

## **PICTURE STORY**

### **Postcards from Bosnia**

**March 2007**

## Postcards from Bosnia



Bosnia has a rich history and so is this collection of historical postcards from that country which we assembled here. They show scenes from the Austro-Hungarian period, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, communist Yugoslavia as well as modern Bosnia. It is a fascinating trip of Christian Orthodox, Catholic and Ottoman dresses, town halls built in Austro-Hungarian "Moorish" style, veiled women in Mostar wearing high heels, men wearing fezzes and weighing plums but above all the story of a shared history of all Bosnians.



## Table of contents

Greetings! .....	4
The Three Bosnians.....	5
Banja Luka .....	6
Brcko .....	7
Doboj .....	8
Gorazde .....	9
Jajce .....	10
Mostar.....	11
Nevesinje.....	12
Plums Bosnia.....	13
Trebinje .....	14
Veils .....	15

## Greetings!



Greetings from Bosnia

Greetings from Bosnia and Hercegovina. The woman is dressed for a wedding in formal Christian Orthodox (Serb) dress. Although the dress itself is from an earlier period the postcard probably dates from the Austro-Hungarian period. Before that there were no postcards in the Balkans.

*For this caption many thanks to Amra Madzarevic and the Sarajevo Museum*

### The Three Bosnians



The Three Bosnians

This postcard was sent in 1917, the last full year of Austro-Hungarian rule in Bosnia-Hercegovina.

The woman in maroon is wearing Catholic (Croat) formal dress. She is wearing *dimije* or baggy trousers. In the second half of the nineteenth century *dimije* were fashionable for women of all religious groups in Bosnia. The only distinguishing feature prescribed by the Ottoman government for the different religious groups was the colour of their dress. Namely, Muslim women were to wear vibrant colours whilst Christians and Jews were to wear dark colours, purple, maroon and other shades of dark red and black.

The woman on the left is wearing Orthodox Christian (Serb) dress in the provincial style. It is hard to discern exactly what the woman in the centre is although she may be wearing formal Christian Orthodox dress.

*For this caption many thanks to Amra Madzarevic and the Sarajevo Museum.*



## Banja Luka



Serbian Orthodox church of the Holy Trinity

The Serbian Orthodox church of the Holy Trinity was built in the 1930s as was the city's municipal assembly building which you can see behind it. During the second world war the church was first bombed and then razed by the Ustashas, the Croatian pro-Nazi quisling regime. The second card was posted in 1955 and you can see that it was taken from almost exactly the same place. The legend on the arch with the communist star built across the road reads: "Long Live the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia headed by Comrade Tito."

In 1992, at the beginning of the Bosnian war Banja Luka immediately fell under Serb control and all of its mosques were blown up. Most of them have now been rebuilt except for the historic Ferhadija mosque, which was built in 1579 and blown up in 1993.

Today, Banja Luka is the capital of the Republika Srpska, the Serb part of Bosnia. It is also the country's second biggest city.

Soon after the war in began in 1992 the Serbian authorities ordered that the Church of the Holy Trinity be rebuilt.

## Brcko



Brcko town hall - Have a nice trip

This first picture was taken in the 1920s or 30s. The building in the background was then Brcko's town hall. It was begun in 1890 and is a classic example of Austro-Hungarian "Moorish" style. Today it serves as the town's library and as you can see it is in poor shape. However it is scheduled for renovation very soon. The hotel next door, which dates from the same period, and which you can see the corner of in the first picture, has already been restored. Since 2000 Brcko has been an autonomous part of Bosnia, and not part of either of its two entities, the Republika Srpska and the Bosniak-Croat federation. The town is a port on the river Sava and its bridge is the busy border with Croatia.

## Doboj



Doboj

Doboj, now in the Republika Srpska, the Serb part of Bosnia in the 1930s.



## Gorazde



Gorazde

This postcard was posted in January 1937. Today it is part of the Bosniak-Croat federation, one of the two Bosnian "entities" along with the Republika Srpska. It was besieged by Serbian forces during the war of 1992-95 but did not fall. Along with Srebrenica and Zepa it was declared a UN "safe area". In 1994 hundreds died during a Serbian offensive on the town.

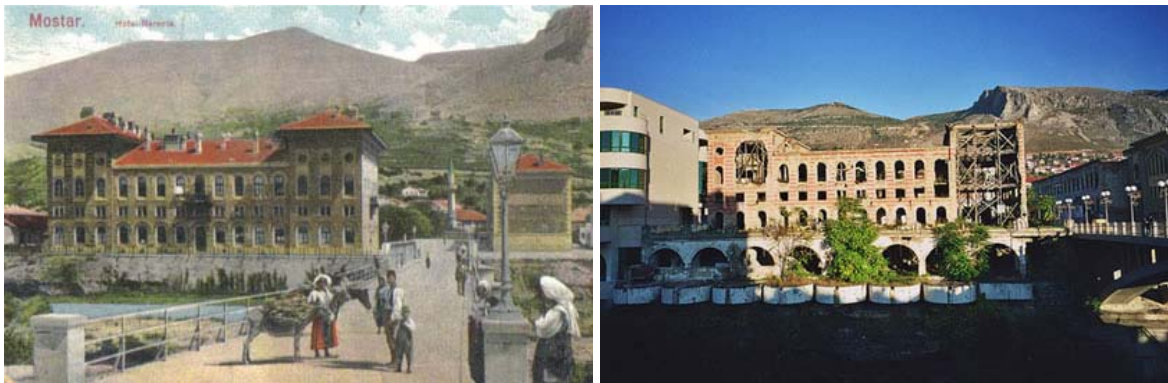
## Jajce



Veiled women - Stamps in black - View of Jajce

Jajce was the medieval capital of Bosnia before it fell to the Ottomans. As you can see from the two pictures of the town it retained, and retains, much of its old fortifications and gates. The postcard which shows the ladies in their veils was posted in 1935. Interestingly the stamps on the back of card were edged in black, in mourning for King Aleksandar of Yugoslavia who had been assassinated the year before in Marseille. The postcard with the view of the town is undated but from the Austro-Hungarian period. On 29 November 1943 a crucial meeting took place here at which the future communist, federal Yugoslavia was founded. From 1992 to 1995 Jajce was under Serb control and a virtual ghost town. Today it is part of the Bosniak-Croat federation. Its economy has never recovered from the war.

## Mostar



Hotel Neretva - Veiled women (note the shoes!)

### Postcard #1 & #2

This is the Hotel Neretva from a postcard posted in 1910. You can see the river just in front of the hotel. At the time the hotel was called the Narenta. Today, although much of Mostar's historic centre, including the Old Bridge has been rebuilt, the Naretva remains in ruins.

### Postcard #3

In the past, Mostar, the capital of Hercegovina, was very mixed. This picture is from the 1930s. Note the shoes! In the wake of the Bosnian war Croats live on the west side of the city, Bosniaks (Muslims) on the east and few Serbs have returned to live in the town itself.

## Nevesinje



Hotel Nevesinje

Nevesinje is in the south of the country. This card, which shows people enjoying themselves outside the Hotel Nevesinje, was posted in October 1940, six months before the war came to what was then Yugoslavia. Throughout the Bosnian war of 1992-95 Nevesinje fell under Serb control and today it is the Republika Srpska, the Serb part of Bosnia. Of a current estimated population of 18,000, some 8,000 are believed to be refugees from elsewhere. The town's economy has not recovered since the end of the war.

## Plums Bosnia



Men weighing plums

This postcard was posted in 1932. The men are weighing plums.



## Trebinje



Trebinje

Trebinje lies in traditionally Serbian dominated eastern Hercegovina. This postcard was posted in October 1949 but is certainly much older. Today Trebinje is in the Republika Srpska, the Serb part of Bosnia. Before the Bosnian war people from Trebinje would go and work in the hotels of nearby Dubrovnik and sell their produce there. Since the war and siege of Dubrovnik people from Trebinje have not been welcomed back. So, Trebinje remains an economic backwater, trapped by geography between the mountains of Montenegro and the Croatian border.

## Veils



Veils

Veils were very common amongst Muslim women in Bosnia-Herzegovina until well after the second world war. In the wake of the war the communist authorities and the Antifascist Women's Front of Bosnia-Herzegovina launched campaigns against the veil, and they also enlisted the help of Islamic organisations in the republic. However, as Robert Donia writes in his history of Sarajevo, "the campaign encountered staunch resistance, especially among women outside of Sarajevo and among Muslim men."

Statistics compiled by the women's front showed that 95 percent of Sarajevo's Muslim women had abandoned the veil by late 1950, but fewer than 50 percent had done so in other towns of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Faced with widespread resistance to the unveiling campaign, the Bosnian Assembly resorted to compulsion to end the practice completely. Legislation banning the veil was introduced by Dzemal Bijedic, who was later to become Yugoslavia's prime minister and emissary to non-aligned nations. Passed on September 28, 1950, the law declared a ban on wearing the veil, "with the goal of ending the centuries old symbol of inferiority and cultural backwardness of Muslim women." Violators were subject to fines and to prison

sentences of up to three months. Veils soon disappeared in Sarajevo, and resistance to unveiling elsewhere in the republic was gradually overcome as well.

### **Postcard #1**

This was posted in April 1912 but was printed in Sarajevo in 1909.

The women are dressed suitably for going out in public. The young men are Bosnians serving in the Austro-Hungarian army. They wore fezzes as their distinguishing feature in the army, which comprised many nations. The picture was taken during an outing and the men are either escorting the women or courting them.

For this caption many thanks to Amra Madzarevic and the Sarajevo Museum.

### **Postcard #2**

This was posted in 1917, the last full year of Austro-Hungarian rule in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It says: "Turkish Picnic". Bosnian Muslims were widely referred to as Turks.

### **Postcard #3**

Women in Mostar in an undated postcard probably from the 1930s. Note the shoes!