

Samija Sarić

Arhiv Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine  
R. Čauševića 6  
Sarajevo  
Bosna i Hercegovina

## DESTRUCTION OF ARCHIVAL RECORDS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

UDK 930.25:355.4](497.6)"1992/1995"

Izlaganje sa znanstvenog skupa

*Bosna i Hercegovina nisu iskusile samo ratna razaranja, već i nagle političke i ekonomske promjene. Sudbina kulturno-povijesnih spomenika i arhivskog gradiva tijekom rata bila je različita. Količina uništenog arhivskog gradiva, opreme, tehnike za umnožavanje i devastiranih površina, ovisila je o području na kojem su se pojedini arhivski objekti nalazili. Svakako da su objekti i arhivsko gradivo smješteni u Sarajevu, gdje su ratne aktivnosti bile najintenzivnije i koje je bilo 1.000 dana pod opsadom i neprestanim granatiranjem, najviše uništeni, kao i oni u Mostaru, Bihaću, Zenici, Tuzli, Gorazdu, Tešnju, Maglaju i drugim mjestima pogodnim ratnim aktivnostima, za razliku od mjesta gdje nije bilo ratnih aktivnosti, kao što su Banja Luka, Trebinje, Bijeljina, Brčko itd., pa su i oštećenja bila neznatna.*

*Prije rata je u Bosni i Hercegovini, uz središnji arhiv u Sarajevu, postojalo osam arhiva: Arhiv Hercegovine u Mostaru, Arhiv Bosanske Krajine u Banja Luci, Arhiv Srednje Bosne u Travniku, Povijesni arhiv u Sarajevu, te četiri regionalna arhiva u Tuzli, Bihaću, Foči i Doboju.*

*Podjelom Bosne i Hercegovine u dva entiteta: Federaciju Bosne i Hercegovine i Republiku Srpsku, postalo je neophodno utemeljenje Arhiva Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine nadležnog za Federaciju. Arhiv je započeo djelovati 1. lipnja 1997. godine. Arhivi u Mostaru, Tuzli, Travniku i Bihaću te Povijesni arhiv u Sarajevu djeluju samostalno i uglavnom kao okružni arhivi.*

*Arhiv Bosanske Krajine u Banja Luci promijenio je ime u Arhiv Republike Srpske i preuzeo ulogu središnjeg arhiva za arhivsko gradivo na cjelokupnom području Republike Srpske, kao i novoosnovanog Arhiva u Bijeljini.*

*Arhivski izvori, su sukladno prije rečenom, nepopravljivo oštećeni tijekom rata u našoj zemlji.*

*Nedavna iskustva su pokazala da su arhivski izvori i registraturni dokumenti izvan arhivskih spremišta pretrpjeli teška oštećenja. Koliko smo uspjeli saznati, u registraturama Sarajeva uništeno je oko 90% operativnih izvora, poglavito onih Vlade i Skupštine, budući da su njihove zgrade intenzivno granatirane i paljene. Arhivski izvori u oko 50% registratura su uništeni i demolirani iako je Odio za zaštitu arhivskih izvora i registraturnih dokumenata izvan Arhiva intenzivirao svoj rad još u 1991. i na početku 1992. godine. Slična je situacija i u drugim arhivima i institucijama.*

Bosnia and Herzegovina has experienced an insane war that lasted from 1992 through 1995 during which innumerable human lives were lost and many facilities destroyed. Numerous cultural-historical monuments were devastated, thousands of invaluable written documents significant for the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina were burnt and destroyed according to our up to date findings concerning the information what has been saved and what has been destructed. The infrastructure can be rehabilitated by investing, while documents, books and archive materials cannot. They are destroyed for good.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has experienced not only the war destruction, but also sudden changes caused by political and economic transitions. The destiny of cultural-historical monuments and archive materials, during the war, has been different. The quantity of archive material, equipment, processing technics and devastated surface areas depended on the territory in which certain facilities of archives or institutions were based. Certainly that facilities and archive materials based in Sarajevo, where the war activities were the most intensive and which was under the siege for 1.000 days with constant shelling, were destructed the most, as well as Mostar, Bihac, Zenica, Tuzla, Goražde, Tešanj, Maglaj and other cities suffering the war activities, differed from the cities in which the war activities did not take place like Banja Luka, Trebinje, Bijeljina, Brčko etc.

Prior to the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there had been eight Archives accompanying the home Archive based in Sarajevo: The Archive of Herzegovina in Mostar, the Archive of Bosnian Krajina in Banja Luka, the Archive of Middle Bosnia in Travnik, the Historical Archive of Sarajevo, and four regional archives based in Tuzla, Bihać, Foča and Doboj.

Dividing Bosnia and Herzegovina into two entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska, foundation of the Archive of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina acting throughout the Federation has become a necessity. It started to function on the June 15, 1997. The archives based in Mostar, Tuzla, Travnik and Bihac are functioning independently as well as the Historical Archive of Sarajevo mostly as the district archives.

The Archive of Bosnian Krajina in Banja Luka changed its name into the Archive of Republika Srpska and took on a role of home archive over the Archives in the entire region of the Republika Srpska and over the newly established Archive in Bijeljina.

The Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina, since its foundation in 1947, has been based in the building of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina being so a target of numerous and constant shelling causing destruction of the archive material. The Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina located in the basement of the building suffered enormous destruction by two direct hits (see photos) that demolished the external wall, metal window shutters, metal shelves, containers and parts of the archive material and archive books of very important holdings: Common Ministry of Finance for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Country's Government for Bosnia and Herzegovina (1878–1918), Minutes from the sessions of the Country's Government (1878–1918), District Courts of Banja Luka, Sarajevo and Tuzla (court proceedings), cabinet's letters, Trade houses, different associations, Police Department of Drinska banovina (regional unit ruled by a ban), then archive material (confidential and confidential state security) of the Drinska banovina holdings, Collection of employees files, "Velika župa Vrhbosna" holding and confidential material of the Executive Council of the SR Bosnia and Herzegovina. We should point out that fortunately the Archive was not hit by incendiary bombs. Only five files were completely destroyed of 2.183 folders, 2.684 boxes and 766 books of the archive sources, while the remaining material and books were partially damaged by shell fragments (that may be seen from the photos), but after a professional work and repair to the damaged sheets of the archive material and books, they could be reinstated.

The Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina had three locations more in the city. A complete film library "Kinoteka" with film material and equipment was based on the ground floor of the building together with the Oriental institute. The upper floors where archive material of the Oriental Institute was placed were seized, while the film library was saved and moved to a safer place with great efforts.

The other two Archives have not suffered significant damage except breaking of window glasses and damage to the walls and doors.

The Archive employees of the Historical Archive in Sarajevo, at the beginning of the war, have moved an oriental collection of extreme significance and value and

other valuable archive material to protect them that proved to be very useful since the home building has been heavily destroyed by shelling during the war (the roof is destroyed, the facade is ruined, the windows are broken etc.) and the fire has caught a part of the Archive building from the fire set to the adjacent building. Fortunately, the fire was brought under control.

Since a major part of the Archive related to the registration of working organisations and institutions, was destroyed and demolished, great efforts were put into relocating and placing of archive material.

An archive building of the Regional Archive in Tuzla was also hit by shells like many buildings in Tuzla causing heavy damages, but archive material has not been damaged. During the war, protection of archive material, filed in the Archive, as well as material in personal possession, was a main issue for the employees in the Archive. Much problems were caused by protection of material in register's offices.

A building of the Archive of Herzegovina in Mostar, located adjacent to the Old bridge and House of the Army, has been constantly destroyed by heavy artillery. Since the archive material was endangered it was prepared for moving to the safer place. However, after some repairs to the whole building, protection and keeping of archive material during the war has been continued resulting in 90% of the saved archive material, while the sources outside the Archive were mainly destroyed.

A building of the Regional Archive in Bihac was heavily destroyed during the war, but the archive holdings were saved and protected although the war activities were very intensive in the region. A part of archive and register's material was placed in the management part of the Archive building, and the other part was well kept and saved in the depots in the suburbs of Kamenica settlement.

Since there has been no intensive shelling in Travnik, neither a building of the Archive of Middle Bosnia has been destroyed nor the archive material (it is completely saved). The archive material outside the Archive building could not be protected due to the war activities and communication blockade, except the region of Travnik and Zenica.

There is no more archive material in the Oriental Institute in Sarajevo which was intentionally set to fire, according to which legal, cultural and social background of the history of peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina could have been studied, especially from the Turkish period since the Oriental Institute has been collecting, keeping, processing and publishing the archive and manuscripts in oriental languages from 1950.

The value of the demolished Oriental Institute was enormous. Only a Collection of manuscripts "turcica" had 7.156 documents within the period from the 16<sup>th</sup> through the 19<sup>th</sup> century – sultan's decree, emperor's decree, orders of Bosnian gover-

nors, court's decisions and numerous reports, while a Collection of court protocols being an excellent source for studying local histories of certain places and regions, included 66 court protocols within the period from the 17<sup>th</sup> through the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The most numerous was a "Vilajet archive" including around 200.000 documents. A collection of deeds from the 19<sup>th</sup> century was one of the original collections.

A well-known document of sultan Mohammed IV from the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century was burnt. It had a magnificent sultan's seal fascinating everybody despite their education or origin. The manuscript originated in 1023 was burnt although saved for nearly 1000 years as well as a famous fragment of astrological document with miniatures representing signs of the Zodiac from the 15<sup>th</sup> century. As regards the percentage of saved archive sources, if the institution is in question, less than 1% of the archive sources has been saved.

In addition to the original archive materials, photocopies and microfilmed material of other Archives from our country and foreign countries were burnt.

The archive holdings of the Franciscan monasteries, keeping great number of archive documents from the Medieval Bosnian period, Turkish rule, Austria-Hungary reign representing a real cultural-historical fortune, have suffered minor damages or destruction. Some buildings of the Islamic religious community and an old Orthodox church also suffered minor damages.

The Archives and archive holdings in the Republika Srpska have suffered no damages according to the reports of our colleagues in Banja Luka.

Recent experience has shown that the archive sources and register's documents outside the archive depots had suffered heavy damages. As far as we have learnt in the register's offices in Sarajevo around 90% of operative sources were destroyed especially those of the Government and the Assembly since their buildings were intensively shelled and set to fire. The archive sources in around 50% of the register's offices have been destroyed and damaged although the Department for protection of archive sources and register's documentation outside the Archives intensified its work even in 1991 and at the very beginning of 1992. The similar situation was in other Archives and institutions.

The archive sources including important data, design and other documentation in the buildings of the School of Mechanical Engineering, School of Mathematics, School of Forestry and Agriculture, School of Transportation and other buildings and institutions were destroyed.

For example, in the business building of the Water Management Institute of Bosnia and Herzegovina which was heavily damaged, in the Centre for documentation placed within the basement flooded premises, a small part of the designs out of 10.000 designs has been saved. The following institutions and documentation suffe-

red heavy damages: Elektroprivreda of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Energoinvest, Railway Transportation enterprise (sources of certain sectors), University Medical Centre, Institute for protection of cultural and natural heritage, the Earth museum having rich collections of extreme value. The main Post Office was burnt to the ground together with the documentation and three telephone switchboards with 38.000 connections, as well as many cultural and historical monuments not only in the city of Sarajevo, but throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I have always asked myself as a historian why the Alexandrian library (7<sup>th</sup> century) had to be set to fire and burnt to the ground destroying so numerous, valuable books and manuscripts. There were 700.000 rolls including the duplicates, according to some written records. Who has done that? Who has needed to do that? Many important and essential facts were lost with the destruction of the library.

In this century, during the war I have witnessed in my native city, a very valuable library was set to fire also- the National and University library founded in 1945 (Vijećnica). An invaluable cultural-historical heritage was burnt in intentionally fired "Vijećnica", a symbol of the city of Sarajevo and its history. Besides valuable book holdings and periodics (thousands of books, magazines, newspapers and many rare volumes) kept in the National and University library, a valuable archive and manuscript material including oriental documents and identity papers (around 450) and those in the Cyrillic and Latin alphabet originating in the 16<sup>th</sup> through 19<sup>th</sup> century. A collection of oriental documents (around 400 inventory units), numerous personal and family inheritance, special collection of geographical maps (around 5.500), postcards (around 60.000) from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, computers' centre and a collection of micro-filmed library materials have been also destroyed. Only 10% of these invaluable documents, a precious "Bosniaca" (literature about Bosnia and Herzegovina) among them have been saved.

The archive sources, according to the above mentioned, were irreparably damaged by the war in our country.

The archive holding of Gazi-Husref bey's library, a special librarian institution for the field of islamistics (founded in 1537) with a Collection of court protocols (87) from the period 1556–1852, a Collection of charitable documents (1.105), a Collection of archive documents (sultan's decrees, emperor's decrees, court verdicts, legal decision, letters) from the period 1580 until the 20<sup>th</sup> century in quantity of 9.000 units have been saved with minor damages thanking to the timely action and moving to the safer place.

I have again asked myself: Who needed all that? Am I witness of a period that will be described and talked about for a long time ahead. Yes. I think I am.

The Archives lost a number of their employees; some left the regions in the war or stayed in the areas from which they could not come to work due to the war actions, while a part of employees left their working posts due to different reasons.

Just before the war, the Archives in Bosnia and Herzegovina have had 156 employees, 55 of these were Bachelors, a few were with Ph.D., 12 had diplomas, 5 high skilled labourers, 11 skilled and 15 were with elementary education. The major part of the employees were employed by the home Archives of Bosnia and Herzegovina (46). Only 3 of them are presently employed.

By the end of 1988 in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Federation and Republika Srpska) 95 persons were employed, 33 of them were Bachelors, 12 had diplomas, 31 with completed Vocational schools, 12 with completed elementary school and 5 skilled labourers. Namely, 40% of the employees have remained after the war, but recently we have reached 70%. However, qualification structure is not so good as it seems from the figures.

The Archives succeeded to save and keep the archive documentation during the war despite the shortage of employees; they even organised a few exhibitions participating in numerous cultural performances that took place in Sarajevo and other cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and even abroad ("Days of Bosnia and Herzegovina's culture in Austria" -Vienna)

#### Literature:

*Vjesnik Arhiva i Društva arhivista Bosne i Hercegovine* (Gazette of the Archive and the Association of Archivists of Bosnia and Herzegovina), XXXII/1992–93 and XXXIII/1994–95;

Vodič Arhiva Bosne i Hercegovine (Guidance of the Archive of Bosnia and Herzegovina), 1987;

*Oslobođenje*, 22 and 26 August 1992.

#### Summary

### **DESTRUCTION OF ARCHIVAL RECORDS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

Bosnia and Herzegovina has experienced not only the war destruction, but also sudden changes caused by political and economic transitions. The destiny of cultural-historical monuments' and archive materials, during 'the war; has been different. The quantity of archive material; equipment, processing technics and devastated surface areas depended on the territory in which certain facilities of archives or institutions were based. Certainly that facilities and archive materials based in Sarajevo,

where the war activities were the most intensive and which was under the siege for 1.000 days with constant shelling, were destructed the most; as well as Mostar, Bihać, Zenica, Tuzla, Goražde, Tešanj, Maglaj and other cities suffering the war activities, differed from the cities in' which the war activities did not take place like Banja Luka, Trebinje; Bijeljina, Brčko etc.

Prior to the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there had been eight Archives accompanying the home Archive based in Sarajevo: The Archive of Herzegovina in Mostar, the Archive of Bosnian Krajina in Banja Luka, the Archive of Middle Bosnia in Travnik, the Historical Archive of Sarajevo, and four regional archives based in Tuzla, Bihać, Foča and Dobož.

Dividing Bosnia and Herzegovina into two entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska, foundation of the Archive of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina acting throughout the Federation has become a necessity. It started to function on the 1st of June 1997. The archives based in Mostar, Tuzla, Travnik and Bihać are functioning independently as well as the Historical Archive of Sarajevo mostly as the district archives.

The Archive of Bosnian Krajina in Banja Luka changed its name into the Archive of Republika Srpska and took on a role of home archive over the Archives in the entire region of the Republika Srpska and over the newly established Archive in Bijeljina.

The archive sources, according to the above mentioned, were irreparably damaged by the war in our country.

Recent experience have shown that the archive sources and register's documents outside the archive depots had suffered heavy damages: As far as we have learnt in the register's offices in Sarajevo around 90% of operative sources were destroyed especially those of the Government and the Assembly since their buildings were intensively shelled and set to fire. The archive sources in around 50% of the register's offices have been destroyed and damaged although the Department for protection of archive sources and register's documentation outside the Archives intensified its work even in 1991 and at the very beginning of 1992. The similar situation was in other Archives and institutions.