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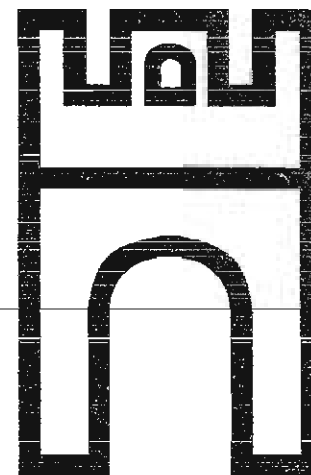
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Mostar: Epicenter of Bosnian Student Movements on the Eve of World War I

The mere mention of Bosnian student movements evokes the image of a single event: the assassination of Francis Ferdinand in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914, by a handful of youthful Bosnians. That event has been variously heralded as the shot heard around the world; as the beginning of the twentieth century; as the end of the age of innocence; and of course as the event that touched off World War I.¹⁾ However, the assassination had another consequence for historians. It has molded the nature of inquiry into the history of Bosnia and Hercegovina in the years prior to World War I. Scholars, polemicists, popularizers, and journalists have all focused their attention on those few students who became terrorist assassins. They have neglected the broader student movements that flourished in several Bosnian cities prior to World War I, movements that played influential roles in domestic Bosnian politics at the time. And they have overlooked the fact that the most important location of those movements, the vital epicenter of discontent, was the gimnazija in the city of Mostar.

What is a student movement? Lewis Feuer refers to it as a "conflict of generations" that occurs when the "generational equilibrium" of a society breaks down.²⁾ Feuer notes that student movements are likely to emerge in societies undergoing rapid change. Participants in student movements are highly conscious of their flitire roles as members of an intellectual elite. Alienated from their own fathers and from the rest of society, they are brought together by a willingness to "sacrifice their own economic interests for the sake of a vision of a nobler life for the lowliest."³⁾

Student movements in this sense of the term did not come into existence until about fifteen years after Austria-Hungary (hereafter called simply "Austria") acquired the right to "occupy and administer" the Ottoman provinces of Bosnia and Hercegovina in 1878. The Habsburg authorities encountered resistance from principally Muslim armed bands in the summer of 1878 and again from Serbian and Muslim insurgents in 1882, but neither movement had any separate identifiable youth component (both were crushed by the Habsburg army). Thereafter, Austrian occupation was relatively tranquil until the mid-1890's, when all three principal confessional communities in Bosnia - Serbian Orthodox, Muslim, and Catholic - began campaigns for greater autonomy from Austrian administrative control. These movements were led by traditional elites; clergy in the Catholic case; landowners and hodžas in the Muslim campaign; and clergy, merchants, and artisans in the Serbian Orthodox drive for autonomy.⁴⁾ Many of these leaders went on to become organizers of the political parties that were created beginning in 1906 along the lines of ethno-confessional, or national, communities. These leaders were what Yugoslav historians referred to as "bourgeois" (građanski) politicians, or what I will refer to here as conventional politicians, as distinct from youthful, or student, activists. The conventional politicians organized parties, engaged in coalition-building, and conducted electoral campaigns when Bosnia received a constitution and a Parliament (Sabor) in 1910.

The resurgence of political activism in mid-1890's had a distinct youthful component despite the dominance of the traditional elites. This was particularly pronounced in the cases of the Muslims and the Serbs. The youthful activists had a common profile: most were educated in the institutions of the Monarchy proper, and they wanted to strengthen the cultural and social foundations of their respective ethnic group rather than expend the group's energies on the quest for religious autonomy. Still, the youth of each ethnic group went in quite different directions politically. Young Muslim intellectuals, centered around the newspaper Bošnjak founded in 1891, adopted a pro-Austrian orientation.⁵⁾ They saw the authorities as allies in their crusade for better education for Muslims and in their attacks upon the wasteful consumption habits of many Muslim landowners. Serbian youth, on the other hand, became increas-

ingly hostile to the Austrian regime and more sympathetic to neighboring independent Serbia. They criticized the leaders of the Serbian autonomy movement for being pre-occupied with religion and for being too accommodating toward the Austrian authorities. They came to form a separate faction in the Serbian National Organization, a political group founded in 1907.⁶⁾

These manifestations of a separate youth viewpoint were tame in comparison to later developments. The politicization of Bosnia's youth, which began at the time of the autonomy movements in the 1890's, was a gradual process that accelerated in the early years of the twentieth century. Two extrinsic factors enhanced the growth of a Bosnian student movement: developments in other South Slav lands, and the Austrian regime's approach to school and discipline problems in Bosnia.

After the turn of the century, a rapid succession of international events influenced the students in Bosnia. The murder of Serbian Prince Alexander Obrenović in 1903 led to a new, sharply anti-Austrian course in the politics of independent Serbia, raising the hopes of many Bosnian Serbs that they might become a part of an expanded Serbian state if Austria could be driven from Bosnia. The annexation of Bosnia by Austria in 1908, dashing the hopes of Serbia and the Ottoman Empire to acquire the territory, further intensified nationalist feelings within Bosnia and led to the creation of small, conspiratorial cells of students and an attempted assassination in 1910.

It was, however, the Balkan Wars, more than the annexation, which gave great impetus to the movement for secret student societies of substantial size dedicated to creating a South Slav state outside the framework of the Habsburg Monarchy. The annexation crisis had ended in defeat for Serbia, albeit without military conflict; but both Balkan wars (1912 and 1913) ended in Serbian victories, giving a new sense of heroic achievement to the Serbian people and lending new prestige to the Serbian army. Austria, on the other hand, had prepared for war but passed through the crisis without military engagement. The Dual Monarchy forced Montenegro to abandon Scutari in April 1913 by a diplomatic ultimatum after the tiny kingdom had conquered the town in a prolonged and costly siege. Many South Slavs believed that Austria had won



glory on the cheap and cheated Montenegro out of its rightful acquisition. The Balkan wars increased the antagonism of many South Slavs to Austria and led to suspicions that the Dual Monarchy could be defeated in war.

These international events and their repercussions sounded the death-knell for Austria's aspirations to insulate Bosnians from the political currents of neighboring South Slav lands. After 1903, politics in Bosnia became increasingly intertwined with events in Serbia, Montenegro, Dalmatia, and Croatia. Serbia and Montenegro actively contributed to the growth of dissatisfaction in Bosnia. Serbia conducted activities designed to spread the spirit of Yugoslavism, a notion that threatened Austria because any independent South Slav state would necessarily include some lands of the Dual Monarchy. The Serbian government and various organizations offered scholarships for South Slav students to study in Belgrade where they could be exposed to Pan-Serbian and Yugoslav ideals. In 1912, the Serbian government offered 75 percent discounts on railway fares to members of student "vacation" societies so that youthful Bosnian activists could more easily attend rallies and meetings in Serbia.⁷⁾ Periodic incidents along the borders between Bosnia and the states of Serbia and Montenegro deteriorated into near-war at the time that the Balkan wars were being fought.⁸⁾ Austrian border guards intercepted infiltrators

carrying bombs, rifles, and propaganda. The police discovered Bosnians, heavily armed, crossing the borders with supplies and uniforms from Serbia or Montenegro. By 1914, the Austrians were more concerned with the possibility of a massive Serbian assault and uprising than they were with the possibility of a single terrorist act.

Within Bosnia and Hercegovina, Austrian school and disciplinary policies were a curious mixture of cautious response and an annoying emphasis on small details. These policies inadvertently furthered the aims of the Serbian and Croatian nationalist student leaders by giving them many instances of petty harassment to portray as persecution of their respective nationalities. Those policies came out of Austria's overall plan to modernize their newly-acquired colony without disrupting the land's backward social structure and risking a revolutionary upheaval. Particularly after 1903, Austria invested considerable resources in education to increase the number of native Bosnians who were literate and also sympathetic to the Monarchy's aims.⁹⁾ The government awarded scholarships to promising students and opened many new schools. Good teachers for the new schools were not easy to find; a government official admitted in 1914 that teachers were hired "where we found them."¹⁰⁾

To compensate for the questionable quality and to reduce the likelihood of student participation in politics, the regime instituted careful control of curriculum, teacher behavior, student classroom activities, and even student behavior out of class. The student conduct code of 1908 had 152 paragraphs.¹¹⁾ It prohibited student membership in any organization inside or outside of school and put even student landlords under the close supervision of school officials. Each student was required to buy a copy of the code and return a signed certificate affirming that his/her parent or guardian had read the regulations. In one incident in 1913, a teacher was reprimanded for lecturing for two hours on the historical use of the Cyrillic alphabet in Bosnia and Hercegovina. His error, however, was not in lecturing about Cyrillic; rather, he delivered the lecture in the fourth high school class rather than in the sixth class where this topic was supposed to be covered.¹²⁾

If regulatory policies focused on minute details and annoyed many of those subject to them, the regime's enforcement of the regulations lacked any real clout. Disciplinary measures

were principally symbolic in character — private or public reprimands, brief suspensions, poor grades in some instances — designed to serve as warnings or bring moral disrepute upon the perpetrator. Behind these mild reprimands and punishments was the assumption that education was a privilege bestowed by the government upon the population for which the recipients, the students, should be grateful, and the general public would shame them into compliance if their misdeeds became known. But the same symbolic reprimands were publicized as "repressive" measures by the students or other nationalist propagandists; consequently, the policy of mild discipline hurt the Monarchy's cause more than it helped. Authorities were reluctant to employ more severe punishments, since more severe measures would alienate the conventional politicians of Parliamentary groups in the ruling coalition. Furthermore, officials did not want to detract from the long-term (and quite urgent) mission of building a loyal native Bosnian elite. They revoked scholarships or expelled students in flagrant cases of political agitation, but these measures were also counterproductive. They drove the students out of Bosnia and into the welcome arms of educators in independent Serbia, who were prompt in offering scholarships to dissidents from Bosnia. The Austrian authorities were so desperate for teachers that they continued to hire graduates of Serbian educational institutions right up until the assassination in 1914.¹³⁾

Austrian disciplinary policy in Bosnian schools, plotted as cautious and mild, was fraught with consequences both unintended and undesirable from the regime's standpoint. Student activists in Bosnia not only stayed around to fight another day, they soon returned with old grievances to settle and new agitational techniques to use in their propaganda campaigns. Secret student societies existed as early as 1899 in Bosnia, and they grew throughout the first fourteen years of the new century. The nature of their activities varied with the degree of government toleration. According to a War Ministry report, by 1913 student activities in Dalmatia were quite open, whereas in Bosnia the students were forced into greater secrecy by close government surveillance.¹⁴⁾

But the greatest spurt in the growth and influence of Bosnian student movements coincided with the Balkan wars. Student societies proliferated in Bosnia starting in 1912. Vladimir Dedijer refers to members of these groups as a "new revolu-

tionary generation,"¹⁵⁾ but it would be more accurate to say that the movement progressed from small, conspiratorial circles to larger scale organizations. One could not call these groups "mass" organizations (they still remained secret), but their memberships were significant: about 100 in Sarajevo, 34 in Tuzla, 100 or more in Mostar, and a group of unspecified size in Banja Luka.¹⁶⁾ Furthermore, these organizations increasingly commanded the tacit support of their classmates, so that in confrontations most of the students would frequently align themselves with members of the secret societies.

By the fall of 1913, most middle schools, merchant schools, teacher preparatory institutions, and high schools in Bosnia had secret student societies. These groups have collectively been designated as "Young Bosnia" by scholars of the assassination.¹⁷⁾ But that term probably attributes too much cohesion and coordination to a very diverse, disconnected, and independent group of organizations.

Mostar was the leading center of student activism. Much smaller than Sarajevo, Mostar had a tradition as a breeding ground for political discontent, and most students at the high school (gimnazija) there became politically active by 1914. Leading Mostar high school students included Bogdan Žerajić, who killed himself after an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate the Governor of Bosnia in 1910; and Vladimir Gaćinović, a pioneer student activist with extensive contacts with Russian revolutionaries. More importantly, Mostar became the center of ongoing confrontations between the Austrian authorities and students at the gimnazija in the spring of 1914 that involved both symbolic acts and violence.

In April 1914, a German theater group visited Mostar to present a play. Midway through the performance, a group of twenty to twenty-five middle school students threw a stink bomb on stage and sang a song of loyalty to the Slavs.¹⁸⁾ They were expelled rather roughly from the theater by police and several Austrian military personnel who were attending the play. A few days later, many of the same students requested permission of school authorities to attend a meeting to commemorate the deaths of the Croatian heroes Zrinjski and Frankopan, even though student attendance at this event had been expressly forbidden in 1903. The authorities refused to grant permission. In response, two Serbian delegates to the Parliament of Bosnia and Hercegovina arranged for a memorial

service at 7:00 a.m. on the day in question so that students could attend and still make it to school by 8:00 a.m. The service, held in the Franciscan Church, was well-attended by students from all ethnic groups. Over two-thirds of all gimnazija students attended. As they left the church, the students were confronted by the police. After negotiations between authorities and the two Serbian delegates to Parliament, the students were allowed to proceed peacefully in a group, and a brief rally was staged in a downtown park. The delegates addressed the several hundred students, emphasized the importance of the holiday, and urged the students to return peacefully to school.

But by then the students were all late. Most school directors simply resumed classes, but the director of the preparatory school for teachers notified the tardy students that they would all be expelled. A few days later, the government overruled the school director and ordered all of the students to be re-admitted.

In May, the confrontations became more violent. Faculty members at the Mostar gimnazija voted to bar two Serbian students from admission to end-of-year examinations because of poor grades. One of these students asked a professor in class why he had been denied the right to take the examination and the class became unruly when the professor tried to answer. The student then threw an inkwell at the professor, covering him with ink and giving him a bloody nose. The next day a Serbian student, Krsto Marić, slapped Professor Prezel on the face and shouted, "You have insulted the Serbs," then fled the building. A few days later a student named Mihajlo Mihić threw an inkwell at another professor to the applause of the majority of students in the class. The authorities expelled some students and briefly closed the school.

These actions mobilized many of the students and deeply divided the faculty, who argued at length about the appropriate punishment for the offenders. The actions thereby achieved their goal of disrupting the educational process. This time, the authorities were spared a strike of students, but almost all students in the Mostar schools had been involved in at least one of the events described above. They nearly succeeded in paralyzing the normal functions of the school. The tactics were demonstrative and disruptive, aimed at politicizing as many students, teachers, and outsiders as possible.

The Mostar events just described took place only a few weeks before the Archduke's assassination, and they illustrate many of the broader characteristics of the student societies and movements on the eve of World War I. The Mostar events involved hundreds of students, far more than the conspiracy that ended in the death of Francis Ferdinand. They illustrate the depth and breadth of student activism in Bosnia by 1914. The student movement was an authentically Bosnian development; it was not called into existence by any foreign government. Independent Serbia may have encouraged it with propaganda, travel discounts, and very probably weapons and bombs. But although the Bosnian student movement had considerable foreign links by 1914, it had indigenous roots dating back at least 15 years.

Although scholars have frequently portrayed members of these groups as in rebellion against the older generation, the students in Bosnia and Hercegovina maintained extensive ties with conventional politicians that were reciprocal and mutually advantageous. The conventional, more senior political leaders, mostly radical Serbs, played key roles in organizing the societies. They offered them places to meet, donated libraries, provided financing, and defended their cause when the government threatened repression.¹⁹⁾ In Mostar in 1914, the Catholic Bishop and the Orthodox Metropolitan intervened to prevent the mass expulsion of student activists from school.²⁰⁾ Youthful activists became the shock troops of the more radical conventional politicians, and at the same time that the students contributed to the radicalization - i.e., the development of more extreme nationalism - of political life. In this regard they exercised considerable upon the conventional politicians. These close ties prevented the authorities from taking stern measures against the students, for they realized that they would arouse the ire of the population and destroy existing Parliamentary coalitions. For their part, the students normally accepted the mediating role of the Parliamentary politicians in their escalating confrontations with the authorities. Perhaps it can be argued that individual youthful agitators and assassins were motivated by conflict with the older generation, but the connections between conventional and student societies in Bosnia and Hercegovina were both extensive and systematic.

Reflecting the organizations and loyalties of the conventional politicians, most student groups were established along

the ethno-confessional fault lines that characterized society as a whole. Those groups that espoused a vague form of Yugoslavism were made up mainly of Serbian students and Muslims attracted to the Serbian national viewpoint. There were instances of groups with members from all three ethnic groups, particularly in the period 1912 to 1914, but the rule was for participation in groups with ethno-religious designations.²¹⁾ On frequent occasions, Serbian and Croatian students celebrated one another's holidays, and they often worked together to protest acts of government repression. Their opposition to Austrian overlordship drew them together for collaboration that was practical and tactical, but it was based on participation in distinct, separate organizations.

The most striking feature of these movements was the virtually total absence of the students to any ideology, let alone the details of a particular political, national, or social program. In their broad orientations, the student societies ranged from Catholic clerical to radical Serbian nationalist. If there was an overriding theme among student organizations in Bosnia and Hercegovina after 1912, it was an attraction to the notion of Yugoslavism. This was neither well-defined nor thoroughly understood by most of its advocates. Members of Sarajevo student organizations who were questioned after the assassination were universally ignorant of what their organizations ostensibly believed, and they didn't seem to care very much.²²⁾ Even a Sarajevo organizational charter, seized by the Austrians in a house search in 1914, was not very explicit about ideological precepts.²³⁾ It advocated cultural revival for the South Slavs and at times half-heartedly included the Slovenes in that notion, but it failed to spell out the relationship between components of the South Slav group. Most members of the student organizations wanted to see the creation of a South Slav state independent of the Habsburg Monarchy, and therefore they hated Austria; but that was about the extent of their common commitment. Most striking was the lack of any well-specified program of social change. Some were republicans; others wanted South Slav unification under the Serbian dynasty; most didn't even think that far ahead, preferring to leave such complex problems to a few spokesmen. Whether Serbia should have hegemony in such a state, whether it should be socialist in orientation, whether a

Constitution should be promulgated - these were remote issues to many of the students.

What tied these activists and their followers together was, more than anything, an obsession with the Propaganda of the Deed: action for its own sake. The single point of agreement for most students lay in the area of tactics: they wished to escalate confrontations with the authorities to gain recognition and sympathy for their nationalist cause. Symbolic and disruptive acts were the media of these confrontations, although they occasionally involved assaults on persons as well. These would make it difficult for government to continue functioning normally and force the Austrians to admit their failure to win the loyalty of the local population.

The student movement formed an increasingly distinct aspect of politics in Bosnia and Hercegovina after 1900, radicalizing conventional politics and intensifying the drive toward Yugoslavism. Still, it never fully transcended the divisions of conventional political groups and was always closely related to the designs of legal parliamentary parties. Lacking a cohesive ideological orientation such as socialism, it was simply a tactically bolder extension of trends that prevailed among conventional nationalist leaders. The Bosnian student movement will ever be remembered in notoriety for its single monumental destructive act, the assassination of the Archduke. That act was a logical, if extreme, extension of students' belief in the value of the Propaganda of the Deed.

- 1) The literature on the assassination is now vast enough to occupy hundreds of pages of citations. Much of it has been polemical, designed to place blame or justify a political program of an interested constituency. Cvetko Popović, *Oko sarajevskog atentata* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1969) provides a bibliographical review of works as of that time. Vladimir Dedijer, *The Road to Sarajevo* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1967), is one authoritative English-language work on the assassination that explores much of the historical background.
- 2) Lewis Feuer, *The Conflict of Generations the Character and Significance of Student Movements* (New York: Basic Books, 1969), p.11.

- 3) *ibid.*
- 4) A description of all three movements is found in Mustafa Imamović, *Pravni položaj i unutrašnji politički razvitak Bosne i Hercegovine od 1878. do 1914.* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1976.). pp. 80-127.
- 5) Muhsin Rizvić, *Književno stvaranje muslimanskih pisaca u Bosni i Hercegovini u doba austrougarske vladavine* (Sarajevo: Akademija nauka i umjetnosti Bosne i Hercegovine, 1973.), I, 111-112.
- 6) Imamović, *Pravni položaj*, p.160-161.
- 7) Arhiv Bosne i Hercegovina, Sarajevo (hereafter abbreviated ABH). 1181 Präsidual Register Bosnien und der Hercegovina (hereafter abbreviated PrBH) 1914. Landesregierung (hereafter abbreviated LR) to Gemeinsam Finanzministerium (hereafter abbreviated GFM), 25 July 1914.
- 8) Examples are found in ABH. 715/PrBH 1913; 680/PrBH 1913; and 691/PrBH 1913.
- 9) Ferdinand Schmid, *Bosnien und die Herzegovina unter der Verwaltung Österreich-Ungarns* (Leipzig: von Veit, 1914), pp.695-742.
- 10) ABH. 705/PrBH 1914, LR to GFM, 15 June 1914.
- 11) Mitar Papić, *Školstvo u Bosni i Hercegovina za vrijeme austrougarske okupacije (1878-1918.)* (Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1972.), p. 177.
- 12) ABH. 1203/PrBH 1913. LR to GFM, 23 August 1913.
- 13) ABH. 790/PrBH 1914. "Abschrift einer Note des k.u.k. Kriegsminister Ritter von Krobotin, Wien, 2 Juli 1914."
- 14) ABH. 673/PrBH 1913. "Abschrift eines Einsichtaktes des k.u.k. Kriegsministeriums, ddo. 1 April 1913, an das k.u.k. gemeinsame Finanzministerium, in Angelegenheiten Bosniens und der Hercegovina."
- 15) Dedijer, *The Road to Sarajevo*, pp.184.
- 16) ABH. Various documents in 899/PrBH 1914 and 1 173IPrBH 1914.
- 17) See Dedijer, *The Road to Sarajevo* Note 1, pp.477-478. The term was adopted from a few articles written by student activists prior to 1914.
- 18) Descriptions of these events are found in two documents: ABH. 564/PrBH 1914. LR to GFM, 11 May 1914; and in ABH. 750/PrBH 1914, LR to GFM, 15 June 1914.
- 19) ABH. 899/PrBH 1914.
- 20) ABH. 564/PrBH 1914. LR to GFM, 11 May 1914.
- 21) Papić, *Školstvo u Bosni i Hercegovini*, p.178.
- 22) ABH. 1184/PrBH 1914. LR to GFM, 25 July 1914.
- 23) ABH. 1 184/PrBH 1914. "Prva redakcija općeg program za omladinski klub Narodno ujedinjenje."