

# RECONSTRUCTION OF VIJEĆNICA – BUILDING OF THE NATIONAL AND UNIVERSITY LIBRARY OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

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## REKONSTRUKCIJA VIJEĆNICE – IZGRADNJA NACIONALNE I UNIVERZITETSKE BIBLIOTEKE BOSNE I HERCEGOVINE

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**Tekst dr Kujundžića govori o potrebi obnove  
Vijećnice kao biblioteke, ili izgradnji potpuno  
nove zgrade za potrebe NUB BIH.**

The destruction of Vijećnica – the old Library building in summer of 1992 represents one of the most tragic consequences of war in the period 1992-1995. Its value as a architectural monument, the content of its precious collections has been recognized for many years. To bring back to life the beautiful building – symbol of the city of Sarajevo and to reconstitute its priceless manuscripts and other documentary records represents not only architectural and financial challenge but also will make valuable contribution to the fruitful dialogue between various civilizations which have left their traces in this country.

### PREHISTORY

Vijecnica, home for the Library since 1951, as the most visible monument of the urban development of Sarajevo in the first decades of Austro-Hungarian rule has been completed in 1896. As early as 1881 Mustajbeg Fadilpašić, the mayor of the city, has proposed to the City council the construction of the new city-hall – its original function.

Several years have passed until the idea of the new building was taken up again. In the beginning of 90ties of the nineteenth century Government has

made necessary decisions and money was appropriated for the construction. Its location was decided to be to the east from the main Baščaršija market at the place known as Mustajpaša's mejdan. The design of the city hall was initially made by architect Carl Patch (1857-1942). The construction work was carried out by two engineers : Aleksandar Wittek in the period 1892-1893, and from 1893-1895, by Ćiril Iveković.

The completion of the building was gleefully greeted in the journal appropriately called "Nada" or "Hope", on 1st. December 1897, reminding the readers that most of the building material for the building came from Bosnia while some was imported from Tirolia and Hungary. In its history the building had various tenants. At one time it was city hall, court house, from 1910 until 1914 it was a seat of Bosnian Parliament. After second world war it was home of the Academy of sciences and arts of BH, finally in 1951, it became Library remaining so until fatal destruction by Serbian forces in 1992.

### RECONSTRUCTION OF THE BUILDING – RECONSTRUCTION OF MEMORY

Reconstruction of the old Library building started after the war which ended by signing Dayton peace agreement in November of 1995. The initial stage of the reconstruction was supported by Austrian government, later on this task was undertaken by the European Union. As one can see the progress is slow and immediate steps should be taken to accelerate the pace of the works for which additional considerable financial means are needed.

Having in mind the important role which NUB BH plays in the cultural, educational and scientific life of BH, not to mention urgent need to reconstitute nation's lost documentary memory, the continuation of the Library reconstruction is urgently required. It should be revived as a modern Library, balancing traditional and digital resources. The ultimate aim would be to create fulltext electronic archive making available on world wide basis the Literature of/on Bosnia and Herzegovina as the country of centuries long tradition of tolerance and cultural pluralism. These ideas were most probably behind the Resolution 4.8 adopted by

the General Conference of UNESCO at its 27th session on 13 November 1993 which, in Item 4, invites "Member States, intergovernmental and international non-governmental organizations and public and private institutions to make voluntary contributions in cash, equipment or services to reconstruct and equip the Sarajevo National and University Library, constitute and preserve its collections and train the requisite personnel".

Reconstruction of NUBBH should serve as a model for the revival of other libraries and information centres in BH particularly if one knows that hardly a single Library building was built in this country for the last fifty years. Wherever possible, cooperation with friendly, particularly neighbouring countries should be sought to establish and maintain groundwork for useful cooperation.

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