

Crimes of War - Crimes of Peace:

Destruction of Libraries during and after the Balkan Wars of the 1990s



BALKAN WARS OF THE 1990s

CROATIA (1991-1995) – BOSNIA (1992-1995) – KOSOVO (1998-1999)





Sarajevo, Bosnia – 1992



Vukovar, Croatia – 1991



Sarajevo, Bosnia – 1992



**“Ethnic Cleansing” in progress
Lasva valley, Bosnia – 1993**



Bijeljina, Bosnia – April 1992

Bosnian Muslim civilians killed by Serb paramilitaries

"Ethnic Cleansing"

- People targeted for their cultural identity
- Terrorized and driven from their homes
- Deprived of their livelihoods & property
- Deprived of their documents
- Their cultural landmarks destroyed



Mass graves

The unquiet dead
and their documents



Mass grave site
Celine, Kosovo – June 1999

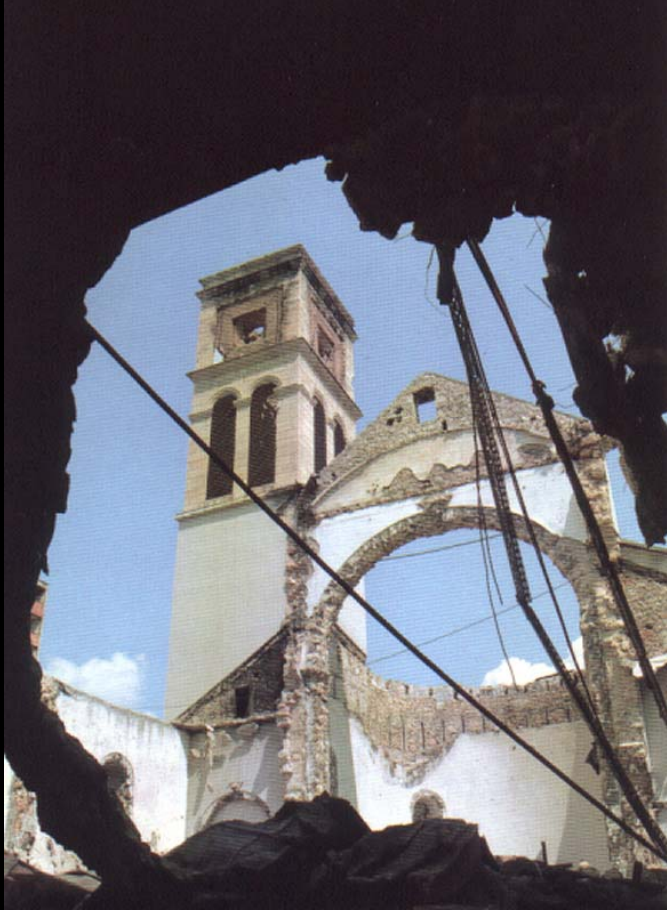


Mass grave site
Sandici, Bosnia
exhumed June 2004



Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina – 1980s
before the war

*Church steeples and minarets
share the same skyline . . .*



Mostar, Bosnia – April 1992

Roman Catholic Church of Saints Peter and Paul
destroyed by shelling by the Serb-led Yugoslav army



Mostar, Bosnia – June 1992

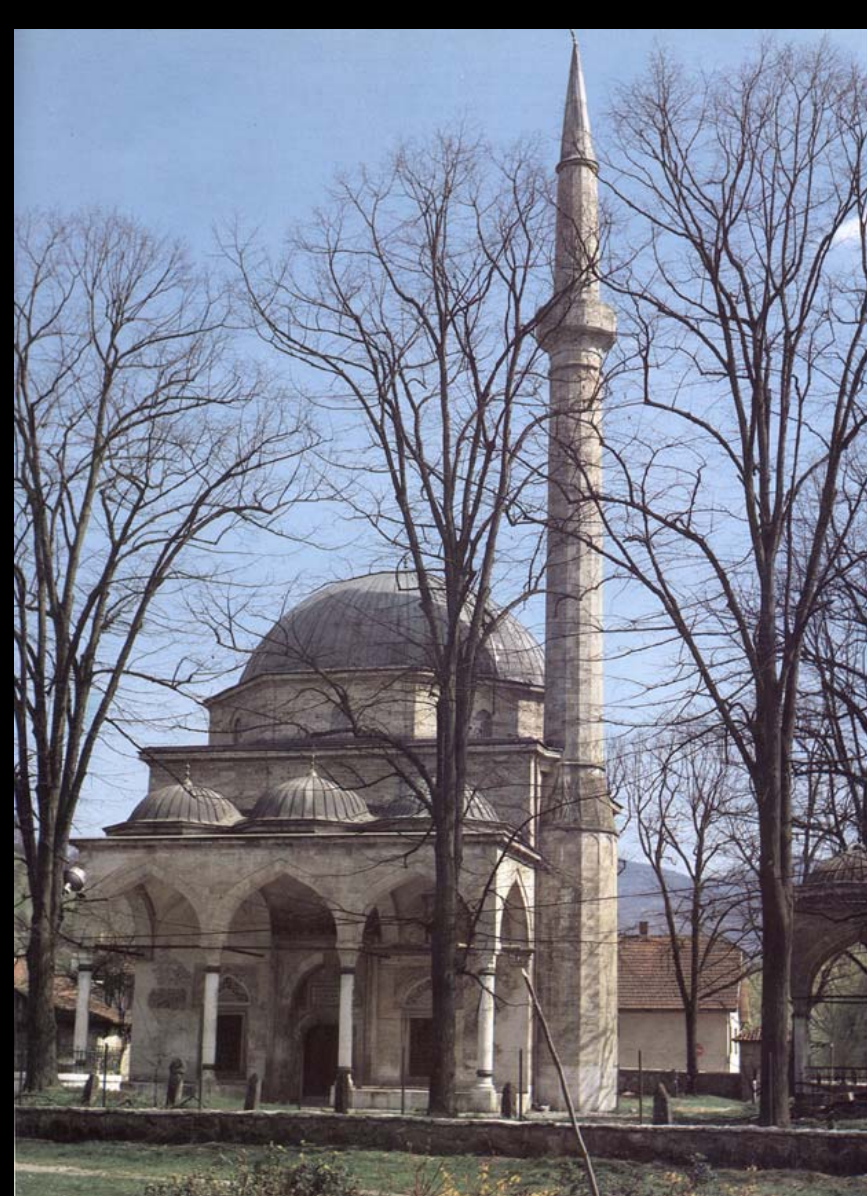
Serbian Orthodox Cathedral
blown up by Croat extremists

Foca, Bosnia

Aladza Mosque, built 1557

Blown up by Serb extremists 1992

**Site of the destroyed Aladza Mosque
after the war – even the rubble removed**





Sarajevo

National Library of Bosnia-Herzegovina

- shelled and burned by Serb nationalist forces, 25-26 August 1992
- more than a million books, the written record of Bosnia's shared history and culture, burned
- largest single act of deliberate book-burning in modern times



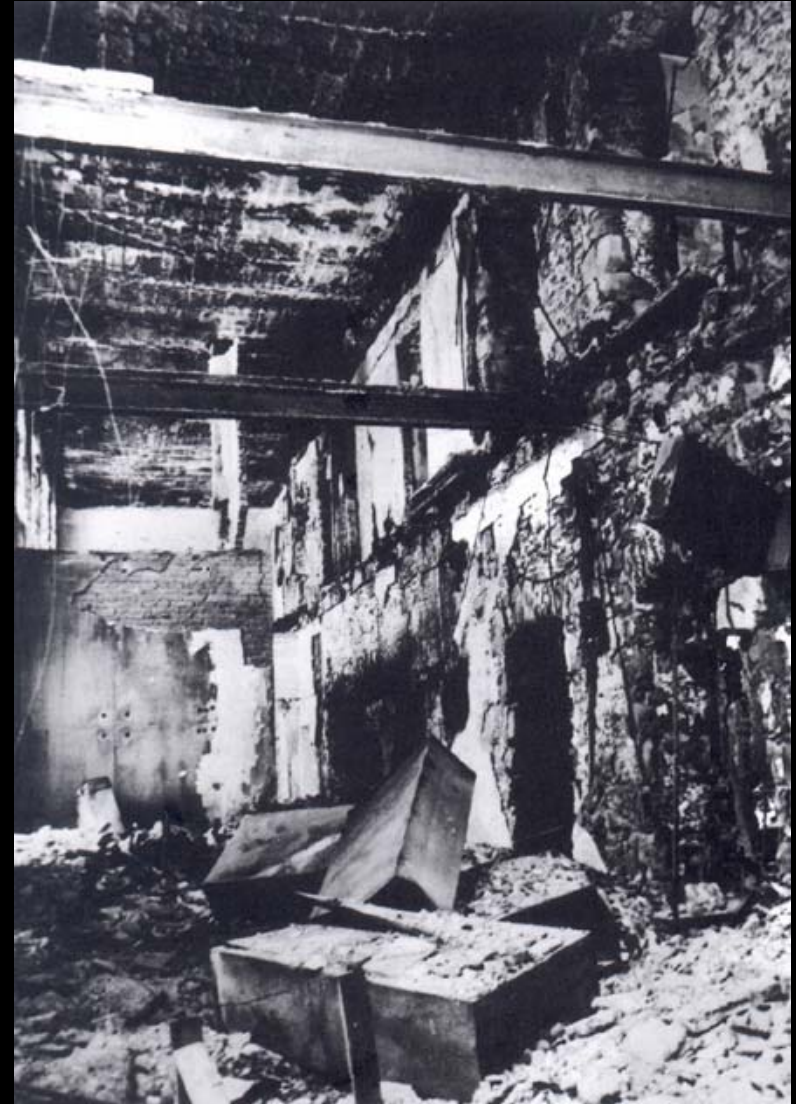
Libraries and archives as targets



Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina – May 1992

The Archive of Herzegovina (top)

Archive of the local monuments preservation authority (right), burned by JNA troops





Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina – May 1992

Library of the Roman Catholic Bishopric

Bombarded by the Yugoslav army & burned -
60,000 books and manuscripts destroyed



Oriental Institute in Sarajevo

- 5263 manuscript codices in Arabic, Persian, Ottoman Turkish, and Bosnian
- Ottoman provincial archives of Bosnia
- Court registers and cadastral records



Oriental Institute shelled and burned by Serb nationalist forces 17 May 1992



Before and after the flames

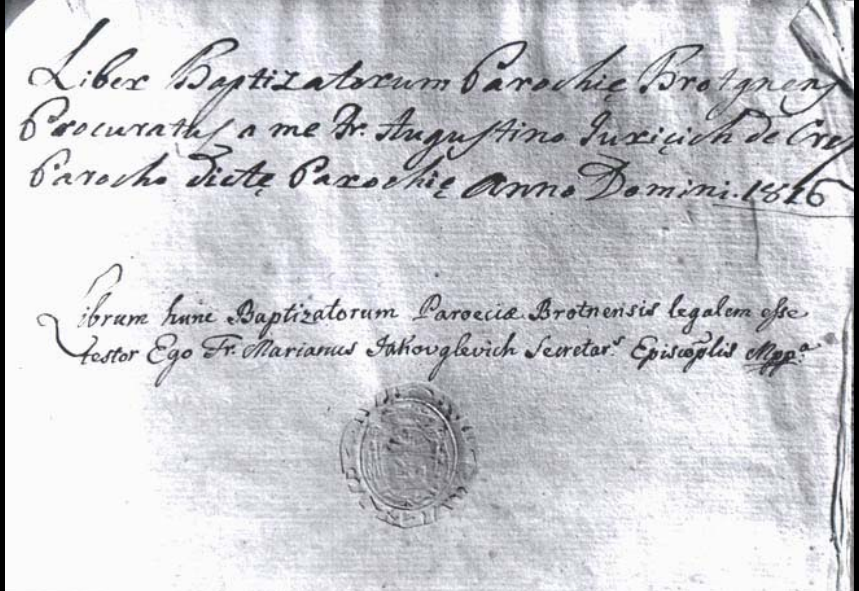
Manuscript from the Oriental Institute in Sarajevo





Lost history

Documents from the Oriental Institute
in Sarajevo



Destruction of Roman Catholic religious libraries and archives





Photo: 1980s



Photo: 1993



Photo: 2002

Srebrenica, Bosnia

Crvena Rijeka Mosque (18th c.) and the Library & Archive of the Islamic Community of Srebrenica

before and after the July 1995 massacre



Skopje, Macedonia – October 1999
Documentation specialist on the way
to do post-war survey in Kosovo

UN war crimes tribunal, The Hague
Facing Slobodan Milosevic in court

- 9-10 April 2002 Kosovo
- 8 July 2003 Bosnia



**Hazards of fieldwork
in the aftermath of war**



Kosovo, 1999
**Bomb-cratered
highway**



Bosnia-Herzegovina, 2002
Caution! - Area Mined



Prishtina, Kosovo – 13 June 1999

**Historical archive of the Islamic Community
in flames, torched by Serbian police**

Vucitrn, Kosovo – 1999

**Mosque of Gazi Ali Bey (built 1444), minaret
blown away by a Serbian tank cannon**





Pec / Peja, Kosovo — The burned-out Bajrakli Mosque (built 1461)

Kosovo Cultural Heritage Survey – Database entry

SurveyDatabase092001-copy.fp5

Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Kosovo, 1998-1999 by Andrew Herscher and Andrés Riedlmayer

Building Identification

Building Name	Bajrakli Xhamia Xhamia e Çarshise Fatih Mosque / Mosque of Haxhi Zeka Mosque of Sultan Muhammed the Conqueror	
Street Name		
District	Pec	Building Use religious
Neighborhood	Carsija	Building Type mosque
Town (Serbian)	Pec	Building Setting historic city core
Town (Albanian)	Peja	Set. Relationship homogeneous complex
GPS Coordinates	N 42° 39.618 E 20° 17.679	
Construction	15th c. (1461)	
Historical Period	Ottoman	Bldg. Condition heavily damaged
Official Status	listed monument	Occupancy vacant
		Adjacent Bldgs. heavily damaged

Building Condition



Damage

Interior of mosque completely burnt.

Original 15th-century pulpit (minbar), made entirely of marble, was partly calcinated (turned to cement powder) by heat of fire destroying original carved surface. Marble columns supporting women's

Building Condition



photo by: Xhavit Lakaj (7/99) showing soot marks of fire, intact exterior



photo by: AR/AH (10/1999) showing burned-out interior

Damage

Interior of mosque completely burnt.

Original 15th-century pulpit (minbar), made entirely of marble, was partly calcinated (turned to cement powder) by heat of fire destroying original carved surface. Marble columns supporting women's balcony and marble dadoes badly cracked from intense heat.

Carved woodwork of women's balcony and other interior woodwork completely destroyed, carpets gone, 18th-century frescoes damaged by fire.

We found remains of burned Korans and religious books piled in a corner of the mosque interior and in a window alcove.

Exterior of building remains in good condition exc. for large tongues of soot marks above windows. No visible signs of damage to roof or dome.

Widely publicized allegations by the Yugoslav authorities that the Bajrakli Mosque was "seriously damaged" by the NATO airstrikes appear to be groundless. Damage seen is not consistent with the effects of aerial bombardment.

Surveyor

András Riedlmayer 10/20/1999



**Hadum Suleiman Aga Library
in Gjakova, Kosovo**

- founded 1595
- destroyed 25 March 1999








Kosovo 1999:
 A Pattern of Destruction

International Humanitarian Law (“The Laws of War”) and the Protection of Cultural Heritage

- Geneva Conventions of 1949 & Additional Protocols (1977)
- 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict & Additional Protocols (1999) 
- Statutes & case law of the International Criminal Tribunals (ICTY, ICTR, ICC)

General Principles:

- **Wanton destruction** of civilian property prohibited
- **Cultural and religious heritage sites and institutions** given special protection
- Protection can be overridden by **imperative military necessity**
- The concept of **proportionality**



The Hague 2005



Ministerie van Defensie

4



Blue Shield



The Hague Emblem
in time of armed conflict



Petrinja, Croatia - City Archive

Sarajevo - Ali Pasha Mosque



Evidence of targeting

Sarajevo

Gazi Husrev-beg Mosque (built 1531)

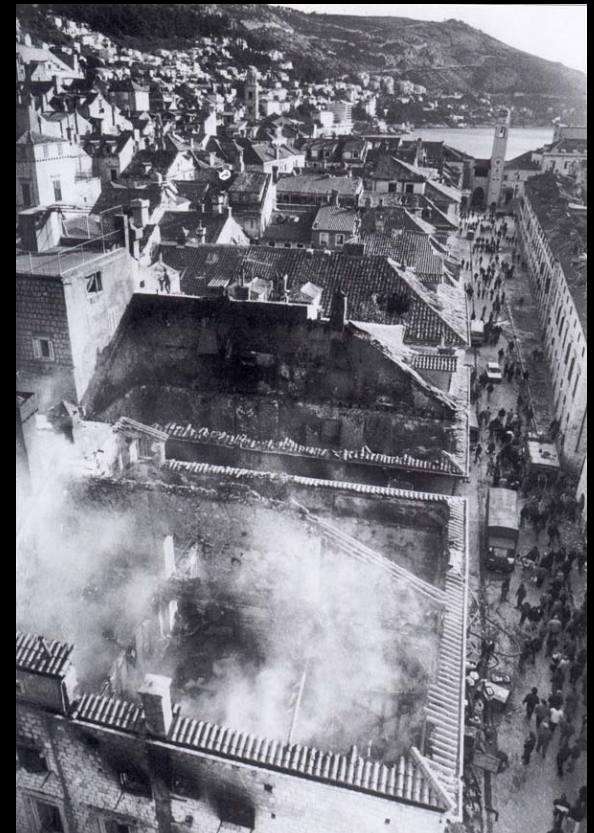
Mapping shell impacts, 1993





Dubrovnik, Croatia

UNESCO World Heritage site



December 1991 - under siege by Yugoslav Army

Setting a legal precedent

International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY)

Dubrovnik siege case brings war crimes convictions
on charges of destruction of cultural property



Admiral Miodrag Jokic

Pled guilty

Sentenced to 7 yrs. in prison



General Pavle Strugar

Convicted

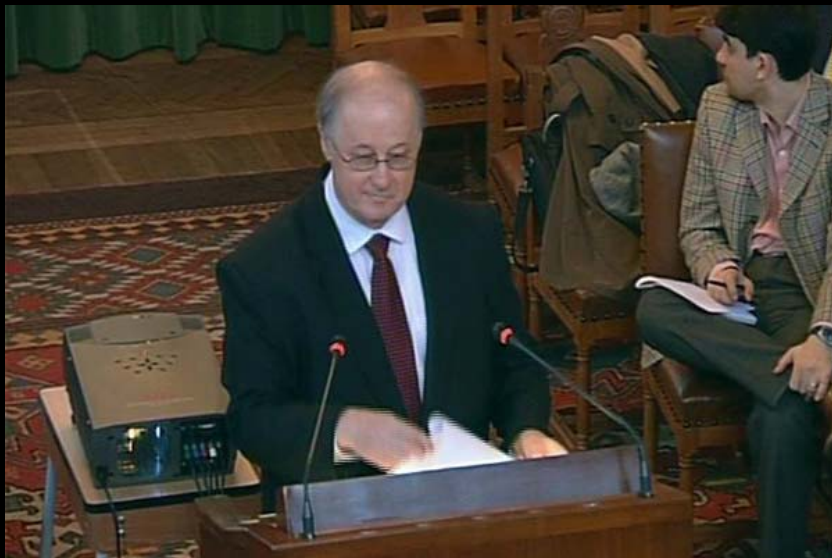
Sentenced to 8 yrs. in prison

International Court of Justice

Bosnia-Herzegovina v. Serbia-Montenegro

March 2006

Charge: **Genocide**



Some lessons from the cultural losses of the 1990s Balkan wars

- **Emergency plans** drawn up before the conflict could often not be implemented
- **Military and security forces** that were supposed to protect cultural heritage institutions became a source of danger instead
- Some of the **staff became divided** along political and ethnic lines, fled, took parts of collections, or even tried to sabotage efforts to safeguard them
- Normal **lines of authority and communication** tended to break down, blocking key decisions
- **Implementation of emergency measures** was often delayed due to fears that such measures would be understood as preparation for imminent conflict and could help trigger an attack
- **Competition** for shelter space, transport, manpower and other scarce resources in time of war

Some lessons from the cultural losses of the 1990s Balkan wars (continued)

- **Inadvertent damage and loss of collections** caused by hasty moves under fire, by improper handling and by poor emergency storage conditions
- **Preventable damage and losses** due to poor choices dictated by pre-war budget constraints and by failure to implement common-sense precautions (e.g. collections only partly microfilmed; microfilms often kept at same site as vulnerable originals and destroyed along with them)
- Cultural institutions and heritage seen as **low priority in post-war reconstruction**
- **Failure of international bodies to respond** appropriately and in a timely manner (focus on publicity and on “needs assessment” advice; little funding available for post-war **reconstruction, staff retention** and **training**, or for **emergency measures** to safeguard and conserve endangered and war-damaged collections)
- Cultural institutions and heritage became hostage to **local politics** after the war, with sometimes dire consequences for funding, staffing and institutional support



Address: <http://www.kakarigi.net/manu/ingather.htm>



UB Karlsruhe: KVK Karlsruhe Virtual Catalog ... <http://news.google.de/> salon :: books :: feature :: "Finnegan... Live Home Page



FIGHTING THE DESTRUCTION OF MEMORY

A CALL FOR AN INGATHERING OF BOSNIAN MANUSCRIPTS

On 17 May 1992 the Oriental Institute (Orijentalni institut) in Sarajevo, home to one of Europe's most important collection of Islamic manuscripts, was attacked by Serb nationalist forces with incendiary grenades. Virtually all of its contents were consumed by the flames.

Losses included 5,263 bound manuscripts in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Hebrew and local *alhamijado*---or *adzamijski*---(Serbo-Croat-Bosnian in Arabic script), as well as tens of thousands of Ottoman-era documents.

Other libraries and archives attacked by various nationalist forces include Bosnia's National Library in Sarajevo, which also housed the national archives; the library of the Museum of Herzegovina, the Archives of Herzegovina, and the library of the Roman Catholic Archbishopric in Mostar; the Orthodox monastery in Zitomislac; and numerous other collections throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Now a group of concerned scholars and librarians in the United States and Canada have begun a project to assist the librarians of the Oriental Institute, and other archives and libraries in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in an innovative effort to reassemble at least part of their destroyed collections.

Since it opened in 1950, the Oriental Institute in Sarajevo has encouraged use of its collections by foreign scholars and has maintained exchange relations with other institutions throughout Europe and the Middle East. As a result, a substantial part of the collection was sent or taken abroad in the form of microfilms or photocopies and survives even though the originals are lost.

Part I Eleazar Birnbaum Collection

Sample of collection OIS R 4810 (10)

CD of collection available with the following manuscripts: OIS R 0017, 0022, 0115, 0343, 2077, 2429, 2883, 4138, 4606 and 4911

Part II Hamdi Hasan Collection

- OIS R 82(1)
- OIS R 111(1)
- OIS R 400(3)
- OIS R 542(5)
- OIS R 771(3)
- OIS R 803(5)
- OIS R 822(3)
- OIS R 878(8)
- OIS R 900(3)
- OIS R 2392 (120)
- OIS R 3109 (2)
- OIS R 4273 (1)
- OIS R 4435 (5)

Part III Gisela HABERER Master of Science Thesis

Rukopis - Manuscript OIS 4810

SARAJEVO ORIENTAL INSTITUTE No. 4810 f. 16-60 last 4 fol.

AHDİ (d. 1002/1574, Composed 960/1553) Ferizice-i Şu'ara / Gülşen-i Şu'ara Composed by Sinan Halife d. 'Al-' al-LARENDI 992/1574

Water mark



Sultan Sul. b. Selim

Main manuscript text in Ottoman Turkish script, including a large illuminated initial 'S' and various lines of text in Rika script.



Unwanted books

Postwar “cleansing” of libraries





October 1999 – guarded by KFOR
Prizren, Kosovo –
Serbian Orthodox Seminary (top)
Holy Archangels Monastery (right)



March 17, 2004 – stormed by rioters

March 2004

*Cultural heritage under
attack once again*

In Kosovo ...





Nis, Serbia – Mosque of Islam Aga (1720)
burned by rioters March 17, 2004



... and in Serbia

Belgrade, Serbia – Library and
Archive of the Islamic Community
burned by rioters 17 March 2004



Memento et ne obliviscaris . . .
Remember and do not forget...
Deut. 9:7

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