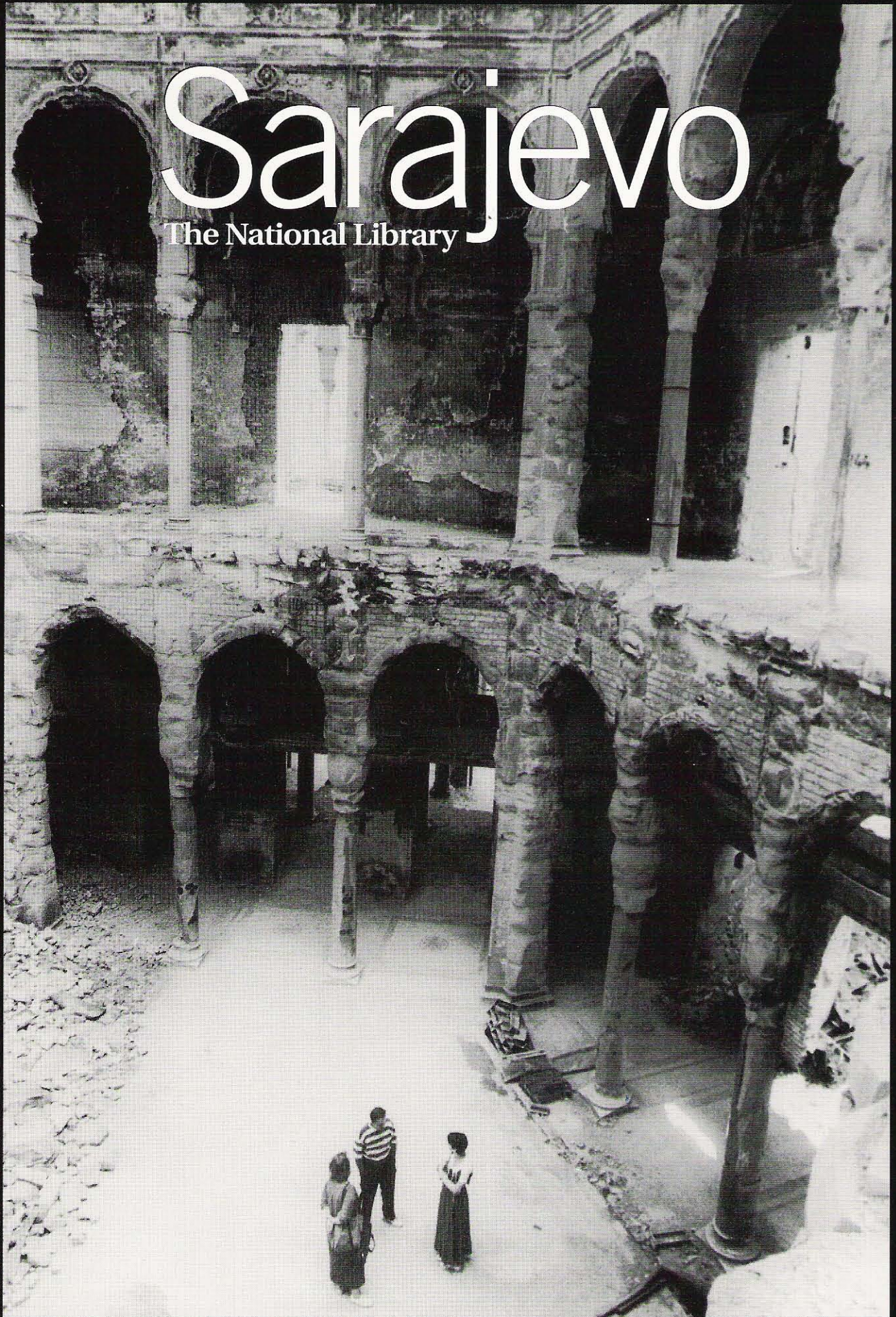


# Sarajevo

The National Library



On August 25, 1992, the Serb Army targeted the National Library from artillery positions in the mountains surrounding Sarajevo. By nightfall this monumental building with exquisite pseudo-Moorish detail had been struck by more than fifty shells. It caught fire shortly before midnight and burned for three days. Built in the late 19th century during the Austro-Hungarian Empire, this colossal structure was designed originally as the Sarajevo City Hall. In 1945 this building, regarded by many as the most beautiful in Sarajevo, was turned into the National Library of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Its collection included more than a million books by Bosnian Serbs, Croats, Muslims, Jews and others. It contained books written in Serbo-Croatian (both in the Roman and Cyrillic alphabets), Arabic, Hebrew, English, German, Russian and other languages. It housed concrete evidence of more than 500 years of a successful multicultural society in Bosnia. Scores of students, faculty and other Sarajevans formed a book-brigade in the middle of the shelling to try to rescue their intellectual heritage. Their heroic effort saved thousands of rare books, but one graduate student was killed while more than a million books, and countless documents, manuscripts and rare books were lost to the flames.

Despite the efforts of the 5th largest army in Europe to destroy all evidence of a multicultural society in Bosnia, pluralism has survived. The three persons standing in the ruins of the National Library in this July, 1996 photograph are a Serb, a Croat and a Muslim. During the war each was directly involved with the Bosnian Student Project effort to assist talented Bosnian students of every ethnic tradition to continue their education in the US. They are the proof that multicultural societies cannot be destroyed by shells and bombs.

The people who are not in this picture are the thousands of ordinary US citizens of all races and religions who opened their homes, their schools and their hearts, to make it possible for more than 150 Bosnian students to continue their education in the United States. This was a genocidal war in which Muslims and people of mixed ethnic heritage were specifically targeted for slaughter, "ethnic cleansing," and concentration camps. Bosnians of any ethnicity who chose to continue to live in multiethnic neighborhoods

with Muslims in Bosnian Government controlled areas were also targeted. Purveyors of genocide always try to destroy the human link between their victims and "the rest of us." To the students whom others were trying to kill, destroy or expel, we offered hospitality, shelter and education. Working together, we were able to reaffirm our wonderful, diverse human community in the face of those who were determined to destroy it.

The Bosnian students also have their part to contribute. The students understand that it is only by getting a good education that they will be able to return to help rebuild their country. The students also bring gifts to us. Through sharing their stories the students have alerted us to the dangers of ethnic chauvinism and religious bigotry so that we as a country can hopefully avoid the mistakes of the former Yugoslavia.

I want to thank everyone who has participated in any way in this project. Together we have saved the lives and secured an education for these students, while offering hope for their families in Bosnia. Each student knows that it was only through the cooperation of people of many faiths in the US and the former Yugoslavia that they were able to continue their education.

We did not stop the war or end genocide, but hundreds of US schools and thousands of Americans from across this country have given witness to our belief that these students of a different ethnicity, religion and nationality than our own, are our neighbors, part of our human family—children of God. On behalf of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the people of Bosnia and the world, I thank you.

Sincerely,  
Doug Hostetter  
Director,  
Bosnian Student Project

*"The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy... Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."*

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

*"Suštinska slabost nasilja je u tome što je nasilje začarani krug koji radja upravo ono što želi uništiti... Tama ne može otjerati tamu—samo svjetlost može. Mržnja ne može otjerati mržju—samo ljubav može."*