



Senijad (Seni) Felic, left, with Doug Hostetter. Seni is from Bihac, Bosnia, where his father, his two brothers, and their families still live. Seni was at the University of Zagreb in Croatia when the Serbian Army surrounded Bihac two and a half years ago. His family is unable to get out, and Seni has been unable to get in to see them. When his mother died of a stroke seven months ago, Seni was unable to attend the funeral. Seni's oldest brother, Senad, is now totally disabled due to shrapnel from an artillery shell which exploded near him two years ago, and is now being cared for at home by his wife, nine-year-old son, and five-year-old daughter. Seni's other brother, Suad, is also married and has a five-year-old son.

Thanks to the hard work of the Columbia FOR Chapter, Seni has been admitted to the Ph.D. program in Biochemistry and Food Science at the University of Missouri at Columbia. Seni is now living at the FOR headquarters, studying English and working as an intern in the Bosnia Student Project, which has so far brought fifty-five students to the US. Photo: Sally Savage

Bosnian Students: Update

by Doug Hostetter

The situation of Bosnian students in Croatia one year ago was extremely difficult and dangerous. Croatia was at war with Bosnia, having allied itself with Serbia in an effort to divide Bosnia between them. Last summer Croatian police were picking up Bosnian students on the streets of Zagreb and trading them back to Bosnia for Croatian prisoners of war. Bosnian Croats were being pulled from the University, forced into the Croatian army, and sent back to fight against their friends and neighbors in Bosnia. Bosnian students who were Muslim—even former Zagreb University students who had attended the University while it was part of the Yugoslavia university system—were considered foreign students (from an enemy state), charged

high tuition, excluded from dormitories, student cafeterias and student transportation.

Since summer things have improved somewhat. Croatia and Bosnia are now at least nominally allied. Bosnian Catholics (Croats) can get Croatian citizenship, and with it, free tuition to Croatian universities. However, if they are male and eighteen years of age or older, acceptance of Croatian citizenship makes them eligible to be drafted into the Croatian army. Bosnian Muslim or Bosnian Orthodox (Serb) students in Croatia are no longer harassed by the police. They are nonetheless still charged foreign student tuition to attend the university, and are ineligible to live in the university dorms, or to use student cafeterias or transportation. This year, however, most Bosnian undergraduates in Croatia can get tuition grants

from the US-based Soros Foundation. Graduate students in Croatia are ineligible for Soros Foundation grants, and like most Bosnians cannot legally work in Croatia. The BSP will give a high priority to graduate scholarships for 1995.

Most Bosnian refugee students I met with during my recent visit to Zagreb indicated that while in Serb-occupied Bosnia, they had been routinely excluded from school. Those who had been allowed to attend were not allowed to take exams or receive grades, and none of them were allowed to bring out their transcripts.

For students in the Bosnian-government controlled part of Bosnia, school depended on the security situation, surviving faculty members, and the condition of school facilities. Last year there was only one high school functioning in Sarajevo, the First Classics High School. There were only 160 high school students in an entire four-grade school. Classes took place almost every day when there was not very intensive shelling. Students and faculty would gather in the stairwell for protection when shelling started. If the shelling was protracted, classes would be continued in the stairwell, with students gathering closely around their teacher for the lecture.

The University of Sarajevo was able to open some colleges this past year, but others had been completely destroyed or were located in Serbian-occupied parts of the city. Some students had to change their major because the subject in which they had majored was no longer available, due to loss of professors or of the facility in which to study.

In the city of Tuzla, which was often under heavy bombardment during the past year, high school students would listen to the radio in the morning to see if school would be canceled that day on account of war. When school was canceled, some teachers offered lectures to their classes via the radio, so that students could continue their education at home.

Because of these extreme difficulties, the Bosnian Student Project will next year give priority to students from the interior of Bosnia. □

Doug Hostetter is the international and interfaith secretary of the FOR, and is currently the director of the Bosnian Student Project.