rule at the conclusion of the Balkan Wars, in 1913. Although the city was renamed Bitola, so firmly was the name embedded in the Sephardic oral and written tradition, that Sephardic Jews continued using the name Monastir. Into the early years of the twentieth century, the community continued their centuries-old traditions and practices, despite the rise of anti-Semitism, and emigration to Palestine due to the community's growing Zionist movement.

At the age of 19, Kolonomos became a member of the Yugoslavian Resistance shortly after the German invasion of Yugoslavia in April 1941, and the subsequent Bulgarian occupation of Yugoslav Macedonia, and thus was able to avoid the deportation of Monastir's Jewish community on March 11, 1943. On that fateful day, the entire Jewish Community of Monastir was rounded up and sent north to a transit camp at the Monopol Tobacco Warehouse, in Skopje. From there, they were sent to the Treblinka concentration camp along with the Jews gathered from Skopje and Shtip, in three separate transports. Except for a few foreign nationals and physicians who were released from Monopol, not one of the 7,148 Macedonian Jews survived the aftermath of Treblinka.

Adapted and expanded from the compilation of articles and essays, *MONASTIR SIN DJUDIOS* (Skopje, 2006), *MONASTIR WITHOUT JEWS* appears for the first time in the English language, with the addition of 150 personal and archival photographs. The author traces her recollections of life in Jewish Monastir before the war, the fate of Monastir's Jewish community during the occupation, and her life as a Jewish Partisan in the Yugoslav-Macedonian Resistance. According to Kolonomos approximately 102 Macedonian Jews actively fought in the Resistance – of these 75 were killed in combat or were executed.

*MONASTIR WITHOUT JEWS* will be welcomed by those interested in the Sephardic heritage, and by those who wish to increase their knowledge and understanding of

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#### BOOK INFORMATION

*MONASTIR WITHOUT JEWS. RECOLLECTIONS OF A JEWISH PARTISAN IN MACEDONIA.*  
by Jamila Andjela Kolonomos  
Edited by Robert Bedford  
Translated by Isaac Nehama and Brian Berman.  
160 pages, photos, maps & illustrations. \$18.95  
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**For more information contact:**  
[info@sephardicstudies.org](mailto:info@sephardicstudies.org)

Jewish life in the Balkans and the Holocaust. The book joins the FASSAC's growing list of publications exploring the language, regional history, heritage and culture of the Sephardic experience in the Balkans.

MONASTIR WITHOUT JEWS will be available on March 11, 2008, on the 65th anniversary of the deportation of the Jewish Community from Monastir. It can be purchased directly from the publisher at [www.sephardicstudies.org](http://www.sephardicstudies.org) (direct link: [www.sephardicstudies.org/monastirwithoutjews.html](http://www.sephardicstudies.org/monastirwithoutjews.html)), and will be soon available at bookstores and on-line retailers.

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#### About the Author

Jamila Andjela Kolonomos was born in 1922 and raised in the Jewish community of Monastir (Bitola). At the age of 19, she became a member of the Yugoslavian Resistance shortly after the Bulgarian occupation of Yugoslav Macedonia in 1941. She escaped the round-up and deportation of Monastir's Jewish Community, and with several Jewish companions, joined the Partisan army in April 1943, eventually rising to the rank of Commissar of several battalions before becoming a Deputy Commissar of a Macedonian brigade and the 42nd Yugoslav Division. After the war, Kolonomos was cited many times for merit and bravery, and was a leading official in many political, benevolent and social associations, including the *Alliance of Yugoslav Resistance*, the *Union for the Protection of Childhood of Macedonia* and the *Alliance of Anti-Fascist Women of Macedonia*, as well as a deputy in the Macedonian Assembly. In 1962, Kolonomos was named Professor Emeritus in the Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Romance Philology at Sts. Cyril and Methodius University, in Skopje. She is the author of numerous articles and works of history, Judeo-Spanish (the language of the Sephardim), and of the Yugoslav-Macedonian Resistance.

#### About the Translators

Isaac Nehama was born and raised in Athens, Greece in 1927. While his family went into hiding when German troops occupied the Greek capital in 1943, Nehama fled to Thessaly and joined a partisan enclave. Isaac Nehama reunited with his father and brother, the only members of his family to survive the occupation and deportations, and after the war immigrated to the U.S. where he studied and obtained his master's in electrical engineering at the University of Illinois. A volunteer for the US Holocaust Museum, Nehama has been instrumental in documenting and translating the museum's collection of Holocaust materials from Greece and Macedonia. He lives in Bethesda, Maryland, with Paulette, his wife of 50 years.

Brian Berman, has developed LadinoType™, a transliteration system that allows the user to type Ladino in roman characters and convert it to various Hebrew scripts, including Solitreo, Rashi, and Meruba. Berman is currently a law student at UCLA Law School and lives in Los Angeles.

#### About the Editor

Robert Bedford is the Executive Director of the *Foundation for the Advancement of Sephardic Studies and Culture*, NY, and author and editor of several articles and books, including AN INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE ON THE HOLOCAUST IN GREECE; PORTRAITS OF OUR PAST, THE SEPHARDIC COMMUNITIES OF GREECE AND THE HOLOCAUST; TRADITIONS AND CUSTOMS OF THE SEPHARDIC JEWS OF SALONICA, and the documentary film OTTOMAN SALONIKA, 1430-1912. Bedford lives and works in the New York City area.

#### About the Publisher

The *Foundation for the Advancement of Sephardic Studies and Culture* (FASSAC) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion and preservation of the culture, language and experience of the Sephardim – descendants of the Spanish Jews who fled the religious persecution of the Inquisition five centuries ago – which has diminished greatly and is in danger of vanishing completely. The Foundation's goals and interests are reflected in a wide variety of activities, historical exhibits, visual presentations, documentaries and book publications. It continues to conduct research and publish works in an effort to document and promote the culture and history of Sephardic Jewry. More information on the Foundation's projects and publications is available at [www.sephardicstudies.org](http://www.sephardicstudies.org).