ter and heavy boots mounting the stairs.

"Shema Yisrael . . ." My eyes searched the shadows of the balconies. All was quiet, deserted. The service ended; we shook hands all around, bidding one another *"Shabbat shalom."*

One of the worshipers had offered to show us the way to a popular fish restaurant where we wanted to go. He preferred to use a pseudonym, calling himself Lazar. A white-haired pensioner with piercing blue eyes, he told us in Yiddish (he was the only Ashkenazi among the seven congregants we met) that as an officer in the Yugoslav Army in World War II, he had been taken prisoner during the 10 days of Yugoslav resistance to the German invasion, in April 1941.

He recalled a sunny Palm Sunday morning when the Belgrade skies were blackened by 300 German Luftwaffe bombers on a mission. Hitler had dispatched the planes in retaliation for a Yugoslav Army coup intended to block an impending Nazi-Yugoslav alliance. Wave after wave of bombings plunged the city into a fiery inferno. More than 25,000 residents died that day.

The day after the Nazis marched into the ruined capital, Lazar told us, local Germans began looting Jewish homes and shops. Within a week, all Jews had been ordered to register at Gestapo headquarters and to bring their jewelry and other valuables with them. Failure to do so was punishable by death.

Lazar said that practically every member of his family—64 relatives in all—was murdered by the Nazis. Then, as we slowly strolled along, Lazar described to us how he avenged their deaths.

As a prisoner of war in Germany, he was liberated by Soviet troops. He then joined a Red Army unit, one of the first to enter Berlin during the last days of the war. In the collapsing German capital, Lazar went on a shooting rampage. He felt few qualms, he said, as he fired away at Germans—not all of whom were soldiers in uniform. Lazar almost whispered as he acknowledged having killed at least 50 Germans.

Declining an invitation to join us for dinner, Lazar grasped our hands tightly and said *"Do vidjenja"* and "Shalom." We stood outside the restaurant watching his sad, lonely figure disappear in the darkness.

Huddled within one square mile in Belgrade's Old Town are landmarks of four religions: the ancient, Turkish-built Bajrakli Mosque, the neoclassical Serbian Orthodox Cathedral of the Archangel Michael, the venerable Catholic Church of Dorcol and the six-story headquarters of the Federation of Yugoslav Jewish Communities. Because of their close proximity the bell toll in the cathedral's Baroque tower echoes in the mosque, and the muezzin's prayer call over a loudspeaker penetrates to the Catholic church. Jewish choir rehearsals ring through the entire neighborhood. This ecumenical constellation testifies to the freedom of worship in Yugoslavia today, despite the Communist Government's ideological opposition to religious institutions.

The federation building on 7 Juli Street is the center of cultural and social activity for Belgrade's 1,400 Jews and the 5,100 Jews in 30 other small communities scattered across Yugoslavia. The building looks onto adjacent Government offices situated on the site of the great Sephardic synagogue, Beth Israel, that was demolished by the Nazis during their retreat from Belgrade.

The federation has a women's division and a variety of youth programs, such as clubs and summer camps. It also sponsors kindergartens, an old-age home and a library. The federation publishes a number of periodicals, including a lively bimonthly that helps keep local Jews remarkably well informed about Jewish life throughout the world.

The federation building also houses the Jewish Historical Museum and is the headquarters for the Braca Baruh Choir. The museum, on the first floor, is relatively small, compacting the long history of Yugoslav Jewry into a tiny space. Exhibits include a 4th-century tombstone, found near Zadar on the Adriatic coast, of Aurelius Dionysius, a Jew from Tiberias. Precious antiques and well-preserved sketches of vanished synagogues are also displayed.

The more recent and tragic history of Yugoslav Jews during World War II is depicted in photographs, maps and statistical charts enumerating their awesome losses. It is estimated that between 60,000 and 65,000 Jews, out of a prewar community of 75,000 to 82,000, were murdered by the Nazis and the Ustachi.

Prominently displayed in the museum is a large photograph of Marshal Tito, the Yugoslav leader who died in 1980, and his friend and comrade-in-arms Mosa Pijade, both squinting at the camera in their partisan uniforms. Pijade, a former art teacher and journalist, spent 18 years in a Serbian prison for his Marxist beliefs. After the Communists came to power in 1944, Pijade, who always identified himself as a Jew, became President of Serbia and of the People's National Assembly. A leading ideologist of the Communist Party, Pijade remained one of Tito's closest confidants until his death in 1957.

The pride of Belgrade's Jews is the internationally known Braca Baruh Choir, founded in 1879. The choir adopted the Baruh name in 1962 to honor the three Baruh brothers, Izidor, Bora and Jozi—an electrical engineer, an artist and a philosopher—partisan heroes who were killed fighting the Nazis and whose brave exploits have become legend.

The choir, whose members range in age from 17 to 71, includes doctors, lawyers, clerks and students, many of them non-Jews. The multilingual repertoire of Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino and Serbo-Croatian songs is performed at concerts and national festivals and on frequent tours abroad.

Dr. Lavoslav Kadelburg, the federation's 76-year-old president, is a retired Supreme Court judge and lawyer. As a captain in the reserve forces of the Yugoslav Army, he was taken prisoner by the Germans in April 1941 and interned in the Osnabruck concentration camp, along with 500 other Yugoslav officers. Somehow the Nazis did not single out Jewish officers, and he survived.

From my conversations with Kadelburg and my observations of Jewish life elsewhere in Communist Eastern Europe, I gained the distinct impression that Yugoslavia's 6,500 Jews are the most unified and least restricted. They share a conviction that their tiny, centuries-old community must be preserved. But because of their isolation and sharply diminished numbers, the intermarriage rate is high, almost 50 percent. Most of the federation officials are married to non-Jews. However, non-Jewish spouses tend to participate actively in Jewish life and are fully accepted by the community.

Many Belgrade Jews are profes-