



## PICTURE STORY

**Robert Donia's Sarajevo**

**May 2007**

## **Robert Donia's Sarajevo**



Sarajevo has a special place in our hearts. It was here in 1999 that ESI was founded. Now we have teamed up with British publishers Hurst to bring you something of the history of the city. Where others have long lost interest Hurst continue to publish many of the best books on our part of the world. In 2006 they published Robert Donia's *Sarajevo: A Biography*. We think it is a great book and a must read for anyone interested in this city, its history and its people. We have made a selection of extracts, which cover the whole breadth of the Sarajevo story from its Ottoman foundation to today. The idea is to bring you a flavour of the story - but it is not the whole story. For that you need to buy the book!

Robert Donia is a Research Associate at the University of Michigan's Center for Russian and East European Studies, a Visiting Scholar in history at the University of California at San Diego, and holds a courtesy appointment as Associate Professor of History at the University of Sarajevo. He is the author of *Islam under the Double Eagle: The Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1878-1914*, and co-author with John V.A. Fine of *Bosnia and Herzegovina: A Tradition Betrayed*. He has served as an expert witness in seven war crimes trials at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in The Hague.



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## City of Mahalas



Baščaršija shops - Copyright © by Alan Grant

The area of Sarajevo has long been inhabited by man. Neolithic traces have been found and there is evidence of a large Roman settlement at Ilijadža to the west of the city. At the time of the Ottoman conquest in the 1430s there were Catholics living in the area, feudal wards of the Serbian Orthodox Pavlović family. It was only in mid century that what was to become the city was founded. Its name is a Slavic contraction of the Turkish words saraj (court) and ovaši (field). "Like most Ottoman cities," writes Donia, "Sarajevo was divided into mahalas. Each mahala was typically home to members of only one religious community, and each was anchored by a house of worship, so the mahala system meant that, with some exceptions, residences were segregated by religion."

Visitors from abroad often commented upon the extraordinary beauty and rich vegetation of Sarajevo's mahalas. Evlija Čelebi, visiting in 1660, called Sarajevo "progressive, beautiful, and lively" and reported that "unlimited fresh water flows everywhere," making possible "numerous gardens that look like rose gardens or enclosed paradise gardens." Most private residences were inward-oriented, with a large outer gate leading to an inner courtyard that often included a central fountain, fruit trees, and a vegetable garden. Fruits, vegetables, and flowers grew in the spacious area between residences. Water was readily available, either at one of over two hundred public fountains or from a host of fountains in local mosques or residences. Residences were built to accommodate gender segregation.

The largest non-Muslim mahala was inhabited primarily by Catholics from Dubrovnik who were either craftsmen in the building trades or representatives of Dubrovnik's commercial interests. The Latin Quarter, distinguished by a small Catholic church, contained sixty-six houses in the mid-1500s. By the end of the century, some native Sarajevo Catholics and representatives from other mercantile cities also lived there. An Orthodox mahala, established about a hundred metres from the city's eastern end, was anchored by a Serbian Orthodox

church built sometime between 1520 and 1539. The church still stands, albeit with substantial modifications that have enlarged the structure over the years.

The city's fourth group - until their destruction in 1941 - were Sarajevo's Jews.

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Sarajevo: A Biography. 2005. Robert Donia [C. Hurst & Co]

### The Coming of the Jews



Look carefully in Sarajevo and sometimes you can see a reminder of its Jewish past. These are the doors to a dentist's surgery Zelenih beretki street in Bascarsija. When closed you can see that they say, in Italian, from where some Bosnian Sephardi families came from.

In 1992, soon after the beginning of the siege of Sarajevo, a long planned conference began in the city celebrating 500 years since the first Jews, expelled from Spain began to arrive in Bosnia.

Jews were already living in Sarajevo as early as 1565, adding a fourth religious group to the city's already diverse population of Muslims, Orthodox, and Catholics. Expelled from Spain by the religiously intolerant monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella in 1492, many Sephardim subsequently made their way to the more hospitable Ottoman Empire and took up residence in its cities. Speaking Ladino, a language closely related to Spanish, Sephardim established a Jewish mahala with a small synagogue in 1580-1. But unlike the Catholics and Orthodox, the Separdim established residences outside the Jewish mahala as well. The first Ashkenazim arrived from Buda over a century later, after the Ottomans had lost much of their Hungarian territory. Most Ashkenazim spoke German or Hungarian as a first language. After their arrival the Ashkenazim and Sephardim existed as distinct communities, each with its own house of worship and preferred language. The number of Ashkenazim remained relatively small until the onset of Austro-Hungarian rule in 1878.

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## Who? How Many?



View of Sarajevo from the east - Copyright © by Alan Grant

The size and composition of the population of Sarajevo is different today from that on the eve of war in 1992. But that is nothing new. Sarajevo's population has always fluctuated.

From half a dozen scattered villages in the 1450s, Sarajevo's population grew to about 23,500 by 1600, making it the third largest city in the European lands of the Ottoman Empire, after Salonica and Edirne. The growth stemmed largely from South Slav immigration from nearby villages and other areas of Bosnia; Ottoman census records show that few Sarajevans immigrated from elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire. Local officials controlled migration into the city. Although Turkish was the official language in Sarajevo's early centuries, almost all inhabitants were native Slavic speakers. Turkish, Arabic and Persian were languages of official function and literary culture.

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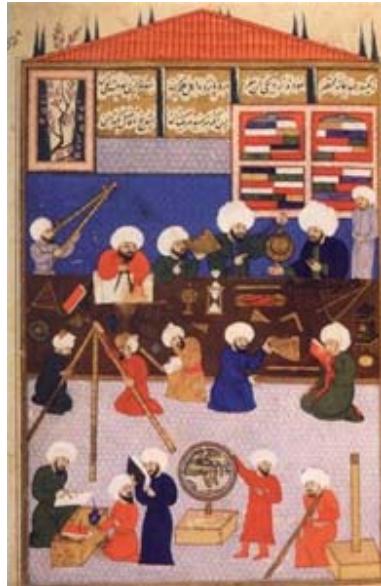
Today the city is again predominantly Muslim, or Bosniak, and in that its composition has changed much from the far more cosmopolitan and mixed city which existed both before 1941 (after which most of its Jews perished,) and again after 1992, after which most Serbs and many Croats too left the city. But again, such shifts in the make up of its population are nothing new.

Most scholars agree that Islamization in Bosnia was gradual and generally voluntary. Through conversions of the local Slavic-speakers to Islam, Sarajevo's urban population changed from being about 73 percent Christian and 27 percent Muslim in 1485, to about 97 percent Muslim in 1530. Census records show that conversions occurred at about the same pace in nearby rural settlements as in the city itself.

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## Ottoman City: Primacy and Prosperity



Today it is easy to forget that Bosnia was not always ruled from Sarajevo. However as Donia makes clear it was always the country's premier city and its fortunes rose and fell, until the mid-nineteenth century, along with those of the Empire

Ottoman officials founded Sarajevo as a seat of regional government, and for much of the Ottoman era it served as a regional capital. Even when the authorities transferred the governor's residence to Banja Luka (1553-1639) or Travnik (1699-1850), newly appointed governors acknowledged the primacy of Sarajevo by ceremonially asking permission to enter the city. Its role as a regional political centre not only brought economic benefits to the city, but also elevated the importance of relations between the governor and the city's elite. These relations, harmonious during Sarajevo's Golden Age, began to become contentious at the first signs of Ottoman weakness on the battlefield after 1600.

Sarajevo's prosperity rested on preparing men for war, but as an unfortified city its very survival depended on peace. It flourished and grew as long as the Ottoman Empire expanded. But when the expansion gradually halted and the empire began to suffer territorial losses, Sarajevo's physical location and economic foundations made it vulnerable to invaders arriving on the high hills around the town. With initial indications that the Ottoman conquests were coming to an end, the city entered a sustained decline lasting into the middle of the nineteenth century.

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## 1697: Sword and Fire



Prince Eugene of Savoy

Following the breaking of the siege of Vienna in 1683 the Austrians soon began to roll back the Ottoman advance. Dalmatia, Slavonia and Hungary were retaken and in the summer of 1697 Prince Eugene of Savoy led his troops into north-western Bosnia. There his offensive stalled but then "he led his troops across the Sava River into northern Bosnia at Brod and followed the Bosna River south to Sarajevo."

Encamped on the city's outskirts, Prince Eugene promised to "destroy everything with sword and fire" unless the city capitulated. The city leaders remained defiant, and soon Eugene fulfilled his promise. The Habsburg army entered Sarajevo and burned most of the city on the night of October 23-4, 1697. Most wooden structures were destroyed, and some of the city's stone mosques and other religious buildings were damaged. An anonymous Sarajevo writer suggested that desecration of Islamic institutions and practices was a deliberate part of the destruction:

Austrian infidels came with an army, they burned prayer books and mosques, ravaged mihrabs [the niche in a mosque in the direction of prayer] and beautiful Šeher-Sarajevo, from one end to the other. They herded men like sheep, shed bloody tears from their eyes, imprisoned and ruined many a man, and even girls, heavenly beauties with faces that saw neither sun nor moon, were driven barefoot and bareheaded from their happy lives and sent as a present to the king, for an infidel came and seized their belongings and food while ten thousand imprisoned people cried.

Within a few years, most of the mosques were repaired and being used for worship or calls to prayer, and eventually most of the burned structures were replaced. But Sarajevo's population and prosperity did not return to its pre-fire levels until the early 1900s, ironically, under the administration of the same Habsburg Monarchy that had nearly destroyed it in 1697.

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## Rebels and Loyalists



During the period of its long decline Bosnia's Muslims were in continual conflict with the Ottoman authorities and often in armed conflict with them. Sarajevo's Muslims never rebelled against the sultan himself though but rather against the new governors appointed by the grand vizier. Punitive missions were sent out by the government but there was never enough money to keep these troops in Bosnia. "Repeated with many variations in the 1600s and 1700s, this pattern of events further weakened the city's economy and exacerbated internal bickering among leading Sarajevo Muslims."

Beginning in 1729, Sarajevans responded to growing insecurity by constructing a complex of walls, towers, and gates. These fortifications consisted of about three hundred meters of walls and four towers. Two gates and a portion of wall survive to this day. Since approaching conquerors could use the high ground of the surrounding hills to attack the city, the fortifications were of limited military value, but the gates enabled city officials to regulate routine entry into the city, and the walls prevented much unauthorized economic activity.

Donia goes on to point out here that despite often contesting the authority of governors sent by the sultan Sarajevo remained very much an Ottoman city:

The city's institutions remained Ottoman in character, and the city was administratively as much as ever part of the empire. The city's Muslims remained among the empire's loyal fighting forces, and many of them died for the sultan on battlefields near and far. Sarajevo Muslims responded to the Ottoman call-up of forces for the war against the Persian Empire in 1727. Of 5,200 officers and men from Bosnia, only 500 returned from the battlefield. In 1737, a contingent of 10,000 Bosnians was part of the Ottoman force that fought the Russian Empire. Only a handful returned, straggling back in the fall and winter of 1737.

In addition to serving on remote battlefields, Bosnian Muslim forces were periodically engaged to keep nearby territories under the sultan's rule. In 1712, Bosnian forces fought Montenegrin tribesmen who were making periodic raids into Herzegovina. Although the Montenegrins were driven back, many Muslims in the recaptured areas chose to leave with the Bosnian forces. Muslims from contested areas fled their homes and became refugees in the sanctuary of Sarajevo.

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## Change comes to Sarajevo



Orthodox and Catholic Cathedrals (curvy and pointy respectively) - Copyright © by Alan Grant

In the seventeenth century Sarajevo's population peaked at about 24,000 people declining to about 20,000 or, as Donia says, "fewer in the 1860s". The city itself remained largely unchanged following reconstruction after the devastation of 1697 but at last, signs "of widespread revitalization first appeared in the 1860s."

Two major changes in the third quarter of the nineteenth century brought about a new alignment of population and political forces in the city. First, the expansion of the Serb merchant class, made possible by the improved legal status of the empire's non-Muslim citizens, added demographic diversity to the city. Second, the city's Muslim elite lost its intransigence and propensity for armed rebellion....

One of the changes that helped foster the change was the abolition of guilds in 1851, "leaving Muslim craftsmen without the influential organizations that had helped ensure their economic dominance".

Serb and Jewish entrepreneurs enjoyed close ties with those in neighbouring lands of their faith and ethnicity, and they excelled in importing cheap manufactured goods from abroad that challenged the more expensive locally produced handicrafts. The Bosnian historian Iljas Hadžibegović summarized the process: "As early as the second half of the eighteenth century, many Serb craftsmen expanded into commerce and, together with Jews, took almost all external trade into their own hands, while the Muslims retained a dominant role in crafts and domestic retail trade."

With growing numbers and increasing affluence, Serbs organized Serbian Orthodox communes in major Bosnian towns to support their church and promote the education of Serbian youth. Acting in part through the commune, Serb merchants helped fund the first permanent Serb school in Sarajevo in 1850-1....To the dismay of both Ottoman officials and the Habsburg authorities who superseded them, the communes also brought together

nationally conscious Serbs who promoted their identity and closer ties with neighbouring Serbia.

The most enduring achievement of Sarajevo's Serbian Orthodox commune was the monumental Assembly Church (Saborna crkva), begun in 1863 and dedicated in 1872.... it was the first building to break the Muslim monopoly on monumental edifices in Sarajevo's central city. Built with the approval of Ottoman officials, it was dedicated under the protection of Ottoman troops. Financing and constructing the church was a multiconfessional and international success story of its time. Most of the 36,000 dukat cost was borne by Sarajevo's Serb merchants, led by Manojlo Jeftanović with a donation of 2,000 dukats. In a symbolic act of equality, the Ottoman sultan and the prince of Serbia each donated 500 dukats. Russia's Tsar Aleksandar II sent expert craftsmen to construct the iconostasis. The church remains Sarajevo's most prominent structure from the Ottoman reform era.

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## 1878: Resistance



The Congress of Berlin

The Congress of Berlin took place between June 13th and July 13th 1878. It was attended by representatives of France, Britain, Russia, Austria-Hungary, Germany and Italy. In other words, substitute Austria-Hungary for the US, exactly the same countries which constitute the Contact Group which have tried to manage Balkan affairs in our times. "The Treaty of Berlin gave Austria-Hungary," writes Donia, "the right to 'occupy and administer' Bosnia-Herzegovina but not to annex it." (That happened only in 1908.) By this time Ottoman authority had already crumbled in Bosnia but what was to replace it was not clear. As Donia writes however, the prospect of Austro-Hungarian rule was seen very differently by different Bosnians:

Many Bosnian Catholics in Sarajevo welcomed the notion of occupation by coreligionists. Many Serbian Orthodox Bosnians, on the other hand, were disappointed that neither Serbia nor Montenegro was given any role in Bosnia, and they found little reason to cheer an impending invasion by Serbia's nemesis, the Habsburg monarchy.

The prospect of Austro-Hungarian rule divided Bosnian Muslims along social lines. Wealthy and influential landowners, closely tied to officials of the waning Ottoman regime, supported the change. They hoped that a smooth transfer of power would enhance their value to the new rulers and help preserve their privileged status and property rights. Many religious authorities and urban lower class Muslims, centered in the marketplaces of Sarajevo and other towns, were stridently opposed. They viewed the prospect of Habsburg rule as a triple threat, combining the liabilities of occupation by a foreign power, rule by the dreaded Christian infidel, and the end of hopes for Bosnian autonomy.

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Sarajevo underwent upheaval as a People's Assembly was formed to take control of the situation. By late July, before the Austro-Hungarian entrance into Bosnia, Sarajevo was in turmoil and military resistance was being prepared. On July 29th Austro-Hungarian troops entered the country.

...units were segregated by confession: each unit drew its volunteers from a single religious community, and units subsequently dispatched from the city were likewise segregated. Foreign consuls marveled at the lack of logistical support and the decentralised nature of the forces. "There is no organization of any kind, no arrangement for regular and continuing provisioning of the men, no plan of operation and, above all, no one in whom is vested the supreme command," reported British consul Freeman. "Every little band of men acts entirely on its own responsibility."

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### 1878: The Battle of Sarajevo



Field-Marshal Josip Philippovich

Austro-Hungarian forces led by Field-Marshal Josip Philippovich entered Bosnia on July 29th 1878 and immediately defeated bands of Muslims and Serbs resisting the occupation. They were soon on the outskirts of Sarajevo, ready to take the city:

As Austro-Hungarian forces reached Sarajevo's outskirts from the north and the west on the evening of the eighteenth, they placed cannon on high ground at various points around the city. Sarajevans abandoned several vulnerable neighbourhoods and found shelter with relatives and acquaintances in Vratnik, in the shadow of the Ottoman fortress on the hill above. At dawn on August 19, the invading troops began an overpowering artillery bombardment of the city. The Sarajevans fought back, using cannon seized from Ottoman arsenals, but the eight-hour battle ended with Sarajevo's defenders completely vanquished. Heavy street fighting accompanied the troops' entry into the city, and snipers firing from homes were answered by troops burning homes with the inhabitants inside. At 2 p.m. the yellow and black imperial flag was hoisted over Sarajevo, and Field-Marshal Philippovich entered the city at 5 p.m., to be greeted as liberator by small groups of hastily assembled Sarajevans. The four [foreign] consuls called on him in the Konak [governor's building] that evening, and the era of Habsburg rule had begun.

But the battle for Bosnia was far from over. Although the organizational nerve center in Sarajevo was extinguished on August 19, forces of Bosnian Muslims and Serbian Orthodox put up a determined resistance. Frustrated Habsburg officials eventually committed 285,000 troops to a campaign that lasted well into the fall. They incurred some five thousand casualties and were criticized by foreigner and several groups within the monarchy for underestimating the scope of resistance to imperial rule.

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### Benjamin von Kállay



Benjamin von Kállay

Habsburg rule lasted from 1878 to 1918 and was to change Bosnia and Sarajevo in the most profound of ways. Perhaps the most important single character in shaping Austro-Hungarian rule was Benjamin Kállay von Nagy-Kálló (1839-1903). From 1882 until 1903 he was imperial joint minister of finance and administrator of Bosnia. He was extremely well qualified for the job, knowing the region well. Curiously echoes of his views and of his concerns persist to this day.

Kállay believed that the masses should be showered with benefits but deprived of rights. Although other imperial officials of his generation and background had begrudgingly reached an accommodation with ascendant liberalism as early as the 1860s, he approached his task as an unrepentant apostle of neoabsolutism. Authoritarian Rome, rather than democratic ancient Greece, served as his prototype of an ideal polity. In Rome's classical era, Kállay saw a vast empire bound by a uniform legal code, a far-flung system of roads, and allegiance to the person of the emperor.

...Along with many other imperial civil servants, Kállay believed the Habsburg Monarchy had a mission to civilize Bosnia-Herzegovina, and for two decades he worked to mold Bosnia and Sarajevo into his vision of enlightened European state and society. He aggressively promoted economic development, Westernization, Bosnian cultural awareness, and modern administration of the monarchy's new territory. Such innovations, he believed, would result in a docile, contented, and grateful population. At the same time, Kállay came to share the view of many Habsburg officials that neighbouring Serbia and Montenegro might incite the Serbian Orthodox population of Bosnia-Herzegovina to rebellion. To combat the infiltration of nationalism from neighbouring states, his administration fostered a regional patriotism called **bošnjaštvo**, a multiconfessional Bosnian nationalism that he hoped would prevail over the Serb and Croat nationalist waves then lapping at the province's boundaries. In Sarajevo particularly he instigated a major makeover of the central city to highlight the importance of religion and to divert popular attention from potentially divisive nationalism.

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## Building the Habsburg City



Under the Austro-Hungarians Bosnia had its own postage stamps

"In the twenty-one years of Kállay's rule," writes Donia, "the Sarajevo cityscape was reshaped to correspond to his ideals." Indeed the short period of Habsburg rule in Sarajevo was to change it in ways, which endure to this day.

By 1900 an east-west axis was defined by two new secular administrative buildings at either end of the city: the Regional Government Building in the west, and the Sarajevo City Hall in the east... The newly configured Sarajevo embodied Kállay's belief that enlightened secular administration mandated that all confessional communities be treated equally. In fostering the growth of clusters of religious and educational structures, Kállay hoped to bolster the prestige of the authorities from all religious communities and enhance their influence to oppose the rise of secular Croat and Serb nationalism.

The principal inspiration for Sarajevo's physical transformation was Vienna's Ringstrasse, the vast undertaking that replaced medieval walled fortifications with dozens of monumental structures built from 1859 to 1900. Sarajevo, crowded into an east-west valley, had few medieval fortifications in 1878 and therefore could never be encircled by a Ringstrasse, but Vienna's trends were copied in Sarajevo on a more modest scale in hundreds of buildings erected during imperial rule.

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The single most important architect in Habsburg Sarajevo was Josip Vančaš (1859-1932). He designed, among other buildings, the city's Catholic cathedral and the Regional Government Building, the headquarters of the Austro-Hungarian administration, which is now the Presidency and which was positioned to be as far as possible from the old Ottoman government buildings. It also incorporated features, "from the Italian renaissance, known for its secular values and urban political centers..."

Location, mass and architecture combined in the Regional Government Building to proclaim the importance of new authorities, who were eager to replicate European models and distance themselves from the Ottoman past.

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However the renaissance and the Ringstrasse were not the only sources of inspiration for the men who were designing the new buildings of Sarajevo. Many "incorporated decorative motifs that are often called pseudo-Moorish but might be better classified as neo-Oriental, a variant of romantic historicism deriving its inspiration from Islamic architectural motifs rather than European historical eras."

Neo-Orientalism won favour with Kállay and his subordinates, who believed it fostered a sense of local identity by evoking the elusive, exotic spirit of the Muslim population. Sarajevo's most distinctive neo-Orientalist monument, the Vijećnica (City Hall) [now the war-gutted city library] was designed by another Viennese architect, Karl Wittek, under close supervision of officials acting on Kállay's directives. Located on the north bank of the Miljacka River near the first Islamic religious structures built in the fifteenth century, the Vijećnica is a marvel of both design and engineering. Stained glass windows, a large dome admitting generous exterior light, and a stately six-sided central interior vestibule combine to recall the Alhambra built by the Moorish rulers of Granada in the fifteenth century.

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## Young Bosnia



Arrest of members of the "Young Bosnia" movement

The assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo by the Bosnian Serb student Gavrilo Princip changed the course of world history. And yet, as Donia writes it "had local roots in nationalist students movements that flourished in Sarajevo after 1910.

Like similar movements in colonial societies, Sarajevo's student movements arose in schools the government had built to promote secular education....Many were passionately preoccupied with ideologies of the time, drinking deeply at the well of ideologies such as romantic nationalism, racism, anarchism, communism, socialism, and nihilism. The obsession with ideology led many to conclude that their convictions demanded individual action. In their world, theory demanded practice. The engaged student radicals of the time practiced the "propaganda of the deed", an apt phrase the Habsburg prosecutors used at the assassins' trial in October 1914.

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....After the assassination, Bosnian students movements of the early twentieth century became labeled as "Young Bosnia." It is something of a misnomer. No single organization carried the name Young Bosnia, and the term was rarely used by contemporaries. The pre-war Bosnian student movements were diverse, amorphous, and transient. Their participants embraced no common ideology, had no unified view of appropriate strategy or tactics, and did not coalesce into a united organization....Despite their lack of ideological cohesion, most Bosnian students professed devotion to some form of Yugoslavism, the belief that Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes should unite and form their own South Slav state. That ideology was inherently revolutionary to Habsburg officials, for its implementation would dictate realigning state boundaries and an end to the monarchy's existing political arrangements...Serb and Croat societies disagreed fundamentally on its meaning. Croat students, acting under the aegis of student groups in Zagreb, formed societies that looked to Croatia as the center of a future South Slav polity. Serb students formed organizations devoted to the idea that a future Yugoslavia would be an extension of the Serbian kingdom. Not until after Serbian victories in the two Balkan Wars of

1912 and 1913 did Serb youth come to believe that the pendulum was swinging in favor of a Serbia-centered variant of Yugoslavism.

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## 28 June 1914



Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand - This is the street corner where Gavrilo Princip shot the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife on 28 June 1914

The Archduke Franz Ferdinand came to Sarajevo to visit Sarajevo on June 28, or Vidovdan, the day Serbs commemorate the Battle of Kosovo of 1389. Scheduling the visit for this day, says Donia, "is often ascribed to a malicious desire to provoke Serb sensitivities. Most scholars now agree that the date was selected for convenience rather than symbolism." As the visit to the city progressed one of the conspirators, Nedjelko Čabrinović threw two bombs at the Archduke's car. The first missed but the second injured two passengers in the following car.

Franz Ferdinand's last public words were spoken on the steps of Sarajevo City Hall. On being welcomed by the mayor, the archduke stated that he appreciated the mayor's welcome but hadn't expected to be greeted by a bomb. He announced his intention to visit the injured passengers in the hospital before departing the city. General Potiorek, chief of the Regional Government, advised him to change plan and return along the riverside rather than risk parading through the city center's dense, crowd-lined streets. Orders were given to make the change, but the driver of the archduke's car never heard them. When he reached the Latin Bridge, the driver followed the original plan and turned the car to the right, toward the city center. Alerted to his error, he inadvertently brought the car to a stop directly in front of Gavrilo Princip, another of the assassins. Princip fired two shots. One struck the archduke, and the other hit Sophie. She slumped onto the archduke. The driver later reported that they had exchanged a few words, but he was unable to hear what was said. As police arrived at the scene of the killings, the car sped the archduke and Sophie to the nearest medical facilities at the Konak across the river. Both were dead by the time they arrived.

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From 1992 until 2007 the small museum which had commemorated the murder of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and which stands at the corner where it took place was closed. Recently it has reopened but it now it is no longer a museum about the assassination but one about Sarajevo

under the Austro-Hungarian empire. What is fascinating is how every single regime, from the Austro-Hungarians, to the Yugoslav kingdom, to the Nazis, the communists and since have sought to remember the event.

Paul Miller, Associate Professor of History at the International University of Sarajevo and McDaniel College has written this short and fascinating account of this story, which he also gave as a talk at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington. It is called: "Compromising Memory: The Site of the Sarajevo Assassination".

## The First War



War came to Sarajevo three times in the last century. Only during the first was there no fighting in and around the city.

The front lines never reached Sarajevo, but the First World War touched every resident of the city. Most males of military age fought for one side or the other. Many enlisted or were drafted into the monarchy's armed forces and fought with the courage and distinction that characterized the empire's forces in the war's first few years. Others, particularly Serbs, volunteered for the Serbian army or joined various paramilitary groups fighting alongside Serbian regulars. The price of participation was heavy. Many Sarajevans never returned, and many others were injured and bore debilitating injuries for the rest of their lives. Those who never left the city endured deprivations in everyday life, and Serbs who stayed were exposed to harsh repression by the Habsburg regime. The monarchy's security officials feared that the assassination was just the tip of the iceberg in the willingness of some Serbs to undertake violence against the monarchy. For the duration of the war, the authorities employed drastic measures in a campaign to destroy the ability of Serbs to organize resistance. Their apprehensions were strengthened by the discovery, *ex post fact*, of widespread illegal societies among students in every major town of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

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## Forgotten City



Before the new state of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (SHS) could print its own stamps  
the old Austro-Hungarian ones were overstamped

Donia argues that while Sarajevo had been a "Habsburg showplace...thoroughly integrated into the monarchy's economic, political, and cultural orbit....Those linkages were shattered in 1918," and that Sarajevo became the urban orphan of the new Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The new country he says, gave "preference to Belgrade, Zagreb, and Ljubljana, the major urban centers corresponding to the three groups in the state's formal title...Neglected because of its diversity and torn by forces emanating from the three....Sarajevo became a forgotten city.

Most Sarajevans greeted the prospect of life in a new South Slav state with enthusiasm and optimism. When soldiers of the Serbian royal army entered Sarajevo triumphantly on November 6, 1918, marking the city's uncontested passage from Habsburg to South Slav military control, they were hailed as liberators and welcomed with celebratory activities matching any from Habsburg times. Soon Sarajevans were busy preparing new governing institutions, anticipating that the city would continue to be a major administrative center in the new kingdom. Members of the first appointed city council, expecting the imminent dawn of democracy in their land, put forth initiatives for reform and prepared to hold elections based on a broad franchise. But those prospects faded with the regime's unrelenting autocratic centralism and determination to eliminate Bosnia-Herzegovina as an administrative unit, diminishing Sarajevo's role as a regional capital.

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The years 1918-41 were to be ones of disillusion for Sarajevo and compare unfavourably in terms of the development of the city with the years that came before 1914 and after 1945.

In Sarajevo protracted economic stagnation was the overriding problem throughout the period. The government's persistent refusal to grant the city meaningful local self-government rendered the city fathers largely impotent to deal with the problem. In royal Yugoslavia, no less than under Habsburg rule, the city's residents struggled in vain to acquire control over their own destinies. The new rulers offered no grand vision to inspire the growth or reconfiguration of urban space. The house of Karadjordjević [the Serbian and after 1918, Yugoslav royal family,] replaced the house of Habsburg in the city's memorial culture as the central theme of holidays, statues, memorials, cultural events, and street renaming. But little was altered during the protracted political struggles between the council and the various representatives of royal rule. Many things happened, but few things changed.

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## The Second War



Sarajevo came under the control of the NDH, the fascist Croatian state from 1941-45

German bombers attacked Belgrade and Sarajevo on 6th April 1941 and royal Yugoslavia quickly crumbled. Bosnia-Herzegovina was now assigned to be part of the Nazi quisling, so-called Independent State of Croatia (NDH) whose Ustasha ideology considered Bosnian Muslims to be Croats of the Islamic faith. Throughout the war Bosnia was ravaged by conflict.

The occupiers and their collaborators wrought immeasurable harm in Sarajevo. They exterminated a significant part of the population, altered the city's demographic balance for the indefinite future, and governed principally through terror and intimidation. Their oppression spurred the growth of opposition movements, some of them peaceful and relatively impotent, others armed and dangerous to the occupiers and their allies. The communist-led Partisans, the most successful of these movements, undermined and eventually destroyed the forces of the occupiers and their collaborators. Their final victory in April 1945 owed much to an urban-rural lifeline that allowed the KP [Communist Party] inside occupied Sarajevo to mount clandestine operations in support of the Partisans in the surrounding hills.

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Fleeing Belgrade the Yugoslav royal family and top officials fled first and briefly to Pale, outside Sarajevo, which was in 1992 to become the Bosnian Serb headquarters. On the night of April 13-14 they left for Montenegro and then exile. The Germans entered Sarajevo on April 15th.

German forces quickly set the tone for their occupation. On their first day in Sarajevo, they removed the plaque commemorating Gavrilo Princip's 1914 assassination of the Habsburg Archduke Franz Ferdinand and sent it to Adolph Hitler. On their second day in town they sacked the recently built (1929) Sephardic synagogue in the heart of the city. With the aid of local vandals, German troops confiscated or burned the invaluable contents of the

synagogue's library and archives, tore elaborate ornamentation from the walls, and destroyed much of the roof.

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"The four years of occupation were the worst of times for the city's residents," writes Donia:

Most manufacturing enterprises were shut down or functioned at partial capacity. Food shortages persisted and at times approached critical dimensions. NDH authorities opened public kitchens to feed Sarajevo's poorest residents, but most aid was provided by the various ethnoreligious cultural societies and other volunteer organizations. Visitors to the city frequently remarked on the bleak atmosphere, the large numbers of persons taken for forced labour each day, and constant police surveillance and arrests.

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"Precise numbers of victims, are elusive," says Donia, yet in 1981, "a commission created by the city's veterans organization culled a variety of documents to enumerate deaths among Sarajevans during the war."

The commission concluded that 10,961 Sarajevans perished from the violence of the Second World War. Some 7,092 Jews perished in the Sarajevo Holocaust, accounting for 65 percent of all war deaths and 68 percent of the prewar Jewish population of Sarajevo. Of the other 1,945 Sarajevans who died as "victims of fascist terror" a category that excluded deaths in Partisan units and the KP), 1,427 were Serbs, 412 were Muslims, 106 were Croats, and 34 were classified as "other."

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### Valter Defends Sarajevo



Vladimir Perić (1919-45)

One of the key figures in the Partisan resistance in Bosnia and Sarajevo was the youthful Vladimir Perić, codenamed Valter (1919-45). Towards the end of the war he "revitalized the KP's [Communist Party] urban-rural link with Partisan forces and reconstructed the KP to resume its support of the Partisan movement with personnel, supplies and intelligence." He was to die in the last hours of the war in Sarajevo, on 6 April 1945. Today, his bust stands in a forlorn corner, close to the Skenderija Bridge.

In an apocryphal scene from the 1972 film *Valter brani Sarajevo* (*Valter defends Sarajevo*), a German officer, having been relieved of his command for failing to capture the elusive Partisan resistance leader Valter, voices his grudging admiration for the city. "Now that I must leave Sarajevo, I finally know who Valter is," he states. Another German officer orders him, "Then tell me his name right now!" Sweeping his hand across the vista of the city, the first officer answers, "You see this city? Das ist Valter!" His last three words have been etched in the consciousness of Sarajevans ever since. Resistance to tyranny is the very essence of the city, according to this cinematic history lesson eagerly embraced by Sarajevans as accurately portraying their fundamental ideals. Valter has frequently been resurrected to personify various causes, most notably during the antinationalist and anti-war demonstrations in March of 1992.

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## Tito is Ours



Josip Broz Tito (1892-1980)

Many Sarajevans and Bosnians look back on the Yugoslav Socialist period with great nostalgia. The city itself writes Donia, "underwent an unprecedented transformation" and it grew from less than one hundred thousand people at the end of the Second World War to over half a million by 1991. It was a period dominated by one man, even in the first years after his death, Josip Broz Tito (1892-1980), who along with his Partisans had refashioned Yugoslavia at crucial meetings in Bosnia during the war. One of the most important decisions they took was to create a federal state, in which Bosnia-Herzegovina was to remerge within its historic frontiers and as a republic in its own right.

Tito first visited Sarajevo in November 1945 and returned many times thereafter. Huge crowds greeted him, and banners were hung across major streets along his entry route. During his last visit a few years before his death in 1980, he entered the city from the east in an open-top Mercedes that followed the route Franz Ferdinand had taken in 1914. Aged and corpulent, he sat erect in the car's back seat. Rather than receiving a hearty reception, he was greeted with subdued, reverential applause by the thousands lining his route of entry. Those in the crowd seemed honored just to have laid eyes on him. As he slowly alighted and entered the hotel, a chorus of girls in folk costumes greeted him with flowers and chanted "We are Tito's, Tito is ours." His reception, in short, benefited a saint more than a political leader. Nowhere was Tito more revered than in Sarajevo.

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### Tito Baroque



View of Sarajevo from Jajce Fortress - Copyright © by Alan Grant

Sarajevo has been marked by the builders of three eras. Ottoman Sarajevo survives in the great mosques and alleyways of Baščaršija. The Austro-Hungarian city extends along the river and westwards while Yugoslav Sarajevo exists in the blocks and housing developments, which stretch west again just as the buildings of the pre-1918 city begin to peter out. "Sarajevo's development as a socialist city benefited immensely from a change in economic philosophy proclaimed by Tito ten years after the war," writes Donia. "At a rally in June 1955 he announced that economic policy henceforth "should stimulate the development of industrial sectors that directly influence the improvement of living standards."

The colossal investment in the industrial base in the late 1940s, coupled with the gradual rise in consumer spending, powered economic growth in the 1950s at a rate unprecedented in Sarajevo's history and unparalleled in most cities of the world. Personal income rose 11 percent annually between 1952 and 1964. In 1948, 72 percent of the population of Bosnia-Herzegovina lived in rural communities; that number fell to 36.6 percent by 1971. The perpetual expansion of the housing stock in Sarajevo and other cities provided a growing supply of comfortable housing for those drawn into urban areas.

As a result, the most conspicuous transformation in the Sarajevo cityscape was the rise of ubiquitous high-rise residential complexes. Drawn by the city's disproportionate economic benefits, better living conditions, and urban cultural life, immigrants came to the city from both the countryside and other towns....The great expansion of the city took place westwards....High-rise apartment buildings arose periodically along Vojvoda Putnik Street, which soon became a boulevard with tram tracks between the east and westbound lanes. Many high-rises were built in the spirit of a master design used throughout Yugoslavia, and costs were carefully controlled. Even architects complained of the drab repetitiveness of the new housing structures. Ivan Štraus complained, "The settlements were arranged in rows

westwards, and each addition reached the level of mediocrity of its predecessor." One pundit dubbed these structures "Tito Baroque."

Although their uniformity put off some observers, the high-rise housing settlements were redeemed by the convenience they offered their inhabitants, and they fulfilled the socialist vision of making all important services immediately accessible to the working class. Most buildings were grouped in settlements served by cafés, restaurants, shops, one or two schools, a tramway and bus stop, and a small park or central square. With contemporary utility services, finished interiors, and regular maintenance, the new apartments were valued by those who lived there and coveted by those who did not. Sarajevans did not stop appreciating their cultural heritage, but they opted in overwhelming numbers for residence in the new, undistinguished skyscrapers.

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### The Third War



The Third War

The Bosnian war and the siege of Sarajevo lasted from 1992 until 1995. Donia notes that the Bosnian Department of Public Health, which reported casualties daily, "counted 10,615 deaths during the siege, with over 75 percent of all deaths occurring in 1992." Demographers at the UN's war crimes tribunal in The Hague "have estimated that 4,352 persons (soldiers and civilians) died violent conflict-related deaths in besieged Sarajevo between September 10, 1992, and August 10, 1994, a period that excludes times of the heaviest shelling in 1992 and 1995."

They found that the wounded numbered more than three times those who were killed, with civilians accounting for about 37 percent of casualties in the city. Shelling accounted for 66 percent of violent civilian deaths, with sniping blamed for another 18 percent of civilian casualties. These numbers, which remain uncertain and contested, in any case fail to capture the fear, agony, and loss felt by Sarajevans who remained in the city.

The war and siege ended without a victor. Persons on all sides were incredulous that the struggle had gone on for so long and been so utterly destructive. The Bosnian Serb nationalists had come close to accomplishing their goal of separating Sarajevo's peoples, but they had failed to bring the city to its knees. Nationalist forces had been strengthened by the war, and the ubiquitous feelings of resentment and desire for revenge dimmed the prospects for large-scale reconstruction and meaningful reconciliation. The Sarajevo siege wrought great and long-lasting devastation on the city that is still felt today.

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### The Defense of Human Dignity



Vrelo Bosna springs - Copyright © by Alan Grant

"The war in Sarajevo," writes Donia, "was a struggle between well-armed VRS [Bosnian Serb Army] and the well-manned ARBiH [Bosnian Army]" It dragged on from the spring of 1992 until the end of 1995. Much of Donia's work on this tragic period was informed by the meticulous work he did on it for the UN's war crimes tribunal in The Hague.

Wartime reports by most Sarajevo-based Western journalists and visitors to the city frequently relegated ARBiH military operations to an informational black hole. ARBiH military operations were typically shrouded in secrecy and conducted in obscurity. Journalist often portrayed ARBiH troops as well intentioned but hapless soldiers engaged in a futile struggle against overwhelming odds. Bosnian government supporters encouraged this representation during the war to highlight the plight of the city's civilians, but armed defense of the city was much more effective than outsiders frequently portrayed it.

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Sarajevans were deeply disturbed by the sheer randomness of death in the city as well as by the mounting number of casualties. No resident of Sarajevo passed those wartime years without mourning the loss of one or several family member, close friends, or neighbors. Grief was deepened by survivor's guilt, the awareness that the sniper might just as well have selected the prior passerby or the artillery shell might have been landed a few feet away or a few minutes earlier or later. Global television coverage transmitted the human agony of the infamous massacres of civilians in the bread line on Miskin Street and at the Markale marketplace, but little notice was taken of most deaths except by those who buried and mourned the victims of the war. Mourning proved as hazardous as life's other life activities. Burial services brought a significant number of people into close proximity, and numerous times gunmen in the surrounding hills shot and killed mourners.

Death mingled with persistent shortages of food and water. The average Sarajevan lost thirty pounds during the siege. With little or no heating gas for weeks at a time, Sarajevans suffered prolonged exposure to cold. Waste disposal became a chronic problem. Toilets went unflushed, and garbage piled high on sidewalks and in the courtyards of apartment buildings. Nonetheless, during years of deprivation and daily threats to their lives, Sarajevans found affirmation in being in the vanguard of a struggle against savagery. Rather than demeaning their lives, siege conditions elevated their sense of purpose. Historian and Sarajevo resident Dževad Juzbašić characterized that period in his life as a "struggle for mere survival, but also for the defense of human dignity."

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## War's Shadow



Baščaršija - Copyright © by Alan Grant

The war was ended with the Dayton Accords of November 1995. Much of the Serb-held part of the city was handed over to the Bosniak [Muslim] - Croat Federation which had been founded the year before. Serb radicals forced many of their own people out of these areas before the handover took place.

The contrast with the recovery after the Second World War could not have been greater. The triumphant Partisans had given Sarajevans a clear if idealized vision of a new society and a transformed city to be constructed in the aftermath of the war and liberation. In 1996, however, there was no sense of victory, no inspiring vision to compel popular engagement in remaking the city. War was over, but the struggle was not resolved. With international blessing, the Dayton Agreement institutionalised many of the national divisions that had dominated since 1990. Most Sarajevans were immensely relieved that the war had ended, but a widespread sense of uncertainty about the future fed pervasive lassitude and despair, despite the gradual return of intense activity to the central city.

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The city's common life did not die during the war, nor has it perished in the difficult postwar era. However, Sarajevans face many difficult choices in the postsocialist and postwar era, and the future of the city's common life is among them. Some thriving new organizations, such as the Bosniak Institute, are untainted by association with communism but owe much to Bosniak national values. However, many of the city's most venerated institutions and practices have their origins in the dynamic first two decades of the socialist era and were in part designed to overcome national divisiveness. Sarajevans have almost unanimously rejected communism as an ideology, yet they hold fond memories of life before the war, a time when communists ruled the city. Most of them reject national exclusivity in principle, yet they have repeatedly opted to put nationalist political leaders in office. With the city still living in the long shadow of ruinous war and its citizens holding contradictory social values,

Sarajevans have yet to discover or invent a full spectrum of cultural, political, and educational institutions that are free from both communist and nationalist authoritarianism. As they endeavor to do so, the future of the city's common life hangs in the balance.

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