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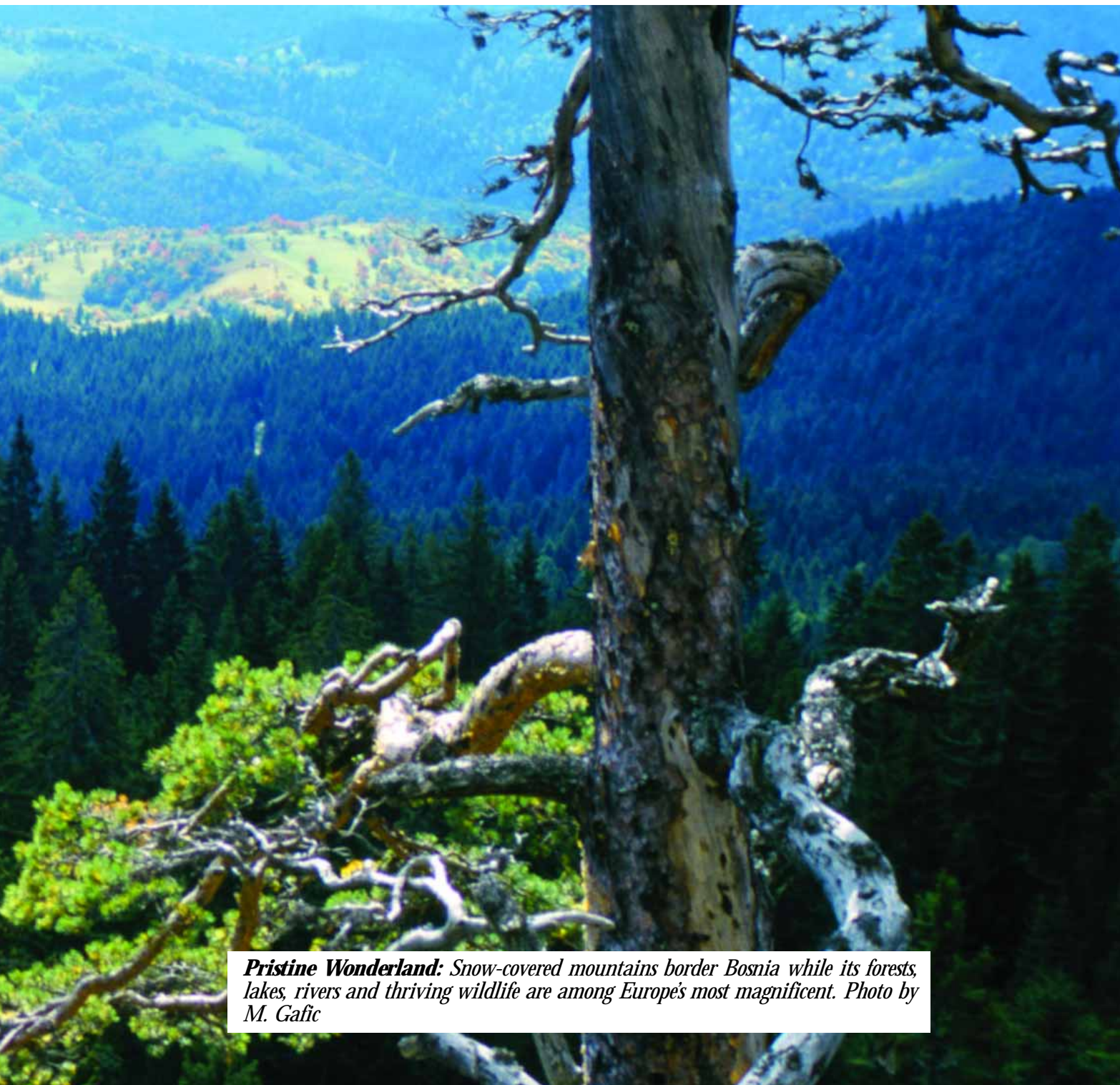
BOSNIA TODAY

Hajrudin Somun • Limkokwing



LIMKOKWING
UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF CREATIVE TECHNOLOGY





Pristine Wonderland: Snow-covered mountains border Bosnia while its forests, lakes, rivers and thriving wildlife are among Europe's most magnificent. Photo by M. Gafic



Foreword

More than a decade ago, Malaysia, like the rest of the world, witnessed in horror, the daily accounts and stark images of the indiscriminate destruction and atrocities inflicted upon the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The implementation of peace was a lengthy process but, today, the restoration and rebuilding of the war-ravaged cities and homes, and the healing of a deeply traumatised society and nation, is well on the way.

I am deeply honoured to write the foreword for this vibrant book which shows a completely different picture of Bosnia-Herzegovina – one that portrays the endurance and resilience of the human spirit.

This book also marks the role the international community as well as Malaysia played in the rebuilding of this nation. On this note, I congratulate Limkokwing Integrated for the positive contribution towards portraying a nation now free from war and tyranny.

Bosnia Today is a stark contrast to another book published by Limkokwing Integrated, *Bosnia: Beyond Words, Beyond Tears*. I launched that book on Feb 16, 1996, with the hope and the prayer that people all

over the world will rise to the aid of the unfortunate people of Bosnia-Herzegovina in rebuilding their ravaged country.

Malaysia, with members of the international community, rose to the challenge of rebuilding a new nation with the firm belief that economic recovery and growth is the most effective way of guaranteeing social and political stability. We identified areas of cooperation between Bosnia-Herzegovina and Malaysia to enable the private sectors of our two countries to play a role in the reconstruction of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Today, that cooperation has extended to many different sectors and we are truly committed to providing our expertise and capability in nation building.

Malaysia, which also has a federal system of government, subscribes to the same ideals of a multi-ethnic society as Bosnia-Herzegovina. We are linked by a strong bond of friendship and solidarity founded upon the shared commitment towards peace, freedom and justice. We can lend a hand and share our experiences in institutional and community rebuilding which is a critical component in the process of the economic development of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The current economic development of Bosnia-Herzegovina has been admirable and shows the resourcefulness of the Bosnian people and I have no doubt that this nation will soon re-emerge as a successful economy.



Support: Prime Minister of Malaysia Dato Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the launch of *Bosnia: Beyond Words, Beyond Tears* in 1996.

Today, there is a positive outlook among Bosnians as it is being integrated into a peaceful Europe. Progress has been rapid since the Dayton Peace Accord. Infrastructures have been reconstructed and freedom of movement has been restored. There are many investment opportunities in the furniture, food, tobacco, metal processing, cement and software development industries. There is also huge potential in the tourism industry.

Malaysia will continue to focus on helping Bosnians help themselves while contributing to social and economic recovery. It is our hope that Bosnia-Herzegovina will become one of Malaysia's strategic partners in Southern Europe. We, on the other hand, can be an important conduit for your products to enter the wider East Asian market. We extend and continue our cooperation just as we have done so during the reconstruction.

This timely book serves as a reminder that the human spirit endures but we should also not forget the fallen heroes. I salute the men and women who have dedicated and given their lives and to those who endured to see the dawn of a new Bosnia-Herzegovina.



Dato Seri Dr Mahathir bin Mohamad
Prime Minister, Malaysia



Introduction

Bosnia-Herzegovina has risen from the ashes of destruction and the hellish nightmare of a nation under siege. The rebuilding and reconstruction of this once terrorised country show the indomitable spirit of mankind to rise above political anarchy, uncertainty and fear, and economic chaos and to forge a roadmap to peace.

In 1996, Limkokwing Integrated published *Bosnia: Beyond Words, Beyond Tears* which portrayed the horror visited upon the gentle people of Bosnia with the aim of rallying international support to help bring about peace and reconstruction to this ruined nation.

Bosnia Today, on the other hand, portrays a nation and its people rebuilding itself in the hope of cultivating long-lasting peace in their homes, their schools, their neighbourhoods and their global community.

I am reminded by the Bosnian Ambassador to Malaysia, His Excellency Hajrudin Somun, that Bosnia-Herzegovina is today a country which is vibrant and peaceful after the war in 1992-1995.

Today, this once besieged nation is taking concrete steps in fostering values and looking to the future with renewed optimism and vigour. We are looking towards Bosnia-Herzegovina as a symbol of peace and a country that fosters and values respect for others, acceptance of diversity and social inclusion, which are the key qualities to creating a culture of peace.

It is inevitable that history has a nasty habit of repeating itself. The tragic events of Sept 11, 2001 and the escalation of conflicts around the world, such as the carnage in Iraq, have focused attention on the urgent issues of world peace and human security.

There is no way we can undo our past but we can learn from it and look forward to a bright new future with long term solutions that require substantial shift in mindsets on how peoples of all cultures view global citizenship, conflict resolution and respect for human rights. I firmly believe that the strongest force available to shape cultural change is education.

Bosnia Today is a reflection of the beauty of this once devastated land and the hope of its people. They have undertaken the monumental task of rebuilding their lives and their country and are ready to share their spirit and vitality with the rest of the world.

Peace came with a price – a price that has been dearly paid by the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina. *Bosnia Today* is a testament to the hope and resilience of the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina to build a new future for themselves and the future generations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lim Kok Wing', with a long, sweeping flourish extending downwards and to the right.

Tan Sri Dato' Dr Lim Kok Wing
President, Limkokwing University College of Creative Technology





[Small, illegible text block, likely a caption or description of the photograph above.]



Touched: Dr Mahathir at an exhibition *Bosnia: Beyond Words, Beyond Tears* organised by Limkokwing University College of Creative Technology as part of a worldwide awareness campaign.

Why Venice Is Sinking

I look at the sky over Venice.
Nothing's changed for the last seven billion years.
God's up there. He created the universe and then
the seven billion worlds in it and in every world innumerable nations,
a babel of tongues, but only one Venice.

He made each nation different, whispering: "Now get acquainted."
He gave them foreign language to get better acquainted with,
making them all, by this means, richer and better.
He made Venice the way he did birds and fish,
just like that, so people and nations would come to believe in him,
being, of course, thunderstruck by what he could do.

I look at the sky over Venice. Up there and everywhere - is God.
The only one. He created the universe,
seven billion worlds in the universe, and every world
filled with people and languages, to which he added
a single Venice. And in one world, upon a landmass known
as Europe, among the tribe of the southern Slavs, he placed
a small addenda. This is the border. Bosnia.
Bosnia, Bosnia. And here the Eastern cross and the Western cross,
formed of one cross, met and went to war.
But the Bosnians, being meek, took a third faith
and hewed to the unique God, the only One,

neither begotten, nor himself begetter,
Lord of the world, the Master of the Judgement Day.

I look at the sky over Venice. Worldly rulers
have decided that Bosnians should be - nowhere.
Venice is sinking. Europe is sinking. The cradle is sinking.
Roses in Murano glass vases are sinking. Murano
is sinking. Hotel rooms are sinking and
the Dead Poets Society is sinking. Why doesn't the world need
Bosnians? Amongst colours - one colour less?
Amongst scents - one scent less? Why doesn't the world need
Venice? Amongst wonders - one wonder less?

I look at the sky over this earthly world.

In a long arc, a single star is breaking up, right down through
the bottomless universe, falling, it seems, right into the Grand Canal.
This ordinary world, among seven billion celestial worlds,
is about to become poorer by a whole people.

Its worldly rulers appear to have so decided.

In the universe, therefore, a single falling star.

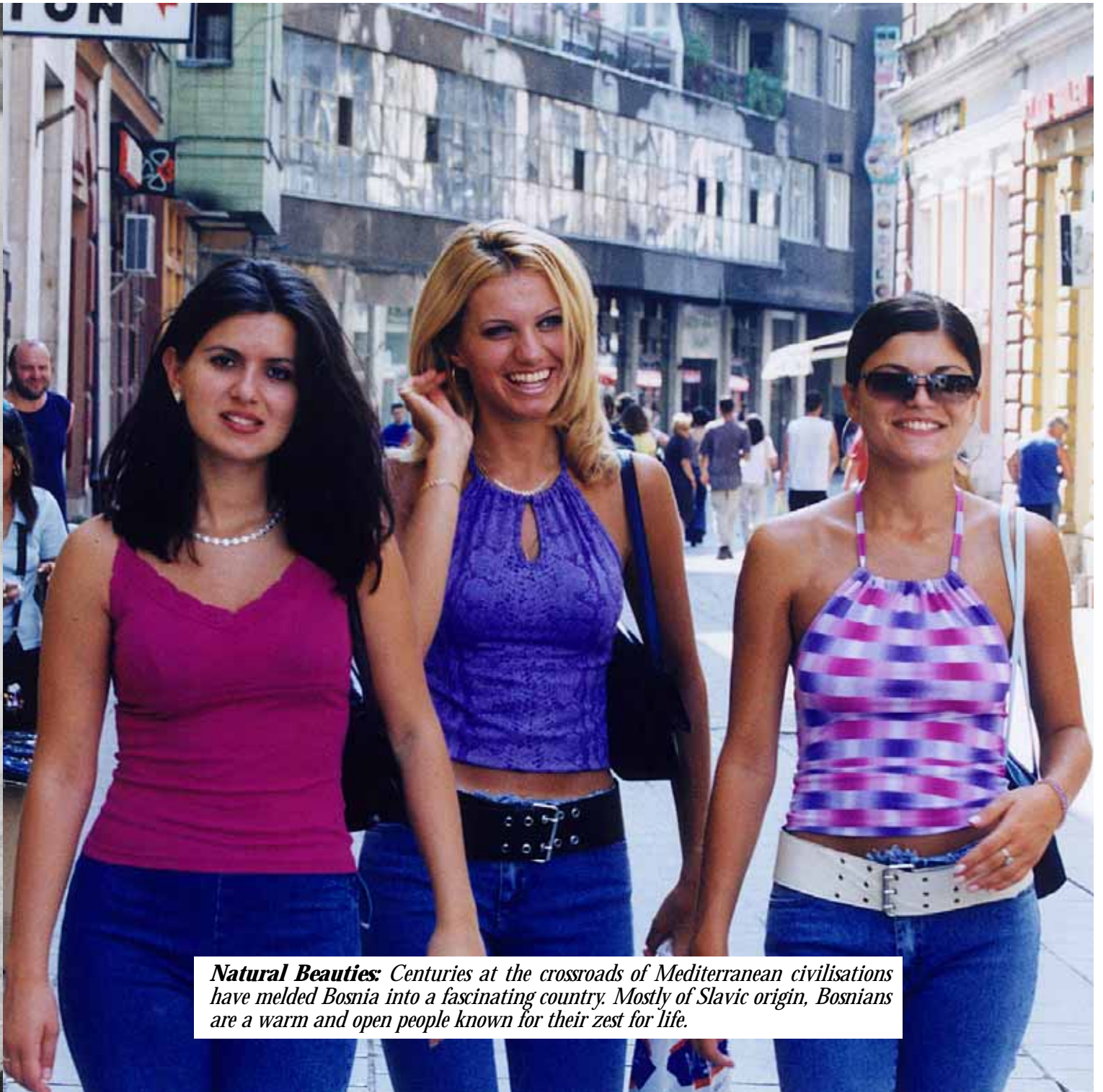
And Venice is sinking. The universe will be poorer by a whole world.

That is the will of the Lord of the worlds,
the will of the Master of Judgement Day.

Written by Abdulah Sidran
Translated by John Hartley Williams



Ten Years Earlier: *Thousands of Bosnians, mainly Muslims, were forced to leave their houses.*



Natural Beauties: Centuries at the crossroads of Mediterranean civilisations have melded Bosnia into a fascinating country. Mostly of Slavic origin, Bosnians are a warm and open people known for their zest for life.

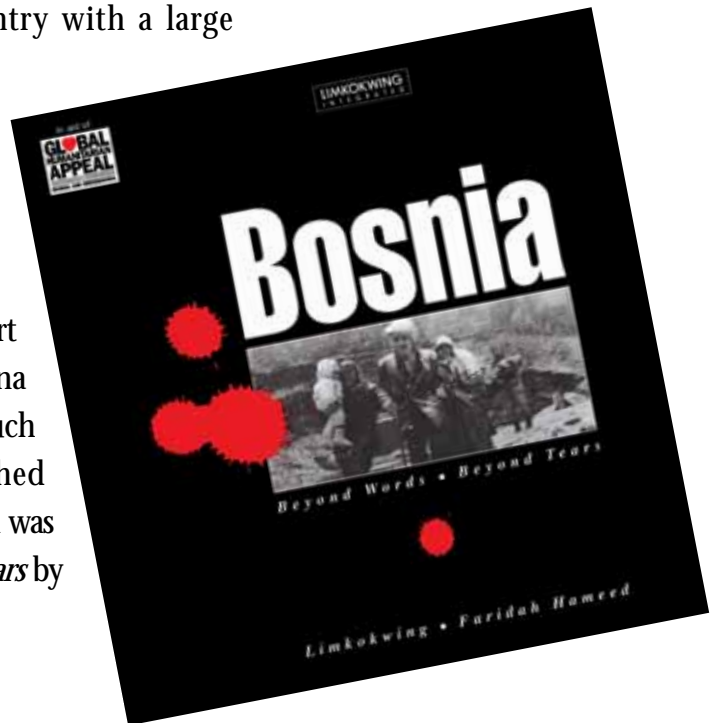
Bosnia Today

Hajrudin Somun

Why am I emphasising BOSNIA TODAY? Why not BOSNIA YESTERDAY?

I learn almost each day how much Malaysians know about Bosnia-Herzegovina in the war period and how much sympathy they feel for this small European country with a large Muslim community which had suffered aggression, genocide and ethnic cleansing not experienced since the Second World War.

Malaysia extended a lot of support and help to Bosnia-Herzegovina during the 1992-1995 war. Much had been written and published during that period, among which was *Bosnia: Beyond Words, Beyond Tears* by Limkokwing Integrated.



Our friends in Malaysia still keep in their hearts Bosnia as a symbol of suffering, struggling and a people seeking refuge. Many Malaysians I met had said with great sympathy: “There is no more war in Bosnia, *Shukur Allah*, is there?” When I stopped by in Ipoh, a young boy asked me where I came from. I told him that I was from Bosnia and asked him whether he knew where Bosnia is. He answered, “Of course I know. Bosnia-Herzegovina is in Europe. There was a huge war against Muslims.”

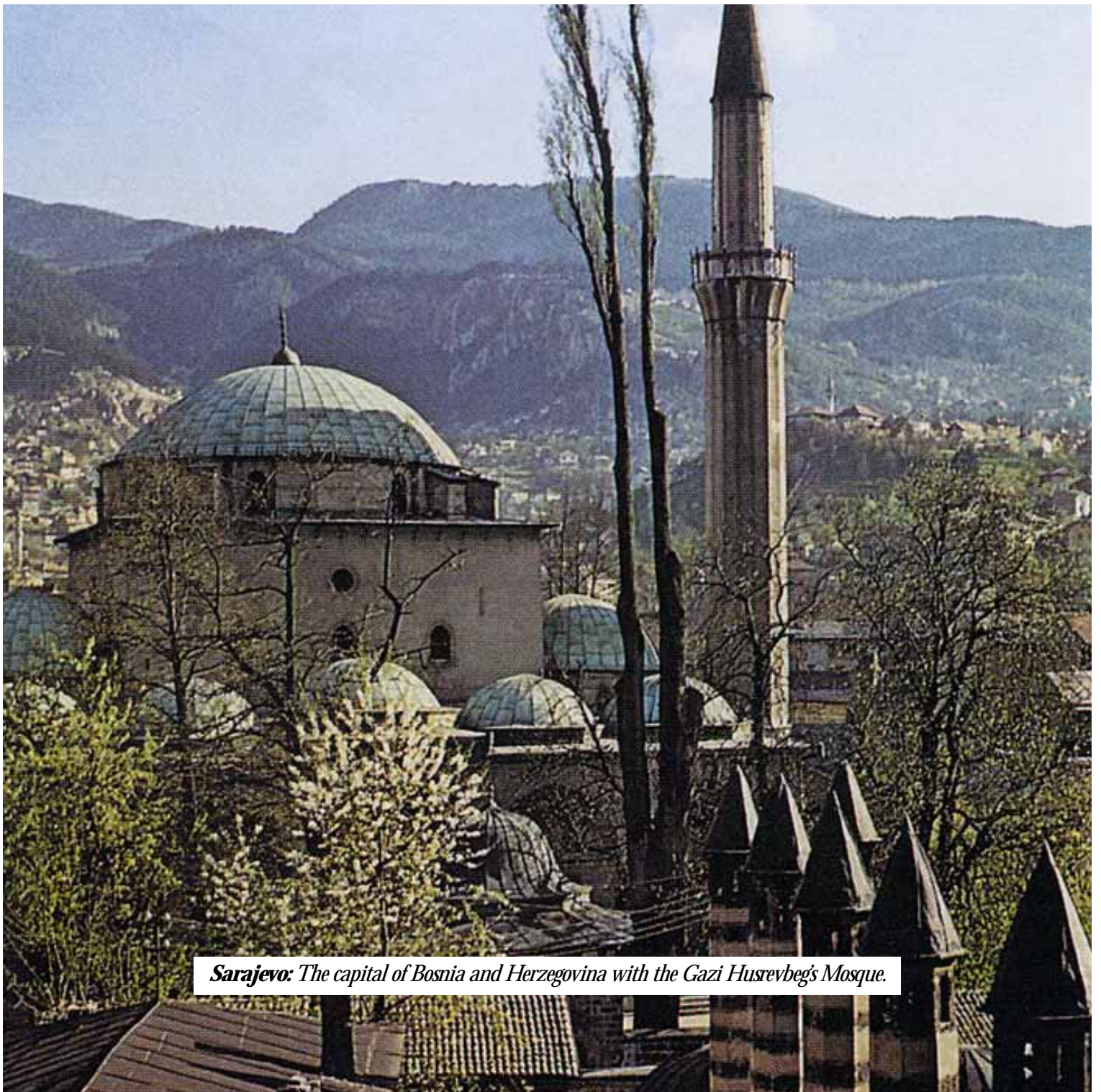
Few, however, are aware of what is currently happening and what peace is like in that country today.

It is not just the Malaysians who know only a little about Bosnia today, which is one of the most beautiful and until recently very developed European countries. In many Islamic and developing countries, only the images of Bosnia in war are still vivid.


Given the events in Palestine, this is completely unobjectionable.

However, eight years after achieving a peace agreement, Bosnia-Herzegovina now seeks more comprehensive relations and economic cooperation with Malaysia, as well as greater understanding that is beyond words, beyond sympathies.

That is why we would be happy if we could succeed in presenting a clearer picture of today’s Bosnia through this publication to our Malaysian friends as well as to our friends in the other member countries of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC).



Sarajevo: The capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina with the Gazi Husrevbeg's Mosque.



During his last visit to Bosnia in October 2000, Prime Minister of Malaysia Dr Mahathir Mohamad delivered a lecture at the Sarajevo University. I could still remember his words on injustice in today's world and his special message to the attending professors and intellectuals: "We have many things in common. Malaysia has a lot to learn from Bosnia, as well as Bosnia from Malaysia."

Following that message, I tried to compare these two multi-ethnic and multi-religious countries. I found out many figurative and amazing similarities, having in mind the tremendous distance and different historical, cultural and social circumstances. Maybe those similarities did play a role in the special relationship we had established during the war in Bosnia.

1. We have to start with some basic facts. In Bosnia, almost four million people living in approximately 50,000 sq km are divided ethnically into about 50% Bosniak-Muslims, about 35% Serbs-Orthodox, 15% Croats-Catholics, some Jews and other groups. Malaysia has similar percentages of Malay-Muslims, Chinese, Indians and other groups. The only difference is in the use of terms to describe the composition because Malaysia uses the term "racial" composition, not "ethnic" composition. However, this comparison is relative. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, almost all the inhabitants are of Slav origin, belonging to the large group of Slav nations. They speak the same language, although they call it by different names - Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian. Physically, that is racially, they do not differ. In Malaysia, as we know, there are different races in the European

understanding of the term “race”. They are not only of various faiths but also of different racial origins, different languages, scripts and customs.

2. We make similar distinctions between Bosnians and Bosniaks, likewise between Malaysians and Malays. All citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina are generally considered Bosnians, although the people living in the southern part, Herzegovina, do not like to be called Bosnians. Bosniaks are, however, Bosnians of the Islamic faith, or Muslims of Bosnia. The name was finally adopted a decade ago, using the old term by which Turks still call all Muslims coming from the Balkans.

Before that, the term “Muslim” was mainly used to denote the ethnic as well as national and political name for Bosnian Muslims. For long, they were not recognised as an indigenous ethnic community. Due to various nationalistic pressures, they were required to declare themselves as either Serbs, Croats or Montenegrins until the end of the Sixties of the last century.

3. There are some common historical facts, particularly regarding the Islamisation of Bosnia and the Malay Peninsula.

The Bosnian scholars usually summarise the key historical periods which had a crucial impact on Bosnia in four major events. The first took place in the year 395, when the Eastern and Western Roman Empire broke up, followed by a final schism of Christianity to the Church with its seat in Rome and the Church with its centre in Constantinople (presently Istanbul) in 1054. The second event was the fall of Bosnia to the Ottoman

Administration in 1463. That event was also generally accepted as the origin of Islam in Bosnia. The third event was the restoration of the Bosnian statehood in 1943, during the Second World War. The fourth event was the international recognition of the state of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1992, with the reinstatement of Bosniaks as a nation in 1993.

It is interesting to note that almost at the same time the Ottomans established their rule in Bosnia, the first sultan was installed in Malacca. Finding it attractive, more convenient and privileged, many mediaeval feudal dukes and local ruling families, who belonged to the Bosnian Church independent of Rome and Constantinople, easily accepted Islam. Bosnian Sanjak was one of most developed and important provinces of the Ottoman Empire, giving to the central power in Istanbul about 20 Grand Vezirs, or prime ministers.

The process of conversion to Islam evolved mostly “as a result of dynamism between the new religion and the State, and not as a result of psychological or physical repression”, according to Bosnian historian Mustafa Imamovic. Islam was spread “simply by people, and by circumstances”.

4. Returning to the present, we can compare the political structure of our two countries as well. Malaysia has its modern sultanates, governors, and federal and special territories.

Bosnia-Herzegovina has, under the provisions of the Dayton Peace Agreement, two entities with its presidents, parliaments and governments.


However, one entity, mostly Serbian (Republika Srpska), is centralised. The other, with Bosniak and Croat majority (Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina), has ten cantons (Swiss type) with a government and assembly in each canton. Each entity covers roughly one-half of the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, the Republika Srpska makes up a little over a third of the population while the Federation accounts for almost two-thirds of the Bosnia-Herzegovina population. And in between, there is a city-district, Brcko, with its own administration, similar to Labuan in Malaysia.

Thus, everything is mixed in that asymmetric state of two entities: one central and the other cantonal; one single-ethnic and the other a two-nation federation. These attributes weaken the central administration and make it less efficient.

5. From here, I have to be more cautious in making further comparisons because the similarities between Bosnia-Herzegovina and Malaysia are moving away from each other and towards different tracks.

Malaysia became a more balanced and stable country comprising various racial communities on account of different circumstances, including the failure of the





Malayan Union plan which the British attempted to impose on the Malays. On the other side, the Dayton Peace Agreement was imposed on the majority of the Bosnian people almost half a century later.

Searching for further similarities or dissimilarities is not worthy as it could lead to an even deeper pessimism regarding Bosnia.

So I stopped at the part where Malaysia overcame its ethnic differences and focused on economic development while Bosnia-Herzegovina became a victim of ethnic tensions and territorial ambitions. Economic prosperity and welfare – and not pseudo-mythical history and politics – contributed to the success of the state and individuals in Malaysia. It became a stable, prosperous and fully independent country while Bosnia is still vulnerable.

Where is Bosnia today?


Bosnia-Herzegovina declared its full independence after the referendum on March 1, 1992. In April 1992, the European Union member states and the US officially recognised Bosnia-Herzegovina as an independent state, and on May 22 it became a member of the United Nations.

Before that, Bosnia was independent only as an important mediaeval kingdom of Southeast Europe, encompassing within its borders large parts of today's Serbia, Croatia and the Adriatic Sea. In the last five centuries beginning in the 15th century, it was a part of the Ottoman Empire, Austro-

Late Medieval: *Stećci are the tombstones of the medieval Bosnia.*



***East And West Unite:** Daily life always brings the various peoples of Bosnia together regardless of ideological differences.*



Hungarian Empire, a royal and then the socialist Yugoslavia. But it has always enjoyed a special status, a kind of self-rule, except for the two decades of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, during which it was ruled by a Serbian king.

Almost on the same day of the recognition of Bosnia by the international community in early April 1992, Serbia and the Bosnian Serbs' paramilitary troops launched an aggression against that newly independent state. One year later, Croatia joined the war against Bosnia, which lasted until February 2004.

The war period of Bosnia-Herzegovina is widely known, and if there is any doubt about the nature of that war it can easily be cleared by checking the processes at the Hague Tribunal on War Crimes in former Yugoslavia. The war ended with the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina, widely known as the Dayton Peace Accord, which was initialled on Nov 21, 1995 in Dayton, US, and signed on Dec 14 in Paris, France.

However, the consequences of the 1992-1995 war had been far-reaching and incalculable.

It was estimated that 258,000 inhabitants of Bosnia-Herzegovina were dead or missing. Of that figure, about 150,000 were Bosniaks. In the UN protected zone of Srebrenica, more than 8,000 were killed. Today, about 20,000 people are still considered missing in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

There were 1.2 million refugees from Bosnia in other countries at the end of the war. More than one million were internally displaced persons.

The economic impact of the war was estimated at US\$50 billion-US\$60 billion (US\$1 = RM3.80), of which the industrial sector accounted for US\$20 billion. However, the combined total of direct and indirect losses was approximately US\$100 billion.

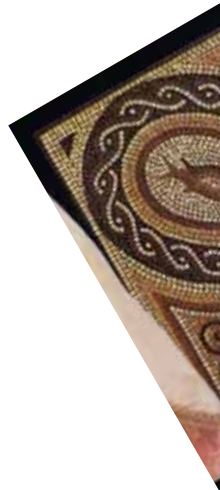
The destruction of society, social ties, tolerance and coexistence, the breakdown of families and the general collapse of social values and normal life were the most enduring consequences of the war which could not be mitigated in decades.

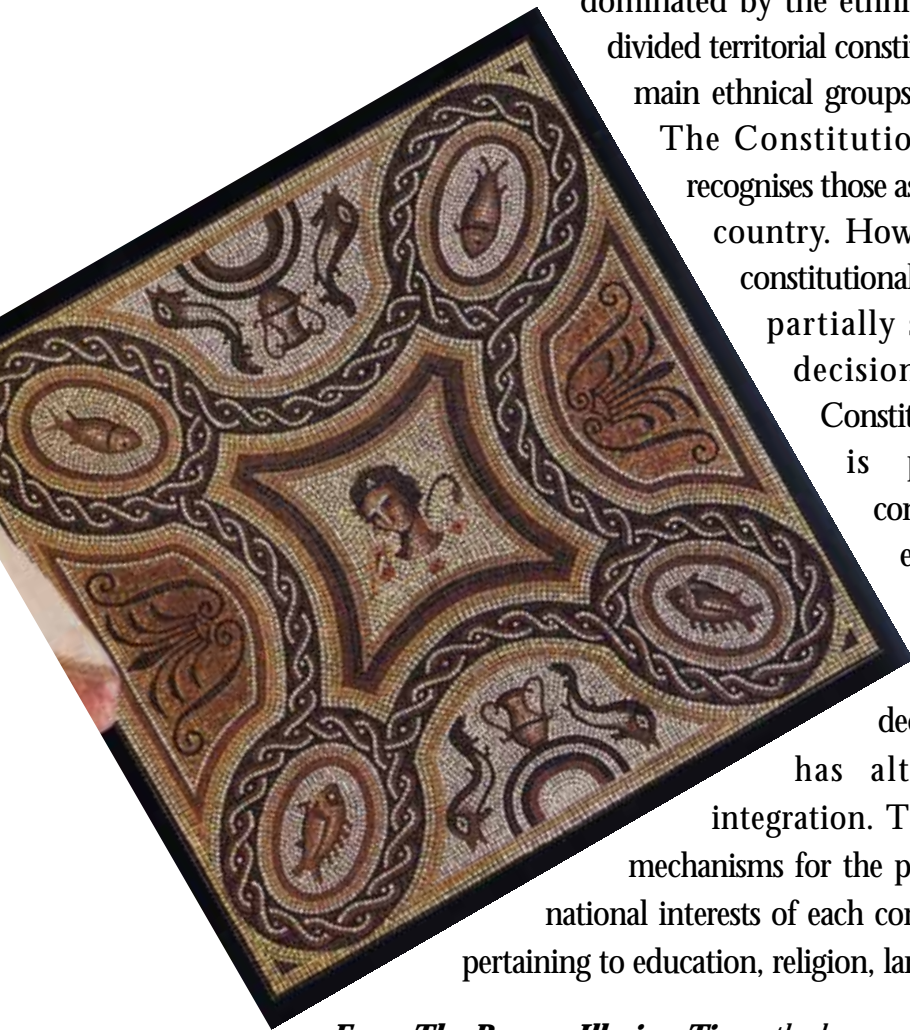
The brain drain was one of the more severe war consequences. It existed in various forms during the war. Many intellectuals were killed. Many left the country on their own will. Without registering as refugees, most of them remained in other countries in temporary employment while a few returned to Bosnia.

Eight years after the war ended, we are still suffering from most of those consequences in Bosnia.

Complex state structure

The Dayton Peace Accord brought an end to the armed conflict but at the same time precipitated an extremely complicated state structure, probably the most complicated in Bosnia's political history. With such complexity, Bosnia-Herzegovina will not have a bright future if the Dayton Peace Accord's structure and constitution are not significantly amended.





The basic constitutional structure of the country is dominated by the ethnic factor, manifested in the divided territorial constituencies of its three peoples, or main ethnic groups: Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats.

The Constitution of Bosnia-Herzegovina recognises those as the constituent peoples in the country. However, such a strict ethnic constitutional structure of two entities was partially soothed by an important decision of Bosnia-Herzegovina's Constitutional Court. It meant there is possibility for further constitutional changes, if there is enough political will.

Namely, the 2000 Constitutional Court decision on "constituent peoples" has altered advanced ethnic integration. The amendments established mechanisms for the protection of the so-called vital national interests of each constituent people, such as those pertaining to education, religion, language, promotion of tradition

From The Roman-Illyrian Time: the basement of a bathroom in Ilidza, built in the 1st century A.C.

and cultural heritage, and a public information system. In addition, they provided for an ethnically balanced representation in the entity parliaments and highest courts, based on the 1991 census taken prior to wartime that forced changes in the ethnic composition of various parts of the country. Entity parliaments subsequently adopted the agreement (although the High Representative had to impose elements in both Entities) and amended Entity constitutions now incorporated into the agreement. A Task Force, established to ensure implementation of the constitutional amendments, adopted an action plan for full implementation by 2003. By requiring representation of each constituent people in each Entity government, administration and judiciary, the constitutional amendments have only partially advanced national integration and affected the dynamics of local and national politics.

Following the October 2002 general election, the High Representative made further amendments to the Constitution, paving the way for the establishment of Entity and cantonal governments in line with the earlier constitutional amendments. (The corresponding law in Republika Srpska had already been adopted.) The amended law on the Federation government provides for a total of 16 ministers (8 Bosniaks, 5 Croats, and 3 Serbs). The Republika Srpska Government will also consist of 16 ministries (8 Serbs, 5 Bosniaks and 3 Croats). Mechanisms protecting the “vital national interests” of each constituent people were established.

The implementation of the new constitutional rules, however, remained a challenge.

Presenting the state structure of Bosnia is complicated enough. However, the complexity does not end here. There are other problems confronting the country, and most of them are the consequences of the Dayton Agreement and the Constitution.

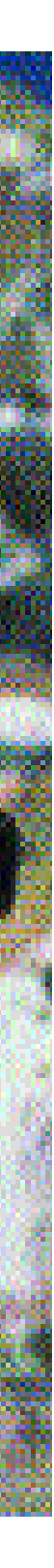
The executive branch of the state consists of the collective Presidency and Council of Ministers. The Presidency has three members, each representing the main ethnical communities of Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats. They are elected by popular vote for a four-year term, but they rotate as chairman every eight months. At present, members of the Presidency are Dragan Covic for Croats, Sulejman Tihic for Bosniaks and Borislav Paravac for Serbs. The next elections for this level of government are planned to take place in 2006.

The main political parties which formed the coalition are: Party of Democratic Action (SDA), headed by Sulejman Tihic; Serb Democratic Party (SDS), headed by Dragan Kalinic; Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), headed by Barisa Colak; Party for Bosnia and Herzegovina (SBIH), headed by Safet Halilovic; and Party of Democratic Progress, headed by Mladen Ivanic, Minister for Foreign Affairs. The Parliament is represented by 18 parties while the main opposition party is Social Democratic Party (SDP).

The head of the government is Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Adnan Terzic.



Olympics Hopfuls: Hosts of the 1984 Winter Olympic Games, the mountains of Jahorina and Bjelasnica near Sarajevo are hopefuls for 2010.



At the entity level, there are also presidents of the Federation and of the Republika Srpska, as well as governments and other institutions.

The legislative branch consists of bicameral Parliamentary Assembly or Skupstina, which consists of the National House of Representatives (42 seats) and the House of Peoples (15 seats, 5 for each ethnical community, or people). All are elected by popular vote to serve four-year terms.

So, there are 13 governments in Bosnia-Herzegovina with about 180 ministers at the state, entity and canton levels. Each minister has a deputy, assistants, secretaries, offices and cars. In a country of less than four million people, there are 13 chief ministers, 13 parliaments, 13 constitutions and 760 legislators. That means a chief minister for every 300,000 citizens.

The country spends 64% of its GDP on its politicians and bureaucrats compared to 43% in Slovenia and 31% in Albania.

The cost of all that administration is almost an incredible US\$1 billion and that does not even include the cost of services such as health, education and pensions. In the Federation part of the country, just 0.3% of the GDP is going to research and education. More than 90,000 young people left the country between 1996 and 2001, and 60% of those who stayed would leave if they get a chance.

In terms of security, Bosnia-Herzegovina has two armies with two ministers for defence. To make it more complicated, one of those armies,

in the Federation part, has two ethnical components, Bosniak and Croat. There are two police formations as well for each entity. Bosnia spends more than twice as much on defence as the developed European countries and one-third as much as the US.

It was grave, if not the biggest failure, of the Dayton Peace Accord to leave two armies in one country, which is unique in the world. One could even argue that the accord is sanctioning the military status quo at the end of war.

What has been achieved?

It would not be fair to look at Bosnia-Herzegovina only from a pessimistic angle. Building peace after a devastating war is no easy task.

There are some remarkable achievements in the postwar period.

The infrastructure of the country has been reconstructed. Almost all hospitals, schools, public buildings, roads and bridges have been repaired or rebuilt.

The freedom of movement has been restored. Five years ago, it was great courage to drive from one entity to another. Now, there is nothing unusual about it.

A million refugees have returned. Thousands of homes have been repaired. Hundreds of thousands of troops have been demobilised. Joint border control was established.

The prewar ethnic picture of Bosnia, where different communities, religions and cultures intermingled through centuries, is far from fully restored, but

it is slowly being mended. Of the one thousand destroyed mosques, many have been rebuilt. Even in Srebrenica, a new mosque built from Malaysian donations has opened. Serbs are returning to the Neretva valley, and Croats to Bugojno. In Janja, a small city on River Drina, 7,000 of the 10,000 prewar Bosniak inhabitants have returned and rebuilt their homes.

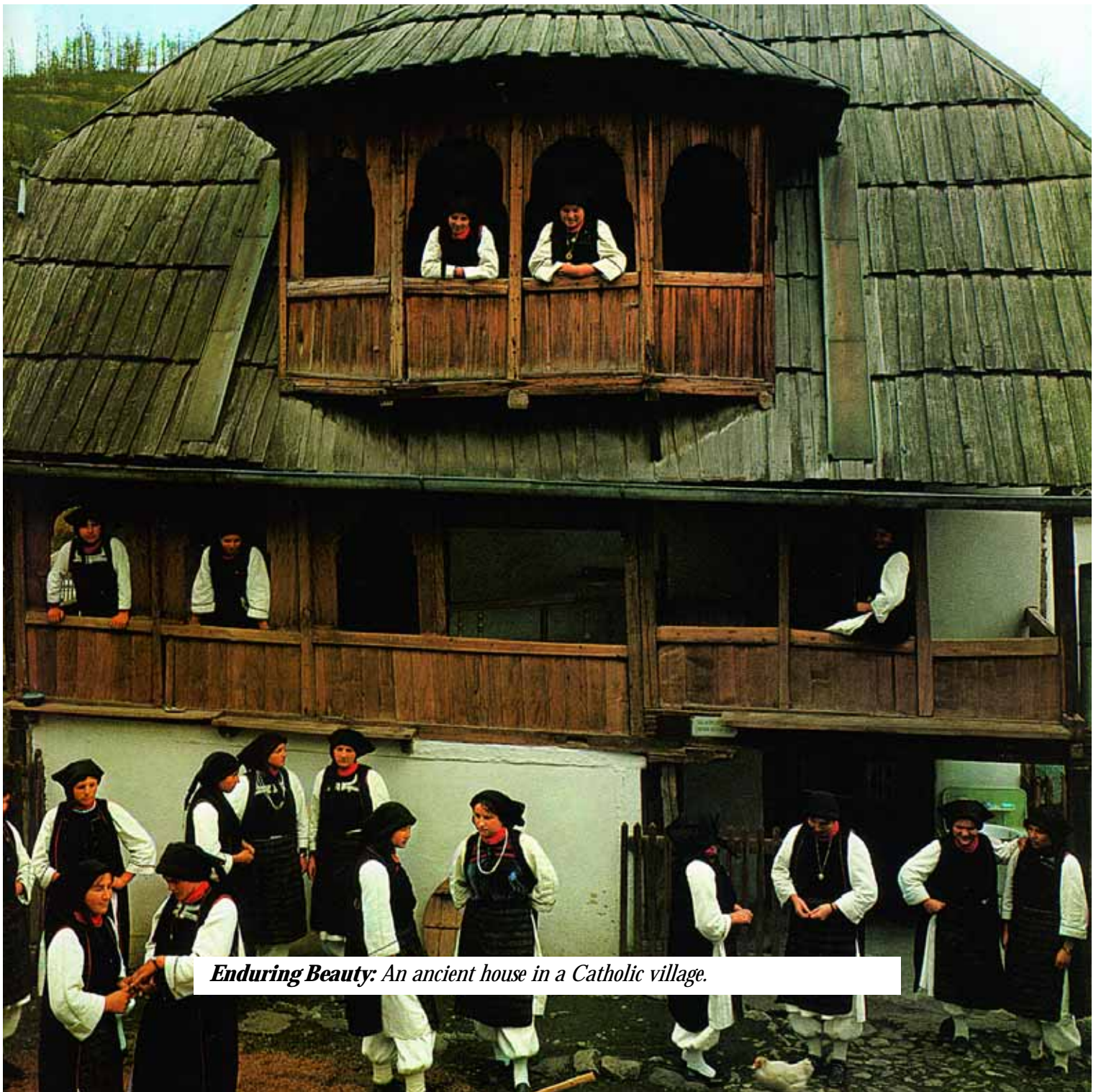
Bosnia-Herzegovina today has a stable and convertible currency, the Convertible Mark (KM), or Bosnian Mark (BAM), completely pegged to the Euro (ratio of 1:0.51).

International involvement


However, much less would have been achieved had it not been for the international involvement.

At the five donor conferences, the international community committed to donating US\$5.582 billion for the reconstruction of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Of that amount, approximately two-thirds have been implemented. The largest donors are the European Union (EU), the World Bank, the US, Japan and Islamic countries.

In the security field, the involvement of the international community was a decisive one. Peace could not have been restored in any other way than by the effective presence and action of the international troops, UNPROFOR under the UN umbrella and SFOR under NATO's auspices and command. There were international police formations in Bosnia under UN control but from 2003 they continued their mission in Bosnia



Enduring Beauty: An ancient house in a Catholic village.



under the auspices of the EU. International stabilisation troops have been reduced from 60,000 to 12,000, but they will stay in Bosnia at least until 2010, according to the American Council for International Relations.

However successful, the international military presence in Bosnia has one big black spot on its career in Bosnia, one unforgivable failure: the leaders suspected for war crimes, Serb political leader Radovan Karadzic and military commander general Ratko Mladic, are still at large. There is not any meaningful excuse for it. Steady, lasting peace and reconciliation – and not to mention confidence – cannot be restored while they are not captured and brought to The Hague Tribunal. There is no meaningful reply which is satisfactory to the Bosnians, particularly the Bosniak young generation, if they ask why those most wanted war criminals are still at large. How can these young people look to their future with confidence when they are growing up aware that it has been almost a decade that Radovan Karadzic is still hiding in the Bosnian forests? What kind of mindset will they form about the world around them? How can they be requested to participate in the rebuilding of the famous Bosnian multi-ethnic confidence?

What answers can those who designed and imposed the Dayton Peace Accord offer to the mothers, sisters and children of Srebrenica, whose husbands, brothers and fathers numbering more than 8,000 were killed in a few days by the order of Karadzic and general Mladic? Many of them are still waiting for the bones of their dead relatives to be found in one of the mass graves, after eight years, and to be assembled and buried as human beings.

Comparing the destiny of the Jews in the Second World War and that of Bosnians in the war of 1992-95, a Bosnian said: “Yes, there are some similarities, but differences as well – the German fascists were sentenced at the Nuremberg War Court, but ours are still walking through Bosnia-Herzegovina.”

Bringing suspected war criminals to The Hague Tribunal is also a prerequisite for the speedier redrawing of the demographic map of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The authors of the Dayton Peace Accord placed high priority on the return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their prewar homes. The peacemakers hoped that their return might one day reverse the territorial, political and national partition of the country that the Dayton Peace Accord otherwise recognised.

Until mid-2003, more than 367,000 Bosnians have returned to live as “minorities” in areas governed by former foes. Years of international efforts to open up their return through targeted reconstruction assistance, and the assurance that refugees and displaced persons have every opportunity to reclaim their prewar residences, have borne fruit. Some 900,000 people have returned to homes from which they fled or were expelled during the war.

Although the security situation has improved considerably, intimidation of “minority” returnees still happens. In some parts of the Republika Srpska, Bosniak-repaired houses are still the target of attacks and a returnee is ten times more likely to be a victim of violent crime than a local Serb. Even where the actual threat may be low, the continuing presence of putative

war criminals, especially if in public office, sends a negative message to potential Bosniak returnees.

The civil international involvement in Bosnia, which is being transformed from American to European, has its Office of the High Representative or OHR in Sarajevo. In some ways, the High Representative in Bosnia could be compared to the colonial “special advisers” to the Malayan rulers. Both have low profile titles, but a lot of prerogatives and power.


In the Bosnian case, in spite of the many misgivings and mistakes, the international presence embodied in the OHR has an effective and positive role, particularly in restoring and enhancing the state institutions, justice and education.

The High Representative had imposed many bills and laws in the last few years, which could not pass so many Bosnian governmental and parliamentary bodies. If there were no OHR, Bosnia perhaps would still not have passports, car number plates, identity cards and driving licences that are ordinary in the normal states.

The present High Representative is Lord Paddy Ashdown, the former leader of the British Liberals and long time member of the Parliament. His courageous trips to Bosnia during the war had earned him respect. When he was appointed High Representative in 2002, many Bosnians welcomed him, contrary to another British lord, Lord Owen, peace negotiator at the Geneva Conference who could even not hide his sympathies for the foes of



Charming A magical mix of many nations, races and cultures, the women of Bosnia are one of the most beautiful in Europe.



Bosnia and those who advocated the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Paddy Ashdown declared his decision to contribute to the reintegration and prosperity of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Some of his statements and decisions did not receive enough enthusiasm and support, some were even opposed, but he did not retreat.

While most of the European and American officials and media considered the results of the elections on Oct 4, 2002 as a failure and setback for the moderate parties, that Bosnia-Herzegovina is returning to nationalism, the High Representative thought otherwise. He said: “The message from the voters was clear. It was not: Give us nationalism. It was: Give us a future.”

He said there was only one answer from the elections which should be understood by Bosnian politicians – that whichever party they belong to, they must step up the pace of reforms and focus ruthlessly on those reforms that are essential, which are the rule of law, economic reforms, and functioning institutions of government.

The High Representative persists in joint work with the new Bosnian government to implement priority programmes in the next few years. “First justice, then jobs, through reforms,” he said. In other words, it will be the rule of law and economic reforms.

To achieve that, many things would have to be done and laws to be put in place, especially pertaining to the economy. If these are not adopted by the Bosnian governments and representatives, they will be imposed by the

OHR. The way in which the governments operate should be changed. The country's economy has to be reformed, all obstacles to foreign investment have to be cleared, and all unnecessary bureaucracy cut back.

There is still a lot to be done because international aid is decreasing, debts are growing while investments are still limited. The trade deficit in 2002 was more than US\$1.5 billion but there are signs of the trade balance improving in 2003. The country is importing nearly four times more than exporting. The foreign debt, although most of it was inherited from the time when Bosnia-Herzegovina was part of Yugoslavia, has increased to about US\$2.5 billion, although it is considered normal for a country of four million inhabitants.

Nearly eight years after the Dayton Peace Accord, and in spite of considerable achievements made, this state of affairs still worries Bosnians and the international community. The dilemma of the international community over when and how to disengage is real. The longer the people and politicians of Bosnia rely on foreigners to make their tough decisions and to pay their bills, the more difficult will be the reckoning. But, as it was emphasised in a report by the International Crisis Group (ICG), it is too soon either for despair or for neo-colonial guilt. In the first case, the consistency with which Ashdown has pushed and preached reform is beginning to dissipate the gloom in Bosnia-Herzegovina and abroad. As for the second, the international community still needs to expiate a different sort of guilt – for a war that need not have happened or lasted so long, a peace that established only the possibility of creating a viable state,

and for several years that followed when it was not even feasible to try.

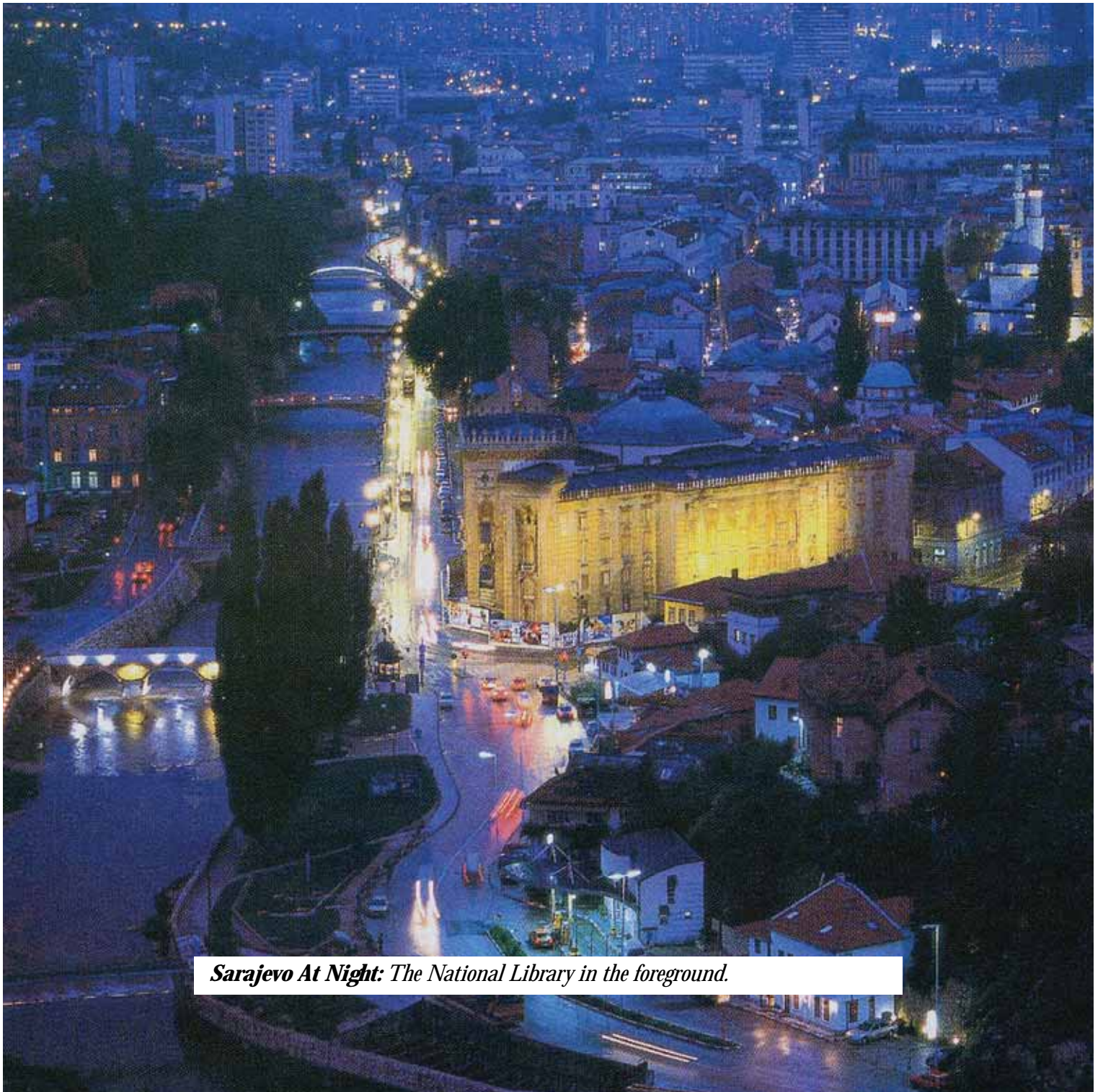
What is clearly being said to Bosnians by the international community is that they have no option but to step up the pace of reform if they are to follow other East European transition countries. They are to meet the EU and NATO standards which are more or less already met by ten other countries the EU has opened its doors to.

If Bosnia wants to approach the NATO standards, it should establish civilian, democratic control of the military. There should be one ministry of defence for Bosnia-Herzegovina and a joint defence policy. There should not be two or even three armies. This goal, however, could not be achieved without the direct involvement of the international community.


If Bosnia wants to approach the EU standards, it should make further institutional and economic reforms. A Road Map was already agreed to in that regard.

However, this Road Map and lasting security in Bosnia-Herzegovina will be difficult - if not impossible - to achieve without making essential constitutional changes to the Dayton Peace Accord's Constitution of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

For Bosnia-Herzegovina, the European destination is the only path of survival because it belongs there. And it has enough human resources to achieve this goal and to again become a model for the successful multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural society. If many talented young people are leaving the country, others are coming back. Bosnia was



Sarajevo At Night: The National Library in the foreground.



impoverished by the war and its consequences, but it has some magnetic powers. It has cultural identity and strength, which was symbolically recognised, earlier by the Nobel Prize in literature for Ivo Andric, and more recently by the Oscar for film director Denis Tanovic.

Looking to the future

That is why I emphasised at the beginning BOSNIA TODAY, and not BOSNIA YESTERDAY.

Unfortunately, it is still almost impossible to separate this country from the images of war. Last year, after presenting my credential letters to the King of Malaysia, Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Syed Putra Jamalullail, I was given a warm reception. I told the King: “Your Majesty, the people from the ceremonial protocol advised me that it is not a practice to talk about politics with the King. But when I say Bosnia, it already has political connotations!” He agreed, smiling.

But to look to the future is worth the effort. Returning from a war, the central hero of the novel, *The Fortress*, by another famous Bosnian writer Mesa Selimovic, said: “It’s not worth the recalling, be it regret or to glorify. Best to forget. Let people’s memory of all that’s ugly die, so children may not sing songs of vengeance.”

It is not possible to forget, but one has to look to the future.

Bosnia deserves it.