CULTURES AND POLITICS OF REMEMBRANCE:

Southeast European and Balkan Perspectives

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Publishers:

forumZFD

This publication was realised in the framework of the project Academic Conference: „Entangled histories of the Balkans: a source of conflicts or chance for reconciliation" implemented by forumZFD, the Institute of National History and the Institute for Ethnology and Anthropology in North Macedonia.

Институт за етнологија и антропологија

Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

The project is supported by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Cultures and Politics of Remembrance: Southeast European and Balkan Perspectives, Skopje, forumZFD, 2021, 132 P

Contents

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Tomasz Kamusella is a Reader in Modern History at the University of St Andrews, Scotland, UK. He specializes in the interdisciplinary study of language politics and nationalism in modern Central Europe. His recent English-language publications include the monographs *Eurasian Empires as Blueprints for Ethiopia: From Ethnolinguistic Nation-State to Multiethnic Federation (2021), Ethnic Cleansing During the Cold War: The Forgotten 1989 Expulsion of Turks from Communist Bulgaria (2018)* and *The Un-Polish Poland, 1989 and the Illusion of Regained Historical Continuity (2017).* His new monograph ***Politics and the Slavic Languages*** is forthcoming from Routledge. He also initiated and co-edited the following volumes, *The Social and Political History of Southern Africa's Languages (2018), The Palgrave Hand book of Slavic Languages, Identities and Borders (2016)* and *Creating Nationality in Central Europe, 1880-1950: Modernity, Violence and (Be) Longing in Upper Silesia (2016).* The bilingual, English-Silesian, edition of his collection of short stories ***Limits / Styknie*** came off the press in 2019.

Ljubica Spaskovska is an Assistant Professor at the University of Exeter in the United Kingdom. She received her PhD from the same university in 2014 and her Master degree from the Central European University in Budapest, as well as the Regional Program for Democracy and Human Rights at the Universities of Bologna and Sarajevo. She is the author of the scientific monograph *The Last Yugoslav Generation: the Rethinking of Youth Politics and Cultures in Late Socialism (Manchester University Press, 2017).*

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Vjeran Pavlaković is an associate professor at the Department of Cultural Studies at the University of Rijeka, Croatia. He received his Ph.D. in History in 2005 from the University of Washington, and has published articles on cultural memory, transitional justice in the former Yugoslavia, and the Spanish Civil War. Recent publications include the co-edited volume (with Davor Pauković) *Framing the Nation and Collective Identity in Croatia (Routledge, 2019), "The Controversial Commemoration: Transnational Approaches to Remembering Bleiburg," in Politička misao (2018),* and *The Yugoslav Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War (2016).* He was the lead researcher on projects such as FRAMNAT (Croatian Science Foundation) and Memoryscapes (European Capital of Culture 2020) and is currently working on a history of South eastern European immigrants in Arizona.

Zrinka Blažević is a Full Professor at the History Department, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb (Croatia). She has published four books (Pavao Ritter Vitezović*, Croatia rediviva/ Croatia Revived, Zagreb, 1998; Vitezovićeva Hrvatska između stvarnosti i utopije/ Vitezović's Croatia Between Reality and Utopia, Zagreb, 2003; Ilirizam prije ilirizma/Illyrism before Illyrism, Zagreb, 2008; Prevođenje povijesti/Translating History, Zagreb, 2014)* and numerous journal articles. Her main fields of interest are intellectual history, theory of history, historical imagology and historical anthropology.

Mariglen Demiri is an Assistant and Junior Researcher at the Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities – Skopje. His field of interest is Political philosophy, Aesthetics and Philosophy of history. He is co-author of the historical overview of the cooperation between Albanians and Macedonians from the Ilinden Uprising up until the National Liberation War (NOB) under the title *"Nacionalizmot vo(n) kontekst" [Nationalism in and out of context].* He participated in the establishment of the left-wing movement Solidarnost and he is a former member of the political party Levica, and many other citizen and political initiatives such as: AMAN, Zaedno za mir, Studentski plenum, Protestiram and Sharena revolucija [the Colourful revolution]. Since 2018 he is not engaged in the daily political and party activities.

Filip Lyapov is a History PhD candidate at the Central European University. He holds a BA degree in History from the American University in Bulgaria, an MPhil in Modern British and European History from the University of Oxford and an MA in Nationalism Studies from the Central European University. His dissertation focuses on the royal dictatorships of Tsar Boris of Bulgaria and King Alexander of Yugoslavia and their relationship with the army. Lyapov has previously worked on interwar Bulgarian and Hungarian history and is also interested in contemporary issues related to right-wing populism, historical revisionism, memory politics, and historiography.

Vasiliki Neofotistos is Associate Professor of Anthropology at the State University of New York at Buffalo. She is the author of *The Risk of War: Everyday Sociality in the Republic of Macedonia (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012)* and numerous peer-reviewed articles on nationalism and the politics of identity in the Balkans. Most recently, she edited *Macedonia and Identity Politics after the Prespa Agreement (Routledge, 2021).*

Miladina Monova is an associated professor at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, and faculty member of the group Knowledge Society: Science, Education, and Innovations. She holds a doctoral degree in social anthropology from the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris with a thesis on refugees from the Greek civil war in the S.R. Macedonia. She was a teaching assistant at the University of Lille 1 (France), research fellow at Ecole Française d'Athènes (Greece), post-doctoral fellow at the Centre for Advanced Studies in Sofia and post-doctoral fellow at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology (Halle, Germany). Since 2009 she works also on the field of economic anthropology.

Ksenia Trofimova is a Research Fellow (PhD) at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Russian Academy of Sciences. Her current research project focuses on religious traditions among Rroma Muslim communities in the Balkans and involves on-going study of local Sufi traditions and "shared" pilgrimage sites in Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Her main research interests include issues of religious continuity, ethnic and cultural identity and memory in the light of religious practice and the development of religious communities.

Ana Milošević is a Post-Doctoral Researcher at the Leuven Institute for Criminology (LINC), KU Leuven. She completed a PhD on Europeanisation of memory politics in Croatia and Serbia, and has published extensively on collective memories, identities and European Integration of post-conflict societies, with a special focus on coming to terms with the past. Her current research examines the roles assigned to memorialisation processes in relation to terrorism, with a view to critically assess their effectiveness for the victims, survivors and societies at large.

Tamara Trošt is an Associate Professor of Sociology at the School of Economics and Business, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. She holds a PhD in Sociology from Harvard University, and was previously a Fung Fellow at Princeton University and a Visiting Professor at the University of Graz, Austria. She works on issues of nationalism, everyday identity, and history and memory, with a geographical focus on the Western Balkans and a focus on qualitative and mixed methods.

Naum Trajanovski is a PhD candidate in Sociology at the Graduate School for Social Research at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences. He was a project co-coordinator at the European Network Remembrance and Solidarity (2017) and a researcher at the Faculty of Philosophy, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University – Skopje (2018-2020). His major academic interests include memory politics in North Macedonia and sociological knowledge-transfer in 1960s Eastern Europe. He is the author of a book in Macedonian titled *Operacijata Muzej: Muzejot na makedonskata borba i makedonskata politika na sekjavanje (Operation Museum: The Museum of the Macedonian struggle and the Macedonian memory politics;* Skopje: Templum, 2020).

Petar Todorov, PhD, is an associate professor at the Institute of national history in Skopje (N. Macedonia), and member of the Center for Research of Nationalism and Culture (CINIK) in Skopje. He is historian, and his main research interest focuses on social and urban history of the 19th and 20th centuries Ottoman and post-Ottoman spaces in Southeastern Europe. He also deals with history education as well as the (ab)use of history in contemporary societies. He (co)authored two books and dozens of research papers. He lives in a multiethnic and multicultural city defined by ethnic, cultural and social borders. The most difficult border he regularly come across is the one created by historians.

Biljana Volchevska worked as a project manager at forumZFD during the implementation of the project Academic Conference: „Entangled histories of the Balkans: a source of conflicts or chance for reconciliation". Prior to this she worked as a Program Coordinator for CIE (Center for International Heritage Activities) in the Netherlands. Currently, she is pursuing her PhD at ICON – Institute for Cultural Inquiry at Utrecht University in the Netherlands and is working as a researcher for New York University Abu Dhabi. Her current research investigates the potential of memory narratives and heritage production in bringing social and political change in society on one side and the social and civil movements that emerge as a reaction to oppressive cultural politics, on the other.

Ljupčo S. Risteski is a professor at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" University in Skopje. He graduated at the Department of Ethnology and Anthropology at the Faculty of Philosophy, Belgrade University. He obtained his MA in social and cultural anthropology at the Belgrade University. He completed his doctoral dissertation entitled: "The space and time in the folk culture of the Macedonians" in 2002. He published 4 books as author, several as a co-author and more than 60 papers in the fields of ethnology and anthropology.

His main topics of interest are traditional, folk cultures in the Balkans, post-socialism and the transition of south-eastern European and Balkan societies, nationalism, symbols, and nation-building processes.

Introduction

by **Naum Trajanovski** & **Biljana Volchevska**

The edited volume in your hands, or on your screens, presents a peak-point of the project "Cultures and Politics of Remembrance in Southeast Europe: Nationalism, Transnationalism and Cooperation" which was organised by the forumZFD, the Institute of National History - Skopje and the Institute for Ethnology and Anthropology in North Macedonia, both part of the University of "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" in Skopje. Initially envisioned as a two-day international conference in Skopje and a subsequent conference proceeding, the idea got swiped by the COVID-19 pandemics in mid-2020 and, thus, the organising team proceeded with a slightly calibrated agenda. Hence, we are particularly glad to stress that we managed to organise two online roundtable discussions and a series of one-on-one interviews with prominent scholars and experts in the second half of 2020[1], and prepare an edited volume on two of the most pressing socio-political issues in the region – cultures and politics of memory and history. In other words, the original idea of organising a conference got adopted into a platform for discussing the issues of, *inter alia*, cultures of memory, memory politics and the various (ab)uses of history in and beyond the region of Southeast Europe. One of the major benefits of this restructuring was the very publicising of the aforementioned roundtables and interviews, which certainly contributed to better public dissemination of the expert-opinions. A brief look at the numbers of viewers of the project-related activities at the forumZFD's YouTube channel is a clear indicator of the aforestated.

In addition, the project came in a period of heated public debates over history and memory on local, national and regional levels. Even though a particular thermometer of such types of public debates is hard to establish – in the given, but in any other context as well, as these debates are certainly not specific to the present moment – all the articles in this volume have the ever-changing actuality of history- and memory-related questions as a highlight. Moreover, it is important to note that the preparation of this edited volume unfolded in the period of the reinvigoration of the Bulgarian-Macedonian history dispute, a long-lasting conflict of two ethnonational narratives over history, which eventually culminated in an informal Bulgarian veto for an official start of the Macedonian EU negotiations in December 2020. Historical and historiographical tropes were dominating the public domains in both Bulgaria and North Macedonia as of 2019, while many seized the opportunity to load the bilateral and interstate neighbourly relations' discourse with personal or family memories. With the selection of texts for this edited volume, we aim at reaching beyond the prevailing public *Floskeln* and present some of the under-discussed mnemonic cases, mechanisms and history- and memory-related socio-political trajectories in the region. The number of texts dealing with the Bulgarian-Macedonian history affairs, thus, is one such metrics which was hard to be overlooked in terms of editing this volume at the given point in time.

After the "transnational turn" in the social sciences and the critique of the so-called methodological nationalism, what became prevailing the scholarly debates were, among the other topics, the transnational norms-diffusion, the various interplays on local, cross-border and regional levels; and the impact of digital technologies and social media in the remaking of history and memory[2]. These analytical discourses, however, do not necessarily imply that the nation-states are losing their instrumental power as producers and containers of history and memory.

1 We would like to thank Eda Starova Tahir who conducted the interviews with – in alphabetical order – Keith Brown, Loring M. Danforth, Victor Friedman, Athena Skoulariki, Maria Todorova and Anastas Vangeli.

2 See Aleida Assmann, "The Holocaust - a Global Memory? Extensions and Limits of a New Memory Community" in *Memory in a Global Age: Discourses, Practices and Trajectories*, eds. Aleida Assmann and Sebiastian Conrad (London & New York: Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies, 2010); and Lucy Bond, Stef Craps, and Pieter Vermeulen, *Memory unbound: Tracing the dynamics of memory studies* (New York: Berghahn, 2017). In brief, the "transnational turn" in memory studies was delineated as a research agenda which seeks to understand the memory making processes beyond national borders and reconfigure the spatial extent and influence of memory politics in order to create – in the words of Assmann – "new forms of belonging, solidarity and cultural identification in a world characterised by streams of migration and the lingering impact of traumatic and entangled pasts." The summary is taken from Jihwan Yoon and Derek H. Alderman, "When Memoryscapes Move: 'Comfort Women' memorials as transnational" in *The Routledge Handbook of Memory and Place*, eds. Sarah De Nardi et al. (London & New York: Routledge, 2019).

In the words of Greene, Lipman and Ryabov: "No nation can consolidate around an uncertain past," even though "all people face an uncertain future."[1] The two online roundtable discussions, which we organised in September 2019, reaffirmed the structural dichotomy between these novel scholarly developments and the nation-centred knowledge-production[2]. We can present the following highlight from the two discussions: there is nothing wrong, from an analytical perspective, in pursuing a study of a certain national feature, domain or instance; or ascribing an agency to- and researching a particular national institution, actor or event.[3] What seems to be problematic – from normative and analytical standpoints – is the process of weaponization of national history and memory politics; or, in the words of Pierre Nora, the process of "general politicization of history."[4] This process was depicted as a legitimation-seeking, value-based endeavour at the two discussions, and observed as a certain "nationalistic turn" – a trajectory which stands in tension with the aforementioned "transnational turn".[5]

The objective of this volume is to showcase the various nuances of the processes of memorialisation, historical knowledge-production and politicisation of history and memory in the Balkans. The selection of case studies also provides a unique opportunity to observe and compare certain features of these types of narratives in the region, as well as the prevailing discursive strategies of the relevant actors and agencies. We offered an immensely wide theoretical and methodological room for the authors, touching upon, deliberately, both the *cultures* of remembrance (close to the so-called *Erinnerungskultur* approach) and the *politics* of memory (close to the newest turn to actors and agencies in memory studies). In line with Todorova, Dimou and Troebst, we presuppose memory as "polysemic by nature," which builds upon the idea that "there will always be memories that resist the politics of memory produced by authorities and institutions."[6] This inherent polysemicity opens a vast space for exploring the means of informing and negotiating the various discourses over history and memory. Here, we also presume the identity- and legitimacy-building features of history and memory: political and social actors oftentimes relate to historical events and personae, a process which Mink and Neumayer depict as "memory games", noting, almost immediately, that the "actors who promote historicizing strategies mean to achieve political effects by recycling profitable memory material (profitable in that it is emotionally charged and socially inculcated) in reaction to uncertain or conditional situations."[7]

1 Samuel Greene, Maria Lipman, and Andrey Ryabov, Engaging History: *The problems & politics of memory in Russia and the Post–Socialist Space* (Moscow: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2010), 5.

2 Panellists at the first discussion, entitled "Cultures and politics of remembrance beyond Southeast Europe" were Keith Brown, Natalie Clayer, Eckhardt Fuchs, Nenad Stefanov and Joanna Wawrzyniak. Panelists at the second discussion, entitled "Cultures and politics of remembrance in Southeast Europe," were Georgios Agelopoulos, Kica Kolbe, Vjollca Krasniqi, Olsi Lelaj, Tchavdar Marinov and Dubravka Stojanović.

3 A similar claim was offered by Aleida Assmann, who, in her chapter "The Transformative Power of Memory," wrote that the "new memory policy [she is] dealing with in this chapter differs from the old one, not in abolishing national memory but in rethinking and reconfiguring it along different lines." In Aleida Assmann, "The Transformative Power of Memory" in *The theoretical foundations of Hungarian 'lieux de memoire' studies*, eds. Donald E. Morse and Miklos Takacs (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), 30.

4 Nora describes this tendency as "the inevitable process of transforming what they [historians] produce into an ideology, of transforming the world in which historians work and with which they have to deal into an ideological system." More in Pierre Nora, "Recent history and the new danger of politicization," Eurozine, (2011), https://www.eurozine.com/recent-history-and-the-new-dangers-of-politicization/.

5 Several authors have previously identified these developments as "securitization of historical memory" - or a view at the history and collective identity debates "through the lens of national security threats" – and an "existential use of history" – which is "triggered by the need to remember or alternatively to forget, in order to uphold or intensify feelings of orientation and identity in a society characterized by insecurity, pressure or sudden change." See Alexei Miller, "Memory Control: Historical Policy in Post-Communist Europe," Russia in Global Affairs no3 (2016) for the first account; and Klas-Göran Karlsson "The Uses of History and the Third Wave of Europeanization" in European Memory? Contested histories and Politics of Remembrance, eds. Malgorzata Pakier and Bo Strath (New York: Berghahn, 2010) for the second one. See, as well, Oto Luthar's take on the process of "[n]ationalization of the past" in his Post-Socialist Historiography Between Democratization and New Exclusivist Politics of History (Budapest & New York: Central European University Press, 2017).

6 Maria Todorova, Augusta Dimou, and Stefan Troebst, eds., *Remembering Communism: Private and Public Recollections of Lived Experience in Southeast Europe* (Budapest & New York: Central European University Press, 2014).

7 Georges Mink and Laure Neumayer, eds., *History, Memory and Politics in Central and Eastern Europe* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2013).

Therefore, we dared to ask our authors the following questions: What makes certain history- and memory-discourses and/or narratives attractive? Who benefits the most from the promotion of which type of the aforementioned? Which are the main history and memory stakeholders in the regional arena? What are the goals of the national, cross-national and transnational historical and memory discourses? And, finally, are there any escape routes from the weaponization of certain discursive and narrative domains? Some of these questions have been posed up until now in the literature on the region, yet, the perennial and ever-changing nature of the subjects-in-foci allow us the opportunity to re-pose them anew. Thus, we identified three prevailing research scopes – transnational, national and local – and structured the texts within these clusters, while the volume ends up with the chapter on European Union's role in the memory politics of the region.

The first set of chapters has the transnational actors, dynamics and processes as a certain common denominator. The chapter by **Stefan Troebst** discusses national identities and national histories in the changing "international and subregional environments" of, in this particular context, North Macedonia, Bulgaria and Greece. Troebst portrays the set of "historiographical warfares" as zero-sum-games and identifies a peculiar pattern – if the late socialism in Macedonia and Bulgaria was marked with a bilateral dispute among these states, and the three post-socialist Macedonian decades – with the so-called Greco-Macedonian name game, then the late 2010s brought us back a resurfacing of the Bulgarian-Macedonian "Titanic". The second chapter, authored by **Tomasz Kamusella**, discusses the ethnonationalist linguistic policies in the region in comparative cross-regional and transnational keys, with a special focus on the Bulgarian-Macedonian case since 2019. Kamusella points out to the prevalence of the ethnolinguistic type of nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe as a key driver to Sofia's preconditions to the opening of accession negotiations between North Macedonia and the European Union.

The two following chapters, authored by **Ljubica Spaskovska** and **Tanja Petrović**, deal with the memory of socialist Yugoslavia in a transnational scope. **Spaskovska** focuses on several of the main Yugoslav memory-sites – antifascism, self-management and non-alignment – and introduces the notion of "heteroglossia" as a tool for analysing the memory of the Yugoslav past. In her reading, the recent set of "re-scripting" the aforementioned Yugoslav tropes by the local elites provoked an increased transnational interest in the Yugoslav monuments and memorials associated with the antifascist and socialist past. The chapter authored by **Petrović** deals with Che Guevarra's visit to Yugoslavia in 1959, in particular, and the memory of the Yugoslav socialist project, in general. According to Petrović, a critical view of the event-in-the-focus helps us understand the knowledge-transfers in the given time-period, but also the recent means of decontextualising and depoliticising the Yugoslav past. Similarly to Spaskovska's interpretation, Petrović also argues that the post-Yugoslav narratives over the Yugoslav past are predominantly one-sided, reduced to sensationalism, while the alternative versions of modernisation are hard to penetrate the dominant, Western view of modernity.

The chapter authored by **Vjeran Pavlaković** – as a borderline-case in our typology – opens the section on nation-centred history and memory domains. Pavlaković focuses on the mnemonic practices in Croatia and discusses the recent rift in commemorations of Operation Storm in Knin. In his view, this rift opens up a possibility for shifting the one-sided national narratives over the war to a more inclusive and multivocal discourses, which will present a significant step towards reconciliation and peacebuilding. **Zrinka Blažević**'s chapter also has Croatia in the research focus by presenting the instrumentalization of the national epic *Croatia Mournful* within the Croat nation-building. She argues that the aestheticization of the nation and the "historic eschatology" of *Croatia Mournful* are not only characteristic for 18th century poetic practices, but remain an effective mechanism for national mobilisation thus narrowing down the discursive space for producing polyvocal understandings of the national past and present. The final chapter in this section is authored by Mariglen Demiri, who looks at the Macedonian public debate over the constitutive event for the Macedonian statehood – the Anti-fascist Assembly for the National Liberation of Macedonia – in the wake of North Macedonia's bilateral agreements with Bulgaria (2017) and Greece (2018). Demiri argues that the populist creation of "enemies" in the aftermath of the two agreements leadsto an antagonization in the domestic political arena across ethnic- and minority-lines.

The third section is composed of four chapters: principally dealing with local events, actors and processes of remembrance, but also their resonance within the wider, national and transnational, domains. **Filip Lyapov**'s

chapter thus brings to the fore the history-production over three female assassinators – Karničeva, Buneva and Jakova – and argues that these cases are illustrative of the political partisanship in the pre- and post-1989 memory politics in Bulgaria and North Macedonia. Lyapov observes the agency of several partisan subjects, active in both states, as crucial for the establishment of the "false dichotomy" between martyrs for a national idea and martyrs for a political ideology – a process which results in a spread of exclusionary nationalistic discourses. The chapter by **Vasiliki P. Neofotistos** deals with a local commemorative event – the liberation of Skopje from Ottoman control in 1912 – which is organized annually, as of 12 August 2012, by Skopje's Municipality of Čair. The case study is a great illustration for the aforementioned "memory wars", in this case across ethnic lines, as it provides a platform for the members of the Albanian community in North Macedonia to articulate an alternative historical narrative entwined with the (re)negotiation and (re)definition of Skopje's identity. **Miladina Monova**'s chapter presents the case of the anti-fascists' memories of the Aegean Macedonians as a certain contrapuntal domain, or a juxtaposition, to the dominant national-historical canons. Monova argues that the ideological credo of the Aegean Macedonians is by and large neglected in the historiography of socialist and post-socialist Macedonia. **Ksenia Trofimova** reflects on the spiritual continuity of Sufi Muslims in the local Roma communities in North Macedonia. She also dwells upon the "broad narratives" of an epoch and the "personal lived experiences" which, in the case study she presents, opened up a room for forming regional networks of the Roma community.

The final chapter, co-authored by **Ana Milošević** and **Tamara Trošt**, brings us back to the transnational actors active in the regional memory politics. The authors analyse the interplays between the Europeanisation processes and memory politics in Southeast Europe, and argue that the so-called EU integrations influenced, in many ways, the memory politics and mnemonic practices on local, national and regional levels. By introducing the European memory framework to the discussion, the authors identify two particular trajectories of these interplays: downloading and uploading EU memory politics.

Note on Transliteration

The table below contains the transliterations of the Macedonian and Bulgarian Cyrillic alphabets into Latin and a Latin script of the Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian (BCMS) languages as per the national authorities of all the states involved. We allowed the authors to choose their method of transliteration.

Macedonian	Bulgarian	BCMS
А, а a	А, а a	А, а
Б, б b	Б, б b	В, b
В, в v	В, в v	Ć, ć (in Montenegrin)
Г, г g	Г, г g	Г, г g
Д, д d	Д, д d	Д, д d
Ѓ, ѓ gj, ǵ	Е, е e	Ђ ђ đ
Е, е e	Ж, ж zh	Е, е e
Ж, ж zh, ž	З, з z	Ж, ж ž
З, з z	И, и I	З, з z
S, s dz	Й й y	И, и I
И, и I	К, к k	J, j j
J, j j	Л, л l	К, к k
К, к k	М, м m	Л, л l
Л, л l	Н, н n	Љ, љ lj
Љ, љ lj	О, о o	М, м m
М, м m	П, п p	Н, н n
Н, н n	Р, р r	Њ, њ nj
Њ, њ nj	С, с s	О, о o
О, о o	Т, т t	П, п p
П, п p	У, у u	Р, р r
Р, р r	Ф, ф f	С, с s
С, с s	Х, х h	Т, т t
Т, т t	Ц, ц ts	Ћ ћ ć
Ќ, ќ kj, ḱ	Ч, ч ch	У, у u
У, у u	Ш, ш sh	Ф, ф f
Ф, ф f	Щ щ sht	Х, х h
Х, х h	Ъ ъ a	Ц, ц c
Ц, ц c	Ь ь y	Ч, ч č
Ч, ч ch, č	Ю ю yu	Џ, џ dž
Џ, џ dzh, dž	Я я ya	Ш, ш š
Ш, ш sh, š		

The Resurfacing of the "Titanic" in the Balkan Bermuda Triangle: Political conflicts over history between Sofia, Skopje and Athens before and after 1989

by **Stefan Troebst**

Abstract

The article analyses the Balkan triangle with the corner points Sofia, Skopje and Athens/ Thessaloniki where political actors backed by national historiographies bolster their own historical narratives by the denial of the truthfulness of the historical narratives of their neighbours[1]. In Bulgarian politics of history the existence of a Macedonian nation (and language) is still contested[2], while in Macedonian politics of history historical, cultural and linguistic ties with Bulgaria and the Bulgarians are minimized[3]. And in Greek politics of history the current Macedonian historical narrative with its reference to the ancient Macedonia of Alexander the Great is denounced as an illegitimate "annexation" of the Hellenic heritage[4]. Compared to these two sides of the triangle, only the third—the Bulgarian-Greek one—is less controversial although taboo topics like the systematic expulsion of Greeks from Bulgaria during the 20th century or the cruel Bulgarian occupation of parts of Northeast Greece in both World Wars I and II have the potential to impair bilateral relations.[5]

A desperate Macedonian delegation visited God and tearfully complained about their fate. "Jesus, what's the matter?" asked God. "Oh, Lord, why have you punished us thus? You arranged that all normal nations would evolve from apes; only we evolved from Bulgarians."[6]

Introduction

The Italian writer and journalist Guido Ceronetti once compared what happened in Eastern Europe in 1989 with the "resurfacing of the Titanic": A drowned and thus historically forgotten part of Europe breached the water surface causing wide-spread excitement, astonishment and, partly, shock. The other metaphor in the title, the Bermuda Triangle, stands, on the one hand, for the mysterious disappearance of ships and planes, but on the other for conspiracy myths of all sorts including even the belief in the existence of aliens. In the triangle to be dealt with here, with the corner points Sofia, Skopje and Athens respectively Thessaloniki, myths of this type are also widespread and popular, although ships and planes are rarely involved. Instead, here political actors backed by

1 Sfetas Sfetas, "The Fusion of Regional and Cold War Problems: The Macedonian Triangle Between Greece, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, 1963–80," in *The Balkans in the Cold War. Security, Conflict and Cooperation in the Contemporary World,* ed. Svetozar Rajak at al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 307-329; Tchavdar Marinov, "Regionalism in South-Eastern Europe," in Xosé M. Núñez Seixas & Eric Storm (eds), *Regionalism and Modern Europe. Identity Construction and Movements from 1890 to the Present Day* (London etc.: Bloomsbury, 2018), 307-321.

2 Bozhidar Dimitrov, *The Ten Lies of Macedonism* (Sofia: Kom Foundation, 2007).

3 Ulf Brunnbauer, *"Ancient Nationhood and the Age-long Struggle for Statehood: Historiographic Myths in the Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)",* in Myths and boundaries in South-Eastern Europe, ed. Pål Kolstø (London: Hurst, 2005), 262-296.

4 Adamantios Skordos, "Makedonischer Namensstreit und griechischer Bürgerkrieg. Ein kulturhistorischer Erklärungsversuch der griechischen Makedonien-Haltung 1991," *Südosteuropa-Mitteilungen* 51/4 (2011): 36-56.

5 Teodora Dragostinova, *Between Two Motherlands. Nationality and Emigration among the Greeks of Bulgaria, 1900–1949* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011); Hans-Joachim Hoppe, "Bulgarian nationalities policy in occupied Thrace and Aegean Macedonia," *Nationalities Papers* 14/1-2 (1986): 89-100.

6 Maria Todorova, "On Happiness and Nationalism," *Balkan Insight,* 3 June 2020.

national historiographies bolster their own historical narratives through the denial of the truthfulness of the historical narratives of their neighbours.[1] In Bulgarian politics of history the existence of a Macedonian nation (and language) is still contested[2], while in Macedonian politics of history historical, cultural and linguistic ties with Bulgaria and the Bulgarians are minimised.[3] And in Greek politics of history the current Macedonian historical narrative with its reference to the ancient Macedonia of Alexander the Great is denounced as an illegitimate "annexation" of the Hellenic heritage.[4] Compared to these two sides of the triangle, only the third — the Bulgarian-Greek one — is less controversial although taboo topics like the systematic expulsion of Greeks from Bulgaria during the 20th century or the cruel Bulgarian occupation of parts of North Eastern Greece in both World Wars I and II have the potential to impair bilateral relations.[5]

That is the situation today, but how did things look like before? Partly similar, when we focus on relations between Bulgaria and Macedonia — then Yugoslavia's southernmost republic, but very different when the relations between the NATO member state Greece and non-aligned Yugoslavia (including its constituent Socialist Republic of Macedonia) are considered. To put it in a nutshell: While from the mid-1960s on relations between Sofia and Skopje were tense due to endemic disputes over history and language, relations between Skopje and Athens/Thessaloniki were rather relaxed; here history was a latent, yet not a major source of conflict.

The end of the Cold War and the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia, however, brought about significant changes: On the one hand, Greeks discovered that their northern neighbour was no longer federal Yugoslavia but an independent Republic of Macedonia, whereas "Mother Bulgaria" soon realised that "the prodigal daughter" Macedonia had little intention to return into mommy's lap. Within less than two years after 1989, the comfortable security of the decades of the East-West conflict — Bulgaria as a Warsaw Pact member, Greece in NATO, and Macedonia safely within neutral Yugoslavia — had disappeared. Instead, the perception prevailed that the "resurfacing of the 'Titanic'" not only brought new liberties and opportunities but primarily difficult to master challenges and new threats to one's internal and external security.

In the search for orientation in a drastically changed international and subregional environment concepts like "national identity" defined by "national history" appeared as reliable landmarks. This naturally implied that the rivalling and, more often than not, contradictory concepts of the neighbours' "national identity" and "national history" had to be delegitimised, preferably with arguments produced by one's own professional historians. Whereas the "historiographical warfare" between Sofia and Skopje of the time before 1989/91 simply went on, a new front opened between Skopje and Athens/Thessaloniki — a bad surprise for both sides involved.

1 Sfetas Sfetas, "The Fusion of Regional and Cold War Problems: The Macedonian Triangle Between Greece, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, 1963–80," in *The Balkans in the Cold War. Security, Conflict and Cooperation in the Contemporary World,* ed. Svetozar Rajak at al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 307-329; Tchavdar Marinov, "Regionalism in South-Eastern Europe," in *Regionalism and Modern Europe. Identity Construction and Movements from 1890 to the Present Day*, eds. Xosé M. Núñez Seixas & Eric Storm (London etc.: Bloomsbury, 2018), 307-321.

2 Bozhidar Dimitrov, *The Ten Lies of Macedonism* (Sofia: Kom Foundation, 2007).

3 Ulf Brunnbauer, *"Ancient Nationhood and the Age-long Struggle for Statehood: Historiographic Myths in the Republic of Macedonia (FYROM),"* in Myths and boundaries in South-Eastern Europe, ed. Pål Kolstø (London: Hurst, 2005), 262-296.

4 Adamantios Skordos, "Makedonischer Namensstreit und griechischer Bürgerkrieg. Ein kulturhistorischer Erklärungsversuch der griechischen Makedonien-Haltung 1991," in *Südosteuropa-Mitteilungen* 51/4 (2011): 36-56.

5 Teodora Dragostinova, *Between Two Motherlands. Nationality and Emigration among the Greeks of Bulgaria*, 1900–1949 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011); Hans-Joachim Hoppe, "Bulgarian nationalities policy in occupied Thrace and Aegean Macedonia," *Nationalities Papers* 14/1-2 (1986): 89-100.

The Bulgarian-Macedonian controversy before and after 1991

After World War II, both Bulgaria and Yugoslavia became communist regimes of the Stalinist type. While Tito split off from the Soviet camp and propagated something like "a third path to socialism", Bulgaria remained a firm ally of the USSR. This included the full implementation of the so-called "Leninist principles of nationality policy". Accordingly, a Macedonian minority within Bulgaria was also recognised and Macedonian-language schools were opened. In the 1960s, a sharp U-turn in Sofia's nationality policy took place: All Macedonians of Bulgaria were now categorised as ethnic Bulgarians. This started a decade-long propaganda war with Belgrade and Skopje since the Bulgarian Communist Party as well as the Bulgarian government even denied the existence of a Macedonian nation with its own language and history on Yugoslav territory. Bilateral relations between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia deteriorated to a level so far unknown between two "socialist brotherly peoples".[1] Accordingly, Robert R. King, a Balkan specialist of the US "Radio Free Europe", stated in 1973.

Not only has the Macedonian debate been the most extensive and the most bitter, it has also been the least esoteric of the nationality debates between Communist parties. Although both sides generally stayed within the framework of historical debates, they have gone farther by specifically accusing each other of making territorial claims.[2]
Things got worse when in 1977 post-Mao China reactivated its Balkan policy by supporting not only neutral Yugoslavia under Tito but also the hesitant Soviet ally of Romania under Ceauşescu. Therefore, Bulgaria under its head of party and state Todor Zhivkov increasingly felt encircled by two hostile socialist neighbours and the two NATO member states Greece and Turkey.[3] A consequence was the stepping-up of the nationalist propaganda campaign against Yugoslav Macedonia which lasted throughout the 1980s. The palace revolt against Zhivkov of the 10 November 1989 and the beginning of democratisation in Bulgaria in 1990 did not bring about a change, to the contrary: A newly founded organisation of Bulgarian citizens declaring themselves to be ethnic Macedonians, "OMO Ilinden", infuriated Bulgarian nationalists both in the camps of the still ruling post-communists as well as in one of the democratic, yet increasingly nationalist opposition. Some of them rallied in a new political party, the "Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation" — despite its name, a rabidly nationalist formation of Bulgarians aiming at the "reunification" of Bulgaria with now independent Macedonia in a Greater Bulgarian state.
Bulgaria's anti-Macedonian propaganda and politics of the 1960s to the 1990s had visible effects on the politics of history of Yugoslav Macedonia and then independent Macedonia. Up to the 1960s, politicians and historians in Skopje had strictly applied Marxist-Leninist theory even towards Macedonian national history. Since according to the founding fathers of Marxism, nations are the product of the capitalist mode of production, the establishment of the first protoindustrial manufactories in then-Ottoman Macedonia during the 1830s was proclaimed the birth date of the Macedonian nation. In the 1970s, however, this date was shifted back into the 10th century AC, to the medieval empire of Tsar Samuil who now was proclaimed ruler over a mighty Macedonian state. . This strongly contradicted the Bulgarian perception of Samuil as tsar of what in Sofia traditionally was called the First Bulgarian Empire.[4]

In the 1990s, however, the search for national roots in Skopje led even further back into history, to Alexander the Great (in Slavic languages: Alexander the Macedonian) and his father Philipp II, rulers of ancient Macedonia in the 4th century BC. "We Macedonians", thus the new message from Skopje to Sofia, "are an older people than you" who arrived in the Balkans only 1.000 years later, during the 6th century AC.[5]

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1 Stefan Troebst, *Die bulgarisch-jugoslawische Kontroverse um Makedonien 1967-1982* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1983); Spyridon Sfetas, "The Bulgarian-Yugoslav Dispute over the Macedonian Question as a Reflection of the Soviet-Yugoslav Controversy (1968-1980)," Balcanica XLIII (2012): 241-271.

2 Robert R. King, *Minorities under Communism. Nationalities as a Source of Tension among Balkan Communist States* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), 219.

3 Jordan Baev, Drugata studena vojna. *Săvetsko-kitajskijat konflikt i Iztočna Evropa* [The other cold war. The Soviet-Sino conflict and Eastern Europe] (Sofia: Voenno izdatelstvo, 2012), 223-224; Jovan Čavoški, "Between Ideology and Geopolitics: Sino-Yugoslav Relations and the Wider Cold War, 1950-1970s," in *New Sources, New Findings: The Relationship between China, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, ed. Péter Vámos (Shanghai: Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 2013), 187-406 (402-404).

4 Maria Hviding, "The tug-of-war over Tsar Samuil – Bulgarian or Macedonian?," *Café Balkans. Actualité balkanique éclectique*, 27 April 2014, https://cafebalkans.wordpress.com/2014/04/27/the-tug-of-war-over-tsar-samuil-bulgarian-or-macedonian/.

5 Stefan Troebst, "IMRO + 100 = FYROM? The Politics of Macedonian Historiography," in *The New Macedonian Question*, ed. James Pettifer (London, New York, NY: Macmillan, St Martins Press, 1999), 60-78.

However, this newly constructed ethno-genetical link of independent Macedonia's titular nation to the ancient Macedonians, enraged first historians and archaeologists, then also clerics and politicians in Macedonia's southern neighbour Greece.[1] In Athens and, in particular, in Thessaloniki, Alexander and Philipp were and still are perceived as top representatives of Greece's ancient Hellenic heritage identity — and usurpation of this heritage by Slavs speaking what was called by Greek nationalists "an unintelligible Serbian-Gypsy dialect" was in this perception intolerable. One result was massive Greek political, diplomatic and — via closing of the border for trade — economic pressure on Skopje in order to force the new state to change its national flag displaying a symbol used by Philipp II, the eight-ray sun respectively star of Vergina and to replace the term "Republic of Macedonia" by the provisional name "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", abbreviated FYROM.[2]

The emergence of the bitter Greek-Macedonian dispute over the history, the name and the symbols of the new Macedonian state came as a shock for the government in Skopje and the Slavic-speaking majority of the country: From now on, relations with all four neighbours were tense: With Greece due to the name issue, with Bulgaria because of history, with rump-Yugoslavia respectively Serbia due to hostile military gestures by Belgrade, and with Albania because of the large Albanian minority in Western Macedonia and its demands for full political participation. And the founding of a second Albanian state, the Republic of Kosovo in 2008 did bring the number of unruly neighbours to five.

A changing international environment

A stabilising element, however, was the strong engagement of the international community in Macedonia — first CSCE (today OSCE), then UN (including US blue helmets) and EU, and finally NATO. The spill over effects of the Serbian war against the Kosovo Albanians in 1999 in the form of a wave of some 400.000 Kosovar refugees and expellees hitting Macedonia within just two weeks, and the clash of Macedonian security forces with Albanian insurgents in 2001 could thus be contained. Also, the continuing Greek pressure on Skopje and the volatile inter-ethnic relations in Macedonia slowly lead to a reformulation of Sofia's policy towards its southwestern neighbour. In the Bulgarian perception the fact that the "prodigal daughter Macedonia" did not ruefully "come home" was on the one hand regretted. On the other, however, the potential integration of another strong Muslim minority, the Macedonian Albanians, in addition to Bulgaria's Muslims — Turks, Pomaks and Roma — was not considered to be an asset. Thus, in 2017 Sofia and Skopje signed a Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighbourliness and Cooperation which seemed to pave the way for an end of the long-standing dispute on history, language and identity of the Macedonians at least on the governmental level and thus to open the door for Macedonia's membership in NATO and EU.[3] Even before, several hundreds of thousands of Macedonians had already made their peace with Bulgaria by applying for Bulgarian citizenship in order to get the red passport with the inscription "Evropejski sǎjuz" — European Union — allowing for free movement (as well as employment and/or social security benefit) in Germany, Italy, the UK, Austria, Sweden and elsewhere.

1 Loring M. Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict. Ethnic Nationalism in a Transnational World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997); John Shea, *Macedonia and Greece: The Struggle to Define a New Balkan Nation* (Jefferson, NC, London: McFarland, 1977); Adamantios Skordos, *Griechenlands Makedonische Frage. Bürgerkrieg und Geschichtspolitik im Südosten Europas 1945-1992* [Greece's Macedonian Question. Civil War and Politics of History in Southeastern Europe 1945-1922] (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012).

2 In 1996, the British historian Norman Davies instead of FYROM proposed tongue-in-cheek an in his view historically more correct form: FOPITGROBBSOSY, an acronym standing for "Former Province of Illyria, Thrace, Greece, Rome, Byzantium, Bulgaria, Serbia, the Ottoman Empire, Serbia and Yugoslavia". See Norman Davies, *Europe. A History* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 135.

3 Dogovor za prijatelstvo, dobrososedstvo i sorabotka megu Republika Makedonija i Republika Bugarija, 1 August 2017, *https://vlada.mk/sites/default/files/dogovori/Dogovor_Za_Prijatelstvo_Dobrososedstvo_Sorabotka_Megju_Republika_Makedonija_I_Republika_Bugarija.pdf*.

The Macedonian-Bulgarian rapprochement of 2017 probably also played a role in the context of the decision of the Greek government to start negotiations with Skopje in order to overcome the name blockade. On June 17, 2018, in the presence of the two prime ministers Alexis Tsipras and Zoran Zaev as well as of the longstanding UN intermediator Matthew Nimetz and EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Federica Mogherini, the two foreign ministers, Nikos Kotzias and Nikola Dimitrov, signed the so called Prespa Agreement whose main clause was the declaration of intent of the Macedonian side to rename the country from "Republika Makedonija" into "Republika Severna Makedonija" — "Republic of North Macedonia", thereby opening a window of opportunity for Macedonia's NATO and EU membership. How long this window will stay open, is difficult to say. On 30 September 2018, a referendum on the name-change in Macedonia resulted in a majority of yes-votes, yet failed to meet the quorum of 50 percent of the voters. On 3 December 2018, a narrow two-third majority of the Macedonian parliament voted for including the name change into the constitution, ballots in the Macedonian parliament (15 January 2019) as well as in the Greek one (February 2019) led to the ratification of the Prespa Agreement.

The Prespa Agreement of 2018

The document signed by Greece and Macedonia in the small fishermen village of Psarades on the shore of the Greek part of Lake Prespa[1] and cryptically entitled *Final Agreement for the Settlement of the Differences as Described in the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 817 (1993)* and *845 (1993), the Termination of the Interim Accord of 1995,* and the *Establishment of a Strategic Partnership between the Parties* is a highly unusual piece of international law. Already the first sentence in the preamble highlights this specificity:
The First Party, the Hellenic Republic (the "First Party"), and the Second Party, which was admitted to the United Nations in accordance with the United Nations General Assembly resolution 42/225 of 8 April 1993 (the "Second Party"), [are] jointly referred to as the "Parties".[2]

While Greece figures with its constitutional name "Hellenic Republic" the constitutional name of Macedonia — "Republic of Macedonia" — is not mentioned, not even its provisional name "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia". But also, many of the detailed provisions of the agreement concern matters not usually dealt with in this type of diplomatic texts and thus make it a rather unique bilateral treaty. This goes, in particular, for topics such as history and language. E. g., paragraph 4 of article 7 reads:
The Second Party notes that its official language, the Macedonian language, is within the group of South Slavic languages. The Parties note that the official language and other attributes of the Second Party are not related to the ancient Hellenic civilisation, history, culture and heritage of the northern region of the First Party.[3]
Equally specific on a non-diplomatic topic is paragraph 2 of article 8:

Within six months following the entry into force of this Agreement, the Second Party shall review the status of monuments, public buildings and infrastructures on its territory, and insofar as they refer in any way to ancient Hellenic history and civilisation constituting an integral component history and civilisation constituting an integral component of the historic or cultural patrimony of the First Party, shall take appropriate corrective action to effectively address the issue and ensure respect for the said patrimony.[4]

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1 In chosing Psarades for reasons of geographic vicinity to the Macedonian shore of Lake Prespa, the Greek foreign ministry was obviously not aware of the fact that up to the 1920s the village was predominantly inhabited by Slavic-speakers and carried the Slavic name Nivitsi. Even more astonishing is that political actors in Athens seemed not to have realised that in late March 1949, at the end of the Greek Civil War, Psarades was the site of the Second Congress of the pro-Communist Macedonian National Liberation Front, an armed formation allied with the armed forces of the Greek Communist Party. Two months earlier, at the Fifth Plenum of the party, its leader Nikos Zachariadis had declared that after a Communist victory over the Royal Greek Army and its US allies a reunification of Greek Macedonia with Yugoslav Macedonia would be possible. See Skordos, Griechenlands Makedonische Frage, 171-181.

2 F*inal Agreement for the Settlement of the Differences as Described in the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 817* (1993) and 845 (1993), *the Termination of the Interim Accord of 1995, and the Establishment of a Strategic Partnership between the Parties* (Prespes, 17 June 2018), 1, *https://vlada.mk/sites/default/files/dokumenti/spogodba-en.pdf*

3 Ibid., 7

4 Ibid. This paragraph refers to the 'Skopje 2014' project pursued by the nationalist Macedonian government during the years 2006 through 2016. See Anastas Vangeli, "Nation-building ancient Macedonian style: The origins and the effects of the so-called antiquization in Macedonia," *Nationalities Papers* 39/1 (2011), 13-32, and Paul Reef, "Macedonian Monument Culture Beyond 'Skopje 2014'," *Südosteuropa* 66/4 (2018), 451-480.

And finally, paragraph 5 of article 8 contains the following bizarre conditions:

Within one month of the signing of this Agreement, the Parties shall establish by exchange of diplomatic notes, on a parity basis, a Joint Inter-Disciplinary Committee of Experts on historic, archaeological and educational matters, to consider the objective, scientific interpretation of historical events based on authentic, evidence-based and scientifically sound historical sources and archaeological findings. The Committee […] shall consider, if it deems appropriate, revise any school textbooks and school auxiliary material such as maps, historical atlases, teaching guides, in use in each of the Parties […]. To that effect, the Committee shall set specific timetables so as to ensure in each of the Parties that no school textbooks or school auxiliary material in use the year after the signing of the Agreement contains any irredentist/revisionist references. […].[1]

To put it short: The Prespa Agreement is an attempt by Greece to impose its own historical narrative on Macedonia which is forced to considerably revise its own historical narrative. As during the Cold War, also nowadays governmental politics of history are a policy not only in domestic politics but also in bilateral and international relations.

In both countries, Greece and Macedonia, the public reaction to the core points of the agreement, particularly the name issue, was mixed — violent outrage on behalf of political extremists, tacit consent on behalf of moderate forces. The same goes for Balkan experts worldwide.[2] EU and NATO officials were, of course, full of praise, politicians and diplomats of the Russian Federation appalled. The British author James Pettifer sardonically wrote, "The 20 page 'agreement' seems to have been written by an unknown junior operative in a think tank not widely known for Balkan expertise"[3], and in a letter to the editor of the website *Balkan Insider* Macedonian nationalists like the historian Blaže Ristovski, but also internationally known figures like the writer Milan Kundera and the political philosopher Johan Galtung took issue with what they called "the Prespa 'agreement"' for not showing "respect for international law, human rights and democratic principles":

An agreement trying to define political, historical and cultural boundaries between "classical Macedonia" and (would be) North Macedonia is a bizarre undertaking in the 21st century. The construction of identities is not for governments. Macedonia is subjected to arbitrary international engineering against the will of the people. With little public support a highly polarised atmosphere deepens internal divisions. The asymmetric 'deal' will not lessen regional tensions as only the weaker (Macedonian) side was forced to compromise, to force (North) Macedonia into NATO – itself in an identity crisis. […] NATO membership is unlikely to bring social and economic progress or security to the small Macedonian state […].[4]

There was, however, no international echo to this protest of Russophiles, leftists and post-Communists.

Renewed Bulgarian-Macedonian Tension

The bilateral treaty between Sofia and Skopje on friendship, good neighbourliness and cooperation concluded in 2017 entered into force on 14 February 2018. According to the treaty's paragraph 8, article 2, a 7+7 Joint Multidisciplinary Commission of Experts on Historical and Educational Questions was formed. The Bulgarian members are predominantly well-established elderly scholars of nationalist leanings, with a former Bulgarian ambassador to Belgrade and Skopje, Angel Dimitrov, as co-chair of the commission.[5]

1 Final Agreement, 7-8.

2 Stefan Rohdewald, "Citizenship, Ethnicity, History, Nation, Region, and the Prespa Agreement of June 2018 between Macedonia and Greece," *Südosteuropa* 66/4 (2018), 577-593; Biljana Vankovska, "A diplomatic fairytale or geopolitics as usual: A critical perspective on the agreement between Athens and Skopje", *OSCE Yearbook* 24 (2018), 113-133; Christian Hagemann, "Goodbye FYROM, Welcome North Macedonia. Solving the Name Dispute with Greece and the Way Forward", *Südosteuropa-Mitteilungen* 59/1 (2019), 7-19.

3 James Pettifer, "Should Albanians Support or Use the New Name?," Koha (Prishtina), 20 June 2018

4 "Letter to the Editor: Academics Take Issue With Prespa Agreement," Balkan Insider, 29 August 2018, https://www.balkaninsider.com/letter-to-the-editor-academics-take-issue-with-prespa-agreement/.

5 For his mindset see the summary of a book of his of 2011: "An analysis of the historical foundation of the Republic of Macedonia through the generalised presentation of the most important characteristics of the Bulgarian and Yugoslav legacies, presents the country as split between the effects of unrecognised old Bulgarian cultural and political traditions and the fetishized new societal standards, formed during its Yugo-communist period. The attempt for their blending through a politically-directed interpretation of the past, leading to claims over all of Macedonia's history, is scholarly, culturally, and politically inadequate." Cf. Dimitrov, Angel: Raždaneto na edna nova dăržava. *Republika Makedonija meždu jugoslavizma i nacionalizma* [The birth of a new state. The Republic of Macedonia between Yugoslavism and Nationalism]. (Sofija: Akademično izdatelstvo "Prof. Marin Drinov", 2011), 576.

The co-chair on the Macedonian side, Dragi Gjorgiev, is an apolitical Ottomanist as well as most other members who are younger historians specialising on various epochs of Balkan history. According to the treaty, the joint commission's task is "to contribute to an objective scholarly treatment of historical events, based on authentic and documented historical sources".[1] Whereas common understanding on the role of prominent cultural, religious and political figures of the medieval Balkans was reached, that was not the case concerning similar figures of the late 19th century. The Bulgarian formula that these figures, notwithstanding their regional affiliation to Ottoman Macedonia, belonged exclusively to Bulgarian national history was unacceptable to the Macedonian side.

But "history" was not the only stumbling block as articles 5 and 6 in paragraph 11 in the treaty indicate: First, on the insistence of the Bulgarian side, Macedonia had to declare not to meddle "into the internal affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria with the aim of protecting the status and the rights of persons who are not citizens of the Republic of Macedonia" (article 5). This targeted, of course, at the non-recognised Macedonian minority in South Western Bulgaria. And second:

Both contracting sides will undertake efficient measures to stop malevolent propaganda on behalf of institutions and agencies and will discourage the activity of private persons aiming at the incitement of violence, hate and other similar actions which would impact their relations (article 6).

Finally, next to "history", "minority" and "hate speech" also "language" was used by Sofia for erecting another hurdle to Macedonia's EU membership: In contrast even to the wording of the Greek-Macedonian Prespa Agreement, the Bulgarian side set as a new precondition for its green light to the opening of negotiations between Skopje and Brussels that the term "the Macedonian language" should be replaced by "the official language according to the constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia". All these conditions were listed in a "Framework position on the enlargement of the EU and the process of stabilisation and association: Republic of Macedonia and Albania" by the Bulgarian government in October 2019 — a document approved by the National Assembly soon after. Then, in August 2020, Sofia communicated to the other 26 EU member states a lengthy "Explanatory Memorandum on the relationship of the Republic of Bulgaria with the Republic of North Macedonia in the context of the EU enlargement and Association and Stabilisation Process" with the message, that Bulgaria will veto the opening of accession negotiations with Skopje until the long list of demands is fulfilled.[2] Despite heavy diplomatic pressure from Brussels and Berlin, the veto was formally interposed on 17 November 2020. The leading *German daily Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* sarcastically remarked on the occasion:

Good news for all who are against an enlargement of the European Union by the six countries of the Western Balkans: After Bulgaria's veto against the beginning of accession talks with North Macedonia the chances for bringing the process to a complete halt and for losing the rest of its already heavily impaired credibility have increased.[3] After the 27-year period between the founding of the Republic of Macedonia and the Prespa Agreement of 2018 in which the Greek-Macedonian side of the isosceles Balkan triangle was the neuralgic one, by now the situation has dramatically changed: Now the triangle's Bulgarian-Macedonian side is again as conflictual as it was in communist times. The "Titanic" of Balkan nationalism has resurfaced.

1 Dogovor za prijatelstvo, dobrososedstvo i sorabotka megu Republika Makedonija i Republika Bugarija, 1 August 2017, *https://vlada.mk/sites/default/files/dogovori/Dogovor_Za_Prijatelstvo_Dobrososedstvo_Sorabotka_Megju_Republika_Makedonija_I_Republika_Bugarija.pdf*.

2 Boris Georgievski, "Bulgaria asks EU to stop 'fake' Macedonian identity." in *Deutsche Welle*, 23 September 2020, *https://www.dw.com/en/bulgaria-asks-eu-to-stop-fake-macedonian-identity/a-55020781*

3 Michael Martens, "Die einzige historische Wahrheit" [The one and only historical truth] in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* no. 270 of 19 November 2020, 10.

The 2019 Bulgarian Ultimatum in Comparison

by **Tomasz Kamusella**

Abstract

In 2019, Bulgaria, as an EU member state, issued an ultimatum to North Macedonia in the form of a list of demands to be included as one of the preconditions for opening accession negotiations between North Macedonia and the European Union (EU). Most of these demands question the foundations of North Macedonia's politics, history and culture by de facto pressing Skopje to consent to the Bulgarian thesis that neither the Macedonian language nor nation exist. The ethnolinguistic type of nationalism predominates in Central and Eastern Europe for statehood creation, legitimation and maintenance, therefore, Sofia's precondition appears to infringe the sovereignty of North Macedonia, and thus is in contravention of the Helsinki Accords. The situation, unusual in democratic Europe, is here forth analysed in comparative manner with the use of historical and contemporary examples.

From the Macedonians to the "Macedoners"?[1]

Macedonia is the sole post-Yugoslav state that was founded without bloodshed. To a degree, the reason for this was pure good luck. The close political and even military rapport between Serbia and Greece during the 1990s stopped short only on the issue of attacking Macedonia together.[2] Athens would not support Belgrade in an onslaught on Macedonia. Serbia – then already engaged in the wars against Bosnia, Croatia and Slovenia – was not ready to open another front in the south on its own. But Greece was instrumental in blocking the development of Macedonia as a viable independent state by persistently desisting from recognising its name. On this account, at the international level Macedonia had to acquiesce to the unwanted acronym FYROM (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).[3] Another stumbling block on Skopje's path to full international recognition and to the accession to the EU and NATO was the official disregard for the country's Albanians.[4] In freshly independent Macedonia political life was dominated by the national ideal of posing this polity as a nation-state only for the nation of ethnic Macedonians, or Orthodox Slavophones. This entailed the exclusion and discrimination of Albanian-speaking Muslim Macedonians, leading to an Albanian uprising in 2001. Fortunately, international pressure prevented the possible outbreak of an outright civil (or international) war. A compromise was reached in the form of cultural and linguistic concessions for the community of Albanian-speaking Macedonians.[5]

1 I thank Naum Trajanovski for the invitation to contribute to this volume, Biljana Volchevska and Martin Filipovski for taking care of the administrative details, and Gala Ivanovska for smoothing the rougher edges of my prose. Obviously, it is me alone who bears responsibility for any remaining infelicities.

2 Cf. Mirza Hota, "Interview: Greek journalist sued for writing about the presence of Greek paramilitaries in Bosnia/ Unholy Alliance: Greece and Milosevic ś Serbia," last modified August 31, 2013, accessed July 9, 2020, *https://medium.com/@MirzaHota/interview-greek-journalist-sued-for-writing-about-the-presence-of-greek-paramilitaries-in-bosnia-1cab88209991* ; Takis Michas, Unholy Alliance: Greece and Milošević's Serbia (College Station TX: Texas A & M University Press, 2002).

3 Michael Ioannidis, "Naming a State: Disputing over Symbols of Statehood at the Example of 'Macedonia'," Max Planck Yearbook of United Nations Law 14 (2010): 507–562.

4 "Macedonia: Treatment of Ethnic Albanians, Including Those Who are Members of the Albanian Democratic Party (DPA)," Refworld, last modified October 15, 1999, accessed July 10, 2020, *https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6ad6968.html*

5 "Ohrid Framework Agreement," Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, last modified August 13, 2001, accessed July 10, 2020, *https://www.osce.org/skopje/100622*

The two decades that followed were characterised by peace and relative stability. But no progress was made in regard of Skopje's desire to participate in European integration or for the full-fledged international recognition of this country. The situation blighted prospects of an entire generation and fuelled emigration. Finally, a momentous breakthrough arrived in early 2019. Greece recognised its northern neighbour under the compromise designation of 'North Macedonia,' though agreed to the continued use of the linguonym 'Macedonian' for the country's Slavic language.[1] Even more surprisingly, Skopje agreed to recognise Albanian as the country's co-official language.[2] For these unprecedented achievements, NATO swiftly accepted North Macedonia as its 30th member in March 2019.[3]

North Macedonia is the sole officially bilingual Slavic nation-state, in which a Slavic language and a *non*-Slavic language are (to be) equitably employed in official use, including state administration, education, and public life. In this solution North Macedonia is quite similar to Finland, which is an Finno-Ugric nation-state with Finnish and the non-Finno-Ugric (Germanic) tongue of Swedish as the country's two equal co-official languages.[4] As such Finland managed to overcome the inherent divisiveness of ethnolinguistic nationalism, which dominates elsewhere across central Europe as the leading ideology of statehood creation, legitimation and maintenance. In accordance with this ideology, all the speakers of a language (speech community) constitute a nation, which in turn should be housed in its own nation-state. The entailed principle of ethnolinguistic homogeneity dictates that speakers of other languages (seen as members of 'foreign nations') should not reside in this nation-state. On the other hand, the nation-state's official and national language must be unique, that is, it should not be shared by another polity or nation.[5] Hence, it is incorrect to maintain, as popularly done, that the nation of Finno-Ugric -speaking Finns live in Finland. They are rather the bilingual nation of Finlanders.[6] Should the model be successfully emulated in North Macedonia, the country's Albanian (Albanian-speaking) and Macedonian (Slavic-speaking) communities – alongside Romani- and Turkish-speakers – may meld into a uniformly bilingual nation of Macedoners. It is their country that determines the national identity of the Finlanders rather than a language. The same may become true in the case of the potential Macedoners.

Bulgarian Ultimatum

After joining NATO successfully, and having met all the legal and technocratic requirements set out by Brussels, the hope was that a quick path to EU membership would be unrolled for North Macedonia. However, only several months later, in June 2019, Bulgaria threw an unexpected hurdle in Macedonia's way. Although Bulgaria had been the first country in the world to recognise the independence of post-Yugoslav Macedonia in early 1992, Sofia has obstinately refused to recognise the existence of the Macedonian nation or language.[7] To Skopje's exasperation Sofia reinstated this position as a precondition for opening EU membership negotiations with North Macedonia.[8]

1 "Macedonia, Greece Sign 'Brave, Historic' Agreement On Name Change," RFE/RL, last modified June 17, 2018, accessed July 9, 2020, *https://www.rferl.org/a/greece-macedonia-sign-agreement-name-despite-protests/29293265.html* ; Helena Smith, "Macedonia officially changes its name to North Macedonia," The Guardian, last modified February 12, 2019, accessed July 9, 2020, *https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/12/nato-flag-raised-ahead-of-north-macedonias-prospective-accession*

2 "Macedonia's Albanian-Language Bill Becomes Law," RFE/RL, last modified January 15, 2019, accessed July 9, 2020, https://*www.rferl.org/a/macedonia-s-albanian-language-bill-becomes-law/29711502.html*

3 "It's Official: North Macedonia Becomes NATO's 30th Member," DefenseNews, last modified March 27, 2019, accessed July 9, 2020, *https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2020/03/27/its-official-north-macedonia-becomes-natos-30th-member/*

4 "Swedish Remains Obligatory in Finnish Schools," Yle, last modified March 6, 2015, accessed July 10, 2020, *https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/swedish_remains_obligatory_in_finnish_schools/7850431*

5 Tomasz Kamusella. "The Rise and Dynamics of the Normative Isomorphism of Language, Nation, and State in Central Europe" in The Battle for Ukrainian: A Comparative Perspective. Edited by Michael S. Flier and Andrea Graziosi. Cambridge MA: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute and Harvard University Press, 2017, pp. 415-451.

6 Aleksander Szulc, Historia języka szwedzkiego (Cracow: Polska Akademia Umiejętności and Uniwersytet Jagielloński, 2009): p. 213.

7 Ron Synovitz, "Skopje, Sofia Not Speaking Same Language When It Comes To Macedonian," RFE/RL, last modified December 16, 2018, accessed July 10, 2020, *https://www.rferl.org/a/skopje-sofia-not-speaking-same-language-when-it-comes-to-macedonian/29659030.html*

8 Martin Dimitrov and Sinisa Jakov Marusic, "Long-Dead Hero's Memory Tests Bulgarian-North Macedonian Reconciliation," BalkanInsight, last modified June 25, 2019, accessed Jul 9, 2020, *https://balkaninsight.com/2019/06/25/long-dead-heros-memory-tests-bulgarian-north-macedonian-reconciliation/*; "'What Did You Think is Going to Happen?' – Bitter Reactions in Macedonia After Bulgaria Presents an Ultimatum Over Goce Delcev," Republika, last modified June 12, 2019, accessed July 9, 2020, *https://english.republika.mk/news/macedonia/what-did-you-think-is-going-to-happen-bitter-reactions-in-macedonia-after-bulgaria-presents-an-ultimatum-over-goce-delcev/*

Bulgaria's liberal intellectuals and politicians were appalled by such an ideological throwback straight from the period of national communism,[1] but to no avail. On 9 October 2019, the Bulgarian Parliament[2] and government[3] officially adopted this position, which in essence is an ultimatum, bar the name.

The instrument of ultimatum belongs to imperial and authoritarian (totalitarian) politics.[4] It used to be in widespread employment across interwar Europe,[5] where undemocratic nation-states with bigger armies and economies tended to bully 'smaller' neighbours.[6] This coercive manner of doing politics contributed to the outbreak of the two Balkan Wars and both World Wars.[7] After 1945 the Kremlin built an equally coercive Soviet bloc in Europe.[8] In contrast, Western Europe embarked on the consensual process of European integration. The foundation of this process was self-limitation on the part of the 'big states' and the empowerment of 'small states'[9] for the sake of ensuring lasting peace, stability and cooperation.[10] In the midst of détente, in 1975, the Soviet bloc signed the similarly self-limiting Helsinki Accords. Bulgaria and Yugoslavia also adopted this document. Hence, the former country and the post-Yugoslav states (should) continue to stand by the Helsinki principles of peace and stability in Europe, including the principles of inviolability of frontiers and territorial integrity of states.[11]

It is still to be seen whether Brussels will adopt this long list of Bulgaria's demands as part of the binding preconditions for opening accession negotiations with North Macedonia. A future decision on this issue will be a clear sign whether the EU is ready to stand up to, or rather prefers to acquiesce to the rising authoritarian and nationalist tendency across the bloc, as recently symbolised by Hungary and Poland.[12] Yet, at present, Bulgaria is the EU's most corrupt and poorest country,[13] where the main bodyguard of the country's former communist dictator of

1 Sinisa Jakov Marusic, "Intellectuals Condemn Bulgaria's 'Unacceptable' Demands of North Macedonia," BalkanInsight, last modified October 11, 2019, accessed July 9, 2020, *https://balkaninsight.com/2019/10/11/intellectuals-condemn-bulgarias-unacceptable-demands-of-north-macedonia/*

2 "Narodnoto sıbranie prie Deklaratsiia vıv vrızka s razshiriavaneto na Evropeioskiia sıiuz i Protsesa na stabilizirane i asotsiirane na Republika Severna Makedoniia i Republika Albaniia," Narodno Sıbranie na Republika Bılgariia, last modified October 10, 2019, accessed July 18, 2020, *https://www.parliament.bg/bg/news/ID/4920*

3 "Ramkova pozitsia otnosno razshiriavane na ES i protsesa na stabilizirane i asotsiirane: Republika Severna Makedoniia i Albaniia," Ministerski sıvet Republika Bılgariia, October 9, 2019, accessed July 9, 2020, http://*www.gov.bg/bg/prestsentar/novini/ramkova-pozitsia*; Sinisa Jakov Marusic, "Bulgaria Sets Tough Terms for North Macedonia's EU Progress," BalkanInsight, last modified October 10, 2019, accessed July 9, 2020 *https://balkaninsight.com/2019/10/10/bulgaria-sets-tough-terms-for-north-macedonias-eu-progress/*

4 Cf Robert Howes, "The British Press and Opposition to Lord Salisbury's Ultimatum of January 1890," Portuguese Studies 23, no. 2 (2007): 153-166.

5 Cf George Sakwa, "The Polish Ultimatum to Lithuania in March 1938," The Slavonic and East European Review 55, no. 2 (April, 1977): 204-226

6 Cf Antony Polonsky, The Little Dictators: The History of Eastern Europe since 1918 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980); Paul Gordon Lauren, "Ultimata and Coercive Diplomacy," International Studies Quarterly 16, no. 2 (June, 1972): 131-165.

7 Cf Annika Mombauer, "The July Crisis: Ultimatum and Outbreak of War," OpenLearn, last modified January 14, 2014, accessed July 10, 2020, *https://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/history/world-history/the-july-crisis-ultimatum-and-outbreak-war*

8 Stephen G. Glazer, "The Brezhnev Doctrine," The International Lawyer 5, no. 1 (January, 1971): 169-179.

9 Cf Iain McIver, "The Role of Small States in the European Union," SPICe: The Information Centre, 2015, accessed July 10, 2020. *http://www.parliament.scot/S4_EuropeanandExternalRelationsCommittee/Inquiries/SPICe_briefing_on_role_of_small_states.pdf*

10 Cf Vicki L Birchfield, John Krige and Alasdair R Young, "European Integration as a Peace Project," British Journal of Politics and International Relations 19, no. 1 (January, 2017): 3-12.

11 "Helsinki Accords: The Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe," last modified, August 1, 1975, accessed July 10, 2020, *http://chnm.gmu.edu/1989/archive/files/helsinki-accords_f9de6be034.pdf*

12 Cf Dalibor Rohac, "Hungary and Poland Aren't Democratic: They're Authoritarian," Foreign Policy, last modified February 5, 2018, accessed July 18, 2020, *https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/02/05/hungary-and-poland-arent-democratic-theyre-authoritarian/*

13 Radosveta Vassileva, "Bulgaria's Autocratic Model," New Eastern Europe, last modified September 27, 2018, accessed July 10, 2020, *https://neweasterneurope.eu/2018/09/27/bulgarias-autocratic-model/* ; Mario Tanev, "Bulgaria Perceived as Most Corrupt EU Member - Transparency Intl," SeeNews, last modified January 29, 2019, accessed July 18, 2020, *https://seenews.com/news/bulgaria-perceived-as-most-corrupt-eu-member-transparency-intl-640917* ; "Pistóli, metritá kai rávdoi chrysoú sto komodíno tou prothypourgoú Borísof (fotografíes)," Kathimerini, last modified June 19, 2020, accessed July 14, 2020, *https://www.kathimerini.gr/1083480/gallery/epikairothta/kosmos/pistoli-metrhta-kai-ravdoi-xrysoy-sto-komodino-toy-prw8ypoyrgoy-mporisof-fwtografies*

three country's former communist dictator of three decades and a half,[1] as long-serving Prime Minister, oversees the introduction of an authoritarian system of rule, while Brussels is not watching.[2]

The EU opened the accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia in March 2020. Brussels acknowledged Sofia's position, but has not explicitly itemised it (yet?).[3] The Bulgarian government's 'Framework Position on the Enlargement Process and the Stabilisation concerning Albania and North Macedonia,[4] adopted in October 2019, is a proverbial hot potato. It appears to be in direct contravention of the Helsinki principle of territorial integrity, which provides that the signatories 'will refrain from any action […] against the territorial integrity, political independence or the unity of any participating State […].[5]

Sovereignty and Ethnolinguistic Nationalism

The current understanding of political independence, territorial integrity and the unity of a state is steeped in the concept of sovereignty. This concept was formulated in the late 16th century in France. Subsequently, it was adopted as binding across Western and Central Europe at the end of the Thirty Years' War in 1648, which concluded the period of religious wars in this part of the continent.[6] Sovereignty provides that none other than the legitimate ruler or government have the right to take decisions concerning a given polity with regard to its territory and the population living there. The concept underpins the model of nation-state, or the state for one nation only. In turn, this model became the norm of statehood creation, legitimation and maintenance in Western Europe and the Balkans in the wake of the French Revolution. The difference was that in the former area it was citizenship that made one into a member of a nation, while in the latter religion fulfilled this function. The Ottoman concept of *millet*, or non-territorial autonomy for an (ethno)religious community conditioned this development across the Balkans.[7]

At the end of the Napoleonic wars, in 1813, ethnolinguistic nationalism was invented, when it was proposed that all the speakers of the German language should constitute a German nation.[8] This type of nationalism defines the speech community (that is, *all* the speakers) of language A as *nation A*. In turn, proponents of ethnolinguistic nationalism aspire to turn all areas compactly inhabited by speakers of language A into *nation-state* A for nation A. Practically all of Central Europe was overhauled in line with this ideology after the Great War, when he region's multi-ethnic empires and non-national polities were replaced with such ethnolinguistic nation-states.[9] Meanwhile, tourages drawn from the German Confederation, contributed to the transfer of ethnolinguistic nationalism from

1 Tomasz Kamusella, "Bulgaria: An Unlikely Personality Cult," New Eastern Europe, last modified September 7, 2018, accessed July 10, 2020, *https://neweasterneurope.eu/2018/09/07/bulgaria-unlikely-personality-cult/* ; "Meeting Bulgaria's New Mr Big," BBC Radio 4, last modified, July 25, 2009, accessed July 14, 2020, *http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/8166893.stm*

2 Radosveta Vassileva, "Bulgaria's autocratic model," New Eastern Europe, last modified September 27, 2018, accessed July 10, 2020, *https://neweasterneurope.eu/2018/09/27/bulgarias-autocratic-model/* ; Radosveta Vassileva, "Bulgaria's Dangerous Flirtation with the Far-Right," New Eastern Europe, last modified May 21, 2019, accessed July 10, 2020, *https://neweasterneurope.eu/2019/05/21/bulgarias-dangerous-flirtation-with-the-far-right/*

3 "Enlargement and Stabilisation and Association Process," Council of the European Union, last modified March 25, 2020, accessed July 10, 2020, *https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7002-2020-INIT/en/pdf* ; "Council Conclusions on the Enlargement and Stabilisation and Association Process Concerning Albania and North Macedonia," EU Law Live, last modified March 26, 2020, accessed July 10, 2020, *https://eulawlive.com/council-conclusions-on-the-enlargement-and-stabilisation-and-association-process-concerning-albania-and-north-macedonia/*

4 "Ramkova pozitsia otnosno razshiriavane na ES i protsesa na stabilizirane i asotsiirane: Republika Severna Makedoniia i Albaniia," Ministerski sıvet Republika Bılgariia, last modified October 9, 2019, accessed July 10, 2020, *http://www.gov.bg/bg/prestsentar/novini/ramkova-pozitsia*

5 "Helsinki Accords."

6 William A. Dunning, "Jean Bodin on Sovereignty," Political Science Quarterly 11, no. 1 (March, 1896): 82-104.

7 H. R. Wilkinson, *Maps and Politics: A Review of the Ethnographic Cartography of Macedonia* (Liverpool: At the University Press, 1951): 29; Katrin Bozeva-Abazi, *The Shaping of Bulgarian and Serbian National Identities* (Skopje: Institute for National History, 2007): 143-192.

8 Ernst Moritz Arndt, „Des deutschen Vaterland," in: Ernst Moritz Arndt, *Fünf Lieder für deutsche Soldaten* (Berlin: Reimer, 1813).

9 Cf Tomasz Kamusella, *The Politics of Language and Nationalism in Modern Central Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009).

central Europe to the Balkans.[1] But it was a prolonged process. In Serbia the last ban on the vernacular Serbian language was actually lifted as late as 1868,[2] while the standardisation of this national language was not completed until the beginning of the 20th century.[3] Likewise, the vernacular Bulgarian language was officially standardised only in 1899.[4] What is more, Greek and (Ottoman) Turkish remained co-official in Southern Bulgaria (Eastern Rumelia) until the country's independence, finally achieved in 1908.[5] It was the Russian armies who created Bulgaria in 1878 in the course of another Russo-Ottoman war. As a result, Russian remained the sole official language of the Bulgarian army until 1885, while the military regulations were not issued in Bulgarian before 1905.[6]

Following the Balkan Wars, Albania was founded as the first purely ethnolinguistic nation-state in the Balkans, that is, a polity for all speakers of the Albanian language, *irrespective* of their various faiths, be it Islam, Orthodox Christianity or Catholicism. In this way, the potential partition of their ethnic homeland alongside religious lines was prevented.[7] After the Great War ethnolinguistic nationalism became the norm for creating nation-states and adjusting their frontiers in broadly construed central Europe,[8] that is, from Scandinavia in the north to the Balkans and Anatolia in the south.[9] However, Muslims, *irrespective* of ethnicity and language, lumped as 'Turks,' were periodically expelled or coerced to migrate from Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia to the Ottoman Empire/Turkey, from the moment of the founding of these Christian polities until the fall of communism.[10] In 1989 communist Bulgaria had the doubtful distinction of organising and carrying out the largest and most intensive expulsion in Cold War Europe.[11]

Bulgarian Demands

Sofia's 2019 ultimatum is *not* about North Macedonia as such, but focuses on Bulgaria, namely, the country's nationalism, language policy and politics of history (*Geschichtspolitik*). It plays to the opinions and sentiments of Bulgarian nationalists and populists.[12] However, all the aforementioned three spheres of public policy are deployed in an offensive manner against neighbouring states. Sofia insists that Skopje observe the Bulgarian ideological d ogmas, even if that would breach North Macedonia's own national dogmas. Yet, in the Central Europe of ethnolinguistic nation-states the principle of sovereignty (or the Helsinki Accords' 'political independence or the unity of [a state]') protects a polity's language policy and politics of history from an external intervention. These are the two equally important pillars of legitimate statehood as construed with the use of ethnolinguistic nationalism. These ideological pillars can be discussed, but another state cannot just demand they be removed or otherwise nu-

1 Cf Holm Sundhaußen, Der Einfluss der Herderschen Ideen auf die Nationsbildung bei den Völkern der Habsburger Monarchie (Munich: R. Oldenburg Verlag, 1973).

2 Aleksandar Milanović, Kratka istorija srpskog književnog jezika (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike, 2010): 132.

3 Ibid., 135.

4 Diana Ivanova, *Istoriia na novobılgarskiia knizhoven ezik* (Plovdiv: Universitetsko izdatelstvo "Paisii Khilendarski", 2017): 393, 406-407; Mikhail Videnov, Bılgarskata ezikova politika (Sofia: Izdatelstvo "Zakharii Stoianov", 2015): 117.

5 Ibid., 386.

6 Katrin Bozeva-Abazi, 196.

7 H. R. Wilkinson, 235-237.

8 Cf Paul Robert Magocsi, Historical Atlas of Central Europe (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019).

9 Cf Leon Dominian, *The Frontiers of Language and Nationality in Europe* (London: Constable and Company, 1917).

10 Ahmet İçduygu and Deniz Sert, "The Changing Waves of Migration from the Balkans to Turkey: A Historical Account" in *Migration in the Southern Balkans,* ed. Hans Vermeulen, Martin Baldwin-Edwards and Riki van Boeschoten (Cham: Springer, 2015): 85-86; "1938: Convention Regulating the Emigration of the Turkish Population from the Region of Southern Serbia in Yugoslavia," in Robert Elsie *Texts and Documents of Albanian History,* accessed July 18, 2020, *http://albanianhistory.net/1938_Convention/index.html* ; Eimitris Litoksou, Izmešana nacja, ili za grcite i raznebitenite drugojazičnici (Skopje: Az-Buki, 2005): 17-28.

11 Tomasz Kamusella, *Ethnic Cleansing During the Cold War: The Forgotten 1989 Expulsion of Turks from Communist Bulgaria* (London: Routledge, 2019).

12 Cf Martin Dimitrov, "Bulgarian Nationalists Suspend Threat to Quit Govt," *BalkanInsight,* last modified September 4, 2018, accessed, July 14, 2020, *https://balkaninsight.com/2018/09/04/bulgarian-nationalists-threaten-to-leave-the-borissov-cabinet-protesting-against-his-unilateralism-09-03-2018/*

llified, because one of the end results could be a thorough de-legitimation of the nation-state in its citizens' eyes and in the view of an external power that presses on with such a demand. A demand of this kind is none other than a clear breach of sovereignty.

Among others, Bulgaria sees the origin of North Macedonia as a state – that is, the Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – to be a constitutive element of 'Yugoslav totalitarianism.' Thus, this origin is alluded to have been 'illegitimate,' unless Skopje recognises that the Yugoslav republic's inhabitants never formed a Macedonian nation in its own right but rather constituted part of the Bulgarian nation. In a nutshell, this convoluted formulation requires North Macedonia to recognise Bulgarian nationalism's cherished claim that the Macedonians are Bulgarians.[1] For the sake of comparison, it would be unthinkable that upon Austria's accession to the EU in 1995, Berlin would have declared 'Anglo-American totalitarianism' as the creator of the non-existent nation of Austrians. Let alone would Germany have demanded that Vienna recognise that Austria's population is part of the German nation.

Another demand tabled by Bulgaria concerns the politics of history. It amounts to a pro-Bulgarian rewriting of the past, which many would see as a blatant falsification. Sofia insists that Skopje desist from using the well-established phrases 'Bulgarian fascist occupation' and 'Bulgarian occupiers' for referring to the wartime Bulgarian administration of Macedonia. Furthermore, any such phrases should be removed from monuments and commemorative plaques, mainly erected in post-war Yugoslavia.[2] Yet, it is sufficient to open any monograph on World War II to see that in 1941 Bulgaria joined the fascist camp of Axis powers. Even Bulgarian authors in textbooks[3] and propaganda publications aimed at international readership have no qualms to talk about 'fascist Bulgaria' in this context.[4] In 1941, Bulgaria, together with Germany, Hungary and Italy attacked and partitioned Yugoslavia. Sofia occupied these areas, which nowadays constitute most of North Macedonia, South-Eastern Serbia and South-Eastern Kosovo.[5] Wartime Bulgaria's propaganda presented the occupation of Macedonia as 'unification,'[6] but the victorious Allies had no doubt that it was an act of occupation. Yugoslavia was reconstituted as a state in 1944-1945. And again, to put this Bulgarian demand in a comparative context – would it be possible for Germany to lean on Vienna that Austria stop presenting itself as the 'first victim' of nazi Germany.[7] That Austrian school textbooks must be rewritten, so that the 1938 Anschluss would be portrayed as a peaceful unification of Germany and the German nation?[8]

1 For instance, see this fragment in "Ramkova pozitsia": *Sıshtevremenno, Bılgariia ne sledva da dopuska integratsiiata na Republika Severna Makedoniya v ES da bıde sıptstvana ot evropeiiska legitimatsiia na dırzhavno sponsorirana ideologiya na anti-bılgarska osnova. Prenapisvaneto na istorioata na chast ot bılgarskiia narod sled 1944 g. e sred stılbovete na anti-bılgarskata ideologicheska konstruktsiia na iugoslavskiia totalitarizım.* (At the same time, Bulgaria shall not allow the accession of the Republic of North Macedonia into the EU, if this would mean the EU's acceptance of a state-sponsored ideology on an anti-Bulgarian basis [as practiced in the latter country]. The rewriting of the history of a part of the Bulgarian nation after 1944 is an anti-Bulgarian ideological construct and one of the pillars of Yugoslav totalitarianism.)

2 [P]redpriemane na sistemni merki za premakhvane ot tabeli i nadpisi vırkhu pametnitsi, pametni plochi i sgradi na tekstove, nasazhdashti otkrito omraza kım Bılgariia, naprimer takiva, sıdırzhashti kvalifikatsii kato „bılgarskiia fashistki okupator". ([North Macedonia should] take systematic measures to remove from signs and inscriptions on monuments, memorial plaques and buildings texts that openly incite hatred towards Bulgaria, for example, those containing phrases such as the "Bulgarian fascist occupant".) See: "Ramkova pozitsia."

3 Kiril N. Vasilev, *Istoriia na antifashistkata borba v Bılgariia 1939-1944* (Sofia: Partizdat, 1976): 58

4 Roussinov Spass, Bulgaria: *Land, Economy, Culture* (Sofia: Foreign Languages Press, 1965): 65.

5 Miroslav Stojiljković, *Bugarska okupatorska politika u Srbiji 1941-1944* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1989)

6 Roumen Daskalov, Debating the Past: Modern Bulgarian History: From Stambolov to Zhivkov (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011): 263.

7 Cf *Austrian Studies* (Special issue: 'Hitler's First Victim'? Memory and Representation in Post-War Austria) 11 (2003).

8 In Austria annexed by Germany a referendum was staged, yielding the almost unanimous approval of the fait accompli. The objectivity of this plebiscite was doubtful, but in Macedonia under Bulgarian occupation no such exercise was even considered (Cf William Edwart Wright, *Austria, 1938-1988: Anschluss and Fifty Years* (Riverside CA: Ariadne Press): 40). On the other hand, like in annexed Austria German citizenship was not extended to the country's Jews, Sofia did not grant Macedonia's Jews with Bulgarian citizenship, either (Paul Mojzes, *Balkan Genocides: Holocaust and Ethnic Cleansing in the Twentieth Century* (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011): 103).

In today's Bulgaria nationalist politicians and public at large like referring to North Macedonia as a 'second Bulgarian state.[1] This disparaging attitude also underpins and enabled Sofia's 2019 ultimatum to North Macedonia. Yet, the territory of today's North Macedonia was included within the boundaries of the Bulgarian nation-state only for four months in 1878, three years during the Great War, and for another three-year stint during World War II. The territory's inhabitants were largely disinterested in the political project of a Greater Bulgaria, unlike their Austrian counterparts who proclaimed the Republic of German-Austria (1918-1919) as an integral part of Germany. What is more, for half a century the German Confederation (1815-1866) included within its frontiers both of what later became, Austria and Germany. And during the Second World War Austria remained incorporated into Germany for seven years. Yet, after 1945, no sane German (let alone Austrian) politician or journalist would dare to speak about Austria as a 'second German state.'[2]

In the 2019 ultimatum, Sofia reiterates its long-established position on the Macedonian language by stressing that it does not exist, and whatever is called 'Macedonian' in North Macedonia actually must be part of the Bulgarian language.[3] In Austria the country's inhabitants use German as their official language, but Vienna retains full sovereign control over its country-specific norm of this language, as evidenced by textbooks and dictionaries of German written by Austrian authors, published by Austrian publishers, and approved by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research.[4] Furthermore, Austria's accession treaty to the EU states includes over 20 specific Austrian agricultural terms (which are differently defined in Germany's German) that shall be used in the EU's official nomenclature.[5]

Germany had no objections, while Vienna continues to emphasize the distinctiveness of Austrian German in the EU institutions.[6] Moreover, the case of post-Soviet Moldova could well serve as a cautionary tale. In 1989 the script of the Moldovan language was changed from Cyrillic to Latin alphabet.[7] As a result, Moldovan became identical with Romanian. In 1991 Moldova gained independence, and its official language was renamed as 'Romanian.' A growing support for a union with Romania, not shared by the country's Slavophones (including ethnic Bulgarians[8]) led to a war (1990-1992) and to the de facto separation of the eastern part of the country (Transnistria).[9] In order to end this conflict and re-establish the political and territorial unity of the country, Moldova's Constitution of 1994 reinstated the term 'Moldovan' as the name of the state's official language.[10]

1 "Dzhambazki: Makedoniia e vtora bılgarska dırzhava na Balkanite," *Fakti,* last modified March 26, 2020, accessed July 20, 2020, *https://fakti.bg/bulgaria/458860-djambazki-makedonia-e-vtora-balgarska-darjava-na-balkanite* ; Ian Pirinski, Gnevıt na pravdata (Blagoevgrad: ET Kheroneia, 2016): 23.

2 Cf Walter Wiltschegg, *Österreich - der "Zweite deutsche Staat"? Der nationale Gedanke in der Ersten Republik* (Graz: Stocker, 1992).

3 *Nikoii dokument/ iziavlenie v protsesa na prisediniavane ne mozhe da se razglezhda kato priznanie ot bılgarska strana na sushtestvuvaneto na t. nar. „makedonski ezik", otdelen ot bılgarskiia.* (No document [or] statement [used] in the accession process can be considered as a recognition by the Bulgarian state of the existence of the so-called 'Macedonian language,' separate from Bulgarian.) See: "Ramkova pozitsia."

4 Cf *Österreichisches Wörterbuch – auf der Grundlage des amtlichen Regelwerks* (neue Rechtschreibung) (Vienna: Österreichischer Bundesverlag and Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky and Bundesministeriums für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Kultur, 2006).

5 "Do[c]uments Concerning the Accession of the Republic of Austria, the Kingdom of Sweden, the Republic of Finland and the Kingdom of Norway to the European Union," *Official Journal of the European Communities European Commission 37* (29 August 1994): 370.

6 Heidemarie Markhardt, *Das österreichische Deutsch im Rahmen der EU* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2005).

7 Mark Sebba, *Spelling and Society: The Culture and Politics of Orthography around the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012): 81.

8 Charles King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture* (Stanford CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2000): 176

9 Ibid., 179.

10 Art. 13.1 in Constituția Republicii Moldova, last modified July 29, 1994, accessed July 12, 2020, *https://web.archive.org/web/20080226205217/http://gov.md/content/ro/0000072.pdf*

Why does the Bulgarian government think that Bulgaria has any right to demand such unacceptable concessions from Skopje? Firstly, because for 30 years Athens took a similarly obstructive position toward Macedonia regarding the country's name, while the EU and the West acquiesced. Secondly, because Bulgaria, being already an EU member, is in a stronger position than North Macedonia. Hence, the Bulgarian government has decided to abuse this position for domestic reasons, and to pander to nationalists in its ranks. Thirdly, Bulgarian nationalists and populists behind these demands really believe in what they say, and that Skopje is 'incorrect' in maintaining that there is such a thing as a Macedonian nation or language. On top of that, ethnolinguistic nationalism continues to be the main ideology of statehood creation, legitimation and maintenance from Scandinavia to Turkey and from Italy to Kazakhstan. The current shift from ethnolinguistic to civic nationalism observed in North Macedonia has not registered in Bulgaria or may be even seen as 'wrongheaded.'

I am afraid that the third explanation is the most probable. That Bulgarian politicians and their scholarly advisors are unable to make the crucial notional distinction between the material reality and the social reality. The former is independent of human will and also accessible to the senses of non-humans (animals and hypothetical extra-terrestrials). On the other hand, the social reality is created and maintained by humans and their groups through language (that is, the biological capacity for speech). As such this type of reality is fully dependent on human will, and in order to 'see' (in a mind's eye) its elements one needs to be 'in the know.' Literally, the social reality exists only in people's heads, in the form of ideas and beliefs (also known as 'values and tradition') that condition how humans and their groups behave and interact. For instance, a dog and its master have no problems to see a tree or a stone. But despite the master's love lavished on his dog, the dog will never be able to 'see' or sniff the master's nation. Likewise, if a person has no concept of the nation in their head, it is impossible for them to conceive of themselves as a member of any nation at all.

Let us now take a map as an example. A geological or physical map of an area is a depiction of the observable material reality. A lake on the map cannot be just imagined away into a mountain. Any atlas of physical geography would reject such a map as erroneous or fictitious. In contrast, a nationality map of the same area aspires to present the social reality. During the last two centuries such nationality maps have proposed that within the boundaries of what today is North Macedonia the inhabitants are Bulgarians, Greeks, Illyrians, Slavs, Orthodox Christians, Macedonians, Muslims, Serbs, Serbo-Croats, Turks, Vlachs (Aromanians), or Yugoslavs.[1] By their nature, cartographic depictions of the social reality hinge on a cartographer's views and preferences, as well as on the changing identities of the population observed.

In the Ottoman Empire millets took precedence before the nation as the preferred locus of identity.[2] Hence, the populace of historical Macedonia, saw themselves mainly as Muslims and Orthodox Christians, irrespective of language, until their land was detached from the Ottoman Empire in the wake of the two Balkan Wars, and partitioned among Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia. As a result, millet as the leading concept of political groupness was replaced with that of the nation. In addition, following the Central European norm, a language was to become the defining basis of such a nation. In the Serbian section of partitioned historic Macedonia, which yielded today's North Macedonia, (especially Orthodox) Slavophones were pressed through administration and compulsory elementary education to become Serbs.[3] Each person was required to choose (declare) their nationality (defined through their language), or membership in a nation. As in the case of monotheistic religions, only membership in a single nation was allowed.[4]

1 Cf H. R. Wilkinson.

2 Cf M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, "Initial Ottoman Responses to the Challenge of Modernity," in *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008): 42-54.

3 Stojan Kiselinovski, *Statusot na makedonskiot jazik vo Makedonija* (1913-1987) (Skopje: Misla, 1988): 25.

4 Cf *Report of the Delegates to the International Statistical Congress Held at St Petersburg in August, 1872.* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1875): 37; Şener Aktürk, *Regimes of Ethnicity and Nationhood in Germany, Russia, and Turkey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012): 229-233; Morgane Labbé, *La nationalité, une histoire de chiffres. Politique et statistiques en Europe centrale* (1848-1919) (Paris: SciencesPo, 2019): 53-56.

In March 1878 Russia established Bulgaria as a more territorially extensive country than it is nowadays. But the other great powers disapproved, and four months later, in July 1878, Bulgaria's territory was scaled down. The area of present-day North Macedonia was included in this short-lived 'Greater Bulgaria,' before it was returned to the Ottomans. On this tenuous ground, Bulgarian nationalists claim the territory's Slavophones as Bulgarians, without paying much attention to the Greek-speakers or Muslims (that is speakers of Albanian and Turkish).[1] Sofia pointed out that the 'southern dialect' of Serbian (or Serbo-Croato-Slovenian, which in the interwar Yugoslav Constitution was designated as the country's official language)[2] was more similar to standard Bulgarian than to Serbo-Croatian.[3] Hence, Bulgaria considered the use of 'Serbian' (or the Cyrillic-based form of Serbo-Croatian) in interwar Yugoslavia's Vardar Region (Banovina) as 'Serbianisation,' while Belgrade did take measures that were explicitly anti-Bulgarian.[4]

Some local intellectuals in 'Southern Serbia' wanted to codify the local Slavic speech into a Macedonian language.[5] Finally, the authorities relented and, after 1939, began introducing to elementary schools the 'southern dialect' (at times also referred to as 'Bulgarian dialect') as a medium of instruction. [6] Understandably, Sofia drew at the population's displeasure with Belgrade's policies in order to rebrand the Bulgarian annexation of Yugoslav Macedonia (or now 'Western Bulgaria') in 1941 as 'liberation.'[7] Bulgarian replaced Serbian as the area's language of administration and education, while the majority of Yugoslav-time civil servants and teachers were replaced with immigrants from Bulgaria proper.[8] This change underpinned the urgent (and often forced) policy of overhauling the Slavophone population into 'real Bulgarians,'[9] on the assumption that most had not developed any nationality (ethnic identity), yet.[10]

Hence, with time the majority of the population came to see Bulgarians as occupiers rather than liberators,[11] which hindered the policy of Bulgarianisation. The post-war reconstitution of Yugoslavia, among others, required the swift founding and standardisation of a Macedonian language, alongside the construction of a Macedonian nation.[12] The obvious goal was to meet the population's expectations for administration and education in an easily comprehensible language, and on the other hand, to neutralise the short-lived wartime Bulgarian political, cultural and social influence[13] in occupied Yugoslav Macedonia.[14]

1 Vladan Jovanović, Vardarska banovina, 1929-1941 (Belgrade: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2011): 54-55.

2 Ala G. Šešken, Formiranjeto i razvojot na makedonskata literatura (Sopje: Filološki fakultet "Blaže Koneski", Univerzitet "Sv. Kiril i Metodij", 2012): 55.

3 H. R. Wilkinson, pp. 331-332; Slavka Velichkova, *Tendentsii v ezikovata politika na Republika Makedoniia* (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na Bılgarskata akademiia na naukite, 1991).

4 Vladan Jovanović, Vardarska, 423-425.

5 Ala G. Šešken, p. 73; Trajko Stamatoski, *Kontinuitetot na makedonskiot literaturen jazik* (Skopje: Prosvetne delo, 1998): 111-116.

6 Vladan Jovanović, *Slike jedne neuspele integracije: Kosovo, Makedonija, Srbija, Jugoslavija* (Belgrade: Fabrika knjiga and Peščanik, 2014): 189.

7 Ibid., p. 77.

8 Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1944): 188-189.

9 Miroslav Stojiljković, Bugarska, 90-94, 101-102.

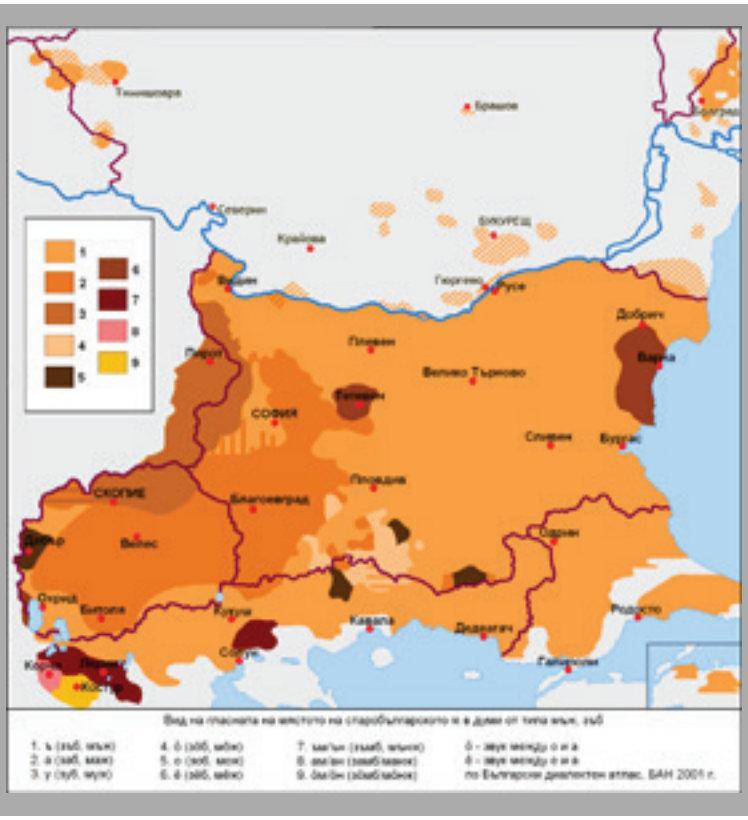
10 Trajko Stamatoski, Kontinuitetot, 110

11 Matjaž Klemenčič and Mitja Žagar, *The Former Yugoslavia's Diverse Peoples: A Reference Sourcebook* (Santa Barbara CA: ABC-Clio, 2004): 177; Frederick B. Chary, *The Bulgarian Jews and the Final Solution, 1940-1944* (Pittsburgh PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972): 45-46.

12 Trajko Stamatoski, Kontinuitetot, 151-154.

13 George B. Zotiades, *The Macedonian Controversy* (Thessaloniki: Society of Macedonian Studies, 1954): 46.

14 Yugoslavia pursued a similar policy of linguistic and national distancing from Albania in Kosovo, see: Tomasz Kamusella, "The Idea of a Kosovan Language in Yugoslavia's Language Politics," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language 242* (2016): 217-237.



Bulgarian dialect map in early 20th. Century acc. to Bulgarian Dialectological Atlas. Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 2001, ISBN: 954-90344-1-0 Source: from :bg:Файл:Bulgarian dialect map-yus.png, graphics created by :bg:User:Пакко (Plamen Tsvetkov), released on Bulgarian Wikipedia under GFDL

The original uploader was Jingiby at English Wikipedia. - Transferred from en.wikipedia to Commons by Sreejithk2000 using CommonsHelper., CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=10521901

In order to prevent a disaster of being occupied both by the Red Army and Yugoslavia's partisans, Bulgaria switched sides from the Axis states to the Allies in late 1944. Hence, Sofia had no choice but to acquiesce to the developments in post-war Yugoslavia's Macedonia, including the recognition of a Macedonian minority in Bulgaria itself. But soon enough, the 1948 rift between Yugoslavia and the Kremlin enabled communist Bulgaria to embark on an anti-Yugoslav policy.[1] In the case of Yugoslav Macedonia, this policy soon progressed from the ban on the Macedonian language in 1948 to the wholesale de-recognition of this minority a decade later.[2] Finally, during the high age of national communism in the Soviet bloc, a Bulgarian dogma coalesced that the Macedonian nation and its language do not exist.[3] [4] Bulgarian scholars were required to espouse and 'scientifically prove' this thesis beginning in 1968.[5]

Ten years later, in 1978, in line with the national-communist ideology of a single, unitary and homogenous Slavophone (and s*otto voce*: Orthodox) Bulgarian nation,[6] the parallel unity and homogeneity of the Bulgarian language was also proclaimed. Obviously, in this ideological construct, Yugoslavia's Macedonian was subsumed as an integral and indistinguishable part of the Bulgarian language.[7] Following the liquidation of education in minority languages in Bulgaria by the turn of the 1970s, and the forced change of names of Bulgaria's Muslims and Turkish-speakers during the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s, the last communist census of 1985 'showed' that only 'ethnic Bulgarians' lived in the country.[8]

1 Cf *Iugoslaviia - koloniia i platsdarm za agresiia na amerikano-angliiskite imperialisti* (Sofia: SBSD, 1952); Bogomil Nikolov Nonev, *Predatelstvo. Ocherki za dneshna Iugoslaviia* (Sofia: Bılgarski pisatel, 1951)

2 Loring M. Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict: Ethnic Nationalism in a Transnational World* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995): 68.

3 Ibid., 67.

4 Interestingly, in Greece's section of historical Macedonia, the term 'Macedonian language' was employed in the 1920 census, when this term was not in use at that time either in Bulgaria or the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Yugoslavia). Subsequently, in the 1928 Greek census, the term morphed into 'Macedono-Slavic,' before becoming the generic 'Slavic' in 1940. See: Eimitris Litoksou, *Izmešana*, p. 108.

5 *Makedonskiiat vpros. Politichesko-istoricheska spravka* (Sofia: Bılgarska akademiia na naukite, 1968).

6 Delcho Todorov, Etnografiia i suvremennost (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na Bılgarskata akademiia na naukite, 1976): 149-150; Vasil Liutskanov, "Etnokulturnoto edinstvo na bılgarskata natsiia," *Rabotnichesko delo* (June 28, 1989): 2.

7 *Edinstvoto na bılgarskiia ezik v minaloto i dnes* (Sofia: Bılgarska akademiia na naukite, 1978): 14-20.

8 Ali Eminov, *Turkish and Other Muslim Minorities in Bulgaria* (London: Hurst & Company, 1997): 70.

Bulgaria officially became an ethnolinguistically homogenous country. The necessity to expel a third (that is, 360,000) of Bulgaria's officially non-existent Turks rapidly falsified this claim. The expulsion also brought about the fall of communism in Bulgaria and almost engulfed this country in a 'Yugoslav-style' ethnic civil war.[1] Afterward Bulgaria's Turks and Muslims were returned with their traditional names and have been free to cultivate their traditions and talk in Turkish openly. The possibility of genuine reconciliation came in 2012, when the Bulgarian Parliament adopted a momentous Declaration. In this document the parliamentarians apologised for the wrongs done to the country's Turks and Muslims during the communist period, and officially recognised the 1989 expulsion as an act of ethnic cleansing."[2]

Meanwhile, it was only in communist Yugoslavia that all the inhabitants were required to attend elementary school, and thus became literate in the standard languages employed as media of instruction, including Macedonian in Yugoslavia's Socialist Republic of Macedonia.[3] Indeed, Bulgarian scholars are right to say that before World War II there was no Macedonian nation or language as phenomena espoused by the majority of Slavophone inhabitants in Yugoslavia's Vardar Region (today's Macedonia). But the same was true of the Bulgarian nation and language in this area. The interwar Yugoslav authorities invariably referred to the population in 'Southern Serbia' as 'Serbs' insufficiently aware of their Serbianness, while Sofia saw them to be 'Bulgarians' suffering under the regime of forced Serbianisation. The wartime occupation with the accompanying policy of equally forced Bulgarianisation was too brief to leave a lasting mark. On the other hand, half a century of political and cultural stability in communist Yugoslavia did produce a Macedonian nation and language. Unsurprisingly, at about 1,500 practically no declarations of Bulgarian nationality (ethnic identity) are observed in North Macedonia.[4] Bulgarian nationalists would disagree and point to over 80,000 takers of Bulgarian/EU passports in North Macedonia, or 4 percent in the country's population of over 2 million.[5] However, from the ethnic perspective (despite the required declaration of Bulgarianness) Macedonians apply for this document in order to be able to travel, work and live freely across the European Union, before their country becomes an EU member, too. In their own view this passport does not make them into ethnic Bulgarians.[6]

To use again a comparison with Austria – in the interwar period the vast majority of the country's inhabitants ethnically identified as Germans.[7] The tragedy of World War II dramatically altered this identificational choice in favour of building a separate Austrian nation and its own nation-state. Almost half a century under the Allies' watchful control sealed the new national identity. Despite sharing the same language of German with Germany, in 2001, 91.1 percent of the Austrian citizens identified as ethnic Austrians, 4 percent as ethnic Yugoslavs,[8] 1.6 percent as Turks, and a mere 0.9 percent as ethnic Germans.[9] Yet, 72,000 self-declared ethnic Germans in today's Austria are many times more than the aforementioned 1,500 ethnic Bulgarians in present-day Macedonia.

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1 Tomasz Kamusella, *Ethnic Cleansing.*

2 Tomasz Kamusella, "Words Matter: Bulgaria and the 30th Anniversary of the Largest Ethnic Cleansing in Cold War Europe," *New Eastern Europe*, last modified February 25, 2019, accessed July 14, 2020. https://neweasterneurope.eu/2019/02/25/words-matter-bulgaria-and-the-30th-anniversary-of-the-largest-ethnic-cleansing-in-cold-war-europe%EF%BB%BF/

3 Cf Stojan Kiselinovski, 78-86.

4 "Republic of North Macedonia: Population: Demographic Situation, Languages and Religions," Eurydice, last modified March 31, 2020, accessed Jul 12, 2020, https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/republic-north-macedonia/population-demographic-situation-languages-and-religions_sl

5 Tim Judah, "Bulgaria Writes New Chapter in Long Story of Demographic Decline," *BalkanInsight: Reporting Democracy*, last modified July 9, 2020, accessed July 15, 2020, https://balkaninsight.com/2020/07/09/bulgaria-writes-new-chapter-in-long-story-of-demographic-decline/

6 Ljupčo S. Risteski, „Bugarski pasoši – možnost za pogolema mobilnost na Makedoncite i/ili strategii manipuliranje so identitot," EtnoAntropoZum/*EthnoAnthropoZoom 10* (2014): 80-104; Katerina Blaževska, "Bugarskiot pasoš „viza" za evropska rabota," DW, last modified December 6, 2012, accessed July 15, 2020, https://www.dw.com/mk/бугарскиот-пасош-виза-за-европска-работа/a-16431221

7 Jeffrey Cole (ed.): *Ethnic Groups of Europe: An Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara CA: ABC-Clio, 2011): 26-27; Evan Burr Bukey, *Hitler's Austria: Popular Sentiment in the Nazi Era, 1938-1945* (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2018): Ch 2

8 The persistent survival of ethnic Yugoslavs, especially in Western Europe and North America is not appreciated in the post-Yugoslav countries, or in Bulgaria. See: Hana Srebotnjak, "Tracing the Decline of Yugoslav Identity: A Case for 'Invisible' Ethnic Cleansing," *Sprawy Narodowościowe* 48 (2016): 30-47.

9 "Ethnien in Österreich 2001," Statista, last modified March 13, 2014, accessed July 14, 2020, https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/217770/umfrage/ethnien-in-oesterreich/

The number of self-declared Austrian Germans is almost equal to that of Macedonians who received Bulgarian/EU passports.

Conclusion

The aforementioned 2012 Declaration of the Bulgarian Parliament shows that an ethnically-blind and all-encompassing civic nation-state is a clear possibility in today's Bulgaria. In this case, North Macedonia already offers a useful Finland-like model to be emulated. However, for the time being the granting of the status of a co-official language to Turkish appears not to be on the cards in Bulgaria.[1] During the last decade, nationalists in this country have clamoured for an exclusionary ethnic definition of the Bulgarian nation, as actually worked out and implemented in communist Bulgaria. Worryingly, quite a few Bulgarian scholars are ready to lend their respectability to this trend. They were instrumental in drafting the 2019 ultimatum to North Macedonia.[2] In order to up the ante, in 'the best tradition' of communist Bulgaria, in May 2020, the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences published a lavishly illustrated brochure,[3] which 'proves' that the Macedonian language does not exist, and it is just a 'North Macedonian dialect of Bulgarian.'[4]

The brochure's title *On the Official Language of the Republic of North Macedonia* indicates that the Bulgarian authorities and the Bulgarian Academy Sciences do not intend to observe North Macedonia's sovereignty in respect of language policy, or the provisions of the Helsinki Accords to the same end. In contrast, it would be unimaginable and utterly shocking for the German government to commission with a serious academic institution a political manifesto, aggressively titled *On the Official Language of the Republic of Austria*. A manifesto posing as a piece of research, whose goal would be to 'prove' that 'in reality' the Austrians are Germans, because they happen to speak the German language. Present-day Germany would never propose that the Austrians are a mere unredeemed part of the German nation. Yet, most of the Bulgarian academic and political elite think that it is a good and 'normal' way of dealing with a neighbouring state, whose elite and population at large are somehow unable to see that Sofia's position is 'right,' and that of Skopje must be 'mistaken.'

Bulgaria's 2019 ultimatum deprecates and even offends the Macedonians, their language and country by stating that all these are a creation of 'Yugoslav totalitarianism.'[5] In support of the government's position on this issue, the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences' Institute of the Bulgarian Language issued an appropriate declaration on the non-existence of Macedonian in December 2019.[6] As the authoritative source of this statement the institute's declaration cites the 1978 brochure *The Unity of the Bulgarian Language in the Past and Nowadays*.[7] Published in communist Bulgaria, at the height of the forced assimilation of ethnic non-Bulgarians, this booklet sketched an expedient language policy. It was readily adopted as an integral element of the overarching program pursued by the Bulgarian Communist party to build a unitary, indivisible and homogenous Bulgarian nation, language and nation-state. This program and the language policy were none other than simultaneously a product and imposition of Bulgarian *totalitarianism*, also known as national communism. In contrast, in communist Yugoslavia the targeted population overwhelmingly embraced the post-war program of building a Macedonian language and nation in the wake of the ravages of the Bulgarian occupation during World War II.[8]

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1 Cf Clive Leviev-Sawyer, "Bulgarian MRF Leader Takes Court Action Against Fine for Electioneering in Turkish Mother Tongue," *Independent Balkan News Agency*, last modified May 20, 2015, accessed July 15, 2020, www.balkaneu.com/bulgarian-mrf-leader-takes-court-action-fine-electioneering-turkish-mother-tongue/ ; Anna Petrova, "Turski universitet v Bulgariia," *Desant*, last modified May 11, 2012, accessed July 15, 2020, http://www.desant.net/show-news/24584/

2 Cf „Stanovishte na Instituta za bılgarski ezik 'Prof. Lyubomir Andreiichin' na BAN vıv vrızka s 'Povelba za makedonskiot jazik' na MANU ot 03.12.2019 g.," last modified December 3, 2019, accessed July 15, 2020, http://www.bas.bg/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Становище-ИБЕ.pdf

3 *Za ofitsialniia ezik na Republika Severna Makedoniia* (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na BAN „Prof. Marin Drinov", 2020)

4 „BAN: Oficialniiat ezik v Skopie e 'severnomakedonski bılgarski,'" 2020, *Mediapool*, last modified May 7, 2020, accessed July 15, 2020 https://www.mediapool.bg/ban-ofitsialniyat-ezik-v-skopie-e-severnomakedonski-balgarski-news307086.html

5 "Ramkova pozitsia."

6 "Stanovishte na Instituta."

7 *Edinstvoto na bılgarskiia ezik.*

8 Cf Ljubica Jančeva and Aleksandar Litovski, "Makedonija i Makedonci u Jugoslaviji", in Sonja Biserko, ed., *Jugoslavija u istorijskoi perspektivi* (Belgrade: Helsinški odbor za ljudska prava u Srbiji, 2017), 153-159.

In spite of the fact that at least a tenth of all the Bulgarians are Muslims and ethnic Turks, Sofia tends to draw at Orthodox Christianity as an important source of legitimacy and Bulgarian culture.[1] On the one hand, this approach alienates the country's Muslims, atheists and Christians of other creeds,[2] while on the other breaches the constitutional division of State and Church.[3] Unfortunately, Bulgaria adopts a similarly divisive and confrontational approach to the neighbouring state of North Macedonia. Sofia accuses Skopje of falling back on 'Yugoslav totalitarianism,' apparently without noticing the irony of the fact that Bulgaria's 2019 ultimatum directly draws inspiration and 'arguments' from communist Bulgaria's totalitarianism. Hence, it is only fitting to conclude by quoting the Gospel, "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?"[4]

Scotland, July 2020

1 Cf "Borissov in Mt Athos: Government Will Continue Supporting Bulgarian Orthodox Church," *dailyNews*, last modified May 6, 2018, accessed July 15, 2020, https://daylinews.eu/en/borissov_in_mt_athos_government_will_continue_supporting_bulgarian_orthodox_church

2 Cf Georgi Papakochev, "Koĭ radikalizira bŭlgarskite myusyulmani?," *DW*, last modified June 3, 2011, accessed July 18, 2020, https://www.dw.com/bg/кой-радикализира-българските-мюсюлмани/a-15127467

3 Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, last modified December 18, 2015, accessed July 18, 2020, Art. 13.2, https://www.parliament.bg/en/const

4 Matthew 7:3, *BibleGateway: New International Version*, accessed July 15, 2020, https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+7%3A3-5&version=NIV

The 'heteroglossia' of loss – memory, forgetting and (post) socialist citizenship

by **Ljubica Spaskovska**

Abstract

This chapter seeks to shift the focus from memory and nostalgia in the realm of post-communist / post-Yugoslav studies to that of social and institutional forgetting. It explores the unmaking of socialist citizenship across three tiers of what Daphne Berdahl termed 'the symbolic spaces of socialist citizenship': antifascism and its trans-national sites of memory; internationalism and non-alignment; self-management and labour, focussing on the processes of erasures and losses that have occurred over the past thirty years. While anti-fascism has been re-scripted and re-purposed to fit the new (ethno) national narratives and political agendas, the doctrine and history of associate labour / workers' self-management, as well as that of non-alignment are analysed in the context of institutional amnesia that also extends to the spheres of education and intellectual debate. Although the boundaries of citizenship have arguably shrank and the region underwent a process of de-globalisation and peripheralization, the loss of institutional memory and the deliberate erasures do not imply a collective/social amnesia, as non-institutionalised, informal acts of commemoration and remembering of these different dimensions of socialist citizenship have recently become more prominent.

Introduction

The memory-nostalgia nexus has underpinned much of the research on post-socialism and the politics and cultures of remembrance after 1989. Nostalgia has rightly been recognised as "heteroglossic, but not omnivalent".[1] This chapter proposes to de-link memory and nostalgia and instead analyse the memory/forgetting nexus and explore the "heteroglossia" of erasure and loss across three tiers of what Daphne Berdahl termed the "symbolic spaces of [socialist] citizenship"[2]: antifascism and trans-national sites of memory; internationalism and non-alignment; self-management and labour. The chapter argues that the boundaries of citizenship and the boundaries of political and social imaginaries and aspirations in fact shrank and the former Yugoslav region underwent and is still undergoing a process of peripheralization and de-globalisation both on a regional and transnational/global scale.

Research and studies of social and cultural memory have indeed mostly focused on remembering and overlooked forgetting.[3] While nostalgia is generally studied through the prism of individual or generational memory, this chapter focuses on institutional and collective/social memory, or rather, on social and public amnesia and the unmaking of socialist citizenship through the processes of forgetting, erasures and losses that have occurred over the past thirty years. As Aleida Assmann argued, "Institutions and larger social groups, such as nations, governments, the church, or a firm do not "have" a memory - they "make" one for themselves with the aid of memorial signs such as symbols, texts, images, rites, ceremonies, places, and monuments. Together with such a memory, these groups and institutions "construct" an identity."[4] This chapter by contrast analyses the "unmaking" of the memory of antifascism, internationalism/non-alignment and self-management as three important dimensions of socialist citizenship and the "deconstructing" of the plurality of identities associated with it.

1 Maria Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille, eds., *Post-communist Nostalgia* (New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010), 279.

2 Daphne Berdahl, "The Spirit of Capitalism and the Boundaries of Citizenship in Post-Wall Germany", in *Comparative Studies in Society and History,* 47/2 (2005): 235-251.

3 Guy Beiner, *Forgetful remembrance: social forgetting and vernacular historiography of a rebellion in Ulster* (Oxford University Press, 2018).

4 Aleida Assmann, "Transformations between History and Memory", in *Social Research* 75/1 (2008): 49-72, 55.

In the context of fractured memory regimes and mnemonic warriors, over the past thirty years the project of unmaking and erasing institutional memories of the socialist past proved to be more straightforward and politically beneficial than constructing new political / institutional / regional identities after independence outside of the ethno-nationalist or religious parameters. As Istvan Rev astutely observed, "At that point between the lost and the not-yet comprehended, historians, politicians, and professional and amateur self-proclaimed experts offered support: to remake the world."[1] However, the project of "remaking" in the former Yugoslavia, as I will argue, was fundamentally rooted in a "vision" of "unmaking", erasing and physically destroying as was the case with the deliberate destruction or neglect of antifascist monuments and the lesser exposed "bibliocide"/"librocide" - the cleansing of libraries and the removal and destruction of books that occurred throughout the region but was particularly acute in Croatia.[2] The chapter argues that a "social amnesia"/ "social forgetting" lens is useful for analysing the loss of institutional memory and the physical and symbolic erasures and exclusions that have occurred in the post-Yugoslav region over the past three decades. As Peter Burke poignantly argued, "to understand the workings of the social memory it may be worth investigating the social organisation of forgetting, the rules of exclusion, suppression or repression, and the question of who wants whom to forget what, and why."[3]

Re-scripting (anti) fascism

Although anti-fascism was indeed one of the political building blocks of socialist Yugoslavia that fulfilled an important foundational, symbolic and political/identitarian function both at home and abroad, the place and meaning of antifascism was similar, but also significantly different from the one it occupied in other socialist states.[4] If in the GDR antifascism was perceived through the lens of 'a twofold victory over both fascism and Germany'[5] - in the Yugoslav context, it was understood as a twofold victory over both external and internal / domestic fascism, embodied primarily in the *Ustasha* and the *Chetnik* movements. Externally, antifascism cemented Yugoslavia's role as a WW2 ally and founding member of the United Nations and helped her carve out a space in a European transnational memory regime building upon WW2 alliances with other European countries such as Britain and France.[6] After 1991, the antifascist past was stripped down of its transnational and Yugoslav dimension and generally reduced to national(ist) narratives about decades' or centuries' long struggles for independence. The socialist/communist, progressive, revolutionary and Yugoslav traits of that struggle and of the individuals who participated in it were conveniently omitted or erased. As Kubik and Bernhard have rightly argued, "Mnemonic actors often try to treat history instrumentally, as they tend to construct a vision of the past that they assume will generate the most effective legitimation for their efforts to gain or hold power."[7] In other cases, like in Serbia and Croatia, historical revisionist agendas helped rehabilitate former Nazi-allied collaborators, openly questioned or denied crimes committed by collaborationist forces like in the case of the Jasenovac concentration camp, or through official state sponsorship endorsed highly controversial ultra-nationalist commemorative events like the one in Bleiburg that the Austrian MPs voted to ban with the explanation that "Austria will not tolerate historical revisionism and any glorification of the Ustasha regime, which has systematically persecuted and murdered Serbs, Jews, Roma and Croats in opposition."[8]

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1 Istvan Rev, Retroactive *Justice: prehistory of post-communism* (Stanford University Press, 2005), 9.

2 Dora Komnenović, "The 'Cleansing' of Croatian Libraries in the 1990s and Beyond or How (Not) to Discard the Yugoslav Past" in *The Palgrave Handbook of State-Sponsored History After 1945,* eds. Berber Bevernage and Nico Wouters (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Ante Lešaja, Knjigocid – *Uništavanje knjiga u Hrvatskoj 1990-ih* (Zagreb: Profil / Srpsko narodno vijeće, 2012).

3 Peter Burke, "History as Social Memory," in *The Collective Memory Reader,* eds. Jeffrey K. Olick et al. (Oxford University Press, 2011), 191.

4 Dan Diner and Christian Gundermann, "On the Ideology of Antifascism", in *New German Critique 67* (1996): 123-132; Anna Krylova, "Dancing on the Graves of the Dead: Building a World War II Memorial in Post-Soviet Russia", in Memory and the *Impact of Political Transformation in Public Space,* eds. D. J. Walkowitz and L. M. Knauer (Duke University Press, 2004).

5 Diner and Gundermann, "*On the Ideology of Antifascism*", 125.

6 Neville Wyllie, ed. *The Politics and Strategy of Clandestine War: Special Operations Executive, 1940- 1946* (Routledge, 2007); Fitzroy Maclean, *Eastern Approaches* (J. Cape, 1949); William Deakin, *The Embattled Mountain* (Faber and Faber, 2011); Geoffrey Swain, *Tito: A Biography* (I.B. Tauris, 2010).

7 Michael Bernhard and Jan Kubik, Eds. *Twenty Years After Communism: The Politics of Memory and Commemoration* (Oxford University Press, 2014).

8 Anja Vladisavljevic, "Austrian MPs Vote for Ban on Croats' Bleiburg WWII Gathering", Balkan Transitional Justice, 9 July 2020, https://balkaninsight.com/2020/07/09/austrian-mps-vote-for-ban-on-croats-bleiburg-wwii-gathering/ (last accessed 16 December 2020).

Taking into consideration the three dimensions of the sites of memory – the material, the symbolic and the functional,[1] and although it is important to acknowledge that there are important differences across the region, for the most part their symbolic content was erased or redefined to fit a new national narrative. A memorial on the island of Vis dedicated to the pilots of the Royal Air Force who gave their lives and perished during the 1944/45 operations over Yugoslavia captures this well – "Yugoslavia" has been erased and "Croatia" written over. The nationalisation of the Yugoslav heritage, as Tanja Petrović has argued, is also one of several prominent trends in recent museum representations of the Yugoslav past.[2] When the Croatian President sent an envoy to lay a wreath at the Tjentište memorial for the 77th anniversary of the Battle of Sutjeska in June 2020, his Head of Office stated after the ceremony that "An enormous number of our citizens were killed here while fighting for freedom and it is quite appropriate to pay them tribute".[3] In addition to being nationalised, or rather, ethnicised, antifascism is also instrumentalised for domestic political battles between "left" and "right". The recent public debates over the Bulgarian occupation of Macedonia in light of the Bulgarian veto for North Macedonia's EU accession negotiations are illustrative of this – the conservative, right-wing VMRO-DPMNE began to defend the antifascist past just because the social democrats in power were seen as making concessions to Bulgaria and hinting that the occupation by Bulgaria was actually an "administration" and should not be labelled "fascist".[4] Not only monuments and memorials, but also street names in Yugoslavia were used as markers of internationalism and antifascism. As it has been argued, "It is not just that the spatial is socially constructed; the social is spatially constructed too."[5] Post-1963 Skopje, for instance, had many public schools and streets named after cities and notable individuals from all over the world, as a gesture of gratitude for the material help in the rebuilding of the city after the earthquake. However, like throughout the region, street names associated with the common socialist, Yugoslav and international antifascist past were erased and changed. In 2012, in a highly controversial and disputed decision endorsed by North Macedonia's then Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, the city of Skopje changed the names of streets named after Salvador Allende, Cairo, Mexico, Adolf Ciborowski, Lenin, and (the interwar newspaper) Socialist Dawn, among others. Gruevski defended the decision by stating that these historical figures or events „from the communist period" such as the October Revolution or Allende were „irrelevant" and „do not have a meaning for us", while opposing voices pointed out that the Prime Minister was either ignorant and didn't know about the many streets and institutions named after Allende in Europe and around the world, or tended to identify rather with Pinochet's political ideology.[6] "The names of streets", as Rihtman-Augusting has argued, "together with the monuments and memorial plaques in the urban landscape contribute to the semiotic presence of the ruling ideology because they give urban architecture a particular symbolic content."[7]

1 Pierre Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire* (Quarto Gallimard, 1997), 37.

2 Tanja Petrović, "Jugoslovenski socijalizam u muzeju: socijalističko nasleđe kao kulturna baština" in *Komparativni postsocijalizam, slavenska iskustva,* ed. Maša Kolanović (Zagreb: Filozofski fakultet, 2013).

3 "The President's Envoy Lays Wreaths at Battle of Sutjeska Monument and at Second Dalmatian Brigade Monument in Donje Bare", *Office of the President of Croatia*, 9 June 2020, https://www.predsjednik.hr/en/news/the-presidents-envoy-lays-wreaths-at-battle-of-sutjeska-monument-and-at-second-dalmatian-brigade-monument-in-donje-bare/ (last accessed 16 December 2020).

4 Sinisa Jakov Marusic, "North Macedonia PM's Remarks About History Hit a Nerve", *Balkan Insight*, 26 November 2020, https://balkaninsight.com/2020/11/26/north-macedonia-pms-remarks-about-bulgarian-history-hit-a-nerve/ (last accessed 15 December 2020).

5 Doreen Massey and John Allen, eds., *Geography Matters! A Reader* (Cambridge University Press, 1984), 6.

6 "Одлука за определување и промена на имиња на улици, мостови и други инфраструктурни објекти на подрачјето на Град Скопје", *City of Skopje Council,* 20 June 2012, http://ipserver1.skopje.gov.mk/e-skopje/sluzben%20glasnik%20so%20konverzija.nsf/82aa49069edfbbb780256a22004ba9e0/25e9152c34d172f2c1257a2800306659?OpenDocument; Naum Kotevski, "Салвадор Алјенде му значи на светот, а нам не ни треба", *Utrinski Vesnik,* 25 March 2012, https://www.utrinski.com.mk/?ItemID=619BC61211144C4CB45B268C67BFE8DA (last accessed 16 December 2020).

7 Dunja Rihtman-Augustin, "The Monument in the Main City Square: constructing and erasing memory in contemporary Croatia", in *Balkan Identities: Nation and Memory*, ed. Maria Todorova (London: Hurst and Company, 2004), 180.

However, memory and forgetting always exist in a complex dialogic relationship and some of the memorial sites related to anti-fascism retained their relevance even after the dissolution of Yugoslavia - in Nora's words, these sites from dominant, turned into dominated sites – refuges, sanctuaries of expressions of spontaneous loyalties.[1] Indeed, after the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the abstract, modernist anti-fascist monuments and sites of memory that foreign reporters and scholars re-discovered, were either vandalised, left to ruin or stripped of their original relevance, their ascribed symbolism and meaning.[2] Yet, some of them underwent a silent or more overt process of transformation. The recent initiative for the reconstruction of the memorial complex Ivo Lola Ribar in Glamoč as a grassroots initiative that also received support from USAID is a case in point.[3]

Forgetting self-management and non-alignment

Under the title "The Anniversary that no one remembers", a recent blog post reflected on the 70th anniversary of the introduction of workers' self-management in socialist Yugoslavia.[4] Indeed, not only the history of self-management has been forgotten and erased from the sphere of public debate, economic thought, education and institutional memory, but the former Yugoslav region, both intellectually and politically is generally outside of current, ongoing transnational debates on the social and solidarity economy, social entrepreneurship and reforming capitalism. The end of socialism marked the decision by local elites not only to embrace a liberal / capitalist version of globalisation but also abandon and erase all visions of an alternative non-Western-centric global integration.[5] Despite the EU and/or NATO membership for some, the successor states have only marginal roles in international affairs and transnational debates on important global challenges and have been mostly preoccupied with their own particular domestic affairs, waging internal political, ideological battles oftentimes with the same political actors and elites from more than three decades ago. This stands in stark contrast with the past when important intellectual, "epistemic communities" such as the Praxis School, or developmental and political doctrines such as self-management were associated with the region and managed to put it not only on the European but also on the world map as a recognisable and well-respected actor and interlocutor in the various debates that defined a variety of twentieth-century internationalisms. The main reason that no one remembered the 70th anniversary of the introduction of workers' self-management and that no one remembers the institutions or initiatives affiliated with the Non-Aligned Movement many of which still survive within the UN system, is that all institutional and political memory on self-management and non-alignment has been erased. Moreover, as Marko Kržan rightly noted, today one cannot count on a reader with a decent or even basic knowledge of the political economy of socialism; on the contrary, one can count on a reader who either knows nothing or the little s/he knows is distorted by the ideological stigmatisations and the capitalist triumphalism of the right.[6]

The disintegration of Yugoslavia not only paved the way for the transformation of the entire socio-political institutional set up and first the nationalisation and then privatisation of socially owned enterprises and property, it also signalled the beginning of a process of institutional amnesia and public forgetting that over the years translated into a continuum of institutional, academic/intellectual and even linguistic erasures. As the Slovenian economist and politician Jože Mencinger noted, "Now, in a way, the idea of self-management is being revived. There is talk of so-called social entrepreneurship, and I say that we already had it, but we destroyed it."[7]

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1 « On opposera, par exemple, les lieux dominants et les lieux dominés. Les premiers, spectaculaires et triomphants, imposants et généralement imposés, qu'ils soient par une autorité nationale ou un corps constitué, mais toujours d'en haut, ont souvent la froideur ou la solennité des cérémonies officielles. On s'y rend plus qu'on y va. Les secondes sont les lieux refuges, le sanctuaire des fidélités spontanées et des pèlerinages du silence. C'est le cœur vivant de la mémoire. » Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire*, 42.

2 Jan Kempenaers, Spomenik (Roma Publications, 2010); Donald Niebyl, *Spomenik Monument Database* (FUEL, 2018).

3 See the Facebook profile page of the citizens' group "Ivo Lola nije sam" (Ivo Lola Is Not Alone).

4 Krešimir Zovak, "Obljetnica koje se nitko ne sjeća", *Bilten*, 26 June 2020, https://www.bilten.org/?p=33401 (last accessed 16 December 2020).

5 James Mark, Bogdan Iacob, Tobias Rupprecht and Ljubica Spaskovska, 1989: *A Global History of Eastern Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), 70.

6 Marko Kržan, "Razvoj i učenja jugoslovenskog samoupravljanja", in *Jugoslavija: Zašto i kako?*, Ildiko Eredi et al. (Belgrade: Museum of Yugoslavia, 2019), 126-48.

7 Omer Karabeg, "Kako su postjugoslovenski kapitalisti uništili samoupravljanje", Slobodna Evropa, 15 September 2013, https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/kako-su-postjugoslovenski-kapitalisti-unistili-samoupravljanje/25106004.html (last accessed 16 December 2020).

What Mencinger talks about is the destruction of the institutional set-up and the socially-owned self-managed enterprises. However, in addition to that, an even more ominous "silencing of the past"[1] has occurred: not only secondary and tertiary education curricula were redesigned and purged of theories and histories of socialist self-management, development economics, anti-imperialism and non-alignment, but the vocabulary and the language associated with the political system of socialist and economic, self-management were also lost. Removal and destruction of books occurred throughout the region both as a consequence of the armed conflicts but also as an organised, top-down process that is a testament of the censoring and political/ideological function that cultural institutions such as libraries play in the processes of state building and identity construction. In Croatia, for instance, books dealing with socialism, the WWII partisan resistance movement, the history of the labour movement and last but not least books by Serbian authors and Serbian publishers printed in Cyrillic, were removed from libraries in vast numbers.[2] All of these erasures and acts of institutional amnesia were underpinned by a type of historical revisionism that fostered a culture of anti-intellectualism and thrived on anti-Yugoslav / anti-communist rhetoric often modelled on that in the former Soviet Bloc.

What has also been lost, is the type of global consciousness and knowledge that was fostered through the region's membership in the Non-Aligned Movement. These links also served as channels of cooperation and exchange with partners in the Global South that saw their close engagement with smaller socialist non-aligned partners such as Yugoslavia as a way to pursue what they saw as a more "authentic" form of socialism – in this case workers' self-management (autogestion).[3] However, the networks of political and strategic partnerships in the Global South have all but vanished and as I have argued elsewhere, the ways the non-aligned past is sometimes instrumentalised and mostly used for pragmatic political gains in international forums such as by Serbia in the case of Kosovo's independence, demonstrates an acute lack of awareness of and knowledge about the concrete policy orientations and achievements of non-aligned multilateralism, in particular in the spheres of international economic relations and development.[4] As part of the Non-Aligned Movement, Yugoslavia played a key role in the debates on "The New International Economic Order" (NIEO) in the 1970s and the 1980s and a consortium of Yugoslav economic institutes were part of the so-called macro-project NIEO. In 2016, on the occasion of the 17th Non-Aligned Summit, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon thanked the Non-Aligned Movement for their continued commitment to global peace, for raising awareness and mobilising the international community on issues ranging from the promotion of sustainable development and the fight against extreme poverty, to nuclear disarmament and intercultural dialogue.[5] However, there is little awareness or interest among official political or academic circles in the region in reclaiming that legacy, which appears particularly short-sighted in light of the 2016 United Nations report on the progress towards a NIEO that found that some of the ideas raised at the time are still relevant and useful for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.[6]

1 Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).

2 Lešaja, Knjigocid.

3 See: Jeffrey Jame Byrne, *Mecca of Revolution: Algeria, Decolonization, and the Third World Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Priya Lal, *African Socialism in Postcolonial Tanzania. Between the Village and the World* (New York / Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

4 Ljubica Spaskovska, "Transformations of Global Citizenship in the Former Yugoslavia: The Legacies of Yugoslav Non-Aligned Multilateralism", in *The Legacy of Yugoslavia: Politics, Economics and Society in the Modern Balkans,* eds. Othon Anastasakis, David Madden, Adam Bennett, Adis Merdzanovic (I.B. Tauris, 2020).

5 "In Video Message to Summit, Secretary-General Thanks Non-Aligned Movement for Continued Commitment to Global Peace, Sustainable Development", *United Nations,* 17 September 2016, https://www.un.org/press/en/2016/sgsm18071.doc.htm (last accessed 16 December 2020).

6 "Updated overview of the major international economic and policy challenges for equitable and inclusive sustained economic growth and sustainable development, and of the role of the United Nations in addressing these issues in the light of the New International Economic Order", *United Nations,* 20 July 2016, https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/71/168 (last accessed 16 December 2020).

Conclusion

The post-Yugoslav region has witnessed a decades' long process of "excising the communist period" which often occurs, as it has been argued, by treating it as an aberration.[1] This has led to the re-scripting of antifascism and the institutional and social forgetting of important markers of Yugoslav and socialist citizenship such as self-management and non-alignment. The boundaries of citizenship and the perimeters of transnational links and global agency in fact shrank and the former Yugoslav region underwent a process of peripheralization and de-globalisation. Institutional amnesia has led to a type of social forgetting that should not however be compared to social or collective amnesia. As it was discussed above, memory and forgetting are closely intertwined, and non-institutionalised, informal acts of commemoration and remembering of these different dimensions of socialist citizenship have recently become more prominent. Therefore, in spite of the context of official commemorative silences and a general neglect surrounding the memorials and monuments associated with the antifascist and socialist past, the trans-national "publics" that have returned to these sites pose a direct challenge to the institutionalised culture of forgetting and erasing the socialist and Yugoslav past.[2] A new, younger generation has begun to fill in the academic vacuum on self-management and non-alignment and accompanies an older generation on voluntary "pilgrimages" to the antifascist sites that have become more frequent and publicised in recent years.

Sites of memory, memorials and museums preserve at least some "life" by virtue of them being visited. During the Yugoslav era, they were vested with transnational symbols and functions, often fusing an antifascist with a revolutionary, socialist and pan-Yugoslav narrative. The identities of these groups, as well as the identities of the sites should be explored through their mutual relationship - the individuals and groups who visited them and visit or rediscover them now, infuse them with life and new meanings and functions to make up for the loss of institutional memory and official support and to counter still predominant narratives of historical revisionism. As material remnants of a discredited past, invested with symbolic meanings of solidarity, freedom and sacrifice, to some communities and individuals they act as anchors of a repressed personal and collective memory. Indeed, "the strong marks of present space merge in the imaginary with traces of the past, erasures, losses, and heterotopias."[3]

1 Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies. Reburial and Postsocialist Change* (New York: Columbia University Press), 116.

2 "Obilježena 78. godišnjica Igmanskog marša", *BHRT*, 25 January 2020, https://bhrt.ba/obiljezena-78-godisnjica-igmanskog-marsa/ (last accessed 16 December 2020).

3 Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: urban palimpsests and the politics of memory* (Stanford University Press, 2003), 7.

When Che Guevara Visited Yugoslavia: On Possibilities of Remembering in the Aftermath of the Yugoslav Socialist Project

by **Tanja Petrović**

Abstract

This essay takes as a starting point the concrete event from August 1959, when a five-member delegation of Cuban revolutionaries and politicians led by the extraordinary ambassador, major Dr. Ernesto Guevara Serna visited socialist Yugoslavia. The delegation of Cuban revolutionaries stayed in Yugoslavia for ten days and visited Belgrade, Avala, Kragujevac, Sarajevo, Jablanica, Konjic, Rijeka, Opatija, Ljubljana, Postojna, and Maribor. The Cubans also met with the president of Yugoslavia Josip Broz Tito at his summer residence on the Brioni islands. The essay ponders upon the meanings of this event that unfold from the present-day temporality and argues that the public memory of this event in former Yugoslavia is defined by two subsequent events and processes – Che Guevara's death in Bolivia and mythologisation of his persona, and the catastrophic end of Yugoslavia and its socialism. Both these processes make it difficult to look at Che Guevara's visit to Yugoslavia as an event unfolding in its own temporality, rendering visions of the future inherent to that temporality invisible or significantly deformed. Public narratives of the past, through which we collectively remember, need to be attentive to these past visions of the future, alternative modernities, and lost solidarities. Only then, they can be a source of a useful knowledge about the socialist period in Yugoslavia.

Introduction: Events and aftermaths

In August 1959, a five-member delegation of Cuban revolutionaries and politicians – captain Omar Narciso Fernandez Camizares, major Dr. Salvador Vilaseca Fornè, the representative of Cuban agricultural bank, lieutenant José Argudín Mendoza, lieutenant Francisco Garcia Valls, delegation secretary, as well as the extraordinary ambassador, major Dr. Ernesto Guevara Serna, the head of the delegation – visited socialist Yugoslavia.[1] As a goodwill mission, striving to secure international support to the Cuban revolution in the immediate aftermath of the coup, the delegation visited a number of countries that were expected to be friendly towards the revolution in Cuba and support the new government. Before Yugoslavia, the only European country the delegation visited, they were in UAR, India, Burma, Japan, Indonesia, Ceylon, Pakistan and Iraq. After visiting Yugoslavia, the goodwill mission planned to visit Sudan, Ghana and Morocco.[2] The delegation of Cuban revolutionaries stayed in Yugoslavia for ten days, from 12 to 21 August. They visited Belgrade, Avala, Kragujevac, Sarajevo, Jablanica, Konjic, Rijeka, Opatija, Ljubljana, Postojna, and Maribor. They also paid a visit to the Yugoslav president Josip Broz Tito in his summer residence on the Brioni Islands on 18 August 1959. It was not initially clear whether Tito will be able to receive the Cuban delegation because he was hosting the Emperor of Ethiopia Haile Selassie at the same time. On the document sent to the President from his cabinet in which they inform him on the Cu-ban delegation's visit, Tito wrote by hand "I will receive the delegation if I will be able to" (*Ako ću moći primit ću je*).[3]

1 "Kubanska delegacija." (n.d.). Archive of the President of the Republic, Archive of Yugoslavia. I am grateful to Momo Cvijović from the Museum of Yugoslavia for his help in accessing the archival material and generously sharing it with me. Research for this essay has been conducted in the framework of the research program "Historical interpretations of the 20th century" (P6-0347), financed by the Slovenian Research Agency (2017–2022), and the EU project "Trans-making: Art/culture/economy to democratize society: Research in placemaking for alternative narratives" (grant agreement no. 734855).

2 "Zabeleška o razgovoru druga Pretsednika s misijom dobre volje Kube na Brionima 18. 8. 1959. godine," in *Archive of the President of the Republic.* Archive of Yugoslavia, 2.

3 "Poseta kubanske misije dobre volje našoj zemlji." Belgrade, 4 August 1959. In the *Archive of the President of the Republic,* The Archive of Yugoslavia.

From another archival note, we learn that after visiting Tito on the Brioni islands, Major Dr. Ernesto Guevara asked – on behalf of the Prime minister of the Republic of Cuba Fidel Castro – for a signed photograph of the Comrade President (Tito). He also said that he would really appreciate receiving a signed photo as well.[1] The State secretariat for exterior affairs sent two photographs signed by Josip Broz Tito to the State protocol, asking to forward them in order to be "handed over to the Cuban leaders."[2]

This event from the summer of 1959 had significant impact on the diplomatic relations of the two socialist countries – Yugoslavia and Cuba – and accelerated the process of opening embassies in Belgrade and Havana that was completed in the same year.[3] In this essay I ponder upon the meanings of this event – aside from its obvious relevance for the diplomatic history – that unfold from the present-day temporality. I argue that this event is defined by two subsequent events and processes – Che Guevara's death in Bolivia and mythologisation of his persona, and the catastrophic end of Yugoslavia and its socialism. Both these processes make it difficult to look at Che Guevara's visit to Yugoslavia as an event unfolding in its own temporality, rendering visions of the future inherent to that temporality invisible or significantly deformed. Public narratives of the past, through which we collectively remember, need to be attentive to these lost visions of the future, or the futures past,[4] as they are of crucial importance for being able "to think productively about the temporality of past–present–future."[5] Social and political conditions of our present make the possibilities of imagining a future rather scarce. In the "desert of post-socialism"[6] in which citizens of former Yugoslav lands found themselves, two intertwined, mutually exacerbating processes were further foreclosing possibilities for hopes for the future: "the capitalist 'transition' leading toward the establishment of the neoliberal paradigm, and ethnocentric restoration leading toward the renewal of an organicist national state."[7] On the global scale, we live in the present in which the future is not easily imaginable, and comes in dystopian registers rather than the utopian ones, witnessing "a marked diminution in the production of new utopias."[8]

Che Guevara's visit to Yugoslavia in 1959 is an event anchored to a temporality in which the future was "not merely possible but imminent; not only imminent, but possible."[9] In this essay, I ponder upon the possibilities to remember such events without erasing "the humanist and modernist horizons that shaped politics and social life in what was once known as the 'Second World'—and a type of political hope that had underwritten many state socialist projects."[10] Attempting to approach this event outside the long shadow of subsequent events and developments, "within its own temporal unfolding,"[11] I am interested in the relations between the past and the present (and the future, too) that are usually obscured, deformed, or effaced in discourses through which the Yugoslav socialist is remembered publicly.

1 "Molba za forografije s autogramom druga Pretsednika," Belgrade, 24 August 1959. In the *Archive of the President of the Republic,* The Archive of Yugoslavia.

2 "Državni sekretarijat za inostrane poslove, Protokolu", 27 August 1959. *The Archive of the President of the Republic,* The Archive of Yugoslavia.

3 Milica Pejčinović, "Če Gevara u Jugoslaviji 1959. Prilog poznavanju uspostavljanja jugoslovensko-kubanskih odnosa," *Vojnoistorijski glasnik* 2, 2017, 249.

4 Reinhart Koselleck. *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

5 David Scott, *Omens of Adversity: Tragedy, Time, Memory, Justice* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014), 9.

6 Srećko Horvat and Igor Štiks, eds., *Welcome to the Desert of Post-Socialism: Radical Politics After Yugoslavia* (London – New York: Verso, 2015).

7 Nikola Dedić, "Yugoslavia in Post-Yugoslav Artistic Practices: Or, Art as...," in *Post-Yugoslav Constellations: Archive, Memory, and Trauma in Contemporary Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian Literature and Culture*, eds. Vlad Beronja and Stijn Vervaet (Berlin – Boston: De Gruyter, 2016), 170.

8 Frederic Jameson, "An American Utopia," in *An American Utopia: Dual Power and the Universal Army*, ed. Slavoj Žižek (London – New York: Verso, 2016), 1. See also David Scott, *Omens of Adversity: Tragedy, Time, Memory, Justice* (Duke University Press Books, 2014).

9 David Scott, *Omens of Adversity: Tragedy, Time, Memory, Justice* (Duke University Press Books, 2014), 4.

10 Maple Razsa, *Bastards of Utopia: Living Radical Politics after Socialism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 6.

11 Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi, *Foucault in Iran: Islamic Revolution after the Enlightenment* (Minneapolis – London: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), xii.

Such revisiting of the events from that socialist past offers us a possibility to look at them as a source of useful knowledge, necessary to address the important questions of the present.

From revolutionaries to pop icons

From the temporality of our present, the fact that the Cuban goodwill mission led by Ernesto Che Guevara visited Yugoslavia in the immediate aftermath of the Cuban revolution, and that a person who would become one of the most recognisable global icons in the following decades, asked for an autographed photograph of Yugoslavia's president, may seem amusing, even sensational. These are, indeed, dominant tones in occasional media articles related to this event that usually appear in the press and other media to mark anniversaries of the visit in August 1959. Equipped with photographs of Josip Broz Tito in a smart suit surrounded by Cubans in military uniforms, these texts mostly observe the event from the present-day perspective, taking Che Guevara's fame that was yet to come as a fact that significantly defines the gaze on his visit to Yugoslavia. That fact that the future pop-icon visited several sites in Yugoslavia in 1959 is sufficient to make a headline and bring back a lure to the places he visited decades ago – cities, museums, factories, memorial sites. These media texts never pose a question why these places, museums, factories and shipyards were interesting and relevant for the Cuban visitors in the first place. For example, in August 2014, the Slovenian Public Television portal published original footage capturing details of the Cuban delegation's visit to Ljubljana and an accompanying text titled "Che Guevara si je ob obisku Ljubljane ogledal tovarno Litostroj" (In Ljubljana, Che Guevara visited the Litostroj factory).[1] Five years later, in August 2019, the Slovenian daily *Dnevnik* published an article titled "Che Guevara se je sprehajal po ljubljanskih ulicah" (Che Guevara walked along the streets of Ljubljana).[2] On 19 August 2018, a portal from Rijeka *Fiuman* published an article "Na današnji dan prije 59 godina Ernesto Che Guevara posjetio Rijeku" (On this day 59 years ago Ernesto Che Guevara visited Rijeka)[3] and similarly, Serbian *Blic* reports "Če Gevara u Kragujevcu: Čuveni gerilac posetio 'Šumarice', a u Zastavi hteo da kupi oružje" (Che Guevara in Kragujevac: the famous guerrilla fighter visited Šumarice memorial park and wanted to buy weaponry in Zastava).[4] A lengthy article from August 2020 on BBC news portal in Serbian covers different aspects of this event. It brings reminiscences of the journalist Giacomo Scotti who had a chance to spend some time with Che Guevara during his visit to Rijeka (and who in 2011 published the book *Fotografija s Che Guevarom*), describes the Cuban delegation's itinerary in Yugoslavia, gives an overview of media coverage of the visit back in 1959 (which was scarce as the attention was paid to Haile Selassie), observes the visit in a broader political context of the time and discusses the importance of this visit for both Cubans and Yugoslavs. The text also points to the curiosity of the fact that Che asked Tito for a signed photo – taking it as an illustration of Tito's status of "a star in communist countries."[5] It quotes Milica Pejčinović, a historian and archivist from Serbia who wrote an MA thesis on the Cuban mission's visit to Yugoslavia, who said that Che Guevara "was fascinated by Tito. Firstly, there was a huge age difference between them. Tito was experienced, went through many battles, and Che was at the beginning."[6]

1 "Video iz arhivov: Che Guevara si je ob obisku Ljubljane ogledal tovarno Litostroj," *MMC, RTV SLO,* 20 August, 2014, https://www.rtvslo.si/svet/video-iz-arhivov-che-guevara-si-je-ob-obisku-ljubljane-ogledal-tovarno-litostroj/344071?fbclid=IwAR-240bqVoYtRJVM7g_z-AR_MXqy0V0pgYzV6AawQv0Stmsoi-dOePPJzt78

2 "Che Guevara se je sprehajal po ljubljanskih ulicah," *Dnevnik*, 19 August, 2019.

3 "Na današnji dan prije 59 godina Ernesto Če Guevara posjetio Rijeku," *Fiuman*, 19 August, 2018, https://www.fiuman.hr/na-danasnji-dan-ernesto-che-guevara-posjetio-rijeku/?fbclid=IwAR1j7S_nFcxMXX35UQKVDESIXXndzvXg9TTxXhZnt50KzOk-Wi-9cIhMqeG0

4 Miona Kovačević, "Če Gevara u Kragujevcu: Čuveni gerilac posetio 'Šumarice', a u Zastavi hteo da kupi oružje," *Blic*, 23 September, 2018, https://www.blic.rs/kultura/vesti/ce-gevara-u-kragujevcu-cuveni-gerilac-posetio-sumarice-a-u-zastavi-hteo-da-kupi/93hv442

5 Nataša Anđelković, "Če Gevara, Tito i Jugoslavija - o čemu su pričali i šta je sve El komandante video i doživeo u zemlji koja je danas prošlost," *BBC News na srpskom*, 24 August, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/serbian/lat/balkan-53863004

6 Ibid.

BBC also pictures the scene of the encounter of "two revolutionaries, politicians and future pop icons": they talked "with inevitable Cuban cigars," one dressed in a green uniform, with black beret and brass star on it, the other dressed in an ironed white suit, with the panama hat on his head. One in boots, the other in polished shoes. One with a beard, the other carefully shaved."[1]

Most of the media accounts appearing in the last decade treat the encounter of two revolutionaries as the moment when two popular icons met. These media texts mainly focus on the iconic figure of the leader of the Cuban goodwill mission and his personal characteristics that became accessible to those rare Yugoslavs who had a chance to meet him, like Giacomo Scotti in Rijeka, who described him as "tall and very handsome. He spoke as an ordinary man, and never showed that he is an official. He was modest and intelligent."[2] Similarly, although the title of the academic article dedicated to the visit of the Cuban delegation "Če Gevara u Jugoslaviji 1959: Prilog poznavanju uspostavljanja jugoslovensko-kubanskih odnosa" (Che Guevara in Yugoslavia 1959: A contribution to the body of knowledge on establishing Yugoslav-Cuban relations) suggests a much larger scope than discussing the personality of the famous revolutionary, the abstract of this article, as well as its introductory part, are entirely dedicated to Che Guevara, his biography and personal characteristics.[3] The meeting with Tito, important enough for the Cubans so that they prolonged their stay in Yugoslavia, is also explained in terms of Tito's revolutionary and political fame.

Framing the encounter of the Yugoslav and Cuban revolutionaries within the recognisable discursive economy of stardom, aura, charismatic personalities, and focusing on the way they looked and were dressed that is characteristic both of media and academic writing, overshadows everything that could be a driving force for this encounter and exchange: shared visions of the future, investments in imagining, but also creating alternatives to prevailing orders, as well as sharing, and living, a revolutionary experience, understood not as a moment of upheaval and radical rupture and change, but as "the realisation of a condition of possibilities."[4] Tito's meetings with other leaders in the framework of the Non-Aligned movement are similarly subjected to the present-day gaze interested exclusively in styles, and postures, dresses, able to read only representations and enactments. The focus is often on Tito's style: on the facts that he was dressed "smartly," together with Naser and Nehru, or that "resplendent in a panama white linen suit, white shoes and black pocket handkerchief, [he] reinvented himself in Brioni as a 'post-revolutionary dandy' and a picture of fashionable modernist commandment on the world stage."[5] For the same author, "Brioni marks one of several homosocial birthing-moments – alongside Bandung, New York, and Belgrade – in the emergence of a (very masculinized) post-colonial vision of 'non-alignment."[6] In a similar vein, the light is shed on the ways in which Yugoslavia "performed" its position and status acting among the countries that have acquired freedom from the colonial rule, usually through appearances and practices of its president, Josip Broz Tito, as well as popular culture and imagery. The scholars focus on the ways in which the modernity is "enacted,"[7] and look for already recognisable performative protocols to read images, postures, discourses. Analysing Tito's photographs from his visits to liberated African countries, Radina Vučetić asserts that "the overwhelming impression after looking at thousands of Tito's photos from Africa is that these are the images of a 'white man' in a 'black country,' a man who comes as a friend and as a modernizer"[8] and that "looking at the protocol and the photos from Tito's safaris, it appears that his anticolonial rhetoric often, although not intentionally, had a colonial tone amid colonial scenery."[9] and that "looking at the protocol and thephotos from Tito's safaris, it appears that his anticolonial rhetoric often, although not intentionally, had a colonial tone amid colonial scenery."[10]

1 Ibid.
2 Ibid.
3 Milica Pejčinović, "Če Gevara u Jugoslaviji 1959," 235-236.
4 Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi, *Foucault in Iran: Islamic Revolution after the Enlightenment* (Minneapolis – London: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 17; see also Gajo Petrović, Mišljenje revolucije: *Od "ontologije" do "filozofije politike"* (Zagreb: Naprijed, 1978).
5 Konstantin Kilibarda, "Non-Aligned Geographies in the Balkans: Space, Race and Image in the Construction of New 'European' Foreign Policies," in *Security Beyond the Discipline. Emerging Dialogues on Global Politics,* eds. Abhinava Kumar / Derek Maisonville (Toronto, 2010), 28.
6 Ibid., 27.
7 Ibid., 29.
8 Radina Vučetić, "Tito's Africa: Representation of Power during Tito's African Journeys," in *Tito in Africa: Picturing Solidarity,* eds. Radina Vučetić and Paul Betts (Belgrade: Muzej Jugoslavije, 2017), 25.
9 Ibid., 43.
10 Ibid., 43.

Vučetić is, however, aware of "the hegemonic power of interpretative frames to ascribe meaning to events"[1] – she warns that "not everything is self-evident and the question should be asked of how much we 'read into' the meaning of these photos ourselves."[2] Despite such warnings, the dominant ways of seeing and "reading" encounters such as Tito's and Che Guevara's in Yugoslavia in 1959, Non-Aligned encounters, or anti-imperial solidarity between Yugoslavia and African countries remain the ones which make these encounters ***legible***[3] from the present-day viewpoint, marked by a hegemonic, Western-centric understanding of modernity. These readings place socialist and revolutionary encounters into broader, easily recognisable, representational frames of stardom, revolutionary hedonism, dandyism, homosociality, coloniality, whiteness, blackness. When asking what these encounters represent, what they stand for, the readings fail to recognise their political meanings and visions of the future intrinsic to the historical moments in which they were taking place.

From messiness of life to purity of myth

The revolutionary Ernesto Che Guevara who visited Yugoslavia in 1959 subsequently became a global icon. His tragic death in Bolivia in 1967 made him a myth, universalised, de-temporalized, suprahistorical, but also commodified in a myriad of ways. Through these processes, the myth of the revolutionary Che Guevara inevitably diverges from what he was as a real person and from discrete context in which he acted as a revolutionary – including his visit to Yugoslavia.

The relationship between the person and the myth was in the focus of the exhibition *Če* u Kragujevcu (Che in Kragujevac) curated by Marko Terzić and displayed in the Museum of 21 October in Kragujevac in September and October of 2018. The exhibition followed the dual logic: its first part was dedicated to the visit of the Cuban goodwill mission – it attempted to reconstruct the route along with Che Guevara was moving in Kragujevac on 14 August 1959. It exhibits documents and photographs from the Archive of Yugoslavia, Museum of Yugoslavia, Archive of Šumadija, banknotes of Cuban currency signed by Ernesto Che Guevara as bank governor.[4] The exhibition's second part addresses the myth of Che Guevara – displaying scenes of his death as a starting point of mythologisation, and various items of popular culture, among which are reproductions of Alberto Korda's photograph and Andy Warhol's pop art. According to Terzić, the driving question of the exhibition was "What led to the situation in which that real person becomes an icon, a myth and a dream, having little in common with each other?"[5] Asking this question, Terzić remained attentive to concrete historical circumstances in which "the real person" as a leader of Cuban political delegation visited Kragujevac and interested in this event as it unfolds in its own temporality. In Terzić's words, the exhibition aimed to "make a specific period of our country close to the visitors; that was a period of industrialisation and progress, and it provides a backdrop and a context for the visit."[6]

1 Ilya Gerasimov and Marina Molinger, "Deconstructing Integration: Ukraine's Postcolonial Subjectivity," *Slavic Review* 74.4, 2015, 715.

2 Radina Vučetić, "Tito's Africa: Representation of Power during Tito's African Journeys," in *Tito in Africa: Picturing Solidarity,* eds. Radina Vučetić and Paul Betts (Belgrade: Muzej Jugoslavije, 2017), 29.

3 On legibility of historical events such as revolutions, see Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi, *Foucault in Iran: Islamic Revolution after the Enlightenment* (Minneapolis – London: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

4 Miona Kovačević, "Če Gevara u Kragujevcu: Čuveni gerilac posetio 'Šumarice', a u Zastavi hteo da kupi oružje," *Blic,* 23 September, 2018, https://www.blic.rs/kultura/vesti/ce-gevara-u-kragujevcu-cuveni-gerilac-posetio-sumarice-a-u-zastavi-hteo-da-kupi/93hv442

5 "Če u Kragujevcu," Blic, 17 September, 2018, https://www.blic.rs/kultura/vesti/ce-u-kragujevcu/sr89plf

6 Miona Kovačević, "Če Gevara u Kragujevcu: Čuveni gerilac posetio 'Šumarice', a u Zastavi hteo da kupi oružje," Blic, 23 September, 2018, https://www.blic.rs/kultura/vesti/ce-gevara-u-kragujevcu-cuveni-gerilac-posetio-sumarice-a-u-zastavi-hteo-da-kupi/93hv442

Figure 1: The exhibition "Che in Kragujevac" (September – October 2018) in the memorial museum 21st October and its author Marko Terzić. Photo is curtesy of Marko Terzić

The process of mythologisation involved sublimation of Che Guevara's deeds into abstract, universal revolutionary activities and the morality of universal justice, fighting for the week and oppressed, simultaneously implying a distance from mundane, "down-to-earth" activities of lived socialism. The colonel of the Yugoslav Army, Dušan Bilandžić, recalls in his memoirs the encounter with Che Guevara and the Cuban delegation, recalling that the Cubans were very interested in details of the Yugoslav partisans' guerrilla fighting in WW2: "I have not received any information on Che Guevara in advance, except that he was the governor of the National bank of Cuba and minister of industry in the government who came to power in January of 1959. I was very confused by these positions he occupied – I was wondering why the man governing a country's economy is so interested in details of guerrilla fighting. (...) I tried to figure out what would be the reason for his curiosity, and I thought that he must have learned that Yugoslavia was the most famous country in the world for its partisan fighting, so he wanted to use the opportunity to get some first-hand information. His interest thus seemed as just l'art pour l'art and looked like an expression of respect to the hosting country, without any practical application in the future. But some questions were asked in the way it was clear that *he is going to use this information somewhere.*"[1] Similarly, Giacomo Scotti shared his view on Che Guevara in the BBC article as a revolutionary who remained faithful to his ideals by rejecting engagement in "real politics." According to Scotti, "once they come to power, all revolutionaries become either bureaucrats or dictators, and Che Guevara did not want it. He could have a life as a minister and the second person in the country after Castro, but he remained faithful to the revolutionary movement and died as a combatant, and I find it exceptional."[2]

In such views, revolution is understood as a sublime experience, concentrated in time and space as an essence of ideals that does not allow for ambiguities. In the Yugoslav context, such an idealised view of the revolution is often ascribed to the liberation movement of WW2, while everything that followed in the decades of socialism is rejected as too ideologized, bureaucratised and thus inauthentic. Bibliographical entries in lexicons and encyclopaedia about persons who were active both in the resistance movement of WW2 and in social and political life of socialist Yugoslavia well illustrate this point.[3] For example, Mara Rupena Osolnik (1918–2003) was a Slovenian partisan

1 Dušan Bilandžić, *Povijest izbliza. Memoarski zapisi 1945–1995* (Zagreb: Prometej, 2006), 29–30, emphasis in the original; quoted after Pejčinović, "Če Gevara u Jugoslaviji 1959," 244–245.

2 Nataša Anđelković, "Če Gevara, Tito i Jugoslavija - o čemu su pričali i šta je sve El komandante video i doživeo u zemlji koja je danas prošlost," *BBC News na srpskom*, 24 August, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/serbian/lat/balkan-53863004

3 For more on refashioning biographies of "political workers" in the aftermath of Yugoslavia, see Tanja Petrović and Jovana Mihajlović Trbovc. "Agency, Biography, and Temporality: (Un)making Women's Biographies in the Wake of the Loss of the Socialist Project in Yugoslavia." *Wagadu: A Journal of Transnational Women's and Gender Studies,* Fall 2020, http://sites.cortland.edu/wagadu/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/11/v21-Petrovic.pdf

who helped organise the resistance movement and performed numerous important functions within it during World War II – among other things, she was a secretary of the regional committee of the Liberation Front, a member of the central committee of the Yugoslav Antifascist Front of Women (AFŽ), and a member of the Antifascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ). After the war, she became a "political worker" – a designation that was used for women and men doing (paid and unpaid) work with the principal aim of benefitting the common good: she first worked as an instructor for agriculture and later occupied many official positions and political functions on regional, republican, and national levels. She became Secretary of the Forestry Industry for the Dolenjska region, General Secretary of the Cooperatives Association of Slovenia (Zadružna zveza Slovenije), Secretary General and Vice President of the Red Cross of Yugoslavia, and Senior Counsellor of the Executive Council of Yugoslavia (i.e., the federal government); and she worked in the Slovenian Parliament as a member of the Board for International Relations and later also as a counsellor. She also had an important role in the international organisation FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation) and in the programs designed to improve the position of women in agriculture and was the Yugoslav representative in the International Cooperatives Association. In biographical accounts since 1991, there have been attempts to disentangle Mara Rupena Osolnik's political engagement and the many institutional functions she performed, as something "inauthentic" and imposed, from her "genuine care for people," thereby looking to decouple her work within "the (socialist) system" from her social activism. In her biographical portrait of Rupena Osolnik, the feminist sociologist Tanja Rener writes: "Whatever she became because of official duty (*po službeni dolžnosti*)," listing many functions Rupena Osolnik performed, "village women were her primary subject of concern"; and in the next paragraph: "although she was always loyal to the socialist political authorities, she preserved a subtle attention to the everyday living conditions and the difficulties of ordinary people, particularly village women and children."[1]

The fact that Rupena Osolnik took an active part in the People's Liberation Struggle in World War II has also been given significant attention since 1991. In several entries in bibliographical lexicons and encyclopaedias, this part of her biography is allotted more lines than the more than five decades of her social and political work in socialist Yugoslavia.[2] Such positive evaluation of Rupena Osolnik's activities in the partisan movement during World War II, but marginalisation of what she did in the liberated socialist country, is a recognisable pattern that characterizes not only public discourses on the past, but also leftist politics and practices in the former Yugoslavia in post-socialist times.[3] See Lilijana Burcar, Restavracija kapitalizma: repatriarhalizacija družbe (Ljubljana: Sophia, 2015); Lilijana Burcar, "Brisanje dosega jugoslavenskog socijalističkog feminizma," in Ljevica nakon opovrgnute revolucije. ed. Srećko Pulig (Zagreb: Jesenski i Turk 2020), 126–155.[4] return to the Yugoslav past with the aim of discovering something new there, something to be used to articulate present and future alternatives. However, these returns usually go back only to the "pure essence" of the revolutionary moment in World War II and its values. They tend to erase the complex, messy, and contested experiences of actual Yugoslavs who both fought for socialism and later lived in it. Furthermore, such re-evoking of the Yugoslav past also demands "purifying" it of all "ideological" layers seen as compromising that revolutionary moment. For example, the all-female activist choir Kombinat from Ljubljana performs exclusively partisan, anti-fascist songs that were written during World War II by members of the partisan movement. In their opinion, only these songs, "untainted" by the subsequent state ideology of socialist Yugoslavia, are capable of reflecting the "pure" revolutionary values of resistance and solidarity. Those written during Yu-goslav socialism cannot be the holders of revolutionary potential, as they are

1 Tanja Rener, "Mara Rupena," in *Pozabljena polovica: portreti žensk 19. in 20. stoletja na Slovenskem*, eds. A. Šelih et al. (Ljubljana: Tuma – SAZU, 2007), 567–571.

2 See "Rupena, Mara (1918–2003)," in Slovenska biografija (Ljubljana: Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti, Znanstvenoraziskovalni center SAZU, 2013), http://www.slovenska-biografija.si/ oseba/sbi527171/#slovenski-biografski-leksikon; "Rupena-Osolnik, Mara," *Dolenjski biografski leksikon*, (n.d.), https://www.nm.sik.si/si/eknjiznica/bioleks/?bid=1831

3 See Lilijana Burcar, Restavracija kapitalizma: repatriarhalizacija družbe (Ljubljana: Sophia, 2015); Lilijana Burcar, "Brisanje dosega jugoslavenskog socijalističkog feminizma," in *Ljevica nakon opovrgnute revolucije*. ed. Srećko Pulig (Zagreb: Jesenski i Turk 2020), 126–155.

4 For an overview, see Igor Štiks, "'New Left' in the Post-Yugoslav Space: Issues, Sites, and Forms," *Socialism and Democracy*, 29/3, 2015, 135–146.

perceived as having been corrupted by their ideological use at the hands of the socialist regime.[1] Similarly, many theoreticians turn to "genuine" partisan art and its messages, to the "pure" aesthetic value of the modernist monuments dedicated to the anti-fascist struggle, etc. In such leftist endeavours, there is no space for the socialist agency of women such as Mara Rupena Osolnik in multiple fields and for the common good. The rejection of that agency as "ideological" makes the new generation of post-Yugoslav leftists' rediscovering socialism without Yugoslav men and women disturbingly reminiscent of the historical revisionism of post-Yugoslav nationalists and liberal political elites.[2]

A glimpse into transcript of conversation between Tito and Yugoslav high politicians[3] with the Cuban goodwill mission on the Brioni islands does not reveal Cuban delegation's leader as a revolutionary who is uninterested in of above daily politics. After all, he was at that moment a minister of industry and governor of the Cuban national bank. His engaged and interested enquiries about the ways Yugoslavia dealt with some issues in the aftermath of the WW2, particularly those aiming at reducing social inequalities – such as agrarian reform and education – point to his genuine belief that the revolutionary work has not been exhausted with ousting Batista's regime earlier that year, nor could it be reduced to the period of guerrilla fighting. The exchange between Tito and Che Guevara pictures the two men as practical and pragmatic, discussing best strategies to sustain and support both internally and internationally the still fragile social and political order of Cuba after the coup. This exchange exposes the revolutionary time as inherently ambiguous and messy. It does not offer a straightforward path to the future and clear answers about it.[4] The official note preserved in the Archive of the President of the Republic quotes the words by "comrade Đerđa"[5] who met the Cuban delegation in Cairo, prior to their arrival to Yugoslavia; these words also reveal the ambiguity surrounding Che Guevara's and his comrades' vision of the future as well as the very journey of the goodwill mission in 1959. "These are," wrote comrade Đerđa, "in any case, very young people who succeeded in their revolution, after which they faced problems much bigger than those, they had during guerrilla fight. Their concepts have not been crystalised yet. They are still searching and wondering. Guevara's journey is part of that search. They want to keep their independence by all means, but do not know how to achieve it in the current conditions, especially in relation to the USA. My impression is that it is not very clear to Guevara what he needs to accomplish on this journey."[6] who met the Cuban delegation in Cairo, prior to their arrival to Yugoslavia; these words also reveal the ambiguity surrounding Che Guevara's and his comrades' vision of the future as well as the very journey of the goodwill mission in 1959. "These are," wrote comrade Đerđa, "in any case, very young people who succeeded in their revolution, after which they faced problems much bigger than those, they had during guerrilla fight. Their concepts have not been crystalised yet. They are still searching and wondering. Guevara's journey is part of that search. They want to keep their independence by all means, but do not know how to achieve it in the current conditions, especially in relation to the USA. My impression is that it is not very clear to Guevara what he needs to accomplish on this journey." The ambivalence, ambiguity and lack of clarity that mark revolutionary acting may have been frustrating for the actors of the revolution and may be seen as compromising in the commonplace views, both synchronically and looking back, but they keep the window for multiple possibilities open and are actually profound characteristics of revolutions and their productive points.

1 Ana Hofman, *Novi život partizanskih pesama* (Beograd: Biblioteka XX vek, 2016), 135–140.

2 Tanja Petrović, "Toward an Affective History of Yugoslavia." *Filozofija i društvo* 27/3, 2016, 504–520.

3 Besides Tito, the following Yugoslav politicians met with the Cuban delegation on Brioni: the state secretary for the exterior affairs Koča Popović, the state secretary for defence Ivan Gošnjak, the secretary general of the President of the Republic Leo Mates, and the counsellor at the State secretariat for the exterior affairs Grgur Cviličević.

4 Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi similarly points to the ambiguity within which the Iranian revolution operated in 1978/79 : "Not ambiguity in its rejection of the Shah, but in its vision of the future, in the lack of an affirmative and precise description of its agenda." Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi, *Foucault in Iran: Islamic Revolution after the Enlightenment* (Minneapolis – London: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 58.

5 Josip Đerđa was the Yugoslav ambassador to UAR and met the Cuban delegation in Cairo in June 1959.

6 "Podatci o Ernesto 'Che' Guevarri" (sic!), n.d. *The archive of the President of the Republic*, the Archive of Yugoslavia.

A cynical gaze

Cynicism is the flipside of the above-described discourses and approaches to the socialist period and its revolutionary promises. Representations detached from the concrete work and efforts to keep multiple possibilities open and to make possible new forms of modernity and different narrations of history – those reducing Tito and his role in Yugoslav socialism and international arena to recognisable tropes of commodification that include Cuban cigars, white suits, luxury travels on the ship "Galeb" etc. – not only obscure solidarities, alliances and imaginations of the future that were in foundation of the international acting of the socialist Yugoslavia and its president, but also subject the concrete histories of modernisation, international solidarity and alternatives to a slightly – or overtly – ironic or cynical gaze. This gaze is, as David Scott argues, a result of the global political-ideological conditions of "the empowered entrenchment of an intolerant and fundamentalist version of liberalism – that make cynicism an acceptable, if not always necessary, part of so-called transitions from illiberal rule."[1] In the post-Yugoslav context, a tinge of irony or cynicism is believed to be necessary in order to prevent one's attitude to the socialist past from being seen as Yugo-nostalgic and thus delegitimised as superficial, banal, and politically unproductive.

In 2012, an international exhibition *Unfinished Modernisations between Utopia and Pragmatism: Architecture and Urban Planning in the Former Yugoslavia and its Successor States* was on display in the Maribor Art Gallery. In April that year, I attended a guided tour led by one of the curators who selected the work for the show, a Zagreb based architect from the younger generation. The tour group was comprised mostly of young people, including some from Great Britain, so our guide spoke English. He took us through several rooms of the gallery, in which were exhibited photographs and models of recognisable buildings, construction designs for socialist cities and neighbourhoods, Yugoslav modernist abstract monuments to the anti-fascist struggle, and the plans for the big projects of Yugoslav companies in other non-aligned countries. Our eloquent guide provided us with a great deal of relevant information about the architectural heritage of the Yugoslav period, sprinkling his talk with irony and jokes about Yugoslavia, its long-serving President Tito – with predictable references to Cuban cigars, communist hedonism, luxury travel, and revolutionary decadence. It was clear from his attitude and way of speaking that he felt it essential to make a distance between himself and his subject, and irony and humour proved to be an effective tool for such distancing. The necessity of emotional distance and "the objective assessment" of Yugoslav modernisation was also emphasised in the meta-text of the exhibition. One of the display labels reads: "It is not our intention to look nostalgically back at historical events, but to critically read the ways in which modern values and ambitions were interpreted and produced: social justice, the public domain, cultural advancement, social solidarity, and the dissemination and exchange of knowledge". One of the visitors on our tour stood out from the others: an elderly gentleman with crutches who slowly followed the group on the ground floor but could not climb the stairs and patiently waited for us to come down again for the last part of the exhibition. When the group approached the model of Split III, a modernist neighbourhood built in the Mediterranean town of Split, our guide gave the floor to the man on crutches. It turned out he was Vladimir Braco Mušič, a Slovenian architect and the creator of several modernist projects in Yugoslavia, including Split III. Mušič did not speak for long, but he did say the following: "You may judge, assess, analyse, and make jokes about what we were doing back then, but I want you to know that when we made Split III and other projects, we truly believed we were doing a good thing and improving the lives of thousands of people. We wholeheartedly dedicated ourselves to these projects."

In a similar way, thousands of former Yugoslavs still insist that they were investing labour and efforts into common good during socialist period. However, their insistence on the meaningfulness of such labour and belief in the ideals of common good is met today with suspicion, ridiculed, and rejected as inauthentic, and they are cynically looked down as naive and politically immature.[2] Their experience and beliefs are marked by a negative

1 David Scott, *Omens of Adversity: Tragedy, Time, Memory, Justice* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014), 163.

2 On the genealogy political immaturity exemplified by the transitional metaphor children of post-communism, as well as on its political implications, see Boris Buden, "Children of Post-communism," in *Welcome to the Desert of Postsocialism*, eds. Srećko Horvat and Igor Štiks (London: Verso, 2015), 123–139.

denomination Yugo-nostalgia – the term which is uncritically attached to any positive reference to the socialist period,[1] while the ways it is understood and assessed are reduced to two interpretational frames: it is mostly seen as either the banal commodification of socialist objects and symbols (and, as Maya Nadkarny and Olga Shevchenko lucidly note, as the triumph of capitalism)[2], or a proof of dangerous, atavistic cultural attachments,[3] false consciousness,[4] and malady.[5] In addition, post-socialist nostalgia is an ascriptive term that "continues to be avoided as self-description."[6] It is typically reduced to consumerist and consumption practices and relationships, to what is the most accessible, visible, banal, and kitschy,[7] to "Balkan parties (parties where popular music from the Yugoslav era is played and there is often a dress code requiring participants to dress in a way reminiscent of the socialist past in popular memory) and the collection of different cultural artifacts from socialist Yugoslavia (old records, clothing, foods, old car models, old-fashioned furniture and electrical appliances, posters of Yugoslav pop and sport stars, etc.)."[8] Primož Krašovec sees Yugo-nostalgia as "a result of a process whereby collective (and thus political) memory becomes reduced to a sum of personal experiences and individual memories. Yugo-nostalgia is what remains after the process of depoliticization of the collective memory of socialism – it is a form of popular memory that has been washed clean of all traces of political demands for social equality, workers' participation in the production process, and internationalism as well as for the antifascism, anti-imperialism, and anti-chauvinism that constituted the core of the revolutionary politics of socialism."[9] The dichotomy between individual memory as banal and depoliticized and collective memory as inherently political is a false one. What the political collective memory is made of if not of *political* individual memories, references, and also politically explicit claims for workers' and social rights, social equality, values of internationalism and solidarity – as something not only possible, but lived, experienced in the past? Such a view on the individual, personal experiences and memories as the opposite to the political and politically relevant fits the general trend of observing the (post)socialist subject and her or his memories, desires and views as politically hindering and unproductive; "s/he is", as Branislav Dimitrijević asserts, "neither the subject who remembers the past nor the subject who imagines the future."[10]

Concluding remarks: In search of useful knowledge

Three decades after Yugoslavia dissolved in violent ethnic conflicts, we are witnessing increasing academic interest for its political history and everyday life. The number of publications, research projects, conferences, as well as centres and departments dedicating significant attention to studying Yugoslav socialism point to this increasing interest.[11] It certainly has to do with a more general condition described by David Scott, who notices that "it is precisely when the future has ceased to be a source of longing and anticipation that the past has become such a densely animated object of enchantment."[12] At the moment when the memory studies are globally gaining an

1 Tanja Petrović, "The Political Dimension of Post-Socialist Memory Practices: Self-Organized Choirs in the Former Yugoslavia." *Südosteuropa*. 59(3), 2011, 315–329.

2 Maya Nadkarni and Olga Shevchenko, "The Politics of Nostalgia in the Aftermath of Socialism's Collapse: A Case of Comparative Analysis," in *Anthropology and Nostalgia*, eds. Olivia Angé and David Berliner (New York–Oxford: Berghahn, 2014), 63.

3 Ibid.

4 Zsuzsa Gille, "Postscript," in *Post-Communist Nostalgia*, eds. Maria Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille (New York–Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010), 283.

5 Maria Todorova, "Introduction: From Utopia to Propaganda and Back," in *Post-Communist Nostalgia*, eds. Maria Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille (New York–Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010), 2.

6 Ibid., 7.

7 See Svetlana Slapšak, "Jugonostalgija i smeh." *Peščanik*, 13 December, 2008, http://pescanik.net/jugonostalgija-i-smeh/

8 Primož Krašovec, "(Yugo)nostalgia," *Atlas of Transformation*, http://monumenttotransformation.org/atlas-of-transformation/html/n/nostalgia/yugonostalgia-primoz-krasovec.html

9 Ibid.

10 Branislav Dimitrijević, "In-Between Utopia and Nostalgia, or how the Worker Became Invisible on the Path from Shock-Worker to Consumer," in: *Nostalgia on the Move*, eds. Mirjana Slavković, Marija Đorgović (Belgrade: Muzej Jugoslavije, 2017), 39.

11 See, e.g., Jugoslavija: *Zašto? Kako?*, eds. Ildiko Erdei, Branislav Dimitrijević, Tatomir Toroman (Belgrade: Muzej Jugoslavije, 2019).

12 David Scott, *Omens of Adversity: Tragedy, Time, Memory, Justice* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014), 13.

impetus, it is important for us who deal with various aspects of memory and history of Yugoslav socialism, to ask about the nature of the knowledge this increased interest and growing body of research produces. In the mid-1980s, when cultural studies were being constituted as an academic discipline, Richard Johnson insisted cultural studies must remain "a process, a kind of alchemy for producing useful knowledge."[1] To be capable of this production, Johnson argued, Cultural studies should escape codification, institutionalisation and formalisation.[2] The same is true for how we approach the Yugoslav socialist past; what we need are the "analyses attuned to historical experience and imagination," those which "require careful work of interrogation that remains attentive to both the context of their emergence and their effects."[3] If we go back to the historical event of Che Guevara's visit to socialist Yugoslavia with attention to the context in which it happened, freeing it from the subsequent layers of stardom, sensationalism and protocol and looking into details that remained hidden into high-level narratives of diplomatic history, we are able to see *the quest for knowledge* as a driving force of the Cuban revolutionaries movement across the Yugoslav space. As Ernesto Che Guevara stressed at the meeting with Josip Broz Tito, "We came to Yugoslavia to see your experience and to *learn about it* in the best possible way."[4] The transcript of the conversation on the Brioni islands reveals learning/acquiring knowledge about Yugoslavia's revolutionary experience as the most important aspect of the Cuban's visit which has been lost in later memorisations of this event. Although the Slovenian public television portal described the Cuban goodwill mission's visit to the Museum of contemporary history as "a side activity" ("Mimogrede pa so obiskali še Muzej novejše zgodovine")[5] Che Guevara pictures Yugoslav museums as places for learning for him and other members of the mission: "We got familiar with different phases of your great struggle. We have also visited the museum in Belgrade."[6] Reconstructing the route of the Cuban delegation during their one-day visit to Kragujevac, Marko Terzić emphasizes two memorial places as crucial points on that route: the museum of the Zastava factory and the memorial park Šumarice (the Museum 21 October placed in this park is yet to be built).[7]

Figure 2: Che Guevara in Ljubljana's National Liberation Museum (today the National Museum of Contemporary History), 20 August 1959. The photo is from the Museum's photographic archive.

1 Richard Johnson, "What is Cultural Studies anyway?" *Social Text* 16, 1986–1987,. 38.

2 Ibid.

3 Larisa Kurtović and Nelli Sargsyan, "After Utopia: Leftist Imaginaries and Activist Politics in the Postsocialist World." *History and Anthropology* 30/1, 2019, 8.

4 "Zabeleška o razgovoru druga Pretsednika s misijom dobre volje Kube na Brionima 18.8.1959. godine," Archive of the President pf the Republic, Archive of Yugoslavia, 1.

5 Video iz arhivov: "Che Guevara si je ob obisku Ljubljane ogledal tovarno Litostroj," *MMC, RTV SLO*, 20 August, 2014.

6 "Zabeleška o razgovoru druga Pretsednika s misijom dobre volje Kube na Brionima 18.8.1959. godine," Archive of the President pf the Republic, Archive of Yugoslavia, 7.

7 "Če u Kragujevcu," *Blic*, 17 September, 2018.

Towards the end of the meeting with Tito on Brioni, Che Guevara touched upon the importance of education and possibilities of exchange in that domain. He said that they "are interested to send a certain number of people to get education in Yugoslavia. But I fear that language may be a problem. Our peasants barely know how to read and write."[1] ." Leo Mates, the general secretary of the President of the Republic responded that language learning has never been an obstacle for students from Asia and Africa, and Tito added "in our school Sudanese, Indonesians and many others got an education."[2] The transcript of the meeting ends with the story Che Guevara shared with the Yugoslavs: "In India, I talked with Krishna Manon about establishing bilateral relations, and he told me to send a professor or a doctor to India as our representative. I laughed and answered – what professor, we do not have any."[3]

In the years to come after the Cuban goodwill mission's journey, Cuba did manage to educate professors, doctors, engineers, artists. Both Cuba and Yugoslavia managed to raise literacy dramatically: according to UNESCO, Cuba's literacy rate of population older than 15 years was 99%. While in pre-WW2 Yugoslavia (in 1921) 50% of population older than 10 years was illiterate, in 1948, due to mass literacy campaign during the war and after it, the percentage dropped to 25%. In 1961, 21% of population was illiterate, and in 1981, illiteracy was reduced to 9,5%.[4]

Significantly reducing illiteracy and making education and health protection widely accessible – were some of the revolutionary visions turned into concrete work with impressive success in the period of socialism. That work becomes easily erased in the narratives in which the memory of that period is reduced to sensationalistic or consumerist tropes. The same is true for envisioning, and practicing, alternative versions of modernity and international solidarity that was an important component of the acting of the Non-aligned movement members. There is no space for these alternative versions in the prevalent views in which modernity is a hegemonic, exclusively Western category, while history is understood as linear and universal. The Non-Aligned movement, on the other hand, insisted on the possibility to "be modern by one's own rules" and to "direct one's own modernization process."[5] It also demanded "new kinds of historicization, rewriting historical narratives or even writing history anew,"[6] provincializing universal history[7] and de-colonisation of information, which one-directional flow shed negative light on developing countries.

The production of useful knowledge about socialism – the one that recuperates alternative modernities, lost solidarities and visions of the future – would be possible if we are able to counter hegemonic regimes of interpretation of the past, both locally and globally. Moreover, we need to observe events, their actors and the possibilities – those for which a window has been opened, but also those turned into reality – within their own temporal unfolding. Finally, we need to take seriously what "socialist subjects" – be it Che Guevara, Tito, Mara Rupena Osolnik, or countless workers, peasants, students, architects... – believed, created, desired and dreamt about.

1 "Zabeleška o razgovoru druga Pretsednika s misijom dobre volje Kube na Brionima 18.8.1959. godine," Archive of the President pf the Republic, Archive of Yugoslavia, 10.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Srđan Milošević, "Yugoslav society 1918–1991: From the stagnation to the revolution," in *Yugoslavia from a Historical Perspective* (Belgrade: Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, 2017), 376–377.

5 Bojana Piškur, "Southern Constellations: Other Histories, other Modernities," in *Southern Constellations: The Poetics of the Non-Aligned* (Ljubljana: Moderna Galerija, 2019), 14.

6 Ibid., 10.

7 Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

"Mixing the Dough for the Bread of Reconciliation": Croat-Serb Relations and Croatia's Commemorative Culture

by **Vjeran Pavlaković**

Abstract

For years, the anniversary of Operation Storm (August 1995) was the trigger that would torpedo any efforts at improving relations between Croatia and Serbia, even after progress had been made in the months prior to the commemoration/celebration. Inevitably, however, the weeks leading up to 5 August would be filled with media speculation and political manoeuvring that always boiled over on the unbearably hot streets of Knin. Due to these diametrically opposed official commemorations there seemed to be little hope for a reconciliatory breakthrough in memory politics. However, the Croatian government, which included members of the largest Croatian Serb political party in its ruling coalition, initiated the most reconciliatory commemorative policies in the summer of 2020 since the war ended twenty-five years ago. This contribution analyses the role of the Operation Storm commemoration in Croatia's collective remembrance and its potential for long-term symbolic reparations, both within Croatia and regarding bilateral relations with neighbouring countries.

Introduction

Despite a limited number of participants due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the twenty-fifth anniversary of Operation Storm (*Oluja*) held in Knin, Croatia, was in many ways one of the most important commemorative events in recent years. Celebrating the victorious entry of the Croatian Army into the capital of the rebel Serb parastate Republika Srpska Krajina (RSK) on 5 August 1995, the annual commemoration was for decades a flashpoint in rival interpretations of the 1990s conflict. For most Croats, the success of Operation Storm represented the biggest victory in the Croatian War of Independence, or Homeland War (*Domovinski rat*, 1991-1995), opening the process of reintegrating Croatian state territory that had been occupied by rebel Croatian Serbs and the Yugoslav People's Army. For many Serbs, this date heralded not only the end of Slobodan Milošević's promise to create a Greater Serbia, but resulted in the exodus of tens of thousands of ethnic Serbs from Croatia, the destruction of their property, and the murder of several hundred civilians who stayed behind. Despite years of attempting to normalise relations and resolve the remaining issues related to the conflict of the 1990s (missing persons, border disputes, minority rights, the return of cultural heritage, war crimes prosecutions), the annual commemorations of Operation Storm invariably heighten tensions and provoke diplomatic sparring between Croatia and Serbia. Rather than focusing on a dignified remembrance of victims on both sides or investing in regional cooperation, memory entrepreneurs in both Croatia and Serbia have politicised commemorations of Operation Storm in order to perpetuate ethnic divisions and hinder constructive bilateral relations.

However, on 5 August 2020, the commemoration in Knin was not used as a stage for nationalistic sabre rattling, but rather an opportunity for a different kind of message. For the first time, in addition to the entire Croatian political leadership (President Zoran Milanović, Prime Minister Andrej Plenković, and Speaker of the Parliament Gordan Jandroković) and the commanding officer of the military operation (General Ante Gotovina), a representative of the main Croatian Serb party attended the event as a member of the governing coalition. Although he did not give a commemorative speech and did not applaud any of the speakers, Boris Milošević of the Independent Democratic Serb Party (SDSS) participated in this highly sensitive commemorative event. Notwithstanding this symbolic moment did not change the fact that the events of Operation Storm and many other episodes of the Homeland War will continue to be interpreted differently throughout the region, it nonetheless represents an important shift in the commemorative culture in Croatia as the country seeks to finally move beyond the post-war

transition and truly turn to building a better future for all its citizens.

Milorad Pupovac, the president of the SDSS and currently the most important Croatian Serb politician, reflected on the potential meaning of the new approach to memory politics for long-term reconciliation several days after the commemoration:

In Knin, on a day that Croats perceive as a day of celebration, and Serbs as a day of mourning, these two opposing feelings are turned into flour and water. At that site Plenković and Milošević brought a piece of yeast and a pinch of salt, and, unlike in previous years, that yeast was the yeast of peace, not hatred. This year's salt was not meant to be salt for wounds. Four days ago, the process of mixing dough for bread of reconciliation (*pogača pomirenje*) has only just begun, since that kind of bread cannot be kneaded in one place and in one day.[1]

The anniversary of Operation Storm was followed by two more commemorations in villages where Croatian Army soldiers killed Serb civilians in the weeks following the military operation, seemingly confirming the Croatian government's commitment to reconciliatory memory politics. This contribution analyses the role of the Operation Storm commemoration in Croatia's collective remembrance and its potential for long-term symbolic reparations, both within Croatia and regarding bilateral relations with neighbouring countries.

Symbolic reparations and reconciliation

Commemorations and other political rituals are key components of a nation's cultural memory, crucial for the construction and reinforcement of ideological, ethnic, economic, gender, and other identities. The construction of cultural memory and cultural identities are central themes of memory studies which analyse the different processes of remembrance and forgetting that they occur at the individual, group, and societal level. The interaction between cognitive (individual) and social (collective) memory is established and manifested symbolically through "body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose 'cultivation' serves to stabilise and convey that society's self-image", as is the case of political rituals and their reliance on triggering past memories.[2] Commemorations, along with other political rituals such as rallies, parades, anniversaries, and other mass gatherings, are symbolic public activities that elites use to construct a grand narrative of a nation-state's history. "Politics is expressed through symbolism," asserts anthropologist David I. Kertzer, suggesting that even people in modern societies are influenced more by symbolic forms than rational calculations.[3] *In Ritual, Politics, and Power,* he cites the prevalence of political rituals, replete with emotional, historical, and national symbols, in every political system regardless of whether it is a democracy with free market capitalism or an authoritarian regime with a state-run economy. Kertzer adds that "ritual is an integral part of politics in modern industrial societies; it is hard to imagine how any political system could do without it."[4] The commemorations of Operation Storm provide an annual litmus test of Croat-Serb relations, and the political speeches given at the central manifestation in Knin reflect the political leadership's view of those relations.

Commemorations, just like memorials in public space, are symbolic acts, which have the potential to give victims recognition on a much larger scale. This recognition is not just between the victim and the perpetrator as is often the case in exclusively retributive justice but presents the traumatic events of the past to society at large in the hopes of preventing a future reoccurrence. Monuments and other memorial spaces not only offer victims public recognition for their suffering but are sites of memory which host commemorative events that allow participants to issue messages of reconciliation, or conversely, perpetuate conflicts. Rigby describes "war memorials as foci

1 "Plenković i Milošević zamijesili su tijesto za pogaču pomirenja, ali za to će trebati i Srbija." *Jutarnji list,* 8 August, 2020. https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/plenkovic-i-milosevic-zamijesili-su-tijesto-za-pogacu-pomirenja-ali-za-to-ce-trebati-i-srbija-15012547.

2 Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory,* trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: 1992); Jan Assman and John Czaplicka, *Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,* "New German Critique 1995", vol. 65, 125–133.

3 David I. Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 2.

4 Ibid., 3

of grief in the absence of the dead, as public sites to which personal memories can be attached in such a manner that private grieving becomes enmeshed in the collective experience and memory."[1] The question that arises is what kind of collective memory, or narrative, is created, or more specifically, allowed in the public space after the kinds of wars that accompanied Yugoslavia's demise?

A broad look at memory politics across the region reveals numerous examples of how commemorations are used to cement victimisation narratives for one's own side, while the "Other" is invariably labelled as the perpetrator. The result in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example, is that all three warring sides see themselves as waging defensive actions against the aggression of the other two, narratives which are perpetuated on monuments, commemorations, and political speeches. The result is a seemingly endless conflict, this time not openly with weapons, but a constant entrenchment of exclusive interpretations of the war that exclude recognition of one's own perpetrators or victims on the other side of the front lines. Although the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is particularly complex, commemorative practices throughout the region follow similar trends. Nationally exclusive memory politics perpetuate the post-war divisions rather than foster reconciliation, a concept used extensively in conjunction with the post-war, post-Yugoslav space.[2] Activists, EU officials, scholars, conflict resolution consultants, NGOs seeking grant money, and a host of other actors involved in transitional justice refer to the final goal of reconciliation. In the former Yugoslavia, reconciliation is generally considered a positive goal by those in the civil society sector, while those coming from a more right-wing position, such as nationalist politicians or representatives of veteran groups, tend to be dismissive of the term as an attempt to equalise guilt or recreate a new Yugoslavia. A possible definition for reconciliation is "the process of developing a mutual conciliatory accommodation between enemies or formerly antagonistic groups…[and] moving toward a relatively cooperative and amicable relationship,"[3] which can be applied to bilateral relations between countries as well as between ethnic groups. This understanding of reconciliation does not envision the restoration of failed states or ideologies but instead the creation of an atmosphere that would enable the successor states to resolve the negative legacies of the conflicts of the 1990s. These include the ongoing search for missing persons, prosecuting perpetrators of war crimes, returning stolen property, restoring property rights, ensuring proper conditions for displaced persons and refugees who want to return to their homes, resolving border and territorial disputes, and providing material reparations to victims. Although ties between the successor states have been "normalised" for decades, these unresolved issues inevitably pop up to sour bilateral relations during controversial commemorations, public stances towards war criminals, and political crises, hampering commerce and negatively affecting the lives of citizens trying to get on with their lives.

For years, the anniversary of Operation Storm was the trigger that would torpedo any efforts at improving relations between Croatia and Serbia, even after progress had been made in the months prior to the commemoration/celebration.[4] Inevitably, however, the weeks leading up to 5 August would be filled with media speculation and political manoeuvring that always boiled over on the unbearably hot streets of Knin. Although there were not necessarily incidents every single year, the commemoration was often accompanied by politicians being insulted, arrests being made, controversial symbols displayed, images of exuberant nationalists celebrating transmitted on television screens, all of which was then followed by cross-bordering verbal sniping between Croatian and Serbian politicians. While the main point of contention for years was the commemoration in Croatia, since 2015 Serbia and Republika Srpska (the Serb entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina) have observed a counter-commemoration on 4 August that emphasises the tragic fate of Serb victims and refugees without reflecting upon the consequences of Serbian policies in the years leading up to Operation Storm. Due to these diametrically opposed official commemorations there seemed to be little hope for a reconciliatory breakthrough in memory politics, which is why the transformation of commemorative culture in Croatia came as such a surprise in 2020.

1 Andrew Rigby, *Justice and Reconciliation: After the Violence* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001), 43.

2 Jens Meierhenrich, "Varieties of Reconciliation," in *Law & Social Inquiry*, vol. 33, no. 1 (2008), 195-231.

3 Louis Kriesberg, "Reconciliation: Aspects, Growth, and Sequences," in International Journal of Peace Studies, vol. 12, no. 1 (2007), 2.

4 Several Croatian politicians, including most recently President Zoran Milanović on 5 August 2020, have insisted that this date is not commemorated, but rather celebrated. Although the observation of this holiday does include concerts, fireworks, picnics, and other festive activities, there are many commemorative elements such as reading the names of fallen Croatian soldiers, laying of wreaths and the lighting of candles in cemeteries, and extensive references to the sacrifices made for the homeland that it can certainly be considered a commemoration.

The Croatian War of Independence and Operation Storm

After Josip Broz Tito's death in 1980, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) was destabilised by economic crises and the rise of nationalist politicians who challenged the stagnant communist establishment.[1] Although the situation between Serbs and Croats had become tense in Croatia during the so-called "Log Revolution" (*balvan revolucija*) in August 1990, full-scale violence erupted in the spring of 1991, escalated during the summer after Croatia declared independence on 25 June, and culminated in November with the siege and eventual fall of the town of Vukovar in Eastern Slavonia. Rebel Croatian Serbs, backed by paramilitaries from Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and openly supported by the Serb-dominated Yugoslav People's Army, created the Republika Srpska Krajina (RSK – *Republika Srpska Krajina*) carved from about 30% of Croatia's internationally recognised territory by late 1991. In addition to attacks against Croatian police and fledging military forces, Serb units expelled tens of thousands of non-Serbs from the territories they controlled and committed numerous atrocities against the civilian population. Although not undertaken in such large numbers, Croatian armed forces and police were involved in disappearances and revenge killings of Serb civilians.

Throughout 1994 and early 1995, with almost a third of the country still under the control of rebel Serbs, Croatian armed forces carried out several smaller operations in Croatia and Western Herzegovina. In May 1995, Croatian troops quickly retook parts of Western Slavonia during Operation Flash (*Bljesak*), followed by Operation Storm (*Oluja*), launched on 4 August 1995. Militarily the offensive was a complete success, breaking rebel Serb resistance in only a few days. Knin, the capital of the RSK and symbolically the heart of the Serb rebellion, fell on 5 August (the day that is subsequently commemorated), and by 7 August the Croatian government declared that the fighting was over. Croatia's victories were sullied by the subsequent exodus of the Krajina Serbs (estimated at 150,000 – 200,000 people), widespread looting, the destruction of housing stock and other buildings, and the murder of several hundred civilians in the four months after hostilities ended.[2] The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) indicted Generals Ante Gotovina, Mladen Markač, and Ivan Čermak for war crimes committed during and after the operation, which resulted in numerous delays in EU accession due to Gotovina's four years on the lam. Opposition to cooperation with the ICTY and domestic trials served to rally rightists and many veteran groups, but in 2012 the Appeals Chamber acquitted all of them and war crimes issues lost their mobilising function.[3] Operation Storm thus became the keystone of the heroic narrative of Croatia's War of Independence (referred to as the Homeland War, or *Domovinski* rat) as well as the country's greatest obstacle to Euro-Atlantic integration. Ultimately the war resulted in approximately 20,000 deaths, hundreds of thousands of displaced persons, and 1,862 persons still listed as missing in late 2020.[4]

Commemorating/celebrating Operation Storm

The Croatian government began commemorating Operation Storm already on the first anniversary, although for the first several years the official program took place in Zagreb. In 2000, the central commemoration moved to Knin, although it was only in 2004, after Ivo Sanader became prime minister, that the entire political leadership (president, prime minister, speaker of the parliament) began attending the commemoration more or less every year. Known colloquially as Victory Day, the official name of the commemoration was expanded to Victory and Homeland Thanksgiving Day and the Day of Croatian Defenders. The commemoration begins with the raising

1 Dejan Jović, *Yugoslavia: A State that Withered Away* (West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 2009); Zdenko Radelić, *Hrvatska u Jugoslaviji 1945. - 1991.: od zajedništva do razlaza* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 2008).

2 For estimates of civilian deaths and number of people who left the Krajina, see Gotovina et al. (IT-06-90), http://www.icty.org/case/gotovina/4.

3 Vjeran Pavlaković, "Better the Grave Than a Slave: Croatia's Relations with the ICTY, 1995–2005," in Sabrina P. Ramet, Konrad Clewing and Reneo Lukić, eds., *Croatia since Independence: Politics, Society, Foreign Policy* (Munich: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 2008); and Vjeran Pavlaković, "Croatia, the ICTY, and General Gotovina as a Political Symbol," in *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 62, no. 10.

4 Davor Marijan, Domovinski rat (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2016). See also the trial judgments of cases related to Croatia at the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), such as Ante Gotovina, Milan Martić, Milan Babić, and others available at www.icty.org for information on the conflict and war crimes that were committed.

of the Croatian flag on the fortress above the town (re-enacting the hanging of a giant flag by Croatian soldiers after Knin fell) and a reading of the names of fallen soldiers, followed by flyovers of the Croatian Air Force and civilian aircraft. Then, a procession of soldiers and veterans, some in historical military costumes, descends from the fortress and winds through the streets of Knin. Politicians have given commemorative speeches in the fortress, in the stadium in front of military formations, or occasionally, since 2012, on the main square in front of the Oluja Victory '95 monument.

Croatia's relationship with the ICTY frequently influenced the speeches as well as provoking protests from the crowd, who expressed their anger by jeering at politicians or even bringing banners and signs. As opposed to the commemoration in Vukovar, which is centred on the Procession of Remembrance from the hospital to the Memorial Cemetery that traces the steps of the town's victims, the speeches held in Knin mostly focus on the bravery of Croatian defenders and on their heroic deeds in the fight for independence. The memory of victims plays far less of a role than in Vukovar, and the main victims mentioned are the fallen defenders who gave their lives for Croatia. Notwithstanding there are many solemn commemorative moments, the event has many aspects of a celebration, which is one reason Croatia's Serb minority has avoided participating in the program prior to 2020.[1]

The speeches in Knin always had messages directed to both the domestic public, which usually make parallels with the need to mobilise the victorious energy from the war to tackle Croatia's contemporary economic, social, and demographic problems, and neighbouring Serbia, which is reminded for its role in the war in Croatia. As a victory celebration, it is not surprising that many speeches, especially in the early years, clearly blamed Serbia for the entire conflict and ignored, or justified, the killing of Serb civilians in the aftermath of the military operations. The values of war, and not the successful peace-making efforts that allowed the reintegration of Eastern Slavonia with the loss of life, were frequently glorified during the anniversary in Knin, contributing to a militarisation of Croatian society and the further marginalisation of the country's remaining Serb minority who were saddled with the collective guilt of being perpetrators in the conflict.

On the tenth anniversary of Operation Storm in 2005, the Croatian political leadership – speaker of the parliament Vladimir Šeks, President Stjepan Mesić, and Prime Minister Ivo Sanader – gathered in Knin to make clear their unified position that the offensive was completely legitimate and honourable. Šeks, a long-time deputy of the centre-right Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ – *Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica*), called Operation Storm "a most brilliant victory, unsullied, in accordance with international and all other laws."[2] Sanader likewise praised it as "a glorious military operation," asserting that the events that took place after the offensive needed to be "separated from Operation Storm itself."[3] Mesić, rejecting Serbian president Boris Tadić's comparison of Operation Storm with the Srebrenica massacre, argued the "entire action, it must be stated, was carried out according to the laws of war as defined by international conventions," even though he did admit "crimes did take place on the margins of the offensive."[4] Thus, Croatia's leaders were acknowledging war crimes had been committed, but under no circumstances could they be associated with the crowning military achievement or Croatia's war for independence.

1 Tamara Banjeglav, "Filling voids with memories: Commemorative rituals and memorial landscape in post-war Vukovar," in Davor Pauković and Vjeran Pavlaković, eds., *Framing the Nation and Collective Identities: Political Rituals and Cultural Memory of the Twentieth Century Traumas in Croatia* (London: Routledge, 2019), 194-208. In 2012, Veljko Džakula, the leader of the Serbian Democratic Forum, participated in the Operation Storm commemoration, but in an unofficial capacity. Thus, the participation of a member of the leading Croatian Serb party and a member of the government was historic in 2020.

2 Zoran Daskalović and Alen Legović, "Proslava 10. obljetnice «Oluje» u Kninu." *Deutsche Welle*, 5 August, 2005. https://www.dw.com/hr/proslava-10-obljetnice-oluje-u-kninu/a-2278217.

3 "Državni vrh u Kninu: Oluja je bila legitimna, opravdana i čista." *Index.hr*, 5 August, 2005. https://www.index.hr/Vijesti/clanak/drzavni-vrh-u-kninu-oluja-je-bila-legitimna-opravdana-i-cista/277511.aspx.

4 "U Kninu počela središnja proslava 10. obljetnice Oluje." *Večernji list*, 5 August 2005. https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/u-kninu-pocela-sredisnja-proslava-10-obljetnice-oluje-808584.

In 2010, during the fifteenth anniversary, the ongoing trial of Croatian generals Gotovina, Markač, and Čermak in the ICTY was constantly hanging over any discussion of Operation Storm, while Serbia attempted to put diplomatic pressure to condemn the celebration of what it considered to be ethnic cleansing. The speeches in Knin were therefore particularly fiery and bellicose. For example, the speaker of the parliament and veteran HDZ deputy, Luka Bebić, stated:

It seems unbelievable that today, fifteen years after the successful Operation Storm brought us victory in just four days, we are faced with political attempts from various sides to tarnish our just, defensive, and liberating Homeland War, to challenge the legality and legitimacy of Operation Storm, and to even try to ban today's celebration. Well, from this place I will be very clear: never, we will never let anyone do that! To those who persistently cannot be reconciled with the idea of a Croatian state or their own defeat, I state: the time has passed when someone else will be deciding for us or instead of us! Croatia is independent and free, and the Croatian people are sovereign and only they have the right to decide their fate![1]

The prime minister at the time, Jadranka Kosor (HDZ), also emphasised that "no one will revise history or erase the historical truth that Croatia was the victim of aggression, and that the Homeland War was defensive. We will not let anyone touch our sacred things, and [Operation] Storm is one of them."[2] Newly elected President Ivo Josipović of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), while also paying homage to the first Croatian president and founder of the HDZ, Franjo Tuđman, was nonetheless subjected to a barrage of jeers and whistles. Knin would continue to be a commemorative site that would mercilessly subject left-wing politicians to such a cacophony that some years it was impossible to hear what they were saying.

While Knin was the central stage for the official commemoration/celebration of Operation Storm, numerous bottom-up commemorative practices emerged in these years. The Serbian National Council (SNV – *Srpsko narodno vijeće*), the umbrella organisation of Croatian Serbs closely tied to the SDSS, began issuing annual press releases on 5 August to draw attention to the Serb civilians who lost their lives during the military operation. Eventually the SNV began to organise commemorations in a different village or town each year where civilians lost their lives, but the participants were limited to the organisers, families of victims, and various civil society NGOs. In October 2010, President Josipović attended the unveiling of the first official monument to Serb victims in the Homeland War in the village of Varivode.[3] The simple memorial, resembling a large headstone with two plaques in both Latin and Cyrillic script, recalled the victims of 28 September 1995, when the Croatian Army killed nine elderly villagers nearly two months after the end of Operation Storm. In 2004, the locals had raised a wooden Orthodox cross in the centre of the village with the names of the victims, but in April 2010 a vandal smashed the cross, drawing national attention to the incident.[4] The government reacted swiftly and condemned the incident, which led to the initiative to erect a true monument in the centre of the village. Croatian right-wing publications railed against the building of any monuments for that side, portraying all casualties as either combatants who rebelled against the state, and therefore could not be considered victims, or else simply collateral damage during military operations.[5] In Varivode, however, the victims were between the ages of sixty and eighty-five years old, and included three women, and were thus undoubtedly civilians who had heeded President Tuđman's message to peacefully await the arrival of the Croatian Army.

1 Press release of speech by Luka Bebić, 5 August 2010, possession of author.

2 *Novi list,* 6 August 2010, 2-3.

3 "Josipović otkrio prvi spomenik srpskim civilima stradalima u ratu." *Večernji list,* 5 October 2010. http://www.vecernji.hr/hrvatska/josipovic-otkrio-prvi-spomenik-srpskim-civilima-stradalima-u-ratu-199841 (accessed 6 October 2010).

4 "Spomenik u Varivodama uništio 47-godišnjak iz Šibenika," Jutarnji list, 24 April 2010, online version at https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/spomenik-u-varivodama-unistio-47-godisnjak-iz-sibenika-2302199 (accessed 6 October 2010). The police arrested a 47-year old man several days later for destroying the monument.

5 This argument is well-developed in the book by former minister of health Andrija Hebrang, who argues that only eighty Serb civilians were killed during the war (while at the same time seemingly arbitrarily claiming that the communist regime killed 200,000 civilians without trial after the Second World War). In other words, his logic is to accuse the Serbian side of exaggerating and lying about the number of Serb civilians by inflating the numbers of those killed after 1945. Andrija Hebrang, *Zločini nad civilima u srpsko-crnogorskoj agresiji na republiku Hrvatsku* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 2013). See also his article on the subject in Večernji list (Obzor), 24 January 2015, 12-13.

While Croatian Serbs struggled to gain recognition for the civilians who lost their lives, right-wing Croatian nationalists, frustrated with what they saw as bending to international pressure regarding war crimes investigations, increasingly gathered in the small village of Čavoglave to celebrate the victory even more fervently. The home of controversial singer Marko Perković Thompson, the Čavoglave celebration centred around Thompson's concert and was a place where Ustaša symbols and radical ideological positions could be openly displayed. Tens of thousands of people would crowd into the tiny village along with numerous politicians from the right-wing spectrum and even convicted war criminals, such as Dario Kordić.

In Serbia, the commemoration for the victims of Operation Storm was held without the participation of government officials for years, although Serbian presidents and prime ministers regularly condemned Croatian celebrations. After 2010, even the good relations between Croatian and Serbian presidents Josipović and Tadić were jeopardised during the months of July and August. Although it is true that Croatian politicians had not particularly reflected on Serb civilian victims in the speeches in Knin, Serbian politicians had also systematically failed to address all the crimes committed against Croats in the four years prior to Operation Storm, creating an exclusive victimisation narrative that sabotaged any true possibilities for regional reconciliation.

Nevertheless, in the following years Josipović launched a number of reconciliatory initiatives related to the Second World War and the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as some related to the Homeland War. In his speech in Knin on 5 August 2012, Josipović emphasised that after winning in war Croatia needed to win in peacetime, and "winning in peacetime means extending a hand to our fellow citizens of Serb nationality, recognising their victims, and showing them piety."[1] This elicited some jeers and whistles from the crowd, although there were no serious incidents. This was also perhaps due to the fact that Thompson attracted over 60,000 people to Čavoglave, which by that point had established itself as the centre of nationalist euphoria and right-wing celebration on Victory Day.

After the ICTY acquitted all of the Croatian generals in November 2012, it seemed that international pressure would disappear and nationalists would lose a symbol to rally around, especially since Gotovina called for Croatia to turn to the future once released from prison. Nevertheless, the Victory Day commemoration began to serve as a serious challenge to Prime Minister Zoran Milanović's and Josipović's authority from the right-wing opposition, since both were from the SDP. Josipović once again issued a reconciliatory speech on 5 August 2013, stating:
we need to extend our hand even to those who were on the other side, we need to recognise that national minorities also loved and continue to love Croatia, as well as recognise that Croatia is a country that is open for all of its citizens and it has to remain like that in order to stay democratic and European.[2]

People in the crowd whistled and jeered slightly when Josipović mentioned reconciliation, but also yelled and insulted Milanović during his speech, which was considerably more patriotic in tone. Knin, a HDZ stronghold, would serve as a trial run for future commemorative interventions by the right-wing opposition. The scenario featuring an angry, nationalist crowd was repeated in 2014, the last time the left-wing government oversaw the anniversary of Operation Storm in Knin.

In order to avoid another debacle in Knin for the twentieth anniversary, Milanović organised a military parade in Zagreb on 4 August 2015. The following day, the new president, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović (HDZ), presided over a celebration that was definitely a return to the more nationalist rhetoric of the early 2000s. Moreover, she invited Thompson to come down from the Čavoglave plateau and perform in the centre of Knin, ensuring that the crowd would be more fired up than ever before. The Croatian media showed shocking images of black-clad revellers sporting Ustaša symbols and shouting fascist slogans, while stands sold all kinds of Ustaša paraphernalia on the crowded streets. Grabar-Kitarović, however, did not completely abandon all of Josipović's efforts at recognising the victims of the "other side". She stated that "we in Croatia do not wish to return to the past, we are extending our hand of friendship, co-existence, and tolerance. We do not want to blame the Serbian people as such for aggression against our country."

1 Ibid., 2.
2 *Slobodna Dalmacija,* 6 August 2013, 4.

This was then conditioned with the phrase "But we will never allow aggressors and victims to be equal," which brings into question who can be considered a legitimate victim when nationalist discourse portrays all Serbs in the RSK as complicit in aggression, and all members of the RSK's military as war criminals.[1] Her comments followed a similar pattern in 2016, when the SDP government had been replaced by an unstable right-wing coalition. After extensively criticising Serbia for failing to accept responsibility for the war and attacking Milanović in the context of communist crimes, Grabar-Kitarović turned to the issue of victims: "I want to use this opportunity to clearly say that I respect every victim, because every human life is equally valuable, and the sorrow of every family for their loved ones is the same. However, it must be known that Operation Storm was, and historically will remain, a politically justified, ethically clean, and militarily brilliantly executed liberation, an honourable victory for a just goal."[2] In both cases she also directly referred to the importance for Serbia to accept the ICTY judgments that acquitted Croatian generals in Operation Storm, drawing upon the international legitimacy of the Tribunal to support her arguments.

While Croatian commemorative politics seemed to be returning to the hard-line HDZ positions at the end of the twentieth century, paralleled by virulent anti-communist revisionist attacks on interpretations of the Second World War, Serbia under Aleksandar Vučić rejected the policy of apologies of his predecessors and completely embraced the victimisation narrative for all memory politics, from Jasenovac to Operation Storm. In 2015, along with Milorad Dodik of Republika Srpska, he inaugurated the new Memorial Day of Killed and Exiled Serbs, which was subsequently organised every year at a different settlement of Croatian Serb refugees in Serbia. Rather than attempting to reflect on the broader historical context of the war or create an atmosphere of reconciliation with neighbouring states, the commemoration is intended to bolster the nationalist credentials of Vučić, who as a member of Vojislav Šešelj's Radical Party had visited occupied Croatian territory in the 1990s. At the commemoration in 2016, Vučić fiercely stated that "there will not be any more 'Storms', Serbia will not allow such a pogrom to happen again…when Croatian hands were bloodied in the biggest ethnic cleansing since the Second World War."[3] Considering such commemorative trends, it was hard to imagine a significant shift towards symbolic reconciliation prior to 2020.

A new commemorative culture in Croatia

As the Covid-19 pandemic spread rapidly through Europe and across the globe in early March 2020, it quickly became clear that commemorations, along with all aspects of public life, would be dramatically changed. Large gatherings, processions, and the traditional post-commemoration practice of doling out of bean soup by the army were all high-risk activities, resulting in solemn events attended by only a few participants with adequate social distance. In April, Prime Minister Andrej Plenković (HDZ) and Zoran Milanović, now in the new role of president of Croatia, seemed able to bridge ideological divisions and oversee a unified commemoration at the Jasenovac Concentration Camp. This commemoration had been boycotted by victims' organisations and antifascist associations due to the government's passivity, or even encouragement, of right-wing revisionism that bordered on overt Holocaust denial.[4] Whereas as Croatian political leaders finally seemed to be building a consensus over the Second World War, Milanović's comment to journalists about a controversial Homeland War monument featuring the Ustaša salute *Za dom spremni* ("Ready for the Homeland") provoked a barrage of angry reactions from the country's veteran population.

1 President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović on 5 August 2015, www.framnat.eu/knin-framnat/.

2 President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović on 5 August 2016, www.framnat.eu/knin-framnat/.

3 *Novi list,* 6 August 2016, 4.

4 Vjeran Pavlaković, "Contested Sites and Fragmented Narratives: Jasenovac and Disruptions in Croatia's Commemorative Culture", in Vjeran Pavlaković and Davor Pauković, eds., *Framing the Nation and Collective Identity: Political Rituals and Cultural Memory of the Twentieth-Century Traumas in Croatia* (London: Routledge, 2019), 119-140.

This culminated with a scandal during the Operation Flash commemoration in May, when Milanović abruptly left when some veterans showed up in the official program wearing shirts with *Za dom spremni* printed on them.[1]

Although these controversies over memory politics in the first half of 2020 did not seem to bode well for the forthcoming twenty-fifth anniversary of Operation Storm, several political developments created a situation that opened the door for a new commemorative culture. Firstly, Prime Minister Plenković convincingly won internal party elections in March, edging out his hard-line opponents who had represented the right wing of the HDZ. Plenković had pursued a more centrist, pro-European policy, and had outmanoeuvred his challengers who had criticised him for being too much of a Brussels-oriented bureaucrat. Secondly, national parliamentary elections in July 2020 resulted in a victory for the HDZ, guaranteeing Plenković a second mandate. In order to secure a majority of deputies, however, the HDZ needed to once again create a coalition with representatives of national minorities, three of which came from the Croatian Serb party SDSS. As in the previous government, radical right-wing opponents criticised Plenković for being beholden to Serb interests, but strengthened by two straight electoral victories, he even included one SDSS deputy, Boris Milošević, as a deputy prime minister in charge of social affairs and human and minority rights. With this political alignment, the Croatian government had the opportunity to take a daring step and open the most sacred commemoration/celebration of the Homeland War to the defeated side in the conflict. The final condition for allowing the inclusion of an SDSS representative at the Operation Storm anniversary was the fact that the Covid-19 pandemic enabled the government to tightly control public space in Knin. As discussed earlier, a number of politicians had been subjected to disruptive jeers from the crowd in previous years during this commemoration, but for this sensitive moment Plenković's government made sure to prevent any troublemakers from getting close to the central monument where the ceremony took place.

On 5 August 2020, Prime Minister Plenković and President Milanović were joined not only by the speaker of the parliament, Gordan Jandroković (HDZ), but most significantly the commanding officer of Operation Storm, General Ante Gotovina. Milošević did not speak, but the television cameras paid close attention to his reactions during the commemorative speeches. For him it was a particularly difficult decision to participate, since his own grandmother had been killed in the aftermath of Operation Storm. Despite the scepticism expressed by many Croatian Serbs about the symbolism of attending the Victory Day celebration, Milošević explained his reasons in an interview a week prior to the event:

For the majority of Serbs and myself personally, "Operation Storm" is a difficult issue and a traumatic experience. If I go [to the commemoration], it will be with a genuine intention to improve the atmosphere in society, to improve the position of Serbs, and to improve the position of all who want reconciliation and dialogue…It would be good to create common narratives, to observe but not celebrate war, rather to celebrate peace, and that when commemorating we express empathy for the defeated.[2]

The Croatian mainstream media had positively reported on Milošević's intention to go to Knin for days prior to 5 August, so it was no surprise that his presence overshadowed even Gotovina's, who had generally avoided all commemorations since returning from detention in the Netherlands. Although he stoically sat through all of the speeches and did not applaud afterwards, there is no doubt that he approved of the messages being sent from the symbolic heart of Homeland War remembrance.

Gotovina spoke first and briefly, thanking all of his fellow soldiers for their efforts a quarter century ago and then concluding that it was necessary to continue "building a modern, European, democratic, social, and just state that cares for its weakest and neediest…and that everyone, regardless of differences, enjoys security and equal rights.[3] Prime Minister Plenković, although emphasising crimes committed in the name of Greater Serbian ideology, also openly called for the recognition of Serb civilians during the commemoration:

1 *Za dom spremni* was the official salute of the Ustaša regime, and subsequently adopted by the right-wing paramilitary unit HOS (Croatian Defense Forces) during the Homeland War. Although, it is clear that HOS used this salute and other Ustaša symbols to directly reference the fascist collaborators of the Second World War, in recent years some veteran organisations have argued that it is exclusively a symbol of the Homeland War, particularly since HOS was subsequently recognised as a legal military unit. For its use in sports and popular culture, see Dario Brentin, "Ready for the Homeland? Ritual, remembrance, and political extremism in Croatian football," in *Nationalities Papers*, vol. 44, no. 6 (2016), 860-876.

2 *Novosti*, 31 July 2020, 5.

3 *Jutarnji list*, 6 August 2020, 2.

As a country which was victorious in an imposed war with numerous innocent civilian victims, we mourn for every victim, especially civilians, and not just Croats, but Serbs and those of every other nationality. With sorrow and piety, we reflect on the hundreds of thousands of displaced persons who had to flee their homes, as well as all of those who from 1991 until the end of the Homeland War died defending Croatia.[1]

While both Josipović and Grabar-Kitarović had likewise mentioned Serb civilian victims as part of mourning for the victims on all sides, Plenković went even farther, stating that "even more so we regret the victims of war crimes committed by the Croatian side, which unfortunately occurred, because the legitimate right to defend oneself is not and cannot be justification for misdeeds. Every such act is painful for all the families of victims and an ugly stain on the just face and defensive character of the Homeland War."[2] This was a direct reference to war crimes committed against Serbs, which Plenković highlighted was not meant to equate all the sides in the war or to blemish Operation Storm.

While Jandroković focused mostly on repeating the importance of unity and the need for building a society based on justness, solidarity, and inclusion, Milanović directly praised Milošević for his bravery in attending the celebration. He also admitted that during the war "there were many mistakes and crimes which later cost us," but then turned to relations with Serbia and the need for dealing with the past on the other side.[3] Even the Archbishop of Split, Marin Barišić, called for reconciliation and for Serb refugees to return in order to build a common future at the Mass for veterans, which has in the past been a pulpit for hardliners in the Catholic Church.[4] Clearly the winds of change had swept through the entire Victory Day commemoration, already dramatically transformed due to the global pandemic.

The major daily newspapers all carried positive headlines on their front pages the following day. The usually conservative *Večernji list* declared "A new era", while *Jutarnji list* noted "The celebration of Operation Storm as a pledge for peace and reconciliation." *Novi list* noted that both the president and prime minister had called for unity under the headline "The messages from Knin are turned towards creating a better Croatia." ." While the vast majority of journalists, politicians, human rights activists, and analysts welcomed the commemorative messages, right-wing parties, such as Domovinski pokret (Homeland Movement) of Miroslav Škoro, attempted to dismiss the commemorative messages as "equating victims and aggressors." An official statement from Škoro, who as a parliamentary deputy was invited to the Victory Day celebration but decided not to attend, noted that his party "saw no reason for any kind of reconciliation."[5] Nationalist parties such as Škoro's had benefited for years from ongoing ethnic divisions by claiming to defend the values of the Homeland War or blaming Serbs for all socio-economic problems, while doing little to address the actual challenges facing Croatian citizens. A normalisation of relations between Serbs and Croats would deprive these mnemonic entrepreneurs of their main arguments that deep state communists, Serbs, and globalists were holding Croatia back. Not surprisingly, Vučić also reacted negatively to the new relations in Croatia, since successful cooperation between the SDSS and the HDZ would weaken his influence over Croatia's Serbs and diminish his nationalist credentials at home. Despite the Covid-19 situation, Vučić managed to organise a commemoration in Sremska Rača, where along with Dodik in front of a kitschy backdrop of actors on tractors and a Yugo, thundered that Serbs could forgive but never forget the alleged genocide in 1995.[6] Media close to the government suggested that Milošević was a traitor for attending the Victory Day celebration, and angrily insinuated that it had been done without consulting Belgrade. The reactions by nationalists in both Croatia and Serbia very clearly show that the new approach to memory politics is a serious threat to the kind of status quo in relations that has prevented the region from moving forward while benefiting a select few mnemonic actors.

1 *Večernji list,* 6 August 2020, p.5.
2 *Novi* list, 6 August 2020, pp. 3-4.
3 *Večernji list,* 6 August 2020, p.5.
4 *Jutarnji list,* 6 August 2020, p. 2.
5 *Jutarnji list,* 6 August 2020, p. 3.
6 *Jutarnji list,* 6 August 2020, p. 5.

Conclusion

This contribution sought to examine the dramatic change in the commemorative culture in Croatia through the lens of one of the key memorial days related to the Croatian War of Independence. It is too early to tell if this shift in commemorative rhetoric can have a long-term impact or is merely a temporary shift as a result of the current political balance of power. This was, admittedly, only one symbolic act amidst a myriad of post-war legacies. However, the participation of Boris Milošević in the Victory Day celebration was not the end of new memory politics in the summer of 2020. On 25 August, the Minister of veteran affairs, Tomo Medved (HDZ), attended a commemoration for six murdered Serb civilians in the hamlet of Grubori, along with Milošević, President Milanović, and Milorad Pupovac. Generally considered part of the right-wing spectrum of the HDZ and close to hard-line veterans, the appearance of Medved in Grubori sent an even stronger message perhaps than Knin about the willingness of the Croatian government to seriously investigate all war crimes and recognise all civilian victims regardless of nationality, which is what Medved stated in front of a newly erected memorial cross.[1] This time the commemoration was not focused just on statements, but the roads and phone lines leading to Grubori were repaired along with an appeal to Serb refugees to return. On 28 September, Prime Minister Plenković joined Milošević and Pupovac for a commemoration in Varivode, the village where the first official monument to Serb victims was erected in 2010. Plenković again forcefully condemned the crimes against Serb civilians, which he considered to be "an insult to modern Croatia because it insults human dignity," as well as a blemish on the otherwise legitimate Homeland War.[2] In November, Milošević participated in the Procession of Remembrance in Vukovar, while Veran Matić, an envoy of Serbian President Vučić, knelt at the monument of the Ovčara massacre in an act evoking Willy Brandt in Warsaw.

The series of symbolic acts may seem minor when considering the many issues and disputes facing the countries of the former Yugoslavia, but for Croatian memory politics it represents the first positive shift after many years of radical right rhetoric and populism. The normalisation of Croat and Serb relations over such emotional and sensitive issues as war trauma and victims allows the government to focus on the much more important policies to tackle such as the consequences of the global pandemic, migration, unemployment, population decline, and endemic corruption. Reconciliation is a process that is constantly evolving, and as witnessed by memory politics in the United States over the legacy of slavery and the Civil War, is never fully complete; traumatic memories or revisionist narratives can quickly be activated by mnemonic actors during times of crisis. Reconciliation, or rather normalisation of relations, also needs to take place on a regional scale, since Croatia is closely tied to neighbouring countries due to co-national and common histories. For each of the post-Yugoslav societies to move forward, there needs to be a dialogue and sincere bilateral relations with neighbours. This is of course a challenge, as seen in the attempts to create a regional truth and reconciliation commission (REKOM), since one of the countries is almost always in an election cycle and the political will to cooperate regionally evaporates in the face of nationalist mobilisation.

Croatia's new commemorative culture can contribute to concrete results if the dialogue and willingness to be inclusive in remembering the wars of the 1990s moves across borders. This also requires accountable politicians, journalists, religious leaders, and intellectuals who can use the momentum for further initiatives. This summer, Croatian politicians seemed to be able to put aside their careers and risk alienating their own political bases in order to show empathy for the other side and attend commemorations that approach the traumatic events of the war from multiple perspectives. As Milorad Pupovac had perceptively noted, the commemorations in August and September represented merely the mixing of the dough; a lot more work needs to be done before the bread of reconciliation was ready. But the process needs to start somewhere, with bakers willing to get their hands dirty. Many sites of memory across the former Yugoslavia await a similar shift in commemorative culture that can liberate these societies from the narrow victimisation narratives and open perspectives for a better future.

1 "Medved u Gruborima: Hrvatska kao pobjednik u Domovinskom ratu žali zbog svih stradalih." *Večernji list,* 25 August 2020. https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/medved-hrvatska-kao-pobjednik-u-domovinskom-ratu-zali-zbog-svih-stradalih-1426419.

2 *Dnevnik.hr,* 28 September 2020. https://dnevnik.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/premijer-andrej-plenkovic-na-komemoraciji-u-varivodama---621890.html

Tears and Memories of the Nation: Poetics of Memory and Aesthetics of Mourning in the First Croatian National Epos

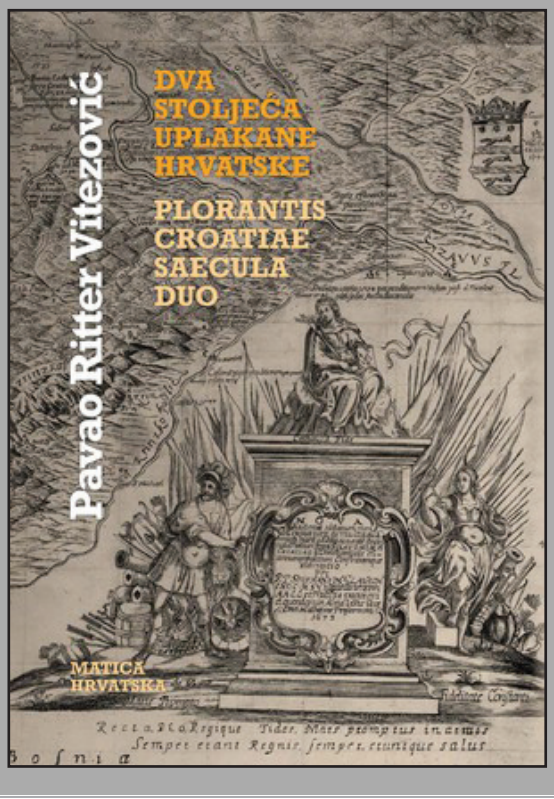
by **Zrinka Blažević**

Abstract

This paper aims at scrutinising poetic strategies and aesthetic dimensions of the culture of memory in the first Croatian national epos *Plorantis Croatiae saecula duo / Two Centuries of Croatia Mournful* written by Pavao Ritter Vitezović (1652–1713) and published in Zagreb in 1703. Due to its inherent ability to employ various forms of aesthetic mediation, the first national epos creates not only imaginative and affective conditions for its own receptivity but also gains "prosthetic quality" as a crucial factor of the cultural dynamics of remembrance.

Introduction

Starting from the presumption that the cultivation of emotionally imbued shared memories is an essential part of national identity, this paper aims at scrutinising poetic strategies and aesthetic dimensions of the culture of memory in the first Croatian national epos *Plorantis Croatiae saecula duo/Two Centuries of Croatia Mournful.* This is a Latin verse chronicle written by Croatian poet and polymath Pavao Ritter Vitezović (1652–1713) and published in Zagreb in 1703. The most prominent feature of Vitezović's poetic discourse is prosopopoeia by which the subject of enunciation, the personified homeland of Croatia, is metaphorically identified with a woman-mother who represents a type of "ego history of mourning" during the two centuries of Ottoman conquests. Due to its inherent ability to employ various forms of aesthetic mediation, the first national epos thus creates not only imaginative and affective conditions for its receptivity but also gains "prosthetic quality" as a crucial factor of the cultural dynamics of remembrance.



Cover plorantis croatiae saecula duo

Book cover: Pavao Ritter Vitezović, Dva stoljeća uplakane Hrvatske / Plorantis Croatiae saecula duo, eds. Zrinka Blažević i Bojan Marotti (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 2019)

From the proto-national to the national ideology

The beginning of the 18th century, marked by the successfully accomplished Viennese War with the Ottoman Empire in 1699, heralded a new era of national politics of the Croatian Estates.[1] As a matter of fact, this was a period when "national" translation of the early modern Illyrism took place. It might be described as an ideological product of the South Slavic branch of the Humanist res publica litteraria, which was from the end of the 15th century intensively engaged in the symbolic construction of the Illyrian transnational identity. From its Humanist beginnings, early modern Illyrism was deeply intertwined with two corresponding European proto-national ideologies – German Teutonism and Polish Sarmatism – adopting their structural elements in order to adapt them to its own ideological and political purposes. Some formative elements of German Teutonism (e.g. national prosopography, translatio imperii topos) and the Pan-Slavic identificational pattern of Polish Sarmatism, based primarily on the idea of Slavic genetic and linguistic unity, were integrated into the ideological and discursive structure of the Illyrian ideologeme as well.[2] At the beginning of the enlightened century, traditional political institutions of the Kingdom of Croatia would recognise the mobilising potentials of the national, "Croatised" version of Illyrian ideology, as well as the need for adequate repository of national memory.

Consequently, the Croatian Parliament appointed the Croatian poet, historian and polymath Pavao Ritter Vitezović (1652 –1713) as the national bard, whose role was to write a representative national epos.[3] As a matter of fact, in 1699 Vitezović became the emissary of the Croatian Parliament to the Boundary Commission after the Karlowitz Peace Treaty (1699) and he articulated a Pan-Croatian ideological conception which was the pivot of the political programme of the Croatian Estates at the beginning of the 18th century. It was subsumed in the Latin political treatise *Croatia Revived* (*Croatia rediviva*) published in 1700. This was a utopian political programme of "reviving" Croatia which would in this scenario stretch, under the Habsburg aegis, from the Baltic to the Black Sea. In general, Vitezović's formulation of the early modern Croatian national ideology was highly reminiscent of the contemporary European, especially German and Polish, ideological conceptions. Their common feature was

1 After a period of political collaboration between the Croatian and Hungarian Estates with the aim of establishing a "national monarchy", starting from the beginning of the Viennese war (1683-1699) one can observe an ever-increasing political separation of former partners. The majority of the Hungarian political nation still persisted in the old programme of "self-determination" and entrenched behind its privileges, refused any possibility of collaboration with Vienna, while in Croatia a policy of the "new course" appeared, advocated by the group around the Croatian Royal Conference. In the realm of foreign politics, this Croatian political *Sonderweg* was characterised by emancipation from Hungary and the aim of establishing a partnership with the ruler (*diarchy*) – through traditional loyalty on the one hand, and religious orthodoxy on the other. In domestic politics, the Croatian *Sonderweg* was characterised by the efforts to implement state jurisdiction in all newly liberated territories (Croatia to the river Una and south of Mt. Velebit, and Slavonia), the endeavours to modernise and rationalise the administration and encourage mercantilist projects. For a more detailed account see: Zrinka Blažević *Vitezovićeva Hrvatska između stvarnosti i utopije* [Vitezović's Croatia between the Reality and Utopia] (Zagreb: Barbat, 2002), 39-82.

2 Zrinka Blažević, *Ilirizam prije ilirizma* (Zagreb: Golden marketing – Tehnička knjiga, 2008).

3 Pavao Ritter Vitezović was born in the city of Senj, one of the main centres of the Habsburg military border. After finishing his studies in a Jesuit academy in Zagreb and accomplishing his *peregrinatio academica*, Vitezović became the *agens aulicus* of the Croatian Parliament in Vienna. In 1694 he was given the management of the National printing press (where he printed most of his works) by the order of the Parliament, reaching his finest moment as the emissary of the Croatian Parliament to the Boundary Commission after the Karlowitz Peace Treaty (1699), headed by the Habsburg commissioner Count Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli (1658-1740). In his five Latin memoranda (*Responsio ad postulata Comiti Marsiglio, Croatia, Dissertatio Regni Croatiae, Croatia rediviva and Regia Illyriorum Croatia sive Croatia rediviva*), written between 1699 and 1701 during his engagement in the Boundary Commission, Vitezović constructed imaginary projects of the new territorial and political organisation of the Kingdom of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia. The thematic focus of Vitezović's memoranda was a kind of discursive "cartography" of Croatia founded upon two argumentative and topical complexes: historical law (public-law tradition, continuity of state institutions) and ethnolinguistic and ethnocultural elements (common language, origin and customs). Alongside the models of contemporary Habsburg publicist writing, in his Postkarlowitz cycle Vitezović referred to the literary, political and ideological traditions of the Humanist Illyrism. Thus, his memoranda can simultaneously be read as an example of the Habsburg imperial propaganda, a political platform of the Croatian Estates, as well as an early modern articulation of the Croatian national identity. The best existing synthesis in English on Pavao Ritter Vitezović and his political conceptions are: Catherine A. Simpson, "Pavao Ritter Vitezović: Defining National Identity in the Baroque Age," *Unpublished PhD Dissertation* (London: School of Slavonic and East European Studies, 1991); Ivo Banac, "The Revived Croatia of Pavao Ritter Vitezović" in *Concepts of Nationhood in Early Modern Eastern Europe*, eds I. Banac and F. E. Sysyn (Cambridge: Harvard University), 492-507; Zrinka Blažević, "Performing National Identity: The Case of Pavao Ritter Vitezović (1652-1713)," *National Identities 5/3* (2003); 251-269. The most encompassing monographs in Croatian are: Vjekoslav Klaić's *Život i djela Pavla Rittera Vitezovića* (1652-1713) [Life and Works of Pavao Ritter Vitezović (1652-1713)] (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1913) and Blažević's *Vitezovićeva Hrvatska.*

a strong link between historical elements (national territory, institutions, legal tradition) and cultural features (language, origin and customs) as cornerstones for building a shared national memory.[1]

The first national epos: generic features

In order to provide an appropriate aesthetic form for the mnemonic national narrative, Vitezović wrote the first national epos in Latin under the title *Plorantis Croatiae saecula duo* [Two Centuries of Croatia Mournful] and donated its copies to the most influential actors of Croatian political and cultural life.[2] Cultural, ideological and mobilising capacity of his monumental poetic work were instantly recognised by the Croatian ruling elite and on the 12th of December 1702 the Croatian Parliament issued a decree which granted Pavao Ritter Vitezović a generous sum of 500 florins to fund his printing house.[3] Soon after, Vitezović published the Latin text of epos in the octavo format and sent it to the most eminent recipients in Croatia and abroad.[4] This deliberate promotional strategy reveals Vitezović's conviction that contemporary political and cultural circles would be quick to recognise the ideological and mnemonic potential of his work.

The desired reception of *Croatia Mournful* was achieved by employing various poetic strategies and forms of aesthetic mediation. Firstly, the poem displays close structural and functional similarities to the classical epic genres, especially to the *Aeneid*, which bears the flattering label of the Roman national epos. The main features of the national epos as an exemplary model of national identity and repository of collective identity are a coherent narrative on origin, history and heroic deeds of the national community. These build a core of historic eschatology, a story that elucidates its contemporary meaning through (re)constructing its past. Besides wars and battles as dominant elements of national epos, historic eschatology encompasses personalities, traditions, artefacts and social practices that (self) define the nation and its relation to the past, present and future.[5]

In addition to this, *Croatia Mournful* resembles the elegiac poetic form of *heroides* which gained popularity in the 16th century. In the literary production of late Humanism, these fictional epistles of mythic heroines were transformed into *querelae*, allegoric laments of nations and states that served as subtle poetic means for articulating political criticism. From the rhetorical and poetic perspective, the effect of empathy in *querelae* is rendered through the fusion of the affective arsenal of commiseration which enables the transformation of individual passion into a collective inspiration for action.[6] By evoking the medieval poetic form of *planctus Mariae*, these Humanist *querelae* became exemplary models for a widespread body of "anti-Turkish" literature in the countries jeopardised by the Ottoman conquests, such as Poland, Hungary and Croatia.[7]

1 Blažević, "Performing National Identity."

2 The full title of the booklet is *Plorantis Croatiae saecula duo carmine descripta ab equite Paulo Ritter, S.C.R. Maiestatis Consiliario.* Two partially differing editions have been preserved. The first, probably a draft copy, comprises 8 non-paginated pages of the foreword and 92 pages of the text in octavo format. The first five pages of the foreword are a dedication to Count Joseph Herberstein, dated 8th January 1703. Then follows a foreword to the reader wherein the author explains the orthographic rules followed in the text. The poem consists of two cantos and 2761 dactylic hexameters. At the end of the book there is a poem of 25 elegiac distiches, dedicated to the Italian diplomat Count Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli (1658-1739), the Habsburg plenipotentiary commissioner in the Boundary Commission after the Karlowitz Peace Treaty. In the second, newer edition, Vitezović added 7 hexameter lines to the epos and partially changed the dedicatory poem to Marsigli by intensifying its political criticism. The last three pages of this edition contain laudatory poems written by some contemporary Croatian intellectuals. Interestingly enough, they explicitly compare Vitezović with Virgil, the author of the Aeneid, Roman national epos. For the modern critical edition of the Latin text with Croatian translation cfr.Pavao Ritter Vitezović, *Dva stoljeća uplakane Hrvatske* [Plorantis Croatiae saecula duo], ed. and trans. by Z. Blažević (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 2019).

3 Vitezović, *Dva stoljeća*, 7.

4 Alongside Juraj Plemić, the prothonotary of the Croatian Kingdom and Martin Brajković, the Bishop of his native Senj, the other reputable recipients of the booklet were Johann Ferdinand Joseph Herberstein, the Vice-President of the *Hofkriegsrat* in Graz, Franz Honorius Trauttmansdorff, Habsburg a diplomat in Switzerland, Aloysius von Harrach, a private counsellor to Leopold I of Habsburg and to Sámuel Káloky, the chancellor of Transylvania.

5 Duncan S.A. Bell, "Mythscapes: Memory, Mythology and National Identity," *British Journal of Sociology 54/1* (2003), 75.

6 As opposed to the negative connotation of commiseration (ἔλεος, *misericordia*) in the classical rhetorical tradition, within the Christian philosophy it becomes a vital part of the ethics of charity. In this manner, commiseration gains positive connotations which makes it the political emotion par excellence. Cfr. Natalia Wawrzyniak, "Pity as a Political Emotion in Early Modern Europe" in *Affective and Emotional Economies in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds. A. Marulescu and C-L. Morand Métivier (London: Routledge, 2018), 51–58.

7 Maria Cytowska, "Kwerela i heroida alegoryczna," *Meander* 18 (1963), 485-503.

On the other hand, *Croatia Mournful* is structurally linked with the tradition of the verse chronicle which characterises Slavic Baroque production in general. Although verse chronicles often refer to the memorable events from the national and universal history, their narrative focus is usually on military campaigns and liberating wars.[1] In addition to this, both querelae and verse chronicles were very suitable genres for self-representation and political promotion of the members of the early modern political nation, which might be another important reason why Vitezović made this peculiar poetic choice.

The first national epos: structural features

Due to its hybrid generic structure which rests on a combination and fusion of the lyric and epic elements, the poem *Plorantis Croatiae saecula* duo significantly increases its own receptive susceptibility and reproductive longevity. In that manner, the historical eschatology which imbues the narrative matrix of epos becomes a cornerstone of national identity and collective memory. In order to realise its main function of building a sense of belonging to the national community, national narration must be rooted in a precise temporal and spatial framework.[2] Besides, the necessary part of national narration is the insurmountable symbolic divide between Us and Them[3] – homogenous national community and its arch enemy usually embodied as the "bloody Turks."

Meticulously following the described structural pattern, the narrative focus of *Croatia Mournful* is on the most important episodes of Croatian history between 1500 and 1700, a period predominantly marked by the Ottoman conquests. Following the chronological sequence of events, the poem is divided into two cantos of the same length, with a characteristic epic invocation of deity at the beginning and at the end. The epic plot itself is occasionally interrupted by digressions and retardations inspired by the popular Baroque Neostoicist philosophy whose distinctive features are *topoi* of fortune's inconstancy and moral indignation. Within each canto events are presented in sequence with the corresponding years given in the margins. The privileged "narrative time" includes only those years important in the constitutive sense for the "national narrative" such as battles, famine, diseases, disasters and changes on the imperial throne or on the seat of the Croatian viceroys (ban). The main historical prototext of Croatia Mournful is the vernacular chronicle published by Pavao Ritter Vitezović in 1696 in Zagreb.[4] Despite the fact that *Croatia Mournful* is in the strict sense a Latin poetic adaptation of Vitezović's chronicle, it was intended for a different public and written with much higher aesthetic and political ambitions.

As far as key historical actors are concerned, the narrative focus of *Croatia Mournful* is on prominent Croatian anti-Ottoman soldiers and viceroys. Idealistically conceptualised as *patres patriae* (fathers of the homeland), they are, on the one hand, represented as embodied models of the patriotic and Christian virtues, and on the other, they figure as symbolic guarantors of the institutional and political existence of the Kingdom of Croatia. The privileged discursive status of viceroys as backbones of the early modern Croatian political order is certainly aimed at the affirmation of the legalist principle of political rule. In addition, by poetically emphasising their political and moral virtues Vitezović indicates a possible establishment of the new ethical and political order whose regulative principle would be the uncompromising loyalty to the homeland, and not primarily to the legal Habsburg ruler. Instead of abstract liegedom to the Habsburg king, the sacred soil of motherland would become the main mobilising force for the liberating war. By accurately choosing relevant historical events and actors, Vitezović successfully delineated the contours of the desirable national memory. As a transtemporal cohesive force, national memory thus plays a key role in ensuring a historical continuity and the common set of values for the nation.

The spatial framework of historical narration in *Croatia Mournful* encompasses the Kingdom of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia as well as its neighbouring regions such as Bosnia, Serbia and the Bay of Kotor. The most important

1 Andreas Angyal, *Die Slawische Barockwelt* (Leipzig: Veb E.A. Seemann, 1961), 259.

2 Bell, "Mythscapes," 76.

3 Ibid, 70.

4 The full title of this work is *Kronika aliti spomen vsega svieta vikov* [Chronicle or Memory of the Times of the Whole World]. It belongs to the genre of the universal world chronicles, established by Cesare Baronio, which begin with the year of creation and end with the year of its publication. Although Vitezović merely follows the organisational and argumentative structure of the world chronicles which manifests itself in the parallelism of the sacral and secular history, he supplements his chronicle with many memorable data from national history. In this manner national history becomes an integral part of the universal historical process.

symbolic markers of the "native soil" in *Croatia Mournfu*l are fortresses. As a matter of fact, more than 70 various forts are listed and described on the territory of *Croatia Mournful*. As material expressions of historical continuity and existence of the noble *natio Croatica* [Croatian political nation], fortresses are at the same time the token pillars of the national identity and memory. The symbolic epicentre of *Croatia Mournful* is located in Vitezović's native town of Senj, well known for the anti-Ottoman raids of belligerent *uskoks*.[1]

In this way the fixed temporal and spatial framework of national epos is established. Its narrative matrix is founded upon the antithetical contrast between Us – fearless, honourable and faithful Croats, and Them – cruel, presumptuous and deceptive Turks. They embody all kinds of Oriental evil and are characterised as merciless subjugators and oppressors of the mourning mother-homeland. Moreover, anti-Ottoman war led by Croats is represented in religious terms since impious Turks devastate homeland, expel inhabitants, destroy cities, desecrate temples and impose heretical "Turkish law" which is conceptualised as the opposition and negation of the ideal Christian religious and political order. By promoting the Croats into "chosen people" who "sanctify their death by saving the homeland," Vitezović supplies his own ethnic community not only with unquestionable sacral legitimation but also with the eschatological pledge, which may certainly produce a considerable mobilising effect. Ultimately, the very establishment of a fixed and symbolic divide between the two confronted ethnical groups emerges as a key mechanism of national identification which is the main task of every national narrative, including the national epos.

The first national epos: emotionological features

In addition to the mentioned forms of aesthetic mediation, the first national epos aims at creating specific affective conditions for its own reception. Nevertheless, the proper type of "national habitus" is a crucial factor for the emphatic transmission of national feelings which create collective "affective networks". According to the most influential theories of political emotions, the "emotional work" of the national narrative greatly depends on successful identification of the factors that form affective moods and emotional dispositions of recipients in order to shape their values and goals for further political action. Emotional expressions can be emphatically transferred by mechanism of projective identification, which is a key prerequisite for creating "affective networks" as constitutive elements of the wider social field.[2]

The most prominent and highly emotionally imbued feature of Vitezović's poetic discourse is certainly the subject of enunciation, the personified homeland of Croatia metaphorically identified with a woman-mother. Narrating in the first person, Croatia presents a type of "ego history of mourning" during the two centuries of Ottoman conquests, thus rendering the whole poem an exercise in the form of a (pseudo)autobiography. Moreover, by representing national history as a personal history of passion, as well as textually abolishing any narrative mediator, Vitezović discursively "revives" Croatia and multiplies receptive effects of his narration by associating it with the strongly religiously and affectively infused motif of the lamenting mother of Christ.

In order to strengthen the semantic and affective potentials of his historical narration, Vitezović uses prosopopoeia (προσωποποιία), a figure of thought taken from classical rhetoric which perfectly fits to the requirements of Baroque poetics.[3] Owing to the immanent rhetorical operations which created the effect of political intimacy, this type of literary personification was a constitutive element of various "national" discourses during the early modern period. The anthropomorphic image of Croatia creates the possibility of emphatic identification between mother/homeland and their sons/political actors by bestowing unto the abstract idea of political entity the ability of feeling and deliberate agency. Besides affects of psychical closeness, such as commiseration, compassion, de-

1 Catherine Wendy Bracewell, *The Uskoks of Senj: Piracy, Banditry, and Holy War in the Sixteenth Century Adriatic* (Ithaca – London: Cornell Uni Press, 1992).

2 Rober D. Hinshelwood, "Social Possesion of Identity" in *Crises of the Self: Further Essays on Psychoanalysis and Politics,* ed. Barry Richards (London: Free Association Books, 1989), 78-79.

3 Stefan Herman, *Żywa postać Rzeczypospolitej: Studium z literatury staropolskiej XVI i pierwszej połowy XVII wieku* (Zielona Góra: WSP, 1985), 10-43.

-votion and understanding, prosopopoeia activates the rich repertoire of physical imaginations as well. In this manner, the personified subject of enunciation – lamenting motherland Croatia – becomes a trope for various corporeal affects, especially for sublime erotic of passion and sacrifice.[1]

The primary effect of frequent lamentations of the suffering mother-homeland is compassion. According to the pragmatical functions of the political lamentation, the dominant purpose of compassion is to evoke empathy and moral responsibility of the recipients, members of the political nation, and to mobilise their collective action in order to mitigate the mother's pain.[2] Commiseration is therefore related to two contrastive emotions: pride for heroic deeds of the exemplary national heroes, soldiers and viceroys who embellished national past, and shame caused by the moral decadence and deformation which characterise the present time. This poetic strategy is a key component of the efficient national narratives which can incite emotional reversal from despair to the promise of a better future. This effect is usually produced by the transformation of martyrological to eschatological discourse which on the one hand fosters national mobilisation and on the other, serves as a modelling force of national habitus.[3]

This is highly concordant with the early modern theory of affects which presupposes that affects or passions are endowed not only with an intersubjective and somatic quality but also with enormous practical potential. As a matter of fact, the main assumption of the early modern philosophical reflections of affects was that they grew out from a dynamic intersection of the inner and the outer part of the human being.[4] Moreover, thanks to the influence of the humoral theory affects were conceptualised as physiological phenomena subjected to the impact of corporeal humours but also to exogenic, cosmical forces.[5] For these reasons, early modern affect theory situated affects within the conceptual triad of the embodied self (microcosm), interpersonal relations and world (macrocosm), while their communicative potential or intersubjective quality was attributed to their ability to be transferred by language.[6] Ultimately, from the viewpoint of Neostoicist philosophy, affects were not opposite to reason, but inevitable conditions for practical thinking and rational action, especially if they were oriented towards some good and beneficial goal.[7]

In the end, the important function of the figure of prosopopoeia is creating an anthropomorphic *ethnoscape*, a poetic and historic landscape invested with powerful emotional connotations and cultural meanings which represents a material setting for the building of historical memory of community.[8] Besides allegoric identification of Croatia-homeland with woman-mother, Vitezović assigned anthropomorphic features to the Croatian fortresses and rivers. They represent mother's bones and blood vessels with strong allegorical association to Christological somatic symbolism. In the manner of Baroque poetics, *ethnoscape* in the *Croatia Mournful* is structured on the antithetical model while the Ottoman conquests represent the symbolic watershed.[9] This means that the idyllic natural order of the pre-Ottoman times is strongly contrasted with the situation after the Ottoman conquests, providing for a highly dynamic picture of the historical landscape. On the level of culture, this bipolarity is reflected in the opposition between civilisation and barbarity, and on the level of ecology, in the opposition between cultivation and wilderness. In this way nature becomes historicised and history naturalised which testifies that the process of territorialisation of memory is one of the crucial aspects of the cultural dynamics of remembrance in the *Croatia Mournful*.

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1 Claire MacEachern, *The Poetics of English Nationhood 1590-1612* (Cambridge: Cambridge Uni Press, 1996), 6.

2 Wawrzyniak, "Pity as a Political Emotion," 59.

3 James M. Jaspers, "Emotions and the Microfoundations of Politics: Rethinking Ends and Means" in *Emotions, Politics and Society*, ed. S. Clarke et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 27.

4 Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category* (Cambridge: Cambridge Uni Press, 2003), 97.

5 Timothy Hampton, "Strange Alteration: Physiology and Psychology from Galen to Rabelais" in *Reading the Early Modern Passions*, eds. G.K. Paster et al. (Philadelphia: Uni of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 272-294.

6 Christopher Tilmouth, "Passions and Intersubjectivity in Early Modern Literature" in Passions and Subjectivity in Early Modern Culture, eds. B. Cummings and F. Sierhuis (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013), 54.

7 Jan Papy, "Neostoic Anger: Lipsius's Reading and Use of Seneca's Tragedies" in *Discourses of Anger in the Early Modern Period*, eds. K.A.E. Enenkel and A. Traininger (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2015), 126-142.

8 Anthony Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford Uni Press, 1999), 150-152.

9 Zrinka Blažević, "Miserrima facies Croatiae: percepcija prirodne okoline tromeđe u djelu Plorantis Croatiae saecula duo Pavla Rittera Vitezovića" in *Triplex Confinium* (1500-1800): *Ekohistorija*, eds. D. Roksandić et al. (Split: Književni krug, 2003), 201-213.

The first national epos: aftereffects

Following the incentives of contemporary cultural memory studies which stress the role of the arts in creating the imaginative and affective conditions for public receptivity of mnemonic narratives, it can be concluded that the "prosthetic quality"[1] of the *Croatia Mournful* lies mostly in the aesthetics of mourning as a key structural element of the first Croatian national epos. Moreover, many *topoi* and narrative episodes of *Croatia Mornful* became indispensable parts of the *antemurale Christianitatis* myth.[2] Although they were at first integrated into the elite political discourse as crucial elements of chivalric and heroic self-image of the Croatian nobility, they soon evolved into the cornerstones of historical imagery and cultural memory of Croatia. The most famous of these *antemurale* motives is certainly the poetic description of the heroic death of Nikola Šubić Zrinski (1508–1566), the famous Croatian viceroy and nobleman who defended the fortress of Szygetvár from the copious Ottoman army led by the sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (1494–1566) in 1566.[3] Within the context of the *antemurale Christiantiatis* myth, Zrinski epitomises the figure of the *athleta* Christi, i.e. an exemplary national martyr and a hero who sacrifices his life in the battle against enemies of Christianity.

The model of remembrance launched by Vitezović's *Croatia Mournful* is even nowadays the predominant feature of the Croatian politics of history and strongly pervades both scholarly and public discourse. By way of illustration, representation of historical events during the anti-Ottoman wars in two history textbooks published in 2020 strikingly resembles the national narrative articulated in the *Croatia Mournful*. For example, main protagonists of "liberation wars" are heroic Croatian viceroys who risked their lives and spent their own financial means to save their homeland from the Ottoman threat.[4] Moreover, "plunder, deterrence and enslavement of inhabitants" are highlighted as primary objectives of the Ottoman conquests of Croatian lands,[5] while their consequences are defined as "reduction of the number of population as well as economic, cultural and political decline of Croatia."[6] Ultimately, the very fact that Vitezović is labelled "the first independent intellectual among Croats"[7] explicitly indicates that his works are regarded as reliable historical sources.

Although this could serve as an incontrovertible proof that Vitezović mastered the art of memorability[8] which is actual up to this day, on the other hand it points to the regrettable fact that the cultural dynamic of remembrance in Croatia is still trapped in the outmoded models, quite inappropriate for building polycentric, inclusive and balanced mnemonic.

1 Ann Rigney, "Remembrance as Remaking: Memories of the Nation Revisited," *Nations and Nationalism* 24/2 (2018), 240.

2 Ivo Žanić, "Simbolični identitet Hrvatske u trokutu raskrižje-predziđe-most" in *Historijski mitovi na Balkanu*, ed. H. Kamberović (Sarajevo: Institut za istoriju, 2003), 188.

3 Vitezović, *Dva stoljeća*, 81.

4 Željko Brdal et al., *Klio 6. Udžbenik povijesti u štestom razradu osnovne škole* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 2020), 87.

5 Ibid, 160.

6 Ibid, 165.

7 Denis Detling et al., *Tragovi 2. Udžbenik povijesti u drugomrazredu gimnazije* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 2020), 206.

8 According to Rigney, memorability is not a feature of events themselves, but depends on people's ability to articulate and convert them into a transferable form. For these reasons, all kinds of media -- language, images, monuments and performances -- are indispensable props for shaping, transferring and disseminating narratives about the past. Cfr. Rigney, "Remembrance as Remaking," 243.

ASNOM and self-determination: Nationalism and populism through a left-wing perspective

by **Mariglen Demiri**

Abstract

This research will endeavour to give an answer to the application of the Anti-fascist Assembly for the National Liberation of Macedonia (ASNOM) as a memorial and historical trope in the Macedonian political context following the Prespa Agreement (2018) and the Agreement with Bulgaria (2017). Moreover, this analysis will map out the political and discursive contradictions regarding self-determination in relation to ASNOM. The text will also analyse the most significant moments of the left-wing political rhetoric in post-Yugoslav Macedonia, with the aim to point out the political representation's ethnocentric and ethnonationalist implications. The premise of this text is that the populist creation of enemy subjects (Bulgaria, Greece, international institutions) leads to the antagonization of other internal contributors, such as the Albanians of Macedonia.

Introduction

The agreements the Republic of North Macedonia signed with Greece (2018) and Bulgaria (2017) instigated dramatic political reactions among the expert public, political parties and citizens. Although, in the past the public had witnessed similar interpretations of public discourse coloured with indicators of ethnonationalist identity, however, as I shall endeavour to argue, in the past three years, the political perception and articulation on behalf of all interested parties in society, shaped new modes of national and political subjectivity. In that aspect, two different camps were distinguishable: part of the citizens, intellectuals and the traditional right-wing political nomenclature that deemed the agreements traitorous and self-annihilating and declared they should be voided because they deny the right to self-determination.[1] The other, however, deemed that compromise is the easiest solution for the country to pursue the road towards European integration.[2]

To begin with, a short additional context is needed: Zoran Zaev, the prime minister of North Macedonia, in his address on the occasion of the signing of the Prespa agreement in 2018, declared that the agreement is of a unifying character and gives closure to the bilateral issue which prevailed for almost three decades. Zaev highlighted courage as the prevailing motive for the signing of the agreement and declared that the friendly relations of the two countries were renewed and crucial in maintaining the European Union's mosaic of values.[3] The agreement with Greece was preceded by the Treaty of Friendship, Good-neighbourliness, and Cooperation between the (then) Republic of Macedonia and the Republic of Bulgaria, signed and ratified in 2017, immediately after the taking over of the executive government by the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM) as the largest party of the ethnic Macedonian bloc. Regardless of the main intentions of the signing of these agreements - to

1 Jovan Bliznakovski, "Idealnoto nasproti nepodobnoto – nacionalnata hegemoniska slika za idealnoto makedonsko semejstvo vo javniot diskurs nasproti neuspehot toa da se ostvari." in *Nie nasproti drugite: Simbolicki podelbi vo Severna Makedonija,* eds. Jovan Bliznakovski and Petar Todorov. (Skopje: CINIK, 2020), 119-140.

2 Dimitar Nikolovski, ""Narodot" protiv "graganite": Za vnatremakedonskite simbolicki podelbi.", in *Nie nasproti drugite: Simbolicki podelbi vo Severna Makedonija,* eds. Jovan Bliznakovski and Petar Todorov. (Skopje: CINIK, 2020), 91-118.

3 "Premierot Zaev na potpishuvanjeto na konecniot dogovor za reshavanje na makedonsko-grckiot spor za imeto I za strategisko partnerstvo: Se obedinivme so reshenie na spor kojshto ne deleshe, izbravme reshenie shto ne obedinuva.", Government of the Republic of North Macedonia official website, 17 July 2018.
https://vlada.mk/node/14966

contribute to a wider composition of possibilities to enable the country for an egalitarian cultural exchange among neighbours – nevertheless these instances allow for interpretations that contribute to the increase of nationalistic sentiment and mostly among ethnic Macedonians.[1]

The implications tend towards the precipitation of nationalist public rhetoric and, in some segments of the relations with Bulgaria, in the renewed problematisation of canonical tropes such as Goce Delchev, the Ilinden Uprising etc. These elements have their own function in the historical narratives of both countries, although in the Macedonian narrative, they represent crucial mythological topoi in which is developed the Macedonian historical subject. On the other hand, for the Republic of Bulgaria, these tropes do not have an identarian ethno-genetic function, rather a constitutive function in relation with the Republic of North Macedonia which then in turn affects the bilateral relations of the two countries. The tension surrounding these relations culminated with the recent veto on behalf of the Republic of Bulgaria for the start of the negotiations of the Republic of North Macedonia with the EU.[2] With that, the agreements somehow increase the stakes stimulating the appetites of the nationalistic factions and lead towards a more severe antagonization of the "enemies".

In the Macedonian context, on the political plane, these agreements transposed the political focus away from the resolution of the internal issues which the country has been facing in the last 15 years. Those issues are the phenomenon of the captive state and its polarising implications on society,[3] as well as the elements of economic constraint and oligarchic occupation of the institutions and the state.[4] Therefore, currently, the imposed leading topics among the public are "self-determination", ASNOM and other similar ethno-symbolic issues. What is significant in the interest of this analysis is the fact that the self-determination is promoted by political instances (political parties, organisations, movements) convening with the populistic political language and creating an enticing political articulation which draws from the nationally humiliated and oppressed Macedonian subject.

What is a particular *novum* in the last years is the nationalistic approach which surfaces in a recently created political party called Levica, that declares itself as a left-wing political party and through the methods of populism and its rhetoric means, they are closer to an ethnocentric paradigm for the application of a mobilising and substantial bridging method between the citizen and the party. Consequently, emancipation through the principles of internationalisation and social justice become second and third in the political imagination of this position. On the other hand, among the traditional Albanian parties in Macedonia – the nominally left-wing, but also the normative right-wing – the question of self-determination in the context of the agreements with Greece and Bulgaria is non-existent, it is not implied either in the public addresses nor in the political programs. Consequently, the political parties of ethnic Albanians, do not represent an object of analysis and interest in this text.

What is the application of ASNOM and self-determination in the populistic political communication in Macedonia? From here on out the text will attempt to ponder upon the ethno-nationalistic implication in relation to the creation of a subject that appeals to voters that do not believe to have an appropriate representation in the face of other right-wing political subjects.

1 For more detailed information on some other implications of the recent agreements see also the texts by Stefan Troebst and Tomasz Kamusella in this publication.

2 Naum Trajanovski, "Bulgarian-North Macedonia's history-dispute: Whose "shared history" in the name of which "European values"?" HEINRICH-BÖLL-STIFTUNG, 16 November 2020. Accessed 3 December 2020. https://ba.boell.org/en/2020/11/16/bulgarian-north-macedonias-history-dispute-whose-shared-history-name-which-european?fbclid=IwAR1rqRIIEBf_mfL1O95KfDt-TOUBNdcx3VxbsAT-ntsMBz1N5zMZW14fbU4U

3 Ana Blazeva et al., *Polarizirackiot diskurs i vlijanieto vrz politickata i socijalnata polarizacija vo makedonskoto opstestvo.* (Skopje: Institute of Social sciences and Humanities Skopje, 2019), 18-20.

4 Branimir Jovanovic and Gorgi Pulevski, "To De-Capture the State, De-Capture the Economy", Unpublished.

Research framework

Through a discursive analysis, this text will approach several media texts, party pamphlets and interviews of the political party Levica. There are several reasons why the instrumentalization of "self-determination" and ASNOM is only analysed in the context of the populist political party Levica, as a self-proclaimed radical left-wing political party in the circumstances of the dissolution of the socialist and communist countries in the Balkans. Firstly, their insistence on the ideologic proximity to the so-called asnomci and the partisan socialist tradition. Their identity is not only associated with the tradition of a ceremonial claim, but also in relation to their economic and political offer. Secondly, because of the fact that during the elections of 15 July 2020, they were the only political party that openly disclosed value and political affiliations to ASNOM[1] and self-determination[2] in the direction of the dissolution of the aforementioned agreements. Thirdly, because they gained seats in the Parliament and thus became a more relevant political factor and gaining a platform for the further mobilisation and articulation of these tropes.

The research subjects that will be analysed henceforth have been published and promoted after the signing of the agreements. Several of these texts will be highlighted as most illustrative of the promotion of self-determination in the framework of a monoethnic narrative, which actually represents the major thesis of this text.

Additionally, I will also attempt to shortly analyse the historical event of ASNOM, National Liberation War (NOB) and self-determination as a concept through the reading of the declaration of the first session of ASNOM. ASNOM has a rather significant place in Macedonian history and political tradition because it is normatively accepted as the moment when the political and value foundation of the Macedonian statehood were first constituted. Simultaneously, this historic episode is considered also as the event in which the right to "self-determination" is realised for the first time among ethnic Macedonians. Hence, the analytical appeal of this event in the context of the newest bilateral agreements, oftentimes acting as the counterweight to the Bulgarian and Greek position, as the positions against the right to self-determination.[3] In that sense, the text will punctuate on the paradoxical elements of ASNOM in relation to self-determination which are intertwined in a historic as well as in a political sense.

The political analysis will also address populism as an already widely present phenomenon in the Macedonian political culture. As previously mentioned, after a period of the so-called "gruevizam" and authoritarian populism[4] on the one hand and the so-called progressive populism of leftist values and rhetoric on the other hand, the populist approach towards politics remains active on the Macedonian political scene even after the change of government in 2017. Consequently, the declination from the left-wing towards right-wing populism of the political party Levica will be analysed, which through populism and nationalism creates its own rhetoric of re-actualisation of the notions of ASNOM and self-determination. Through the re-actualisation of these tropes in daily political communication the party engages the unrepresented citizens in high politics. Thes appeal to the group of voters that condemn consensus as an approach, and instead approve of the concept of confrontation and extreme adversarial ethnonationalism.

1 "If we wish for a better future for the next generation, we cannot make compromises with the ideals of ASNOM for which our predecessors died. This is the last historic chance of our generation – to put an end to the pretence of a "choice" between two evils and, finally, to choose the Good." Election program of the political party Levica, Snap parliamentary elections 2020. Accessed 20 December 2020. https://levica.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/2.-Levica-programa-A5-final-za-web-11.06.2020.pdf

2 "14. The dissolution of the so-called Prespa agreement with Greece and the criminal illegal constitutional amendments arising from it (due to disrespect for the right to self-determination), as well as the revision of the Treaty Good-neighbourliness with Bulgaria, due to historical revisionism and rehabilitation of fascism." Election program of the party Levica, 23.

3 "Levica: Pomina edna godina od nelegetimniot Prespanski dogovor nametnat od NATO-paktot," MKD, 17 June 2019. Accessed 2 January 2021. https://www.mkd.mk/makedonija/soopshtenija/levica-pomina-edna-godina-od-nelegitimniot-prespanski-dogovor-nametnat-od/

4 Ljubomir D. Frckoski, "Koga drzavata e logor," Okno, 5 July 2014. Accessed 28 December 2020. https://okno.mk/node/39102?fbclid=IwAR3RQHg_XhAit1sqvJQOF3P1Q_hlgbb80_EAAmBgDmaIM4-9MjsDdR6odUk

Nationalism and populism in the context of left-wing politics

The past five years in Macedonian society were marked with a lot of protests and initiatives using populism as a means of political communication. The appearance of the political party Levica is a result of a segment of the participants in the protest movements as well as the long-term activity of left-wing associations (Lenka, Solidarnost, Nova Iskra). At the beginning (2015-2017) the formal populist association was considered by the "people" and its sovereignty as left-wing populism. After the change of government from the political party VMRO-DPMNE to SDSM and their external politics furthering the agreements with Greece and Bulgaria, the party Levica changed its course and changed the definition of the people using the terms oppressed and "abolished" in a national sense on behalf of enemy instances (foreigners, internal enemies and Albanians). Henceforth, populism and nationalism played out significant roles in the framing of the subject of this party as nationalistic regarding national issues, but also relating to the conception of enemies, which is one of the basic tasks of populism.

If one reads the address of the president of Levica, Dimitar Apasiev, in December 2019, one can acknowledge that it is a populist political manifest. According to its program the party builds its philosophy on the foundation of unfriendly components: a) nationally unaware social democrats, b) Albanians and their appetites for building big countries and c) NGO intellectuals that represent themselves as leftists and liberals.

"Here, I would shortly ponder upon on that which we, in our leftist circles, pejoratively refer to as "left-wing NGO" – against which we fight and that fights against us, simultaneously... Indeed, in public discourse, we should not be doubtful or afraid in the identification of our political enemies. Today, in Macedonia, they are primarily three: (1) we identified our first enemy as the a-national northmacedonian Social democratic union – who are also our enemies according to class, because our mothers and sisters are cleaners in their homes. We have no common points with them!; (2) The second political enemy we identified is the high-burrow Albanian national-chauvinism, that is at times militant and very dangerous, and which works at full speed on the idea of big countries; (3) And our third political enemy is the so-called "NGO leftists" that I would shortly like to depict..."[1]

Accordingly, everything that is in the framework of these three definitions, represents a political enemy of the party Levica and its supporters. In the manifest there is no mention of building of a national conscience, nor the concept of self-determination and imperialism, however the substance leads us towards everything that represents the opposition of the Macedonian nation and symbols.

On the other hand, the national element is strongly integrated in the rhetoric and public discourses displayed in the public appearances of the party president Apasiev. National identity represents the magnetic energy of this approach where the populist and nationalist element converge towards the formal and content-creating perspectives. In the interview for "Vecer", March 2020, Apasiev declared:

"The (L)eft-wing (Levicata) has never shunned away from the big state and national issues, starting with the right to self-determination that is applicable to every people, we are only doing that which any normal and reasonable person would do – we came strongly in the defence of the right of the Macedonian people to name and identify themselves as they wish. It is an undeniable and supreme collective right, for which wars were fought and people died, and we – as extenders and supporters of the pure ASNOM tradition, couldn't sit silent confronted with the injustice and the defilement of our people and the disfigurement of the Republic."[2]

1 "ZA NOVATA POPULISTICKA LEVICA," Levica official website. Accessed 20 December 2020. https://levica.mk/2019/12/30/za-novata-populistichka-levica/

2 Jovanka Caruleska Gruevska, "INTERVJU SO PROF. DIMITAR APASIEV: Nie sme nezgodni politicki protivnici, od nas ke zavisi idnata vlada!," Vecer pres, 20 March 2020.

This is only one small episode representative of the public rhetoric in which self-determination and sovereignty are the key words in Levica's addresses. The political potential of ASNOM as a historic romantic appeal to the ideal so-called leftist historic episode is recycled in all their public appearances and all the statements to the public on behalf of the party. It is important to note that they do not reference the Yugoslavia's Constitution of 1974 – which advanced minority rights – on the contrary: ASNOM as a metanarrative of a political abstraction of self-determination is in opposition with the abolition of minority rights secured through the Ohrid Framework agreement – and the Law on the use of languages, which are explicitly referred to on the list to be abolished in the program of the political party Levica in the snap parliamentary elections in 2020.

It also seems paradoxical to ponder upon the interpretation of the right to self-determination of North Macedonia's neighbour-state Kosovo. In the party's pre-election campaign Levica stated to its voters the withdrawal of the recognition of Kosovo, and on the other hand the recognition of the Basque Country, Catalonia and Palestine. Several superficial claims to nationalist modernist affect can be acknowledged in Levica's position towards the concept of nation, which points to the fact internal enemies, which according to a populistic logic can be created and maintained, are those that represent a potential threat to the ethnical and political borders and simultaneously play a part in the creation of the state's politics and participate in the state's apparatus by benefiting from high managerial positions. Herein, they are referring to the Albanians and the hysteria which is drawn based on the right-wing primordial paranoia related to the loss of the nation as a parallel drawn from the modernist mix of the loss of the state, that is, its federalisation. Even though, as demonstrated below, the episode of self-determination in the history of the Macedonian nation had been granted in the context of a federal political infrastructure through a common struggle hand in hand with the Albanian people.

Implication of populism in a leftist context in Macedonia's society and politics

This type of populism has its own implications of which the most significant is that which it exercises on the political hegemony and the creation of conflictual points of altercation with the enemies. Therefore, the first step in this method presupposes the creation of a "people" – agent of the political changes and an active instance in the political fight against the elites: in this case the "people" is the Macedonian people. From there derives the occurrence of the so-called "self-annihilation" in the party's rhetoric as a negative occurrence against which the Macedonian needs to fight as an act of self-determination. In this direction, the nation becomes equivalent to the state and ethnicity of the majority of the population in the country. Thus, the country defined through a mono-ethnic character, on every opportunity to become a neutral organisation of institutions will represent a danger of "self-annihilation". From there, derive the constituted relations towards the Macedonian Albanians in the question of the use of languages and symbols.

The populist political rhetoric is adapted to the presented circumstances in which society functions and represents a self-proclaimed authentic representativeness of the so-called majority of the society. Even though, the main premise is that the majority are the oppressed instance in the political life, still when one ponders more deeply several meaningful elements can be identified. In the context of Macedonian society, in the past 15 years these structural determinations are engulfed in a primordial nationalistic phase brimming with ethnonational symbols and burdened with the obsession to safeguard the identity. Therefore, the nationalist imagination of the structural disseminations as a basis, through a populistic approach successfully create political subjectivity which corresponds to that basis. In actuality, the creation of this subjectivity means adjusting to the hegemony of who "we" (the Macedonians) are and who "they" (enemies, internal or external) are.

What makes this populism nationalistic is precisely the premise that the "people" becomes a substance within the "nation"[1], when it refers to the people, it refers to the nation, and anti-elitism becomes a populist direction towards a clash between "Us" (the Macedonian people) and "Them" (the elite, "the foreigners" that changed our name and imposed upon us the treaty with Bulgaria, the Ohrid Framework agreement and the Law on the Law on the use of languages).

1 Rogers Brubaker, "Populism and nationalism", *Nations and Nationalism,* Volume26, Issue1, (January 2020): 7-11.

With that the political agency is founded on the national element as a worldview in the creation and imagination of the future of politics. The coordinates of political action are delineated through the formal populist speech frame as a rhetoric and discourse that narratively forms the reality of the listener. Contrary to right-wing populism, left-wing populism defines the "people" as oppressed and in a constant struggle against economic elites.[1] The target of the attacks of this type of populism are bankers, corporations, capitalists, bosses, oligarchs, the powerful, racist and nationalist factions etc.[2] The key difference really, is in the determination of the enemies, the enemies in right-wing populism are other nations and ethnic communities, and those in left-wing populism are the broader political and institutional entities.

The de-politization of the ethnic Albanian community in the daily and high politics, can be also noted in the appeal of the president Apasiev to the Albanians:

"Dear fellow citizens ALBANIANS. Imagine this situation: the Republic of Albania having an ethnic Macedonian as Minister of foreign affairs and he, in the name of all Albanians to negotiate with the Republic of Turkey on the matter if Skanderbeg is Albanian or Turkish!?

Would it be pleasant to you? Wouldn't it frustrate you? That is precisely what Bujar OSMANI from DUI is doing to us!

In the name of the Macedonians, he negotiates with the Bulgarians on the origins of Cyril, Methodius, Clement, Naum, Samuel, Goce... With what right? With what credentials? That is why, dear fellow citizens Albanians. Now, in these dramatic moments, when insolently and secretly our identity is for sale in Sofia, now is the moment to condemn Osmani and to stand shoulder to shoulder with us, your neighbours for centuries!
Death to fascism, freedom to the people!"[3]

In this example one can notice the ethnonationalist understanding of the country as a unique identity point on which the country can rely on. Even though the appeal is to the Albanian citizens that live in Macedonia, nevertheless, he, the leader of Levica, presupposes that their political matrix is located in the Republic of Albania. This supposition imposes qualitative passages and conclusions relating to the role of the Albanians in Macedonia, as to those to whom the country can never be a "mother", hence they cannot identify with the country.

In that sense, these premises and tropes point towards an adjustment to the "people", who for decades already draw the term for self-understanding through ethno-national (even nationalist) methods of creation of self-awareness. That self-awareness searches for some type of national pride and a retrospective monopolising approach to the identification to historic events, persons and periods. Therefore, the historic methods are not employed in the pursuit of the truth but an instrument for proving the need of pride and glory of "our" history. In this case, Cyril and Methodius, Clement and Naum are only presumed as "ours", and therefore, us (the Macedonians) should decide if we would "give them away" or "negotiate" for them, and not the Albanians whose state identity is Albania, and not Macedonia.

The second implication is the function of the party Levica as a disseminator and reproducer of an unrepresented subjectivity in the political sphere. Even though insofar the right-wing political parties headed by VMRO-DPMNE had nationalistic and ethnocentric characteristics, still in the end the agreements signed on behalf of the international institutions and organisations such as the Ohrid Framework agreement were respected, and the political practice of institutional functioning was consensual. The example of the party Levica is not such a case.

1 Bart Bonikowski, et al. , "Populism and nationalism in a comparative perspective: a scholarly exchange," Nations and Nationalism, Vol. 25, (28 November 2018): 11-24.

2 Although Rogers Brubaker considers that the formation of the term "people" among populists and nationalists throughout history has been different. The populists defined the people as a sovereign category, and the nationalist approach to defining the people was transformative rather than restrictive, so nationalists often changed the notion of what a people is. Brubaker, "Populism and nationalism," Rogers Brubaker, "Populism and nationalism", Nations and Nationalism, Volume26, Issue1, (January 2020): 7-8.

3 "Apasiev so povik do Albancite: Sega e momentot da zastanete do nas," *Antropol*, 1 December 2020. Accessed 3 December 2021. https://antropol.mk/2020/12/01/apasiev-so-povik-do-albancite/

"Namely, I think that if the Albanian political camp continues with its expansionist demands after each election there will be a need to form a Macedonian or Skopje, whatever you want to call it, platform which would argue in four points the red lines that cannot be crossed in order to avoid the stress that arises among the Macedonian people on the questions of federalisation or cantonment of the country, after each election. But in such a case, neither Zaev, nor Mickoski would assume the role of prime minister, they would probably find a more inconspicuous person who would play the role of prime minister for a year, says the leader of Levica."[1]

This shows that consensus and the established interethnic practice of the government's parliamentary coalitions between ethnic Albanian and ethnic Macedonian parties does not apply to this party. Considering the previously defined categories, the motto of this party is represented through a national political preference – which undoubtedly, according to the newest surveys, also gains supporters for the party.

ASNOM and self-determination

After 1991, the significance of ASNOM as a nation-building and state-building element was accepted by the whole of the Macedonian post-Yugoslav political spectre.[2] The status of ASNOM is also recognised by all political parties as a consensual political starting point of the Macedonian historic political subject. The official narrative of the Macedonian historiography is that the efforts during the Second World War culminated in the emergence of ASNOM in 1944, and one year before, its emanation was agreed upon during the Prespa council of the 2nd of August 1943 in Prespa. In actuality, ASNOM is a result of NOB's resistance on the territory of the then occupied Macedonia by the nazi and fascist powers and their collaborators. Consequently, its main component is the self-determination of the Macedonians as a state-building people of the Democratic Federal Macedonia.

Relevant to this analysis is ASNOM's proclamation and the topos of self-determination as an ideological framework. Considering that the self-determination derives as a consequence of the organised resistance during the Second World War, it cannot be analysed isolated from the political context, as well as the historic trajectory and development in a political sense and the perspective of the multi-ethnic inclusive character in relation to the institutionalisation in a formal sense. What can be read in ASNOM's proclamation as an essence of that assembly, is the political momentum, which is thought out and asserted by ASNOM, respectively the right to self-determination of the Macedonian people in the framework of a federation.

"With this state-building act, based on the sovereign will and the right to self-determination of the people of Macedonia, ASNOM is constituted as the supreme legislative, executive and representative body of the Macedonian state, as an equal federal unit in a democratic federal Yugoslavia. Thus, the existence of the first modern Macedonian state – Democratic Federal Macedonia is declared de jure."[3]

Therefore, ASNOM represents the moment when the people on the territory of Macedonia constitute a state. A state that gets its own mandate for self-determination through a political configuration with other small(er) states in a bigger federation and in coordination with AVNOJ. This demonstrates that the federation component is significantly important in the opportunity for a nation to create a state. Here we can pose another question, namely – was the Macedonian nation created at the same time as ASNOM? If that is so, the ASNOM romantic vocation is relevant in the contemporary political context. If we continue to read the ASNOM Manifest, we come across this section:

1 Violeta Gerov, "Apasiev: Mozni desetina scenarija za formiranje parlamentarno mnozinstvo, tri najostvarlivi," MIA, 24 July 2020. Accessed 18 December 2020. https://mia.mk/apasiev-mozhni-desetina-scenari-a-za-formira-e-parlamentarno-mnozinstvo-tri-na-ostvarlivi/

2 Naum Trajanovski, "The Three Memory Regimes of Ilinden: A Prolegomenon to the Study of the Official Memory in North Macedonia". *Southeastern Europe*, (2020): 28-52.

3 Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia, Parliamentary Institute, Acts of the First Session of ASNOM, November 2014. Published by the Parliamentary Institute of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia.

"The Manifest to the Macedonian people represents a proclamation of the national freedom of the Macedonian people and the creation of the Macedonian state. This historic document gives an overview of the Macedonian people's difficult struggle for freedom from the time of the Ilinden Uprising and the Krushevo Republic and the national liberation resistance against the fascist occupiers, that resulted in the constitution of the first free Macedonian state."[1]

Taking this into account, the struggle for self-determination of the Macedonian people is not initiated by NOB, merely before ASNOM. That struggle has a longer history, a history of a people's efforts, through stages of building self-awareness and self-memory and the fight for political freedom. De facto, the political freedom is enabled through an organised fight (CPY, and later CPM) for national freedom through the principles of internationalism, modernism and anticapitalism. The universal and particular in this case are not in confrontation and as such both parties are satisfied. Herein, NOB and ASNOM take upon themselves a duty to the historic mission of creating a state.[2]

This is the cannon which is followed and thought in the educational and cultural perspectives of the citizens since the foundation of the Federation, and still today, even though attempts for challenging it can be identified during the government led by VMRO-DPMNE. During the rule of VMRO-DPMNE (2006-2016), there were attempts on behalf of a primordially academic, but also political elite for the reinterpretation of ASNOM, recontextualising it in a strictly ethnical component as a key motive of ASNOM's members for the creation of the Macedonia state.[3]

"The class and nation were the two components of Tito's communist Yugoslavia (the Yugoslav revolution), it is within this framework that the Macedonian question was positioned, which during the Second World War was basically resolved as a national one. Up until the first parliamentary elections (November 1945) and then the conclusion of the peace negotiations, the fact that the DFY would be constituted as a one-party communist state was not emphasised too publicly.

...

However, the communists' class ideology was unacceptable to Cento, so he remained a national democrat until the end. Because of that, he will be treated as a "foreign" element in the Party.

...

In the general ideological education of the communists who were brought up in the spirit of the teachings of Marxism-Leninism, through various forms, and through the basic material, a type of bible for every Yugoslav communist – "The Short course of the History of the AUCP(B)"9", in Macedonia, however, the national rather than the class component of the struggle dominated, which can be seen through the numerous proclamations of Macedonia's military-political leadership, as well as through the meticulous British reports."[4]

If we go a step further and analyse the political element of self-determination as an executive act in the framework of NOB and ASNOM, we will realise that ASNOM is actually the product of NOB's fight, through the infrastructure of CPY, and not a political act of a distinct democratic practice. In the context of self-determination, it

1 Ibid.

2 Andrew Rossos, *Macedonia and the Macedonians* (Hoover Institution Press Publication, 2008), 155-165.

3 On the ethno-nationalist (re)mythologising narrative, in the context of Macedonian society, during the rule of VMRO-DPMNE, the dimensions of the primordial nationalist component were mainly present among the academic circles. On the 70th anniversary of the First Session of ASNOM, MANU organised a conference in which some of the academics and professors from UKIM gave speeches and submitted reviews with ethno-nationalist argumentation. It is enough to read the texts of Dimitar Mirchev entitled "Imase li ASNOM Filozofija i Ideologija" [Did ASNOM Have Philosophy and Ideology] and Violeta Achkoska entitled "ASNOM i makedonskata drzavnost megu klasnoto i nacionalnoto 1941–1991" [ASNOM and Macedonian Statehood between the Class and the National 1941-1991] to hear the resonance of the intellectual milieu in the country. Vlado Kambovski, ed., *ASNOM I MAKEDONSKATA DRZAVA*, (Skopje: Macedonian academy of sciences and arts, 2014).

4 Violeta Achkoska, "*ASNOM I MAKEDONSKATA DRZAVNOST MEGU KLASNOTO I NACIONALNOTO 1941–1991" in ASNOM I MAKEDONSKATA DRZAVA,*" Vlado Kambovski, ed. (Skopje: Macedonian academy of sciences and arts, 2014), 117-137.

can be noted that the self-determination is not performed through modern institutions (referendum and such).[1]

The self-determination in this case appeals to the territorial integrity of the states, i.e., the republics before the Second World War. The cities Kicevo, Struga, Debar, Tetovo and Gostivar are also encompassed here.
The cities that were liberated during NOB with the collaboration of ethnic Albanians, while Debar is freed by the Albanian partisans from CPA and handed over to the Macedonian partisans.[2]

This framework imposes two perspectives in which ASNOM and self-determination can be referred to in the modern era:

1. The acknowledgement of self-determination as an initial political and ontological act in the creation of a state, and with that the history of the development of the political idea of self-determination. Further steps to this act do not stop at the ethnic Macedonian element as a substance, but continue with constitutional, political and formally inclusive initiatives. It refers to the Preamble to the 1974 Constitution, in which the Albanian and Turkish nationalities receive a recognised political status.[3] In that sense, the second point of ASNOM's Declaration is realised where the political rights of the national minorities are guaranteed. A big part of the contemporary historians of ethnic Albanian origin, look towards ASNOM with distrust and challenge the canonised and mythologically accepted narration of inclusion due to the low participation of Albanians in the First and Second Sessions of ASNOM and the small number of ethnic Albanians in the Presidium of ASNOM, pointing to the fact that Albanians were deceived.[4] Still, justification can be found, taking into account the historical dimension of antagonism and nationalist residuality in the relations between Macedonians and Albanians that remain active durinh that period due to the clashes with the Albanian National Front (Balli kombëtar).
2. The isolating and antihistorical attitude towards ASNOM, without its inclusive component and the development of political emancipation and multi-ethnic realisation.[5] This attitude towards ASNOM not only accepts the myth of the democratic self-determination procedure as is, but also applies this attitude of the historically defined self-determination in the current political context. In this context, self-determination has a strictly ethnic dimension through the monopolised attitude towards the state and its institutions. This can be concluded also from the attitude of the party Levica towards the referendum of 2018 for the Name agreement with Greece (the referendum was consultative), when the party called for a boycott on the referendum, namely a boycott on the possibility of a direct use of the right to self-determination. Consequently, after the referendum was held, the party kept using this concept, as ahistorical and monoethnic. Herein the political confrontation towards the Framework agreement and the ethnic minority rights of Albanians in the framework of the constitutional and political perspectives is performed through the use of the second ahistorical dimension of ASNOM and self-determination, and not the first dimension which may be controversial and has potential to be challenged but nevertheless follows a line of inclusivity and political progress.

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1 If we take into account the participation of the ethnic minorities of ASNOM and compare their participation in the National Liberation War, we could observe that in the constituent assembly of the so-called first Macedonian state, no significant minority groups participated. Albanian partisans taking part in the National Liberation War and the liberation of Kicevo, Tetovo and Gostivar, while Debar was liberated by Albanian partisans and finally handed over to Macedonian partisans in 1944. However, there was some tension after the capitulation of Italy and the takeover of local government by NOB participants. Hence the letter of Enver Hoxha to Tempo on 29 October 1943 addressing Tempo and the CPY's accusation on the matter of secession and "Greater Albania": "We do not accept the new borders set by the fascists. But what is the situation in Debar? Here is what we were informed of and we believe that the report is correct: in that city the Macedonians are a minority and, on the other hand, the influence of the Yugoslav party [CPY] is not very large due to its weak organisation, and consequently the national liberation movement led from the Yugoslav partisan headquarters is not widespread, but on the contrary is at the embryonic level." Enver Hoxha, Selected Works Volume I (Tirana: Institute of Marxist-Leninist Studies at the CC of PLA, 1974), 217-219.

2 Mariglen Demiri and Zdravko Saveski, *Nacionalizmot vo(n) kontekst: sorabotka na Albancite i Makedoncite od Ilindenskoto vostanie do Narodnooslobоditelnata vojna* (Skopje: Solidarnost, 2014), 90-69.

3 "The Socialist Republic of Macedonia is a national state of the Macedonian people and a state of the Albanian and Turkish nationalities in it, based on the sovereignty of the people and the government and self-government of the working class, and all working people, and a socialist self-governing democratic community of working people and citizens of the Macedonian people and the Albanian and Turkish nationalities equally." *Official Journal of the Republic of Macedonia* No 03-487/1974, Part I, Chapter I, Article I.

4 "Vebi Xhemaili: Kjo preambullë nuk shpreh vullnetin e popullit shqiptar në Maqedoni" Tetova News. Accessed 30 December 2020. https://tetovanews.info/2019/01/vebi-xhemaili-kjo-preambulle-nuk-shpreh-vullnetin-e-popullit-shqiptar-ne-maqedoni/

5 On the multi-ethnic character of ASNOM see Ljubica Jančeva, "The principles of ASNOM and the constitutional historic legacy for the "framework" Republic of Macedonia", *Politeia*, issue 30, (2014), 71-78.

Concluding remarks

The term self-determination as one of ASNOM's basic privileges is actualised in the daily political strategy for mobilisation and political communication in the context of the signing of the agreements with Bulgaria and Greece. Self-determination is one of the fundamental components in the constructions of an ethno-nationalist narrative which combined with the populist narrative strategy and polarisation (Us-Them) integrates two important nationalistic positions. The first is that the Macedonians have lost the political status of self-determination which they acquired through ASNOM, and that in itself is national self-degradation, and all of it was brought on by the internal "traitors" who serve as "mediators" to the western imperialist instances. Through this act, "the Macedonian" self-annihilates nationally, through the signing of the "treasonous" agreements that undermine the mythological dimensions and symbols of the ASNOM mythology and the Macedonian struggle for independence and self-determination. The second component is related to the Albanians and the line of reproduction of animosity related to the Albanians throughout history, discrediting their status as second-rate in relation to the Macedonians who in this historical context defend themselves from all sides, defining the Albanians as predators who have political and territorial pretentions for overtaking and further humiliation of the Macedonian in this historic episode of his existence. The third, represents the strength of this narrative among the politically unrepresented citizens who become more and more attached to this discourse and have hopes in the political option that infuses the connection to the un-consensualness and the long-established understanding of creation of coalitions in the framework of Macedonia's political life.

Therefore, Levica's nationalism is ingrained in the monoethnic contemporary logic, with symbolic passages and mythologic transpositions which are accepted exclusively, without analysis, blind to the context in which they occurred and in which they are used. The main symbolic line of Levica's nationalism is an ethnically mobilising component which reflects itself throughout the country and is filtrated through the politics and the political and for which the Macedonians are the primary and ultimate contributors to the state and national sovereignty.

In that sense, the party Levica adapts itself to the already established hegemony of the former political, academic, cultural, structural and intellectual instances. The created authority in the sphere of political action refers to national sediments of the past, not only disseminating a daily political offer, but also becoming the locus of reproduction of the established hegemony in the frame of Macedonian society. This hegemony adapts the retrospective outlook on history to the current needs of the Macedonian subject and does not allow a historic overview with all the contradictions that exist in history and society.

Female Martyrs and Assassins: Local, National and Transnational Entanglements of Memory Politics in Contemporary Bulgaria[1]

by **Filip Lyapov**

Abstract

Mnemonic debates around historical figures seem to provide unique vantage points to gauge the current political and ideological climate in a society. Their potential to initiate both deep polarisation and general consensus makes them indicative of the existing patterns of remembrance and how they evolve over time. The different post-mortem memorialisation of three female assassins – Mencha Karnicheva, Mara Buneva and Violeta Yakova – highlights the entanglements of regional, national and transnational dimensions of memory politics in Bulgaria and illuminates the latest mainstreaming of nationalist discourses. Those discourses deemed the memory of the communist partisan Violeta Yakova to be a surplus, a remnant from the abjected communist past that had to be erased from the new post-1989 pantheon of national martyrs. In her place, the memory of two activists of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation, Mencha Karnicheva and Mara Buneva, was restored as the two women's allegiance to a seemingly national idea as opposed to a political ideology made them fit with the growing national populist political landscape. The chapter tries to problematise this simplistic division into national heroines and political terrorists and traces the path of Bulgaria's culture of remembrance towards its current state, dominated by exclusionary nationalist discourses.

Introduction

Notwithstanding their obvious common background as political assassins, the names of three interwar Bulgarian women – Mencha Karnicheva, Mara Buneva and Violeta Yakova – are rarely mentioned together.[2] They were all in their twenties when they gained notoriety as each murdered an older and distinguished male figure seen as an embodiment of "the enemy."[3] Yet, the trajectory of their post-mortem memorialisation was vastly differed. After decades of glorification, Yakova's communist partisan background automatically erased her name from the pantheon of national martyrs when the regime change in 1989 initiated a revision of Bulgaria's mnemonic landscape. The marginalisation of her memory and that of fellow partisans and antifascists can be counterposed to the symbolic endorsement of Karnicheva and Buneva first by various right-wing political actors and more recently by the general public. Yet, exploring the complex processes of remembering and forgetting the history of these three women, who all committed murder in the name of an idea, reveals much more than a presumed divide between national ideas and political partisanship, or pre- and post-1989 memory politics. The three cases highlight the entanglement of regional, national and transnational dimensions of memory politics, and illuminate the mainstreaming of nationalist discourses and the return of the *Macedonian Question*.[4]

1 The author is grateful to Victor Petrov and Irina Gigova who both helped with their ideas and amazing editing skills. Notwithstanding, any shortcomings are solely the author's responsibility.

2 Macedonian according to their birthplace, both Karnicheva and Buneva will be referred here as Bulgarian as their own deeds and the debates surrounding their memory in this text position them predominantly in the Bulgarian context. Their contested ethnic identity, to the extent that it can be "objectively" discussed, is of no relevance here. The spelling throughout the text thus reflects the Bulgarian spelling and transliteration norms.

3 For a detailed narration of the lives of all three women, see Tsvetana Kyoseva, *Krasivite litsa na terora* [The Beautiful Faces of Terror] (Sofia: Ciela, 2013).

4 The term Macedonian Question alludes to the 19th and 20th century struggle over the political fate of the region of Macedonia after the retreat of the Ottoman Empire. See the entry on the Macedonian Question in Dimitar Bechev, *Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Macedonia* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2009), 138.

Mencha Karnicheva (1900-1964) and Mara Buneva (1901-1928), both born in modern-day North Macedonia, were activists of the interwar right wing of the IMRO (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation), an organisation committed to the autonomy of Macedonia, a region split at the time between Bulgaria, Yugoslavia (the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes until 1929) and Greece. Guided by the IMRO leader Ivan (Vancho) Mihaylov, Karnicheva and Buneva assassinated two of the organisation's most notable internal and external enemies. Karnicheva, born in a mixed Vlach family in Krushevo, was the first to act in May 1925 when she fatally shot the leader of the left-wing faction of IMRO Todor Panitsa in the Viennese Burgtheater. Captured, tried, and sentenced to prison, the assassin was soon released due to poor health and returned to Bulgaria where she married Mihaylov and became his lifelong companion.

Inspired by Karnicheva whom she met in Bulgaria, the Tetovo-born Mara Buneva targeted the Yugoslav high-ranking official Velimir Prelić, a lawyer at the Skopje district directorate, notorious for his role in the Student Trial of 1927 involving young Macedonian activists. Buneva fatally wounded first Prelić and then herself in order not to be caught alive. Both women were widely celebrated as heroes in interwar IMRO circles in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and among the Macedonian diaspora.[1]

The third female figure, the communist partisan of Jewish origin Violeta Yakova (1923-1944), was only nineteen at the time (January 1943) she assassinated General Hristo Lukov. Lukov was a former Bulgarian Minister of War and leader of the pro-fascist nationalistic organisation Union of Bulgarian National Legions during WWII. Yakova continued her activities as part of the underground communist resistance but was ultimately caught and executed in June 1944. Her death came less than three months before Bulgaria switched sides on September 9, 1944 and the country fell under communist domination until 1989.

The memory politics from 1944 until 1989 produced drastically different historical interpretations of the three female figures. The official communist mnemonic canon proclaimed the antifascist partisan struggle as the glorious culmination of Bulgaria's historic drive towards democracy and freedom and commemorated fallen partisans like Violeta Yakova as martyrs whose heroic deeds put them on par with already established national heroes of Bulgaria's 19th century independence movement.[2] Monuments of deceased partisans were built all across the country, their names becoming a vital part of the new mnemonic landscape – streets, public buildings and enterprises, geographic sites and even cities were renamed after the heroes of the new regime. Yakova was commemorated with a monument in Radomir, a town near her resting place, a small street in Sofia and a youth detention centre named after her. She was further popularised through the famous 1970 movie The Black Angels (Chernite angeli), based on the memoirs of another female communist partisan and assassin, with Yakova as the prototype for one of the characters.

1 Karnicheva's own account of the murder was published in 1926 by the newspaper *Nezavisima Makedonia* [Independent Macedonia] on January 29, 1926.

2 Ana Luleva, "Politics of Memory in Post-socialist Bulgaria," Ethnoscripts. *Analysen und Informationen aus dem Institut für Ethnologie der Universität Hamburg 12, no. 1* (2010), 81.

The monument of female partisan Violeta Yakova - Ivanka, in Radomir, Bulgaria

By Vassia Atanassova - Spiritia, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=17906148

In contrast, along with the majority of the pre-1944 political and intellectual elite, the interwar right-wing IMRO was initially denounced as a "fascist organisation" and "enemy of the people".[1] Since the IMRO leader Ivan Mihaylov and his wife Mencha Karnicheva were still alive and active in Rome, Italy, the anti-IMRO memory politics focused on another figure associated with the right-wing interwar faction of the IMRO – Todor Aleksandrov (1881-1924). Monuments and memorial plaques of Aleksandrov were destroyed in both Bulgaria and Yugoslav Macedonia and the memory of the revolutionary organisation was consistently suppressed.[2] However, as the regimes gradually turned more and more towards nationalism in the late 1970s and 1980s, even Aleksandrov and "the heroes of IMRO would be called upon to serve both Communist regimes" despite the anticommunism of many of the revolutionaries.[3] The female assassins, Karnicheva and Buneva, however, never made it into the Bulgarian national martyrology until the fall of the regime in 1989.

1 Ana Luleva, "Geroi i pametnitsi. Lokalni proektsii na natsionalnata pamet." [Heroes and Monuments. Local Projections of National Memory], *Seminar_BG*, no. 15 (2017): 108-109, CEEOL.

2 Angel Djonev, "Pametnitsite na Todor Aleksandrov." [The Monuments in Memory of Todor Aleksandrov], *Macedonian Review*, no. 3 (2004): 66. CEEOL.

3 James Frusetta, "Common Heroes, Divided Claims: IMRO between Macedonia and Bulgaria." I*deologies and National Identities: The Case of Twentieth-Century Southeastern Europe*, John R. Lampe and Mark Mazower, eds., (Budapest & New York: CEU Press, 2004), 112.

From Anticommunism to Bulgarian Nationalism

As Bernhard and Kubik argue in their typology of mnemonic actors and regimes of memory,[1] the 1989 regime change in Eastern Europe was not only about "the reconfiguration of economic interests, redistribution of political power, and reordering of social relations."[2] It also involved the re-examination of historical memory, seen as a precondition for the "reformulation of collective identities and the introduction or reinvigoration of the principles of legitimising power."[3] In Bulgaria, the re-writing of history that started in the 1990s began with changes in textbooks and school curricula, a new commemorative calendar and erasure of some of the architectural traces of communism such as monuments and street names. It continued with legislative attempts to criminalise everything related to communism and to rehabilitate the victims of the communist regime regardless of their political and ideological affiliation.[4] Correspondingly, "the pantheon of heroes was rearranged and the heroes of the former regime – guerrillas, supporters and communists – were removed from it."[5] Names like Yakova's would sink into oblivion except for the annual commemorations on September 9 by an ever smaller group of antifascist and communist activists. The polarised political climate in the 1990s, the social and economic costs of the difficult transition as well as the rise of new populist political actors produced new ideological fault lines and intensified the Kulturkampf – the struggle to "achieve cultural hegemony, usually identified with appropriating the hegemonic narration of the past."[6] The mnemonic shift from a communist to an anti-communist grand narrative in Bulgaria, initially spearheaded by the broad centre-right political coalition Union of Democratic Forces, in the past two decades has been monopolised by national populist parties and fringe far right groups such as the Bulgarian National Union. The key mnemonic warrior, however, has been the post-1989 party that claims continuity with the historical IMRO – the IMRO-BNM (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation-Bulgarian National Movement).[7] IMRO-BNM has been successful at mainstreaming some of its nationalistic and revisionist discourses and has influenced the governing political party GERB which has previously been described as a mnemonic abnegator – a mnemonic actor without a particularly strong mnemonic agenda who pragmatically abstains from memory politics.[8]

How has the memory of the three female assassins been impacted by those developments? To start with, the rehabilitation of the interwar revolutionary organisation IMRO seems to be completed as its leaders and activists, including both Karnicheva and Buneva, have now become a frequent positive reference for patriots. Notably, the Macedonian Scientific Institute, an academic institution originally founded in 1923, closed in 1947 and restored in 1990, has monopolised publications and public discussions on the topic of Macedonia. Its close ties to the political party IMRO-BNM have at times rendered it a mouthpiece for the party's position on historical topics. The institute's academic-cum-political activities have not forgotten the IMRO female assassins who received recognition through books published in their honour. Tsocho Bilyarski, one of the founders of the restored institute and a prolific historian, was among the first to revive the memory of assassins.

1 Their typology defines four types of mnemonic actors based on their strategy towards instrumentalisation of the past – mnemonic warriors, pluralists, abnegators and prospectives. Jan Kubik and Michael Bernhard, "A Theory of the Politics of Memory," *Twenty Years after Communism: The Politics of Memory and Commemoration, Bernhard & Kubik*, eds., (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 7-34.

2 Kubik and Bernhard, 8.

3 Ibid.

4 Iskra Baeva, "Opiti za institutsionalizirane na antikomunizma v Bulgaria sled 10 noemvri i tehnite rezultati" [Attempts to institutionalize anticommunism after November 10 and their aftermath], *Antikomunizmat v postsocialisticheska Bulgaria* [Anticommunism in Postsocialist Bulgaria], Vasil Prodanov, Angel Dimov, Neno Dimov, eds., (Sofia: Balgarski agrarno-promishlen sayuz, 2018), 139.

5 Luleva, *Politics of Memory*, 11

6 Balázs Trencsényi, "Beyond Liminality? The Kulturkampf of the Early 2000s in East Central Europe," *boundary 2* 41, no. 1 (2014): 135-152. https://doi.org/10.1215/01903659-2409703.

7 According to the typology, mnemonic warriors see themselves as "the guardians of the truth" and their opponents as "the obfuscators, perpetuators of 'falsehoods.'" Kubik and Bernhard, *Twenty Years After*, 13.

8 Venelin Ganev, "The Inescapable Past: The Politics of Memory in Post-Communist Bulgaria," *Twenty Years After Communism*, eds. Bernhard & Kubik, 213-232. On the mainstreaming of nationalistic discourses see Kiril Avramov, "The Bulgarian Radical Right," *Transforming the Transformation? The East European Radical Right in the Political Process*, Michael Minkenberg ed., (London & New York: Routledge, 2015), 299-318.

In 1993, he wrote the preface to a booklet containing Karnicheva's original confession on why she murdered Todor Panitsa. Bilyarski outlined the reasons for retelling Karnicheva's story: "to restore to our people the dear memory of one of its loyal and worthy daughters who, despite being nearly four decades in the shadow of the immortal leader of the IMRO, has dedicated her entire life to the struggle for freedom of the Macedonian Bulgarians."[1]

Extolling Karnicheva's murder of a left-wing IMRO leader was in line with the dominant anti-communist spirit of the early 1990s. With the Yugoslav wars raging across Bulgaria's western border, it was also more prudent to focus on her deed than Buneva's anti-Serbian/anti-Yugoslav act. Less than two decades later however, such nationalistic sentiments could be openly voiced. In 2005, the same author published a book, evocatively titled *Macedonian Martyrology*, narrating the suffering of Macedonian Bulgarians under foreign occupation.[2] And then in 2010, Bilyarski wrote the introduction to a book with collected publications on Mara Buneva in which he refers to her as a "national heroine, who enters the pantheon of immortal Bulgarians only at the age of 25 even though today's generations of Bulgarians know nothing of her and have not even heard her name."[3]

The Macedonian Scientific Institute represents the most vocal academic actor with a stake in the *Macedonian Question* and its historical interpretations but the historical figures it promotes have meanwhile entered more popular historical conversations. *Bulgarian History*, an online history platform and a publishing house – boasting more than 380,000 followers of its Facebook page and close to 60,000 of its YouTube channel – appeared in 2013 to preserve and popularise Bulgaria's past through publishing and production activities as well as free lectures in Bulgarian schools.[4] The online platform has dedicated many of its online articles and social media posts to glorifying the deeds of Bulgarians, male and female, deemed of historic importance. In 2014, an article titled "Who is Mara Buneva and Why We Must Remember Her?" offered a passionate panegyric of Buneva's sacrifice, receiving over 20,000 views.[5] Perhaps surprisingly, Mencha Karnicheva remains neglected, being mentioned only in passing in an article as the wife of Ivan Mihaylov.[6] What is more interesting however, is how the platform covers the story of the third assassin. An article on the Black Angels, the name by which Yakova and her fellow group of communist assassins became later known, at first glance gives a neutral and informative account of the group's activities. Yet, upon close reading, it becomes clear where the sympathy of the author lies – with the victims of the assassinations who are described as war heroes, resilient and honest journalists, etc. To strengthen the impression that the assassins murdered innocent people, the text also contains a vivid account of how General Lukov was shot by Yakova in front of his 9-year-old daughter.[7]

Buneva's rising status in the mnemonic landscape is undoubtedly due to the annual commemorative pilgrimage of activists of the IMRO-BNM political formation to the deathplace of Buneva in Skopje – a spectacle attracting significant public attention. The memorial plaque dedicated to Buneva, built in 2001 by a pro-Bulgarian organisation in North Macedonia, has been vandalised numerous times by Macedonian nationalists who see the plaque and the annual IMRO-BNM-led commemoration as a direct Bulgarian provocation against Macedonian national identity.

1 Tsocho Bilyarski, "Podvigat na Mencha Karnicheva" [The Feat of Mencha Karnicheva], in *Zashto ubih Todor Panitsa?* [Why did I kill Todor Panitsa?], Mencha Karnicheva (Sofia: VMRO-SMD, 1993), 7.

2 Tsocho Bilyarski, *Makedonski martirolog* [Macedonian Martyrology] (Sofia: Aniko, 2005).

3 Tsocho Bilyarski, *Podvigat na Mara Buneva* [The Feat of Mara Buneva] (Sofia: Aniko, 2010). The quote is taken from the introduction, available online at https://sitebulgarizaedno.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=83:2010-04-24-14-37-12&catid=34:2010-04-24-13-08-01&Itemid=55.

4 "Za nas" [About Us], Bulgarian History, accessed November 16, 2020, https://bulgarianhistory.org/about-us/.

5 Martin Chorbadzhiyski, "Koya e Mara Buneva i zashto tryabva da ya pomnim?" [Who is Mara Buneva and why must we remember her?], Bulgarian History, accessed November 16, 2020, https://bulgarianhistory.org/mara-buneva/.

6 Ivo Vladimirov, "Ivan Mihaylov – posledniyat komita" [Ivan Mihaylov – the last komita], Bulgarian History, accessed November 16, 2020, https://bulgarianhistory.org/ivan-mihailov/.

7 Stoyan Tachev, "'V imeto na naroda' – atentatite na 'Chernite angeli'" ['In the name of the people' – the assassinations of the 'Black Angels'], *Bulgarian History*, accessed November 16, https://bulgarianhistory.org/chernite-angeli/.

Since VMRO-DPMNE, a Macedonian populist right-wing political party also claiming the heritage and the name of the interwar revolutionary organisation, has entered the mnemonic battle, Buneva's name has continuously flared up the passions on both sides of the border even leading to a physical clash in 2007.[1]

At the same time, commemorations of Buneva in Bulgaria, if any, are much more low-key affairs. In fact, her status as a "national heroine" might not apply beyond the region she is associated with, suggesting the "incomplete assimilation of Macedonian heroes into the Bulgarian national pantheon."[2] Only a local female organisation of the IMRO-BNM in the town of Petrich and several small streets in Sandanski, Blagoevgrad and Sofia bear the name of Buneva.[3] In addition, the lack of any monuments of the young woman in Bulgaria suggests that the IMRO-BNM's instrumentalisation of her memory is to raise the party's profile as a defender of Bulgarian national interests on both the national and the transnational political arena. The annual confrontations with Skopje over the memory of Buneva and a long list of other topics related to Macedonian language, history and identity have cemented IMRO-BNM's position as Bulgaria's mnemonic warrior par excellence, capable of setting the agenda of the government in which it is currently a junior coalition partner.

In comparison with her "apprentice" Buneva whose memory is "hot"[4] because of its transnational relevance, Karnicheva seems to follow an all too familiar trajectory as other female historical figures in Bulgarian history – she remains on the margins of history, better known through her husband.[5] Those characteristics of Bulgaria's mnemonic and historical canon have been frequently decried by feminist historians and activists who have recently collaborated to create a feminist memorial walk in Sofia and other Bulgarian cities to inspire recognition and increase visibility of female figures in Bulgaria's history and public space.[6] Karnicheva is still celebrated as a patriot by Bulgarian nationalists and the general public but no monuments of her or any other significant form of commemoration has been initiated thus far. Similarly to Buneva's remembrance pattern, a female IMRO-BNM organisation was named after Karnicheva and a street in Blagoevrad has also been dedicated to her (located, perhaps purposefully, parallel to Buneva's street).

Last but not least, Violeta Yakova has made a controversial comeback in Bulgarian memory debates through the attempts at rehabilitation of her victim, the leader of the pro-fascist interwar nationalistic organisation Union of Bulgarian National Legions General Hristo Lukov. Since 2001, activists of the nationalistic organisation Bulgarian National Union have organised an annual Lukov March – a torch-lit procession commemorating the general.[7] In the ensuing public debates over the ideas, espoused by both the interwar organisation that Lukov led and by his modern-day followers, Yakova's name as Lukov's assassin could not have been omitted. For the Lukov March organisers, Yakova represented a particularly irksome figure as a Jewish communist partisan, a significant detail for Lukov's interwar and modern-day followers alike.[8]

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1 For an analysis of the annual commemoration and debates in North Macedonia, see Naum Trajanovski, "A Patriotic Act for Macedonia: The Mnemohistory of Mara Buneva's Commemorations in Skopje (2001-2018)," *Contemporary Southeastern Europe 8, no. 1* (2020), forthcoming.

2 Frusetta, "Common Heroes", 120. Frusetta argues that, on the whole, the IMRO debate in Bulgaria is "far more marginal in its national importance."

3 Like Petrich and Sandanski, Blagoevgrad is also located in the part of Bulgaria that falls within the geographic region of Macedonia where the memory of the historical IMRO and the influence of the contemporary political party IMRO-BNM are quite strong.

4 See Charles Maier metaphorical distinction between "hot" memory of fascism and "cold" memory of communism. Charles Maier, "Hot Memory … Cold Memory. On the Political Half-Life of Fascist and Communist Memory," *Transit. Tr@nsit online*, no. 22 (2002), http://www.iwm.at/transit-online/hot.

5 For a case study, involving strategies of minimising, distorting and especially depoliticising female agency see Anke Hilbrenner, "The Perovskaia Paradox or the Scandal of Female Terrorism in the Nineteenth Century Russia," The Journal of Power Institutions in Post-Soviet Societies, no. 16 (2016), https://doi.org/10.4000/pipss.4169.

6 For reports on the feminist tours in Sofia and Blagoevgrad see Georgeta Nazarska, "'Feministka razhodka' v Sofia: krachka kam sazdavaneto na herstory" ['Feminist tour' around Sofia: a step to creating herstory] *Balkanistic Forum*, no. 2 (2015), CEEOL and Milena Angelova, "Marshrut po zhenskite mesta na pamet v Blagoevgrad" [A Women's Memory Places Route in Blagoevgrad] *Balkanistic Forum*, no. 2 (2017), CEEOL.

7 Filip Lyapov, "Lukov March as a 'Template of Possibility' for Historical Revisionism: Memory, History and Populism in Post-1989 Bulgaria," in *Memory Politics and Populism in Southeast Europe*, ed. Jody Jensen (Routledge, 2021, forthcoming).

8 Filip Lyapov, "Ideological Links between Interwar Nationalistic Organizations in Bulgaria and Their Modern-Day Counterparts," (Unpublished MA Thesis, Central European University, 2016), www.etd.ceu.edu/2016/lyapov_filip.pdf.

The only place where all three women have been discussed equally – in a recent popular history book by the late Bulgarian historian Tsvetana Kyoseva – represents a potent reminder of the existing nationalistic paradigm through which Bulgarian history as a whole, not just the story of these three female historical figures, is being told. Her 2013 book, which focuses on more than a dozen female assassins from IMRO activists to anarchist and communist terrorists, makes a clear distinction between the motivation and therefore significance of these groups. Kyoseva exonerates female IMRO assassins such as Karnicheva and Buneva as they strived for "national unification of the Bulgarians"[1] and represented a "direct continuation and spiritual heir of the actions of Bulgarian revolutionaries from the epoch of National Revival."[2] Karnicheva and Buneva's motivation in particular was "deeply patriotic – their victims had suppressed the national confidence of Bulgarians under Serbian authority or had committed harmful activity against the national liberation movement."[3] On the contrary, anarchist and communist assassins are presented as "fanatic young people between the age of 17 and 25 who followed like soldiers orders for explosions, sabotage and murders."[4] Kyoseva underlines several times that "their participation followed the example of Russian terrorists, was inspired by Moscow, fuelled by ideology and pursued political goals."[5] Unlike their IMRO predecessors, for women like Yakova "class and not Bulgarian national feeling and belonging" was the leading factor as they fought "not for the protection of the national feeling but in service of their global proletarian fatherland – the Soviet Union."[6] Thus, Kyoseva once again elevates the IMRO female assassins and the Macedonian Question in general at the core of Bulgaria's historical and mnemonic debates, while simultaneously discarding the legacy of antifascism represented by Yakova.

Disrupting the Status Quo with the "Left Side of History"[7]

Given the mainstreaming of nationalistic discourses postulating that only historical figures perceived strictly as martyrs for the national cause merit remembrance, commemorating figures like Yakova has proven problematic even for opponents of the Lukov March. The toned-down commemorations of Bulgarian antifascists by political parties and social groups on the left has only reinforced the perception that figures like Yakova are situated within the narrow space of party politics as opposed to the greater national ones. For Bulgarian liberals and democrats, many of them steeped in anti-communist rhetoric and personally embroiled in the mnemonic battles of the 1990s, siding with left-wing defenders of Yakova to preserve the antifascist partisan memory seems both unnatural and too much of a political risk. Cautious not to be accused of betraying the nation or sympathising with the pre-1989 regime, opponents of the Lukov March have either omitted the topic of Lukov's assassins or have condemned both the march and the actions of the partisans, thus sliding into theories of (uni)totalitarianism which equate communism and Fascism/Nazism as murderous totalitarian experiments.[8]

With Bulgarian liberals hesitant to embrace diverse mnemonic traditions and move beyond "strident anticommunist rhetoric" which "demonises anyone who once called himself or herself a 'communist' or who believed in the communist ideal" as "red scum," the plurality of memory in Bulgaria seems once again under threat.[9] Yet, a radical initiative by anonymous participants in the 2020 Anti-Lukov March,[10] might challenge the mnemonic status quo by engaging in what scholars have labelled agonistic memory.[11]

1 Kyoseva, Krasivite litsa, 7.
2 Ibid., 16.
3 Ibid., 35.
4 Ibid., 102.
5 Ibid., 107.
6 Ibid., 120.
7 Kristen Ghodsee, *The Left Side of History: World War II and the Unfulfilled Promise of Communism in Eastern Europe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015) makes a particularly strong case for resurrecting antifascist memory.
8 As an illustration of such a liberal position, see Dimitar Atanassov, "'Hail Hitler' ili 'Badi kato Violeta'? Kak krayniyat natsionalizam na 'Lukovmarsh' mozhe da porodi lyav ekstremizam" ['Heil Hitler' or "Be like Violeta'? How the extreme nationalism of Lukov March can breed left-wing extremism] *Svobodna Evropa* [Free Europe], February 25, 2020, https://www.svobodnaevropa.bg/a/30451400.html.
9 Ghodsee, The Left Side of History, xvi.
10 The Anti-Lukov March is a public demonstration against the spread of right-wing extremist ideas, espoused by the participants in Lukov March. The Anti-Lukov March is usually held earlier during the day of the actual Lukov March and features a number of left-wing but also some liberal activists.
11 Agonistic memory aims to restore both reflexivity and dialogue by engaging in inclusive mnemonic disputes instead of a recourse to victimhood-centered cosmopolitan mode of remembering. See Anna Cento Bull, Hans Lauge Hansen, "On Agonistic Memory," *Memory Studies* 9, no. 4 (2016): 390-404, https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698015615935.

Two activists held signs "Violeta sends her regards" and "Be like Violeta" in a deliberate attempt to resurrect both her own story and the forgotten narrative of antifascism. Their provocation did not go unnoticed and generated a number of negative reactions in liberal and right-wing leaning media alike.[1] Nevertheless, if expanded, such a direct reminder of the actual historical context in which Lukov and his assassin Yakova had existed could once again question the dominant historical grand narrative and initiate wider debates about the past and its meaning. Such an attempt could be seen as a counterweight to the exclusivist antagonistic collective memories constructed by populist neo-nationalist movements.[2]

Conclusion

Including the "left side of history" through agonistic mnemonic initiatives would not erase the story of Karnicheva, Buneva or the other male and female historical figures who had chosen the path of murder for their ideas. It would not restore Yakova and the other communist partisans' previously unchallenged position as the symbolic manifestation of the nation's heroism either. What it could do is problematise the false dichotomy between martyrs for the national idea and for a political ideology which has hampered the creation of an inclusive mnemonic culture and allowed the spread of exclusionary nationalistic discourses. Paying attention to the historical context would expose the artificial and constructed nature of these discourses, it would re-politicise mnemonic debates and restore the "multiplicity of perspectives in order to bring to light the socio-political struggles of the past."[3] In this particular case, it could also enable telling a more nuanced story about "the beautiful faces of terror" which does not divide them simplistically into national heroines and political terrorists nor strip them of their agency.

1 Atanassov, "'Hail Hitler' ili 'Badi kato Violeta'?", "Pokrovitelstva li Stolichna obshtina marsha i prizivite za ubiystva na levite natsisti?" [Does Sofia Municipality patronize the march and the calls for murder of the left-wing fascists?] Faktor.bg, accessed November 16, https://faktor.bg/bg/articles/petak-13-pokrovitelstva-li-stolichna-obshtina-marsha-i-prizivite-za-ubiystva-na-levite-natsisti.

2 Cento Bull and Hansen, "On Agonistic Memory," 12.

3 Ibid.

Commemoration and the Re-invention of a City: Alternative Memories of the Past in North Macedonia

by **Vasiliki P. Neofotistos**

Abstract

In this article, I analyse rival yet mutually dependent constructions of history in the country now known as North Macedonia. Based on ethnographic field research I conducted in the capital city of Skopje in the summer of 2012, I examine the public celebrations to commemorate for the first time on Sunday 12 August 2012, and every year after that, the 100th anniversary of the so-called liberation of Skopje (*çlirimi i Shkupit*) from Ottoman control. The celebrations were organised by the municipality of Čair, home to a large and predominantly Muslim Albanian population, in a broader context of struggles and contestations over who gets to shape the historic qualities of everyday life in Skopje and over who gets to be the rightful "owner" of the capital in the present. Living in an urban space dedicated foremost to the celebration of supposed Macedonian national heroes and a newly found Macedonian national pride, members of the Albanian community created an alternative history and memories, whereby the city was reinvented and redefined as a great bastion of Albanian national identity.

Introduction

In this article, I analyse rival yet mutually dependent constructions of history in the country now known as North Macedonia.[1] Based on ethnographic field research I conducted in the capital city of Skopje in the summer of 2012, I examine the public celebrations to commemorate for the first time on Sunday 12 August 2012, and every year after that, the 100th anniversary of the so-called liberation of Skopje (çlirimi i Shkupit) from Ottoman control. The celebrations were organised by the municipality of Čair, home to a large and predominantly Muslim Albanian population. Albanians make up around 25 percent of the country's population of roughly two million.[2] The article is situated in the context of scholarly work on how the past is interpreted, constructed, and also used in the present,[3] especially in the context of public commemoration.[4] My argument is that commemorations can be used as tools to (re)articulate the identity of a place and its history. Similar to Roudometof, who proposes an "archaeology" of national commemorations in the Balkans,[5] I proceed to examine the rhetoric and performances used to commemorate the 1912 event against the historical record of the event itself. I also explore the wider socio-political circumstances surrounding the adoption of the practice of annual commemoration of this event.

1 On 17 June 2018 the Greek and Macedonian foreign ministers, Nikos Kotzias and Nikola Dimitrov respectively, signed a landmark agreement, widely known as the Prespa Agreement, whereby the constitutional name of Macedonia (the Republic of Macedonia) and the official name under which the country was admitted to the United Nations in 1993 and the Council of Europe in 1995 (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, or FYROM) would change to North Macedonia (the Republic of North Macedonia). The Agreement put a formal end to a decades-long acrimonious dispute, rooted in nineteenth-century nationalist struggles, between the two countries over the use of the name "Macedonia," opening the way for North Macedonia's accession to NATO and the European Union. For more on this topic, see V. Neofotistos, Macedonia and Identity Politics After the Prespa Agreement (New York: Routledge, 2021).

2 According to the latest population census, carried out in 2002, (the then called) Republic of Macedonia had 2,022,547 inhabitants, 1,297,981 (64.18 percent) of whom declared themselves as Macedonians, 509,083 (25.17 percent) as Albanians, 77,959 (3.85 percent) as Turks, 53,879 (2.66 percent) as Roms, 35,939 (1.78 percent) as Serbs, 17,018 (0.84 percent) as Bosnians, 9,695 (0.48 percent) as Vlahs, and 20,993 (1.04 percent) as "other." Census data are available on the State Statistical Office website http://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikacii/knigaXIII.pdf

3 For example, see K.S. Brown and Y. Hamilakis, *The Usable Past: Greek Metahistories* (New York: Lexington Books, 2003).

4 See, among others, J.R. Gillis, *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Uni Press, 1994); R. Tsang and E.T. Woods, *The Cultural Politics of Nationalism and Nation-Building: Ritual and Performance in the Forging of Nations* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

5 V. Roudometof, "Toward an Archaeology of National Commemorations in the Balkans" in *National Symbols, Fractured Identities: Contesting the National Narrative*, ed. M.E. Geisler (Middlebury: Middlebury College Press, 2005), 35-62.

Skopje's "liberation": the historical record

The events of August 1912 were the culmination of a series of Albanian revolts (1909-1912) after the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), an outgrowth of the Young Turk movement against the regime of Ottoman sultan Abdül Hamid, had consolidated its power in the Ottoman Empire and initiated a policy of centralisation and unification to strengthen the empire.[1] Albanian leaders became increasingly disillusioned with the Young Turk regime, which not only did not meet Albanian demands for the creation of an autonomous Albanian state but also imposed census registration, an increase in taxation, and compulsory military service for all nationalities. One of the most consequential uprisings took place in Pristina in March 1910 and soon spread over the entire vilayet of Kosovo. According to Lukić and Ćurčić, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation, which was fighting for Macedonia's autonomy at the time, supported the Albanian rebels.[2] The uprising lasted for a few months before the Ottoman army crushed it brutally, further fanning the flames of revolt. Many of the insurgents fled to Montenegro and joined the revolt initiated by Catholic Albanians in the spring of 1911. The revolutionary movement, nonetheless, failed due to "powerful divergent forces within the Albanian society,"[3] acting according to regional interests in the north and the south. Around December 1911, Albanian political leaders met in Istanbul and decided to begin a general insurrection. Hasan Bey Prishtina, a former Albanian deputy who had lost his position in the Turkish parliament and participated actively in the uprising in Kosovo in 1909, was in charge of preparing the revolt in Kosovo. According to Skendi, Prishtina approached the leaders of "the Bulgaro-Macedonians" [sic] and proposed to them in Skopje – the seat of the Kosovo vilayet – that they "revolt at the same time as the Albanians in order to create together an autonomous Albanian-Macedonian state."[4] This plan, however, did not materialise due to Sofia's intervention.[5] After Albanian rebels had taken control of most of the Kosovo vilayet by July 1912, Prishtina formulated a list of fourteen demands, known as the "Fourteen Points of Hasan Prishtina," that were submitted to the government in Istanbul on the 9th of August. Subsequently, an estimated one hundred armed Albanian rebels, led by Isa Boletini, entered and occupied Skopje on the 12th of August;[6] by the 15th of August, the number of rebels reached 16,000.[7] As Dauti argues, although during that time there was no opposition from the Ottoman army or administration, the events of August 1912 have gone down in Albanian history as the "liberation" of Skopje.[8] As a result of the Albanian military successes, the Ottoman administration conceded to most of the demands Albanians made and on 18 August 1912 the administration offered them the option of an autonomous Albanian statelet within the Ottoman Empire. Aspirations to implement autonomy were short-lived, however, due to the outbreak of the First Balkan War in October of the same year.

The 100-year anniversary: rhetoric and performance

As I shuffled hurriedly up the steps of Mother Teresa's memorial house in downtown Skopje, I realised I would probably not be able to make it inside the chapel on the second floor. My watch showed 12:20 p.m. – it had been twenty minutes since the church service kickstarted the celebration of the 100th anniversary of Skopje's so-called liberation from Ottoman forces, and hundreds of men and women of all ages had already crammed into the chapel and overflown into the terrace outside. The service was conducted in Albanian, and honoured Kolë Bojaxhiu, the father of Mother Teresa (whose original name was Anjezë Gonxhe Bojaxhiu), because he had set up an orchestra, called "The Voice of the Mountains" (*Zani i Maleve*), to welcome the Albanian insurgents who arrived on foot to "liberate" Skopje. I can only speculate about what I missed out on by not arriving at the church service

1 See M. Vickers, *The Albanians: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 62-65.

2 T. Lukić and N. Ćurčić, "Ethno-Demographic Situation of the Population in Kosovo and Metohija in the Beginning of the 20th Century" in *History and Geography: Meetings and Permeations* (Belgrade: Geographical Institute, 2014), 292.

3 S. Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Uni Press, 1967), 424.

4 Ibid, 427.

5 Ibid.

6 See R. Elsie and B.D. Destani, *Kosovo, A Documentary History: From the Balkan Wars to World War II* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2018), 48.

7 Vickers argues that Albanian rebels occupied Skopje and she puts their number at 30,000; in *The Albanians*, 66.

8 D. Dauti, "Gjergj Fishta, the 'Albanian Homer,' and Edith Durham, the 'Albanian Mountain Queen': Observers of Albania's Road to Statehood" in *The Balkan Wars from Contemporary Perception to Historic Memory*, eds. K. Boeckh and S. Rutar (London – New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 94.

on time. My later attempts to find out more about what had transpired by inquiring among friends were not met with success as people in my network were not among the attendees at this particular event – some were vacationing away from Skopje, as is usually the case in August, while many others opted to attend the more festive outdoor events later in the day. For one thing, the decision to hold the commemorative event at the venue dedicated to St. Teresa of Calcutta, the widely known Catholic nun and missionary born in Skopje to Albanian parents from Kosovo, promoted Albanian national unity and ignored differences among Muslim, Orthodox Christian, and Catholic Albanians in their religious beliefs and practices. Also, as I found out when I watched the evening news on television that night, the Bishop of Kosovo Don Viktor Sopi had travelled to Skopje specifically to deliver the sermon. His presence underscored the strong ties among Albanians across religious and geographic boundaries as well.

Standing among the crowd on the terrace in the sweltering heat, I decided to leave the building and walk over to the main bookstore in the old Turkish bazaar (Turska or Stara Čaršija) in time for the second planned event held at 1:30 p.m. that day, namely, the launch of the new postal stamp "The Voice of the Mountains," honouring the above-mentioned orchestra, by the Macedonian Postal Service. After a leisurely, fifteen-minute walk over the Stone Bridge (*Kamen Most*), which stretches across the river Vardar and connects the older Ottoman part with the historically newer part of Skopje, I arrived at the bookstore and started browsing through the books before people began to trickle in. Chairs were arranged in several rows facing a table where a panel of speakers would sit. A few microphones carrying the logos of television channels were propped on the table. The audience consisted predominantly of men, who engaged in small talk while waiting for the presenters to arrive. The chatter slowly died down after four men entered the bookstore and some people took seats while others had to stand as there were no seats left to sit on. The speakers consisted of Skender Asani, Director of the Institute of Spiritual and Cultural Heritage of Albanians in (the then called) Macedonia, Rafiz Aliti, Director General of Macedonian Post, Izet Mexhiti, Mayor of the Čair municipality and member of the Albanian political party Democratic Union for Integration (DUI), and Musa Xhaferi, Deputy Prime Minister for the Implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement – the internationally mediated agreement that put an official end to the 2001 armed conflict between the Albanian National Liberation Army, or NLA (in Albanian, Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombëtare, UÇK) and Macedonian government forces, and included provisions for the amelioration of the status of the Albanian population, in the country.

Mr. Xhaferi pointed out that the event of 12 August 1912 had set in motion subsequent events in Skopje that were important for the Albanian national movement, and he identified the "Assembly of Skopje" as one of them. Indeed, historical evidence suggests that, shortly after the First Balkan War broke out, a group of Albanian delegates met in Skopje to deliberate what they should do in view of the ominous situation. According to Biondich, on 16 October 1912 a declaration was sent out to the European consuls in Skopje, demanding that a unified government exercise control over the Albanian territories.[1] On 28 November 1912, a national assembly of eighty-three Muslim and Christian delegates met at Vlorë (in today's Albania), and with the support of Italy and Austria-Hungary raised a red flag with a black, double-headed eagle and proclaimed Albanian independence from the rapidly disintegrating Ottoman Empire.[2]

Mr. Aliti, known by the nickname "Commander Teacher" (*Komandant Mësuesi*) because he had left his job as a teacher to join the NLA as Unit Commander during the 2001 conflict, also commented on the historical significance of 12 August 1912 and referred in his speech to this "great jubilee for all of us" (*jubilee të madh për të gjithë ne*).[3] As camera flashes went off, he presented a framed enlargement of the postal stamp to Nijazi Seferi, Kosovar MP and representative of the family of the late guerrilla fighter Idriz Seferi who had participated in the so-called liberation of Skopje in 1912. When he was later asked to make a comment, Mr. Seferi said, addressing the televi-

1 M. Biondich, *The Balkans: Revolution, War, and Political Violence since 1878* (Oxford: Oxford Uni Press, 2011), 76-77.

2 See C. Jelavich and B. Jelavich, *The Establishment of the Balkan National States, 1804-1920* (Washington: Washington Uni Press, 1977), 229.

3 The nicknames that were given to NLA commanders in (the formerly called) Macedonia and to Kosovo Liberation Army, or KLA commanders in Kosovo were related to, among other things, to the commanders' occupations, such as teacher (*Komandant Mësuesi*), physical features, such as beard (*Komandant Mjekra*), places of origin (*Komandant Kumanova*), fierceness in battle (*Komandant Tigri,* or "Commander Tiger"), and personality traits (*Komandant Daja*, or "Commander Maternal Uncle" for being caring and protective toward fighters under one's command).

-sion cameras and newspaper reporters, that Skopje "is a crossroads that gathers all people, unites all our lands. This is really the emotional capital of Albanians (*kryeqyteti emocional i Shqiptarëve*)." His statement about the emotional meaning Skopje holds for Albanians echoed similar remarks my Albanian interlocutors often made while reflecting on the outcome of the 2001 conflict. One of my male friends in his mid-twenties, for instance, characteristically told me during one of my visits to North Macedonia that he believed, had it not been for the international mediators, fighting would not have stopped five miles from the capital, but instead UÇK would have laid siege to Skopje and not given up control because Albanians have inhabited Skopje for centuries – allegedly, long before the arrival of the Slavs in the sixth century – and thus they rightfully own the city. The meaning Skopje holds, then, derives from a deep sense of belonging and attachment to the land.

When the launching event came to an end approximately an hour later, participants and attendees quietly dispersed, seeking shelter from the heat. The next event was not scheduled until a few hours later, and so I sat at a café downtown to catch up on my field notes. At around five o'clock, I joined a small crowd at the old Turkish bazaar waiting for the arrival of the "liberation march" (marshi i çlirimit), a re-enactment of the Albanian insurgents' journey to Skopje in 1912 by a delegation of present-day descendants of the insurgents, consisting of among others Mehmet Prishtina, the great-grandson of Hasan Prishtina, and Gazmend Boletini, great-grandson of Isa Boletini. The delegation gathered in front of the statue of Hasan Prishtina at the University of Prishtina in Kosovo and departed for Skopje by car. The Skopje Motorists' Association "Dardanians MC" provided escort and cleared the way as the vehicle procession moved. The Albanian national flag on each motorbike fluttered in the gentle breeze. The Association's name refers to the tribe that inhabited Dardania, a Roman province in the late Roman Empire whose boundaries included at various times Kosovo, southern parts of Serbia, western parts of North Macedonia, and north-eastern parts of Albania.[1] The use of the term "Dardanians" in the name of the association is noteworthy here because Albanians tend to claim proudly direct descent from the Dardanians (and also from the Illyrians), themselves allegedly the oldest settlers in the Balkans. The vehicle procession stopped along the way at sites where the so-called martyrs of the nation (dëshmorët e kombit) were buried in locations throughout Kososvo, including Ferizaj, Kacanik, and Hani i Elezit, for the delegation members to pay tribute to the memory of the deceased.[2] According to the Albanian national narrative, these men and women died for freedom while fighting in the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) against Serbian forces during the 1998-99 conflict in Kosovo. Television camera crews covered these events. When the delegation finally arrived in Skopje, they were greeted by small groups of male and female dancers, some wearing folk costumes, who performed a few traditional Albanian dances to live music in the street. Then, they walked casually through the winding, cobble-stoned streets of the old Turkish bazaar, headed for the Skopje Fortress (commonly referred to as Kale) for a brief respite.

The re-enactment of the "liberation march" to Skopje thus extended to encompass events that have taken place in the pre-Roman past – the formation of Dardania and the emergence of the Dardanian tribe – and after 1912 – the Kosovo conflict – and form an integral part of the narrative presented in Albanian nationalist history. According to this narrative, Albanians are the autochthonous people of North Macedonia – not "newcomers" (*novodojdeni*) from Kosovo, as Macedonians tend to claim – because their ancestors lived in the region in pre-Roman antiquity while the Slavs, ancestors of the present-day Macedonians and Serbs, arrived much later and invaded Albanian-inhabited territories. In addition to national origin claims, the Albanian nationalist historical narrative highlights the purported achievements of Albanians in 1912 and in the late 1990s, and is shaped by the tropes of heroism and freedom.

The next planned festivity to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Skopje's "liberation" was an open-air iftar meal (breaking the daily fast at sunset during the fasting month of Ramadan), hosted by the Čair municipality at

1 On Dardania and the Dardanians, see F. Papazoglu, *The Central Balkan Tribes in pre-Roman Times: Triballi, Autariatae, Dardanians, Scordisci and Moesians* (Amsterdam: A.M. Hakkert, 1978); cf. V.D. Mihajlović, "Roman Imperialism and the Construction of Dardanian Collectivity" in *Reflections of Roman Imperialism*, eds. M.A. Janković & V.D. Mihajlović (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018).

2 Public commemorations, organised and attended by members of the Albanian community (mainly, though not exclusively, DUI supporters) to honour the dead NLA fighters, take place every year in North Macedonia (and also in Kosovo; see S. Schwandner-Sievers, "Democratization through Defiance? The Albanian Civil Organization 'Self-Determination' and International Supervision in Kosovo" in *Civil Society and Transitions in the Western Balkans*, eds. V. Bojicic-Dzelilovic et al. (London – New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 95-116.

the old Turkish bazaar. The members of the delegation arrived before sunset and joined hundreds of others from the Albanian community, predominantly men, at long tables set in rows facing an elevated stage with a microphone. The stage was backdropped with a poster whose central visual element was a red and black logo resembling the eagle on the Albanian national flag. The logo was surrounded by the words, some written in capital letters, "100 years FLAG" (100 Vjet FLAMUR) and "100 years INDEPENDENCE" (100 Vjet PAVARËSI) in red and black. The equestrian statue of Albanian medieval hero Skanderbeg erected in Skopje appeared on the right side of the poster while the words "100 years PRIDE" (100 Vjet KRENARI) stretched across the top together with the sponsor's name (Čair municipality). This was not the first time I had seen the poster – it appeared in various places, mainly in the northern part of Skopje where many Albanians reside, in preparation for the then upcoming festivities to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the proclamation of Albanian independence on 28 November 1912 – an event that many Albanians in Macedonia (and also in Kosovo[1]) regard as the most significant in Albanian history. The poster sometimes appeared with a variation printed in capital letters reading at the top, "WE CELEBRATE TOGETHER" (FESTOJMË SË BASHKU). The poster's display at the *iftar* dinner assertively extended the dinner's objective beyond the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the so-called liberation of Skopje to include the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of Albania's Independence Day (also known as Flag Day), thus enhancing the symbolic value of Skopje in the Albanian national narrative.

Indeed, Izet Mexhiti in his speech that evening underlined the important role the insurgents' arrival in Skopje had played in proclaiming independence in Vlorë a few months later. Similarly, Mehmet Prishtina showcased the role his great-grandfather Hasan Prishtina had played in the "liberation" of Skopje and the overall efforts he had undertaken to unite the Albanian nation as a whole. Ali Ahmeti – former political representative of the NLA and leader of DUI, the party that grew out of the NLA – directed attention to alleged historical wrongs of past centuries in his speech and stated, among other things, that Albanians are "divided unjustly" and "territories have been unjustly taken" away from them. "But today," he continued, "a climate is created which Albanians have filled with the belief that the century-old injustice will be regulated and will be improved."[2] The event ended after certificates of gratitude were awarded to male members of the families descended from those who played a role in the formation of the Albanian state in terms of – according to the wording of the certificates – contribution to, and sacrifice for, the liberation of Albanian lands, the protection of Albanian national identity, and the continuous cultivation of love toward the Albanian nation and homeland. The day's festivities ended at the Skopje Fortress with an outdoor Albanian popular music concert and fireworks.

Skopje 2014

The commemoration of the 100th anniversary of Skopje's "liberation" cannot be fully understood unless we consider the broader context of long-standing inter-ethnic tensions, dating back to the socialist period.[3] These tensions informed the 2001 armed conflict, instigated by the NLA for so-called greater rights for Albanians in the country, and they were literally cemented in the urban landscape twice in the post-2001 socio-political environment. The first time was in 2006, when a monument to the most renowned Albanian national hero Gjergj Kastrioti, also known by his Turkish name as Skanderbeg, was unveiled in Čair on Albanian Independence Day (November 28) on the initiative of Čair municipality officials and DUI party members.[4] The monument generated a bitter political controversy, especially in the immediate aftermath of the redrawing of municipal boundaries in 2006.[5] In response to this heated public disagreement, many of my Albanian interlocutors in Skopje, especially th-

1 See V. Krasniqi, "Kosovo: Topography of the Construction of the National" in *Strategies of Symbolic Nation-Building in South Eastern Europe,* ed. P. Kolstø (New York: Routledge, 2014), 148.

2 Ahmeti said the following: "Shqiptarët padrejtësisht janë ndarre. Padrejtësisht janë marrë territore. Por sor, është krijuar një klimë, klimë e cila Shqiptare i kanë mbushur me besim që padrejtësi shekullore do të rregulohet dhe përmirësohet." All translations are the author's.

3 See V. Neofotistos, *The Risk of War: Everyday Sociality in the Republic of Macedonia* (Philadelphia: Uni of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

4 Ragaru convincingly argues that the controversy over Skanderbeg's statue must be understood through the lenses of not only Macedonian-Albanian rivalry but also intra-Albanian political competition. See N. Ragaru, "The Political Uses and Social Lives of 'National Heroes': Controversies over Skanderbeg's Statue in Skopje," *Südosteuropa* 56/5 (2008), 522-555.

5 Ibid, 539-543.

-ose who had themselves experienced some form of ethnic-based discrimination in their lifetimes, told me that, although they were the indigenous occupants of the land, they felt Albanians constantly needed to beg Macedonians politically for things they rightfully deserved. The second time was in 2009, when the Skopje 2014 project was announced by the government then headed by leader of the right-wing nationalist party VMRO-DPMNE Nikola Gruevski.[1] Skopje 2014 promoted a particular nation brand,[2] whereby the legacy of Alexander the Great and the ancient Macedonian past belonged to (the then called) Macedonia – not Greece, as Greece has historically claimed. To this end, Skopje 2014 involved the construction of buildings in baroque or neoclassical styles as well as the placement of bronze and marble statues of controversial historical figures whom the government claimed as national heroes in and around Skopje's main square. When it was first announced in 2009, Skopje 2014 did not include any statues of Albanian historical figures other than the statue and memorial house of Mother Teresa.[3] Moreover, the project tapped into nationalistic sensitivities that were aroused among Macedonians in the aftermath of the 2001 conflict.

Let me illustrate with a brief vignette from my fieldwork. One lazy afternoon in August 2011, as I was strolling aimlessly downtown after having met with a group of friends, I could not help but notice a large crane placing parts of the statue of Alexander the Great within the fenced area of the main square demarcated for the erection of the statue. I approached the scene and started to stare at the bronze, disassembled statue. A small group of workers was trying to fasten the statue's lower arm, which was holding out a sword, to the upper torso. Many passers-by stopped to watch the scene unfold and take photos. I, too, took my camera out of my purse and started to snap pictures. Suddenly, a man in his mid-fifties who was standing a few meters away, turned toward me. He caught my eye and with a sly grin on his face pointed his index finger to the poster on the building right behind Alexander the Great's disassembled statue. The poster promoted Ali Ahmeti during the June 2011 general election in the country. Then the man looked back at me, said "Aleksandar" smilingly, moved his hand across his throat, and pointed back to Ahmeti on the poster, indicating that Alexander's sword would slash Ahmeti's throat. He then pointed back at me and, acting as if he was holding a camera, pretended to snap a photo. I smiled back somewhat awkwardly, but did as he prompted me and captured his perspective on camera (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Skopje

1 The acronym VMRO-DPMNE stands for *Vnatrešna Makedonska Revolucionerna Organizacija - Demokratska Partija za Makedonsko Nacionalno Edinstvo.*

2 See A. Graan, "Counterfeiting the Nation? Skopje 2014 and the Politics of Nation Branding in Macedonia," *Cultural Anthropology* 28/1 (2013), 161-79.

3 After sharp criticisms from the Albanian political bloc against Gruevski regarding the delegitimisation and erasure from the urban landscape of the history and culture of Albanians, and as a result of political bargaining, the Macedonian government, led by VMRO-DPMNE, in 2016 included in the Skopje 2014 project a few statues depicting Albanian jurist Nexhat Agolli, poet Josif Bagëri, writer Pjetër Bogdani in the main city square and poet and translator Adem Gajtani on Art Bridge, a pedestrian bridge across the river Vardar. In 2012, the government also agreed to the refurbishment of the area in Čair where the equestrian statue of Skanderbeg was erected in 2006. The development of a square, named after Skanderbeg (*Skanderbeg Square*, or *Ploštad Skenderbeg* in Macedonian, *Sheshi i Skënderbeut* in Albanian), was well under way while I was in Skopje in the summer of 2012 and it was completed in 2017. On the mythology surrounding Skanderbeg, see F. Lubonja, "Between the Glory of a Virtual World and the Misery of a Real World" in *Albanian Identities: Myth and History*, eds. S. Schwandner-Sievers & B.J. Fischer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 91-104.

This vignette points to a deep sense of humiliation and wounded national pride in the early 2010s due to the ramifications of the Ohrid Framework Agreement for social and political life in the country. To be more precise, the Preamble to the 1991 founding constitution was amended to define the country no longer as "a national state of the Macedonian people [*narod*], in which full equality as citizens and permanent coexistence with the Macedonian people is provided for Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, Romanies, and other nationalities [*nacionalnosti*] living in the Republic of Macedonia." Rather, the amended Preamble specified that "The citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, the Macedonian people, as well as the citizens who live within its borders and who belong to the Albanian people, the Turkish people, the Vlach people, the Serbian people, the Roma people, the Bosniaks and the others (…) have decided hereby to constitute the Republic of Macedonia as an independent, sovereign state." In other words, the distinction between the Macedonian *narod*, as the "real" Macedonians to whom the state belonged, and other *nacionalnosti*, who did not enjoy the narod status and did not qualify for group rights, was erased, and mention is now made of citizens. Additionally, in 2004 Albanian was recognised as an official language, in addition to Macedonian, in the Skopje municipality and other areas in the country where Albanian speakers constitute at least 20 percent of the population.[1] Such developments in the aftermath of the 2001 conflict have left many Macedonians feeling so vulnerable to alleged Albanian aggression against the sovereignty of the Macedonian state that Skopje 2014 appeared to many Macedonians as the appropriate means of vindicating the presumed loss of what used to be rightfully theirs.

The Right to the City

The erection of the monument to Skanderbeg in 2006 and the launching of the Skopje 2014 project in 2009 provided a framework within which the entry of the Albanian rebels into Skopje in 1912 was selected as an event of major national importance, reconstructed as the "liberation" of Skopje, infused with political meaning, and commemorated for the first time in 2012 and every year thereafter in what is now North Macedonia. More specifically, the commemorative event emerged in a broader context of struggles and contestations over who gets to shape the historic qualities of everyday life in Skopje and over who gets to be the rightful "owner" of the capital in the present. For one thing, the Sunday service, the launch of a new postal stamp, the political speeches, statements, artistic performances, the collective breaking of the fast at sunset, the certificates of gratitude, and the pop music concert and fireworks that were included in the commemoration reaffirmed the social bonds uniting Albanians across religious borders in Albania, Kosovo, and (the then called) Macedonia, reasserted loyalty to the Albanian community, and reinforced the community's attachment to a shared history.[2] Beyond this, however, the commemoration provided a powerful tool for the articulation of what Harvey describes as "the right to the city," namely "a right to change and re-invent the city more after our hearts' desire."[3] While Harvey infused it with revolutionary, anti-capitalist meaning in the context of capitalist urbanisation as a class phenomenon, the concept of "the right to the city" is apt here because it suggests a struggle, by those construing themselves as less privileged, to claim the right to decide what kind of city needs to be produced. Living in an urban space dedicated foremost to the celebration of supposed Macedonian national heroes and a newly found Macedonian national pride, members of the Albanian community created an alternative history and memories, whereby the city was reinvented and redefined as a great bastion of Albanian national identity.

As Drozdzewski et al. point out, the memory of place is inextricably intertwined with the rooting of identities to places.[4] It is significant that such developments unfold in Skopje, the capital city. For, as Kong insightfully argues, "cities are the medium and outcome of power: that is to say, they are the means by which power is expressed, and at the same time, the result of power and influence."[5] In other words, Skopje today allegedly cannot be separated

1 In 2018, the government adopted a new law on languages, whereby Albanian, in addition to Macedonian, became an official language at the state level. Macedonian remained the only official language at the international level.

2 See, as well, P. Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

3 Harvey builds on the work of Henri Lefebvre, whose articulation of the "right to the city" was originally published in 1968. More in D. Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (London: Verso, 2012), 4.

4 D. Drozdzewski et al. (eds), *Memory, Place and Identity: Commemoration and remembrance of war and conflict* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

5 L. Kong, "Power and Prestige" in *The Sage Companion to the City*, eds. T. Hall et al. (London: Sage, 2008).

from Albanian heroism: its very existence is said to be the result of the supposedly courageous acts of a group of Albanian individuals who dared to stand against the Ottomans at the turn of the twentieth century. Additionally, as the major locus of state power, Skopje provides a platform for the articulation of the symbolic power members of the Albanian community have assumedly thus amassed throughout history until now. This symbolic power is not restricted to articulation per se; rather, it has a far-reaching and pervasive impact upon wider society in that it seeks to set the agenda of public discussion regarding what events and which proclaimed heroes are publicly celebrated and to produce public knowledge, beliefs, values, and norms.

The case-study of the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the so-called liberation of Skopje, then, helps us better understand how memory is a site of political and ideological strife. Members of the Albanian community unambiguously claimed continuity with a glorious past, promulgated alternative narratives and representations of the past – entwined with the (re)negotiation and (re)definition of the identity of the capital city – and addressed larger issues of Albanian inclusion and belonging in the Macedonian state in the present.

Acknowledgments

The work leading to this article was supported by grant funds provided by the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research (NCEEER), funds which were made available by the U.S. Department of State under Title VIII (The Soviet-East European Research and Training Act of 1983, as amended). I alone am responsible for the views contained herein.

The possibilities of memory: Resurrecting communist memories from the Greek Civil War in North Macedonia

by **Miladina Monova**

Abstract

Within the last decade, the field of memory studies was almost entirely deserted by social scientists. I argue that the current revival of totalizing narratives on history necessitates a rehabilitation of the concept of memory and the renewal of sociological and anthropological approaches. By looking at antifascist memories among Aegean Macedonians in North Macedonian I show how individual narratives and memory work can open an avenue to multiple understandings of the past.

Introduction

Alexis Tsipras's speech before the Greek Parliament on January 24, 2019, delivered during a tense debate over the ratification of the Prespa Agreement, provoked an unprecedented wave of positive reactions in the press and on social media in North Macedonia, but it went almost unnoticed in Greece. In just a few sentences, Tsipras acknowledged the participation of "Slavo-Macedonian fighters" in the Greek Civil War (1946–1949) and their tragic destiny as refugees who were deprived of the right to return to their homeland until 1983; made reference to the educational booklet on the Slavic Macedonian alphabet that the Greek Communist Party 'distributed' to the children of Slavo-communist partisans in the refugee community in Tashkent; and to the female partisan Mirka Ginova (Irini Ginny) by saying her name in both Macedonian and Greek.[1] Tsipras's speech made a particular impression on Aegean Macedonians – refugees from the Greek Civil War and their descendants – who felt officially recognised by the Greek state for the first time.

The Macedonian philosopher and writer Kica Kolbe described the event as a watershed moment enabling a "new history" and opening "a new area";[2] others emphasised the symbolism of reconciliation and also saw in the speech a "historical event". Among Aegean descendants of my acquaintance, I witnessed something I had never seen before: tears and feelings of gratitude towards a Greek party leader, and the prime minister at that. I argue that the magical power of Tsipras's words is due not only to the political context in which they were produced in Greece but also to the post-socialist and post-Yugoslav context in which they were received in North Macedonia. His statement certainly gestured toward recognition of the 'minority problem', but more than that, it evoked the common history of antifascist and communist struggles shared by Macedonians and many Greeks.

Recent scholarship demonstrates the potency of anti-communist narrative that dominates the memory politics of post-socialist states and more generally in the current neoliberal context[3]. The specific nature of the post-Yugoslav case as one in which memories of WWII have been thoroughly ethnicised and depolitised has also been

1 Ginova joined the Communist Party in 1943 and was the first woman to be sentenced to death and executed by the Greek government during the civil war. Hardly known to the general public in her native country, she is considered a national hero in North Macedonia, where many streets, schools, and institutions are named after her.

2 Kica Kolbe "Trauma i vina - senkata na gragjanskata vojna vo Grcija", *Deutsche Welle*, 28.01.2019, https://www.dw.com//a-47262091.

3 See Kristen Godhsee, "A Tale of "Two Totalitarianisms": The Crisis of Capitalism and the Historical Memory of Communism," *History of the Present*, Vol. 4, no. 2 (Fall 2014): 115-142.

shown[1]. In contrast, since the global economic crises of 2008 there has been a new trend of politicisation among young people, revealing what Ana Hofman terms a new form of "memory activism" that reclaims "the 'lost' radicality of anti-fascist resistance"[2] and its humanist heritage. I argue that it is pressing to go back to ethnographic approaches in memory studies – a field somehow neglected within the last years. My focus is on political memories in order to analyse the ways in which different experiences of the past shape different communities of memory, often in conflict with dominant official narratives.

About what happened to the concept of memory

Almost thirty years have passed since the publication of Marie-Claire Lavabre's influential essay on "usages of the past"[3] which calls attention to the overexploitation of the concept of memory and to the persistent methodological confusion in academic writing between the concepts of history and memory. Drawing on debates about Vichy France, memories of the Holocaust, and the Algerian War of Independence, Lavabre argues that the concept of memory has been largely misused. Instead of helping us to achieve better "intelligibility of the past", it is systematically deployed to accomplish "the final cause" of "revealing the truth about the present" and ultimately to "construct and reinforce" a presumed sense of shared identity. In sociology and anthropology, where the field was ascendant in the 1990s and first decade of the 2000s, the problems with memory were reproduced in its global career. Many researchers have since expressed a certain fatigue with the appropriation of the notion by politicians and policy makers. Others emphasize its conceptual fuzziness and empirical slipperiness, which memory shares with the concepts of culture and identity.

More severe critiques have accused memory studies as levelling an unfair but "devastating critique of the totalising aspects of historical discourse"[4] and even dismissed it as a retreat from New Historicism or as essentialist. When D. Berliner wrote his essay on the "memory boom" in anthropology,[5] the "academic market demand" for memory studies was already decreasing. It vanished almost entirely over the course of the last decade, as a simple internet search will confirm. Such is the situation today, but one cannot be content with the passive observation: "In the absence of sociology/anthropology of memory, there are no problems with the notion of memory".

In fact, the current problem with memory does not pertain to its fuzziness, but to its concerted efforts to use 'history' to wipe it out. Within the last several years, alternative collective memories have increasingly become the target of state memory entrepreneurs armed with academic jargon. Especially in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, political parties and government-sponsored bullying campaigns try to impose an outdated approach to history as a compilation of 'true facts', a dogma that does not tolerate polysemy or the pluralities of experiences and interpretations (exactly what the field of memory studies treasures). What is most concerning is that there is now precedent for EU member states to successfully leverage their EU membership to force non-member states to adopt their official ethno-national historical myths.[6]

1 See Jelena Djureinović, *The Politics of Memory of the Second World War in Contemporary Serbia. Collaboration, Resistance and Retribution* (Routledge, 2020).

2 Ana Hofman, ""We are the Partisans of Our Time": Antifascism and Post-Yugoslav Singing Memory Activism," *Popular Music and Society*, (2020): 1-15.

3 M.-C Lavabre, "Usages du passé, usages de la mémoire," *Revue française de science politique, n° 44*, (1994) : 480-493.

4 Lee Klein, "On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse. *Representations* 69, (2000): 127-150.

5 David Berliner, "Abuses of Memory: Reflections on the Memory Boom in Anthropology", *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 78, No. 1 (Winter, 2005): 197-211.

6 I refer to the Prespa Agreement (2018) that ended the "name-issue" dispute between Greece and, now, North Macedonia. Using its veto right, Greece prevented the recognition of the Macedonian state under its constitutional name for 27 years. Currently, by using the same veto mechanism, Bulgaria attempts to go even further by trying to impose as a pre-accession condition to North Macedonia its official ethno-national narrative regarding Macedonian identity from the Middle Age to the first half of the 20th century. See Tchavdar Marinov, "Europe does not understand us. Why is Bulgaria trying to veto North Macedonia EU membership?", Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, 12 February 2020.

In this essay, I examine collective memory as a reservoir of reinterpretations of the past that every present can interrogate, interpret, and reinterpret. By focusing on the life-stories of refugees from the Greek Civil War in North Macedonia, I examine "memory work"[1] as a dynamic and everlasting process that opens up new possibilities of collective memory within changing "social frameworks".[2] Every narrative of war, exile, and resettlement is a recollection of individual and/or collective experiences that offer new possibilities for re-making togetherness.

I use data collected during ethnographic field work conducted between 1997 and 1999, which I reinterpret with reference to current debates about the ways in which antifascist memories sometimes collude and compete with state-sponsored hegemonic narratives.[3] These interviews take on a new significance and meaning in the current context. In 1997-1999, my informants oscillated between the interiorised dominating narrative ethnicising refugees' experience of the Greek civil war through the dichotomy of "Greeks" and "Macedonians" over the one of "Monarcho-fascists/Communists", or Leftists/Rightists. Indeed, refugees' recollections revealed fragmented memories reflecting complex war trajectories that had generated enduring internal divisions. A new analysis of these sources shows that the antifascist and communist commitments of these people, silenced and rendered taboo under the dominating anti-communist consensus of the post-socialist Macedonian state, now make surface. This is observed within the context of a nascent social and cultural activism that reclaims a positive (re)reading of Yugoslav resistance during WWII, the communist struggle and its legacy of contestation in the present.

Refugees from the Greek Civil War in Prilep

In the aftermath of the Greek Civil War (GCW) that took place between 1946 and 1949, the town of Prilep in S.R. of Macedonia (now North Macedonia) became a major site of displacement for a growing number of refugees fleeing the armed conflict between the communist forces led by the partisans of the Democratic Army of Greece (DAG) – the military branch of the Communist party and the Government forces. For residents of the guerrilla-controlled area, fleeing across the border was the only way to escape retaliation.[4] But this was not a straightforward journey. Before setting foot in their new homeland, refugees followed different roads to exile, sojourning through the Eastern Bloc and the USSR. In Prilep, Aegean Macedonians, together with many locals who were former peasants like them and arrived with the rural-urban migration flow, would gradually embrace the rapid industrial growth of the socialist town.[5]

Tushimci, as they are called, originate from Tushim, a village in the district of Voden/Edessa,[6] in northern Greece, not far from the current border between the two states. About 80 families fled together on January 31, 1948, after the DAG ceded its positions to the government army and the villagers became exposed to bombing. They had to embark on a difficult journey through the high mountains that separate their village from Yugoslavia. Unlike other refugee communities, Tushimci spent "only" one year and a half in refugee camps in Voivodina, and eventually settled in Prilep. "The State welcomed us" recall the elderly, with employment and housing policies, and official recognition as "Macedonians from the Aegean part of Macedonia". This neighbourhood became a refugee district, "invaded" according to locals by those whom they pejoratively called Egejci.[7] Today it is a rather well-off area of the city with nice houses built by two generations of factory workers and tobacco growers.[8]

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1 Brayan Conway, *Commemoration and Bloody Sunday: Pathways of Memory* (Palgrave, 2010).

2 Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1925/1992).

3 Ljupco Risteski and Paul Kolstø, eds., *Strategies of Symbolic Nation-Building in South Eastern Europe*, (Ashgate, 2014).

4 Mark Mazower, ed., *After the War was Over: Reconstructing the Family, Nation and State in Greece, 1943-1960* (Princeton University Press, 2000). Alexandra Ioannidou. "Literature against Concealment and Distortion or the True Story of the Egejci" Colloquia Balcanica 2, Warsaw, 389-413 "Greek Civil War in Eastern Europe and Central Asia". New Balkan Politics, n°7-8, 2013.

5 Miladina Monova, *Parcours d'exil, récits de non-retour. Les Egéens en République de Macédoine* (PhD diss.) Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales. Editions ANRT, 2002.

6 The Slavic name of the region of Edessa is Voden.

7 Kica Kolbe, Egejci (Skopje: Kultura, 1990). Miladina Monova, "The impossible citizenship: the case of Macedonians, refugees from the Greek civil war in the Republic of Macedonia," in *Migrations from and to Southeastern Europe*, eds. A. Krasteva, A. Kasabova and D. Karabinova (Ravena, Longo Editore 2010), 253-266.

8 Miladina Monova,"De l'historicité à l'ethnicité: Les Égéens ou ces autres Macédoniens", *Balkanologie*, vol. V, n°1-2, ("Homelands in question: Paradoxes of Memory and Exile in South-Eastern Europe"), K. Brown (dir.), Paris, 2001, 179-197.

Tushimci struck me as the most compact and cohesive refugee group among the ones I encountered during my field research. They had managed to remain together through their entire refugee journey and maintained internal cohesion in the new settlement. Five decades after their exile, with entire new generations having been born in the neighbourhood and despite intermarriage with locals, they were still called Aegeans (Egejci). Connected through kinship ties, which were reinforced by the pattern of village endogamy that the community had practiced before migration, they still stood a little apart from other refugee groups.

In their recollections, my interlocutors generally insist on what they share rather than on what divides them. Common war experience, forced migration and resettlement, relationships of exclusion/inclusion with locals have reinforced their community of memory, first as refugees, then as Aegean Macedonians. However, shared trajectories do not always imply shared memories and interpretations of the past. During interviews there were long intervals of silence on topics that I instinctively avoided, feeling that I should not address them directly, or rather leave them for another day. While resentment towards "locals", "Greeks", "the State" were rather easy to communicate to outsiders, tensions inside the community generated by internal divisions based on conflictual memories, took some time to surface. What made this memory exercise even more difficult was that for the majority it was the first time they were openly discussing their past in the presence of their children and grandchildren. This is how "memory work" is performed according to Ricoeur with its both social and psychological dimension implying that memory is our only resource concerning the past[1].

Behind the collective "We" that individuals tend to employ when narrating their life-stories – "we, the family", "we, the village", "we, the refugees", a collective memory fissure started to appear in an otherwise strong commitment to display internal kinship and community cohesion. This dichotomy became apparent within the families when "working" together with my interlocutors on their memories of war, exile, resettlement and the way in which present-day debates in Macedonia impinge on their personal experience. On the one hand, there were the *deca begalci* (child-refugees) whose singular war experience and collective exile in East European orphanages, away from their families, have shaped a particular community of memory, apart from the others.[2] Called also "Child-Grandfathers", they present themselves as innocent victims to whom society owes justice and must give redemption.[3] As Keith Brown has demonstrated, the 'obsession' with the event of evacuation in March 1948 is not only a collective trauma but also a militant strategy. On the other hand, there were the fighters (borci), or partisans in the Communist army who were considered also as victims, but not innocent. They were adults during the events and therefore responsible for their choices and acts. Those parents, brothers, and sisters of *deca begalci* who engaged with the partisans are notable for their reluctance to make claims and public statements: they show no eagerness to "remember the past", little presence in the media, little participation in associations and militant organisations.

I argue that the ethnicisation and nationalisation of communist and anti-fascist struggle started already in socialist Yugoslavia with the official historical narrative on National liberation struggles (*narodooslobоditelni borbi*) - a concept that encompasses all "national liberation wars" (narodooslobоditelni vojni – NOV) movements for national liberation, insurrections in different parts of geographic Macedonia from the 19th century to WWII, and ultimately the Greek Civil War.[4] Communist fighters in Aegean Macedonia are seen first as led by their national ideal, the political and communist affiliation becoming a secondary but positive and prestigious asset under the socialist Yugoslav regime.[5] With the breakup of Yugoslavia and the shift to anti-communism as the central state policy, the refugees'

1 Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

2 The so-called exodus took place in March 1948 when the Communist party of Greece evacuated in Yugoslavia and Albania about 30 000 children from the war zone under the control of its army. "Slavo-Macedonian" children in exile, as well as their parents were not allowed to return to their birth places. They spent years in orphanages in the Eastern bloc before re-joining their parents also exiled, mostly in the S.R. of Macedonia but also in the diaspora in the Third World. See also, Loring M. Danforth and Riki van Boeschoten, *Children of the Greek Civil War: Refugees and the Politics of Memory* (University of Chicago Press, 2012); Anna Kurpiel, "Macedonian Refugees from the Greek Civil War: From Separation to a Transnational Community" in *Migration and Border-Making.* Reshaping Policies and Identities, eds. R. Saata, J. Roose, and P. Karolewski (Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 189-208.

3 Keith Brown, "Macedonia's child-grandfathers: The transnational politics of memory, exile and return, (1948-1998)", *Donald W. Treadgold Papers,* University of Washington, n° 38, 2003.

4 See for example "Egejska Makedonija vo NOV. Dokumenti za istorijata na makedonskiot narod", Vol. 1-7, R. Kirijasovski, V. Pejov, T. Simovski, eds., Arhiv na Makedonija, Skopje, 1971-1996.

5 The Greek communist political ideology during the Civil war entwined the national and communist questions and supported the recognition of a Slavo-Macedonian minority.

communist memory has become officially a negative historical experience that is to be sent into oblivion. Communist fighters have been ejected from the pedestal of war victims and heroes of antifascist and national affirmation struggles. They found themselves confined in the position of being blameable and accountable for their past political choices.

Interlocutors who were former partisans, often communicate feelings of remorse and guilt when they recall the separation with the children "given to partisans" in March 1948. Some have even interiorised the belief that by giving their children away they not only harmed their families, but also facilitated the Greek nationalist agenda of "ethnic cleansing" in Aegean Macedonia. For decades, adult partisans felt the silent blame of committing a "historical fault" towards their children and Macedonians in Greece. By enrolling as communist guerrillas, they had chosen the loser's side, and naively let themselves be used for a cause lost in advance: the official recognition of the Macedonian minority in Greece.

At the end of the 1990s, among "child-grandfathers" and the second generation born in the Republic of Macedonia, a common interpretation of the past was becoming dominant. They agreed that if adults in the villages had opposed the evacuation of their children to Yugoslavia, the Greek government would have been compelled to make an amnesty. This anachronism, ultimately, makes adults and partisans responsible for the last ethnic cleansing of Macedonians in the history of this region. In the 1990s, when the generation of the fighters was still among the living, this memory divide was not yet publicly assumed within the S.R. of Macedonia. After all, the two categories of refugees (adults-partisans and children now grandfathers) belonged to the same families and lived under the same roof until the vanishing of the war generation. Today, with the new generation and re-evaluations of the official state narrative, this hidden controversy moved from the sphere of family intimacy that cultivates the unspoken, tacit and implied, to the public sphere and the more general debate on the legacies of communism, antifascism, and the ways in which they contributed to Macedonian nation-state building. Will the prevailing ethno-national narrative about the 'heroic' participation of Aegean Macedonians in the GCW remain? Or will their political memories (communist, leftist, antifascist) resurrect in a renewed collective memory with a narrative that challenges the dominating anti-communist ideology? Here, I show how old recollections of partisans that are no longer among us give the possibility for the second hypothesis.

Hierarchies of suffering and internal divisions: The Partisans and The Fighters (Borci)

During my research, war identities within the community which appeared homogeneous and cohesive at first glance started to look more fragmented as I got closer to the people, their stories and their complex trajectories. Within a given refugee group, especially during socialism, there are two war identities that grant social prestige: that of a child-refugee, who spent several years in an East European orphanage, and that of a Communist Fighter consecrated by "the State" with the official title of veteran. The value scale arranges villages and sub-regions in Greek Macedonia (Lerin/Florina, Kostur/Kastoria, Voden/Edeessa) along "bigger or lesser merits" for their role in the anti-fascist and national liberation struggle. Tushimci, while pondering on these topics, often express a feeling of inferiority: "We have only five children-refugees" and "We have only six Fighters with pensions". Indeed, as the majority fled 1 year and 9 months before the end of the war, only members of three families stayed long enough to "give children to partisans" in March 1948. Therefore, I was told: "If you want to learn about the real tragic history, you have to meet people from other villages! In the villages around the Prespa lakes, people gave all their children and also had many more partisans then us. For you, they are more interesting than us!"

After several months researching Tushimci, I started spending more time with families from other villages in Aegean Macedonia and it was quickly noticed in the neighbourhood. Some even expressed anxiety: "Are you going to leave us now that you found more interesting people?" Refugees from Lerin/Florina and Prespa made comments in a similar mood, as they positioned themselves on the top of the scale of suffering: "What are you doing with people from Tushim?!

They know almost nothing about the real war! If you want to learn history, you must see our people", or "Did you like the Mitrov family? You see, I told you they are very interesting for you". One day I overheard my key informant, a second-generation refugee, saying to her old parents, "Don't worry, she will not leave us (*nema da ne ostai*). Of course, she goes elsewhere, because she needs to compare. She is going to write a big book, naturally, she has to say more about all Aegeans".

Soon after I found a discrepancy between the collective memory of the village and official narratives about Communist Fighters (*borci*) and partisans. A simple question arose: Why do Tushimci say they don't have Fighters when so many people participated in the battles and call themselves partisans? Why are not all partisans celebrated as Fighters? Peyo, for example, at the age of 70 still cries when recalling combats. He was enrolled at the age of 14, one year before fleeing with the rest of the village to Yugoslavia. The communist regime did not grant him the title of Communist fighter and the benefits for veterans. The same can be said about other men and women. The next stage of the investigation showed a far more complex picture and the hidden semantics of words such as "partisan", "fighter" and "the Fighter". All who had been recruited by DAG and for some period fought against "the monarcho-fascists" could be called partisans. But if they did not keep fighting until the end of the war and fled with their families to the Eastern bloc, then the Greek communist party considered them as deserters and in Yugoslavia most of them did not receive the status of "Fighter against fascism and for national liberation". (*Borec protiv fašizmot i za nacionalno osloboduvanje*). The "true combatants" called Borci (*Fighters*), are veterans of the Greek resistance during WWII or fighters in the civil war who stayed until the end and participated in the legendary battles on the mountains Grammos and Vico/Vitsi. Some fled with the defeated Greek communists via Albania to the countries of the Eastern bloc, most with the elite of the party to the Soviet Union (Tashkent). In Socialist Macedonia, where they finally got established, they were able to provide documents and find witnesses attesting to their membership in the party and, more importantly, to their participation in the war until its end.

Ironically, "the elite fighters" exiled in Tashkent endured the hardest political and living conditions after joining their families in Yugoslav Macedonia. In the 1960s-70s, nearly twenty years after the end of the war, they were finally "repatriated" not in their birthplace but in the "fatherland" (*tatkovina*) as "the place where we have a state" is generally called. They confess they had arrived in a different country compared to the one their fellow villagers experienced in the aftermath of the GCW. The story of the veterans' exemplary antifascism coupled with their struggle for the Macedonian national liberation, had already played its role in the making of an official Yugoslav Macedonian narrative and for strengthening the social bond among ethnic Macedonians in the post-war socialist federation. The veterans themselves were no longer needed and surprisingly, as they recall, not even expected to come back.

Over time, all the refugees are becoming unnecessary to the state's narrative construction. At present, while Macedonian historiography and identity narratives officially still assume an antifascist rhetoric, the emphasis has already shifted to an atemporal ethnonational struggle, at significant distance from the initial antifascist and communist messages. When I conducted fieldwork in 1997-1999, this process was already underway; "Aegean Macedonians" had become a label for "ethnic Macedonians" from the Aegean part of Macedonia. This identity was taken for granted as if it had been there from Antiquity throughout the legendary insurrection of Ilinden (1903), until the time of the Greek civil war when the last remaining Macedonian villages were almost emptied from "slavo-communists".

Two stories of Fighters

Macedonian fighters of the DAG established in Uzbekistan started applying for repatriation after the beginning of the process of political relaxation and Khrustchev's visit to Tito in July 1955. The GCP in exile supported the Soviet military interventions in Hungary in 1958 and continued harsh anti-Yugoslav propaganda in the Stalinist mood. For Macedonians, applications for repatriation were made even more difficult. As Greek political émigrés, they had to apply for Yugoslav citizenship from the Soviet Union and prove their loyalty to the Yugoslav state. It took another 5, 6, or 10 years before my interlocutors arrived in Skopje.

In Skopje they did not find the "homeland" of their dreams. They imagined Tito's Yugoslavia as rich and open, and of course welcoming to those who had fought until the last battle with the Slavo-Macedonian battalion. Their disappointment was bitter: "No flowers, no joy, there was no one waiting for us when we first set foot on Skopje's central train's station". Except, that is, "agents" from the Ministry of Interior. The arriving repatriated "citizens" were taken for interrogation to the prison Idrizovo, as they were suspected of espionage, of acting as a Soviet Trojan horse.

"I left a good profession in Tashkent to come here and to live in poverty", said Kraste. He did not expect such poor conditions in "Tito's Yugoslavia". The economic situation had worsened. In the 1960s, the specific employment policies for Aegean refugees were no longer in place, the country suffered from de-ruralisation, overpopulation, and unemployment. The refugees were not authorised to settle in the same cities as their relatives and they had to battle before finally coming to Prilep.

Kraste came with his wife Zoia, who had been a child-refugee in Poland before joining her mother and sister partisans exiled in Tashkent. In Prilep, Kraste went to register his family with the social services but could not even fill out the form for social support and veteran benefits. The employee pushed him out every time he tried: "What are you Aegeans still coming here for begging, you are Gypsy, we don't need you!" One day, someone on the train overheard Kraste speaking in Russian and started a conversation with him. "He just enjoyed talking with people knowing Russian. Borka Talevski, professor in Latin and Russian and a very respected person in the city". The new friend decided to "take care" of the couple. "He found me a job, when it was almost impossible, resolved the problem with the municipality employee", concluded Kraste with the feeling of gratitude. This is how the couple started their new life, already at the age of 40-45. When Zoia and Kraste were told by "envious locals" that they are privileged because of their pensions "for antifascism" they felt angry. Fighters who came earlier may have had an easier life in a country with economic growth, but those from Tashkent did not see much of it. In Prilep they feel apart, as much as elsewhere. "What do you want me to do with the title of Fighter and big hero!? It doesn't mean anything if they treat you like this".

Not heroes. Just "with the partisans"

There is a silent rivalry between Vardar and Aegean Macedonians who, according to a shared conception most eagerly participated in the antifascist Resistance during WW II, fought with the communists during the civil war. Refugees considered they had made more sacrifice for the right cause while locals received peace and the "republic" as home state "without much effort". In the context of nation-state building within Yugoslavia, Macedonian participation in both the Resistance during WWII and the civil war made a stock of exemplary antifascists and physical evidence of the existence of a Macedonian ethnic minority in Greece. But in everyday life, local Macedonians do not subscribe to this official narrative. For them, Egejci are neither true Macedonians, nor true heroes. Inversely, Aegeans notice that you can hardly find a Vardar Macedonian in a veteran association: "Why do they (locals) stare at our pensions and social benefits? Why do they say we are privileged, as we have stolen this money?! During the war, in my village (in Prespa) their partisans came to our houses, we opened our doors. At that time, we were all the same, and now, we are just some dirty Aegeans".

Still, there were, as mentioned above, layers and layers of distinction about the value of each person's contribution to the antifascist cause with reference to categories that were supported by the Yugoslav state. On the surface, everyone was proud. Interlocutors who have war experience but fled the battlefield are also incorporated into the "grand" Macedonian national narrative. In everyday life, families having a grandfather or grandmother partisan are treated with respect, whether or not he/she holds the Fighter distinction. Officially, the blame of being a "deserter" did not survive on Yugoslav territory after the defeat of the communists in Greece. All "Slavo-Macedonian" Greek refugees risked imprisonment and deportation if they returned home, and the Yugoslav regime considered them firstly as victims of Greek nationalism.

But the status of "fighter" was not attributed without a document from the party and witnesses who fought in the same battalion. In general, Tushimci partisans seem to agree that they "do not deserve" such official honours as those who made the ultimate sacrifice by leaving their families in order to fight for a bigger cause. "Everyone cannot be a great Fighter!".

Yet when I invite people to recall their physical experience of the combat, another value scheme was invoked. A first reaction was often, "Don't ask the elderly, they don't like talking about it, some went to prison for desertion". Then it was the degree of "suffering" that people recalled concerning physical harm, losses, and different levels of violence that made one a fighter. This schema was combined with the internalised stigma of "deserter" and the perceived injustice of the social ranking as a "second class fighter" to produce statements such as this: "Yes, he was a *borec* (fighter), but he did not take *borecka* (pension for war veteran)"; or as Peyo used to say about himself, "I was just partisan for some time".

The acceptance or rejection of "blame" for one's actions and status is also complicated by memories of how choices and decisions had been made within the patriarchal families and in the midst of conflict. When recruitment for the DAG started, I was told, "If we had a choice, we would send the oldest brother(s). We gave one or two men to the partisans, at least one son has to stay home and take care of the family and the youngest". Some bigger families sent two or three males with the head of the household. With the growing need for fighters, DAG put more pressure on peasants in Slavo-Macedonian villages to enrol women and young adults. This is how the youngest fighters, aged 14-15 years old, joined the communist rebellion, together with older sisters.

For example, Peyo enlisted with the partisans at the age of 14 and stayed two years in the mountains. When he recalls this experience, he always cries. In his family there were three other men enrolled; he was not supposed to go, but he had to join the partisans or face certain death by remaining at home. The first weeks he was trained to hold a gun, but not long after he joined the "true fighters". He still has one leg injured, but in Prilep he was not eligible for an invalid war pension. He did not even apply. This is because he was "just partisan for some time". He deserted in January 1948 and joined the others from Tushim to cross the border. Again, he expressed his desertion as a non-choice: "I didn't have the choice to stay, we were dying there, it was already over. It was suicide. Only a few survived on Grammos and all went to Tashkent". He arrived in Yugoslavia as an ordinary refugee, yet village's collective memory records him as a true fighter despite the blame of deserter.

Riste does not feel shame about saying that he ran away from his battalion when he knew the village was going to flee. He passed the border with his sister and lied when he was brought to the Greek camps where Yugoslav authorities did not interfere with the GCP decisions. Riste lied about his name and his age (he claimed to be 14, but he was 17): "and of course it didn't work". He was identified by fellow fighters and his name was already on the list of deserters. He was sent to a labour camp in Western Macedonia, and he managed to escape the forced return to the Greek front. "This is why I am a partisan but not a Fighter". Today, despite his desertion he supports the "communist ideal, or socialist". "The post-WWII government in Greece was fascist, that's all. It was not only Macedonians, Greeks were also fighting against it. We were together, we wanted a better life".

Vande was 16 when he deserted in the summer of 1948 – 6 months after his village left. At that time "the party did not care anymore about age, they took everyone – elderly, children handicapped". Through Yugoslav Macedonia, he went all the way to Gakovo in Voivodina where refugees from his region were settled. He also lied to authorities saying he was 14 years old. In his case, "the party" could not find out the truth. For his part, he said, he did not apply for Borec not only because he does not "fit" the category, but also because he doesn't feel himself to be either a "big" communist or a "big" fighter as others fellow former partisans.

Conclusion

The communist fighters I interviewed years ago are no longer among us but their political memories take a new meaning within the changing social framework of collective remembrance in North Macedonia. A young generation of activists challenging the hegemony of ethnonationalism and free market ideology claims the right to revitalise the humanist and progressive legacies of antifascism. After the university and high school student protests (2014-2015) that culminated with the Colourful Revolution (2016) and the political changes that followed, this emerging and grassroots process has become more visible. Aegean Macedonians' story also bridges with antifascist memories in Greece, at regional and European level, where similar socio-political processes also take place. Often, tenants of the hidden memory remain silent and if their narratives are not transmitted to subsequent generations, only resentments survive. When alternative memories are excavated through memory work, rigid bureaucratic categories and "true facts" recorded in history books become subject to revision. Deconstruction is a necessary tool to break down into pieces "facts" that are taken for granted. At this level, sociological and anthropological approaches can contribute to disclose narratives and therefore to open new possibilities for history.

Spiritual Continuity and the Way of Things: Discussing the Past while creating Muslim Networks in Romani Communities

by **Ksenia Trofimova**

Abstract

The paper aims to trace and explore the timely memory discourse that shapes self-representation strategies of new religious actors in the narratives about spiritual continuity, transmission of religious traditions and establishment of institutional networks. Basing on the stories by early generation religious leaders, who directly took part in spreading the Sufi tradition among Roma Muslims and its institualization in North Macedonia, several narrative templates used for self-representation, - exclusion, social distance, mistrust and autonomy, - are revealed. The first ones refer to the limited access for Roma Muslims to local official Muslim infrastructure and knowledge due to social distance. Being separated from common Sufi communities, Roma Muslims were regarded with mistrust due to atomization of the local communities, lack of official approval of their religious authority, and inter-ethnic issues. Finally, the concept of freedom becomes the discursive variable, depending of situational interpretations, mostly addressing to the possibility to teach/serve officially.

Introduction

«Islam has been introduced to Roma people here through many hardships and torments»[1], shaykh Rashid[2] flatly answered as if closing the book, put a lid on it although our conversation has just begun (Skopje 2014). We are having coffee, as usual, in a small hall for gatherings and performance of rituals (sema'khane/semana) which shaykh Rashid – a spiritual leader of the Khalwatiyya order – arranged in his own home, with a separate entrance. And as usual, there are people present in the room witnessing and often actively participating in our conversation; they are mainly members of this brotherhood who pledged to their teacher.

Our meetings with shaykh Rashid are often timed with weekly or occasional *dhikr* – a regular invocation prayer gathering the whole group or its core. The rite itself is usually opened and concluded with negotiations dedicated to various religious issues or those connected with an actual social, political, or sometimes, domestic agendas. Shaykh Rashid commonly avoids marking his presence in such negotiations. He regulates a conversation silently noting the moods and intentions of his disciples and joins as necessary: he does not disregard issues giving rise to the most active discussion. Shaykh's involvement in discussions on various matters forces him to contextually refer to the past, in a broad sense, through references to the tradition or to consider his memories. The latter comprise his personal and/or collective experience – when Rashid speaks on behalf of several "We" and recounts the becoming of the local Muslim (Sufi) communities through this experience. I too, encourage him to narrate his personal or communal experience when I start a topic which is not simple to sort out without referring to the chain of previous events and situations. Master's disciples present at the gatherings and at our personal meetings, as well as the leaders of other religious groups that share the space of the tradition here take up the proposed memory vector, agree emotionally with it and thus translate a certain image of the past to the younger generation.

This ethnographic essay addresses retrospective narratives that follow and contextualize religious continuity processes, and specifically, the case of elaboration of Sufi institutional network among Roma Muslims in North Mace-

1 Serb.: "Islam je u romsku populaciju ulazio mnogim teškim patnjama, mukama"

2 All names have been changed.

-donia[1]. For the last several decades, Roma Muslims have become one of the key actors in transmitting the Sufi traditions[2] in Macedonia and other former Yugoslav republics. My interlocutors are the early generations of religious leaders who were direct participants in the spread of Sufi traditions among Roma Muslims and its institutionalisation, or pass their teachers' experience of involvement in the process. This paper draws upon talks and observations I took part in within my field work conducted systematically between 2011 and 2019 in North Macedonia (Skopje), as well as in Serbia (Niš) and Kosovo (Prizren).

"It is hard" / "It has been hard"[3] is a virtually pervasive framework for shaykh Rashid's and other spiritual leaders' and their disciples' memories and descants related to religious activities of the communities and, wider, of the social fields in which such activities emerged, developed and are realised now. I consider "It is hard" as a discursive framework that both unites and structures memories and therefore imageries of various epochs and distinguishes various "We" on which behalf narratives about the past are formed.

The ritual hall guided by baba Rashid is commonly associated in the vernacular language with a group it hosts, and acts as an institutional cell in the locally formed *Khalwatiyya* brotherhood network. This network links genealogically and practically several Sufi fellowships operating in the Republic of North Macedonia and beyond – within the borders of former Socialist Yugoslavia (mainly in Kosovo and Serbia), as well as in some Western European countries. The Khalwatiyya order is one of the most popular brotherhoods among the local Sufi communities, along with other fellowships, such as *Rifā'iya, Qādiriya, Sa'diyya* etc[4]. In general, spread and rooting of the Sufi traditions, as well as development of an institutional network of this and other tariqas in this region is a tribute to the Ottoman Empire[5]. At the same time, emergence and numerical growth of religious groups – cells within the regional Sufi network among the local Roma population and localisation of new institutions within the mono-ethnic Roma urban neighbourhoods – is purely a product of socialist Yugoslavia and of the period that followed its collapse.

Thus, these three historical periods each of which has its own "before and after" markers are the basic reference points when speaking about certain aspects of spiritual continuity and religious practices in terms of *localité*. Noteworthy, narrations of the past are seldom consistent and self-sufficient. More often, plots in the heart of me-

1 As reported by the last census conducted in 2002 , Muslims coming from different ethnic communities make up a 33% of total population in North Macedonia – a nominally secular state , where followers of various religious traditions have been living side by side for centuries. In addition, according to the statistics combined from alternative demographic sources, most of Roma citizens are recorded as Muslims. Rexhepi, "Macedonia," 451-453. Even though religious identity and representation due to its multi-layered structure and contextual reliance is quite challenging to quantify correctly, my interlocutors refer to Islam at least as a cultural background that influences to some extent their worldview and social practices. See: "The Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia", Article 19, accessed March 21, 2021 https://www.sobranie.mk/the-constitution-of-the-republic-of-macedonia-ns_article-constitution-of-the-republic-of-north-macedonia.nspx; State Statistical Office of the Republic of Macedonia, *Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Republic of Macedonia 2002 – Book X* (Skopje: The State Statistical Office, 2002), 334; Piro Rexhepi, "Macedonia," in *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe*, ed. Oliver Scharbrodt (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 451-453.

2 Sufism (Taṣawwuf – a discursive term to approach a range of spiritual teachings, practices and their institutions within Islam) entered territories of the former Rumelia as early as the 14th/15th centuries following several waves of Ottoman invasions and conquests. Various brotherhoods (tariqas – from Ar. ṭarīḳa meaning "road, route, way or path") established their presence gradually by responding to changing socio-political realities, adjusted borders and expanding their influence across social strata in urban and rural areas. Skopje as well as neighbouring cities were also included in a long-term process of Sufi network formations in the region. For a brief but comprehensive overview of the issue in question see Harry T. Norris, *Islam in the Balkans* (University of South Carolina Press, 1993); Nathalie Clayer, "Muslim Brotherhood Networks in South-Eastern Europe," *European History Online,* 2011. Accessed March 21, 2021. http://ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/european-networks/islamic-networks/nathalie-clayer-muslim-brotherhood-networks-in-south-eastern-europe; Viktor Trajanovski, *Dervishkiot Red Khalveti-Khaiiati vo Ohrid* (Skopje, 2018); Alexander Knysh, "Definitions of Sufism as a Meeting place of Eastern and Western "Creative Imaginations"," in *Sufism East and West. Mystical Islam and Cross-Cultural Exchange in the Modern World,* ed. Jamal Malik and Saeed Zarrabi-Zadeh (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 54-75.

3 Serb.: "Teško je" / "Bilo je teško"

4 The brotherhoods mentioned above were formed between the 12th and the 14th/15th centuries in the regions of Central Asia and the Middle East, while their influence was later spread throughout the world. The respected teachings and communities presented by various leaders and branches have been establishing their networks in the Ottoman Balkans from the 17th century onwards.

5 Norris, *Islam in the Balkans*; Clayer, "Muslim Brotherhood Networks in South-Eastern Europe"; Džemal Ćehajić, "Društveno-politički, Religiozni, Književni I drugi aspekti derviških redova u jugoslavenskim zemljama," *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju* 34 (1985): 93-113.

-mories are reproduced in fragments and woven into a broader narrative context – of spiritual continuity, Muslim tradition and its local variations; authenticity of certain practices and of every-day routine setting a perspective for the religious tradition transmission and interaction of its followers. References to the past are especially characteristic for the narratives of representation of the religious leaders and fellows, representation of communities and for hagiographical accounts. A temporal vector of such narratives allows to follow a spiritual path emphasising the sequence of events/situations that within vernacular hermeneutics are recognized as markers that determine one's spiritual transformation (or that of a group of believers).

The corpus of researches on oral history and cultural memory emphasize the role the retrospective narratives play in making of individual and collective contextual identities[1]. As Elinor Ochs and Lisa Capps put it, "*As narratives reach out to tap a preexisting identity, they construct a fluid, evolving identity-in-the making*"[2] Indeed, most often, a gaze in the past where reasons and explanations to the current way of things are kept and found is set by the events happening here and now, i.e. retrospective narratives help us learn much more about the present, then about the past. In this regard, some challenging situations in the present find connection with the relevant ways things were earlier, be that in the "Turkish times" or in the "times of communism".

Obviously, each of the mentioned historic periods may be introduced into a live narrative in different ways. It can often be noted how a certain period is presented as an age per se and in such cases, one's personal experience is dissolved in the experience of several "We" and is replicated through transfer of popular formulas:

- about spiritual purity, eminence and authenticity of the Islamic tradition in *Turkish times* (in times of the Ottoman empire);
- about the common "fraternity and unity" and Order in times of socialist *Yugoslavia*;
- about extensive persecution and pressure inflicted on ordinary believers and groups in the *times of communism*;
- about freedom that the believers acquired when *democracy* has been established.

Such formulas are typical for *ad hoc* idealisation or demonization of an epoch, for broad narratives, which as Jan Kubik and Michel Bernhard argue are occasionally shaped by mnemonic entrepreneurs of different kind and operate within the framework of politics of memory.[3] At the same time these broad formulas might resonate or come in contrast with the stories, that are meant to make sense of one's personal lived experience. The later one being narrated as if put back together from numerous fragments, is embedded in the order of things, that is formed at the grassroots and reproduced, or more precisely, constructed subjectively through the practice of recalling. Such combinations and contrasts, associated with various (social) orders make the basis for the images of the past and through them, for those social and cultural contexts within which spiritual continuity and the development of Muslim (Sufi) traditions in the local Roma communities takes place.

This paper aims to identify the enduring plots and motives woven into the fragmented narrations of the past transmitted by the spiritual leaders both within the Sufi communities and crossing the boundaries outside these groups in conversations with outsiders (such "friendly outsiders" like me), and thus forming the "guidance" on remembering and the way to speak about social realities. When approaching structural organisational of a narrative – *"a cultural tool in collective remembering,"*[4] James Wertsch distinguishes between two levels of narrative analysis: "specific narratives" and "schematic narrative templates". Whereas specific narratives deal with single unique events, schematic templates are concerned with general story lines and act as underlying patterns.[5] Focusing on such patterns will help further tracing and exploring the timely memory discourse, that shapes self-representation strategies of new religious actors in the narratives about spiritual continuity, transmission of religious traditions and establishment of institutional network.

1 See for example Aleida Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma: Memory and the Politics of Postwar Identity*, trans. Sarah Clift (New-York: Fordham University Press, 2016); Alistair Thomson, "Memory and Remembering in Oral History," in T*he Oxford Handbook on Oral History*, ed. Donald A. Ritchie (Oxford University Press, 2011), 77-95.

2 Elinor Ochs and Lisa Capps, "Narrating the Self," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1996): 22.

3 Jan Kubik and Michael Bernhard, "A Theory of the Politics of Memory," in *Twenty Years After Communism. The Politics of Memory and Commemoration*, ed. Michael Bernhard and Jan Kubik (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 7-34.

4 James V. Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 60.

5 James V. Wertsch, "The Narrative Organization of Collective Memory," ETHOS 36 (1) (2008) :122-124.

A couple of years ago, we were talking with shaykh Ibrahim at his lodge (*tekke*) owned by the Sa'diyya brotherhood. Shaykh Ibrahim's tekke is located close to the "old" city, *čaršija*, with its Ottoman mosques and mausoleums, on the outskirts of a trade quarter.

From the Sa'diyya tekke

Almost nothing is known about the founder of this tekke. According to the legend which is being formed now and which the skaykh himself follows, the lodge was founded by a travelling dervish. The tekke was founded in the late 19th century in a poor neighbourhood; donations from the visitors were small and its fellows, apart from the "Turks", included the Roma. The last "Turkish" shaykh of this lodge, baba Mehmed-Ali, decided at the turn of the 1940s and 1950s to move to Turkey and left the care of the lodge to dervishes remaining in the city. As it is said, the shaykh died on his way to Istanbul and his place in Skopje was taken by Orkhan, the now deceased grandfather of the current community leader. Shaykh Ibrahim stresses that his family are of the kovači subgroup belonging to a certain trade (craftsmanship) in Skopje[1]. I am often reminded by other interlocutors that this group are old residents of Skopje and it is distinguished from other Roma subgroups residing here for its positive reputation and therefore, a higher (informal) status maintained both within the Roma community and the macro-community. Shaykh Ibrahim recalls that his grandfather earned respect of the members of the brotherhood remaining in the city through decency and hard work: the family had their own workshop and a shop. Thus, the Sufi site along with the tradition were passed on (*amanet*) to the representatives of the Roma community.

That year, just at the beginning of our discussion, a middle-aged woman walked into the meeting hall. She spoke chaotically – first, with one of the dervishes, then with the shaykh himself. It was only clear from her words that she was looking for someone who could take over all the necessary rites usually performed on the 52nd day after a person's death. It was about her mother's commemoration. According to the tradition, which there are certain splits over, on the 52nd day after one's death, gatherings are arranges to honour memory of the dead one, Qur'an is read there. That said, the woman got confused, mixed up and repeated the word "*dhikr*" among other. Given the context, *dhikr* was associated for her with reading Qur'an and singing religious songs and she just used a familiar word. Her confused thought gave a start for another round of our conversation.

1 Trajko Petrovski, *The Roms in Macedonia Today V. 1* (Skopje: Romano Ilo, 2000), 58-63.

"Difficult situation. Can't move on", noted shaykh Ibrahim regretfully (Skopje 2018). This remark not only referred to the contested vernacular beliefs and practices shaping religious every-day routine, but also to their vast presence and a variety of agents and platforms of their performance. In his opinion, such agents of "false", "erroneous" knowledge are numerous Sufi leaders that appeared in the last 40 to 50 years and brought together Roma believers from Skopje and other North Macedonia, Kosovo and Serbia settlements around them.[1] Shaykh Ibrahim also notes that the way of spiritual ignorance (*džahilija*) setting the perspective of local Sufi groups development in the Roma environment originates in a certain order of things typical for all the way back to the Ottoman rule (Tursko vreme/Tursko doba). The way of things in question is based on a social distance established towards the Roma by the macro-community: *"Well, with Turks, the Roma never went there [to the Sufi lodges – K.T.], they were not welcome there. They were not expected there, people were wealthier there. We were looked at like, pass me a glass. We were looked down on. Even if there were one, two, three, five Roma, they were expected to serve – to clean, do this or that"* (Skopje 2019).

In shaykh Ibrahim's interpretation, social distancing was expressed through strategic discrimination of the Muslim Roma by other local Muslim communities[2] having enough power and resources through expelling them from the process of religious education and corresponding activities. Apart from the impersonal statement according to which the Roma "were not allowed in a mosque", some spiritual community leaders cite a fragment from Mohammed Seid Serdarević (1882–1918) – a well-known Muslim scholar, author of the first practical guide in Bosnian language – as an example. In this fragment, he makes a fatwa that says it is not advisable (*makrūh*) to appoint a "second-grade person, such as a Roma or an illegitimate child" as an imam.[3]

These ways have also extended for the period of state socialism despite the educational possibilities that have become available for the Roma communities. *"Then the Turks left and there was nobody left to go there [to the tekkes – K.T.] and then it all started with the Roma. But they received no knowledge. Leave him ignorant for him to not know his rights and request nothing in his right"* (Skopje 2019).

Even though Roma believers were allowed in the Sufi communities and the range of their statuses in these communities' hierarchy expanded along with the change of social and cultural conditions, they obtained and then transmitted only fragmented and superficial knowledge. The latter reduced mainly to mimetic practices in the ritualistic sphere and transmission of scattered information. Mention of the dhikr in this very context was a trigger for shaykh Ibrahim actuating memories and the relevant image of an epoch. Stating disconnection of the Roma disciples from obtaining systemic religious education and structured knowledge[4], shaykh Ibrahim presents it as resulting from exclusion strategy within the ethnic policy maintained earlier and now by the communities he determines as bearing the "authentic" Muslim tradition. *"What about the Roma? Let them graze cows. It is a national issue then"* (Skopje 2019).

The same story is transmitted by shaykh Rashid when speaking about "questionable" practices popular among several Sufi groups[5]: *"It is all because of ignorance. There was no one to give them true knowledge. There was someone, but they*

1 Noteworthy, low level of religious literacy of certain Sufi leaders is the key point for their stigmatisation on the intra-confessional level.

2 Depending on the historical stage described these communities are identified differently in the narratives: "Muslims" (*muslimani*) or "Turks" (*turci*) in a generalised way when speaking about the period preceding emigration of the Muslims from the Socialist Yugoslavia in the 1950s; when speaking about the subsequent period, specific communities – Albanians, Turks, etc. – are mentioned along with the generalised "them" or "Muslims".

3 Muhamed S. Serdarević, *Fikh-ul-Ibadat* (Sarajevo: Vrhovno Islamsko Starejšinstvo u SFRJ, 1968), 86. For documentary evidence which can be interpreted in the sense of discrimination, see Elena Marushiakova and Veselin Popov, *Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2001); Zoltan Barany, "The East European Gypsies in the Imperial age," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24 (2001): 50-63. In Barany's review of national projects launched in the early 1990s and related to the position of ethnical minorities including Roma communities in Macedonia, Zoltan Barany states a significant reduction in the social and cultural distance between the Roma communities and the macro-community (compared to other republics of former Yugoslavia) and "peaceful co-existence" with the "dominating" ethnic communities. Barany, Zoltan. "The Roma in Macedonia: Ethnic politics and the marginal condition in a Balkan state," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 18:3 (1995).

4 The same plot was also recorded by Galina Oustinova-Stjepanovic during her research with the communities in question. Galina Oustinova-Stjepanovic, "A catalogue of vice: a sense of failure and incapacity among Roma Muslims in Macedonia." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 23 (2017): 4.

5 Shaykh Rashid's critics mostly revolve around the way healing practices are performed.

were not given. As I said before, they were left blind" (Skopje 2014). At the same time, he especially emphasises in his interpretations the challenge for a Roma in moving along the hierarchy and receiving the status of a spiritual leader (shaykh) along with the corresponding resource of power. The socially informed "spiritual lift" in the community worked differently for the Roma joining it and such attitude, according to shaykh Rashid, was of strategic nature and fell into the general way things were. *"The Turks prevented the Roma from knowing more than they were allowed to, from learning. The Roma were at their beck and call. One had to serve for 20 to 30 years to become a shaykh; now it is much easier. One can get prepared within ten years, both in terms of knowledge and spiritually"* (2014).

Social distance

According to the narrative shared by spiritual authorities and their disciples, it is through Sufism and the emergence of the cells – lodges and rooms for ritual gatherings, that Islam was introduced into religiously eclectic Romani neighbourhood and spread among Roma people. The first spaces intended for meetings and collective rituals started emerging in private houses approximately in the second half of the 20th century responding to a series of dramatic social transformations that affected the region. Both ethnic and religious landscapes were gradually redrawn in a turn of successive wars, formations of new political subjects and relevant social orders. Several waves of displacements and migrations of Muslim population as well as the control over religious institutions and their activities, including Sufi communities, introduced by Yugoslav state authorities left many Sufi lodges abandoned or destroyed, and paved the way for new agents and platforms to transmit the Tradition.

Receiving permission (*ijāza'*) for spreading religious knowledge and performing rituals from the remaining leaders of the mother lodges (*pir-tekke, asitane*) in the region, located mainly in Macedonia and Kosovo, new spiritual authorities in a way filled the void and opened the process of interiorisation of Sufi traditions into the culture of Roma Muslims and, accordingly, the localization of traditions in the old city neighbourhoods or those built from ground zero (like Shuto-Orizari in Skopje) This process was especially intensive during the last 40-50 years: along with initiations grew the number of atomic communities and ritual centres.[1]

Many of the local Roma shaykhs of the earlier generations received their permission for religious activities and documents (*hilafetname*) from the later leaders of the old Rifā'iya lodge in Skopje – the one, that has been associated with official Islamic Community in the Republic during the socialist period and after the breakup of SFRY.

The interior of the Rifā'iya semahane

1 Alexandre Popovic, "The Contemporary Situation of the Muslim Mystic Orders in Yugoslavia," in *Islamic Dilemmas: Reformers, Nationalists and Industrialization: The Southern Shore of the Mediterranean, ed. Ernest Gellner* (Berlin: Mouton, 1985), 245-246.

Some of the future shaykhs have also established linkages with various Sufi groups in Kosovo – the remaining regional centre of Sufi knowledge and tradition at the time – by committing to local spiritual authorities ("Albanian and Turkish shaykhs" as they are called to distinguish them from the Roma leaders). From that on the process of separation and relative autonomisation was launched: the transmission of religious tradition and maintaining the links of spiritual genealogy (*silsila*) were less and less in need of "external" sources of authority and more got closed within Roma communities and their networks.[1]

As for «religious and ethnic microcosmos(es)» formed in this part of the Balkans, both inter-confessional and intra-confessional scales were affected by delineating and refining of boundaries, including those based on ethnicity[2]. Segregation of local Sufi communities according to ethnic positioning and belonging, what was stressed by Ger Duijzings[3] and can be in a way observed today, resulted in elaboration of alternative contexts in transmission of religious traditions. At the same time, certain autonomy of the Roma Sufi communities from their main regional centres ("Turkish" and "Albanian" tekkes as they are sometimes distinguished from others) and creation of their own spiritual centres *do not imply* mutual isolation and ignoring. The distance that may be traced between the Sufi communities representing the imaginary "Muslim macro-community" and the Roma religious groups does not form a stand-alone episode in the memory narratives[4]. Nevertheless, general story lines regarding social distance and boundaries are among the structure-forming ones in the memories and observations of my interlocutors. Interrelated plots are formed and strengthened by various points about the distance between: a Sufi tekke and a mosque; the Sufi network and official Islamic organizations; the local Muslims adhering to different ethnic communities.

The late shaykh Islmail – one of the first Roma Sufi masters to receive permission from the Rifā'iya lodge in Skopje (in early 1970s), repeatedly emphasized the deep-rooted lack of connections between the Sufi lodges and the local mosques and their communities (jama'ats). To clarify his point baba Ismail, as well as some other interlocutors, resorted to argumentation that was set up on distinct grounds and implied distinct "We" voices to represent.

One of the points suggested by Ismail refers to the difference between the ways of practicing faith offered by a mosque and its leader (*hođa*), on the one hand, and by a tekke and its master (*šejh*), on the other hand. These ways cross within the Sharia practice, but differ in their end goals in terms of forming moral-selves of the low-believers. In addition, the mosque is illustrated as an arena for power struggles informed by the representatives of the official Islamic institutions and alternative communities independent of them.[5] A mosque is understood as a space of boundaries and mistrust: both the relations at grassroots between those who come here to pray (among Roma believers as well) are filled with mistrust and the relations between the religious leaders (*hođa*) and Sufi authorities (*šejh*).

"Back at those times, same as now, which we a witnessing, Sufism, dervishes were just an eye winker for religious experts (meaning official (Sunni) religious scholars and leaders)" (Skopje 2014). *S*haykh Rashid recalls that one of the reasons for articulated mistrust to dervishes by the official religious leaders was low level of religious education and alternative ("heterodox") approach to worship among the Sufi brotherhoods followers. This issue was several times discussed within the discourse of orthodoxy on the pages of Islamic religious press, that pursued official position of Islamic community.[6] As for shaykh Rashid, this way of things has no grounds, although it can still be seen: in the past several decades, a vast range of possibilities to obtain the necessary knowledge has appeared and the intra-confessional polyphony motivates to stand one's ground in a well-argued manner: *"I must always be prepared for an argument"*

1 Popovic, "The Contemporary Situation," 245-246. A new round of networking is being currently formed mostly outside the region – with Sufi leaders and their institutions in Turkey and among Muslim communities in Western Europe.

2 Gerlachlus Duijzings, *Religion and Politics of Identity in Kosovo* (London: Hurst and Company, 2000), 5, 107.

3 Duijzings, *Religion and Politics,* 107, 115.

4 Except for the period described above and preceding the development and separation of the Roma Sufi groups and related to politics towards the Roma dervishes

5 Jeremy Walton and Piro Rexhepi "On Institutional Pluralization and the Political Genealogies of Post-Yugoslav Islam," *Religion and Society* 10 (1) (2019): 151-167.

6 Mehmed Handžić, "Pitanje tekija u Jugoslaviji," *Glasnik Islamskog Vjerskog Starejšinstva II* (4) (1934): 197-199; Džemal Salihspahić, "Neke negativne pojave," *Glasnik Islamskog Vjerskog Starejšinstva XLII* (3) (1979): 278-281; Šerif Ahmeti "Kosovska pseudo učenja tesavufa," Glasnik Islamskog Vjerskog Starejšinstva XLII (3) (1979) 282-285.

(Skopje 2012). *"Because they see now that the current generation, today's dervishes, shaykhs do practice Sharia, Quran, they attend the mosque, etc. And they lack grounds to neglect us. They definitely should not do so"* (Skopje 2014).

"We didn't know Quran, what's to be said about Tafsir…" (Skopje 2019). Shaykh Ibrahim notices that in times of the socialist Yugoslavia not only the Roma, despite the opportunities available, remained poorly educated. He stresses, that many of those who had to work at the state-owned enterprises including the Macedonian members of administrations only had primary school education. But within the context of their self-positioning as spiritual authorities in a religious field, the Roma shaykhs appeared to be vulnerable and easily stigmatised. Recalling his path, he underlines that only self-education – systematic studying of the textual corpuses (Qur'an and Tafsīr) as sources of reasoning – allowed him to have a flair with imams of the city mosques and thus shorten the distance and mark his presence in the urban communities of believers.

Some remarks made by my interlocutors present mosques – both those affiliated with the official Muslim organisations and independent ones – as ideologically engaged and managed by various political actors. I would assume, that my interlocutors' fragmented memories and observations echo in a way some of the institutional reforms undertaken throughout the region from the Habsburg period (1878-1918) onwards in the framework of the protracted social and cultural modernization and rationalization processes. The state reforms addressed administrative issues such as "institutional centralization and homogenization" by establishing networks of local Islamic institutions and introducing integrated administrative structures.[1] The reforms put into place at different stages of the above-mentioned period also covered some points regarding religious education, Islamic law and customs (*adat*) implemented on the grounds, and were favoured by closely connected religious and secular agencies.[2] The trajectory towards close supervision in the religious field through institutional centralization and restrictions were particularly the case for state cultural policies in socialist Yugoslavia. The links within the network of Islamic institutions founded in different Yugoslav republics with considerable Muslim population were designed as an umbrella system: two coordinating federal institutions - one of them was the Supreme Islamic Council of the Yugoslav Federation (Vrhovno Islamsko Starješinstvo, VIS) - were based in Sarajevo.[3] As to the religious multivocality, Sarajevo took up a position of exclusion of Sufi brotherhoods from the political and social scene. This initiative was backed by the law (1952) proscribing their activities and closing their lodges over the Islamic Religious Community area in Bosnia and Hercegovina.[4] Although Sufi brotherhoods' presence in Macedonia and Kosovo was not directly affected by this ban (that was one of the points of Sarajevo's critics), the tendencies of social transitions and the ethno-national question - which resulted in mass migrations of populations - led to the overall drawdown and decline in the activities of the Sufi brotherhoods in different Yugoslavian republics.[5] As specified by shaykh Rashid's and shaykh Ismail's memories, back then mosques and Sufi tekkes affiliated with the official Islamic Community received more formal freedoms in terms of religious practice and education than the semi-legal institutions in Kosovo or cells opened in the Roma neighbourhoods.

Certainly, the way of things created through such a broad narrative framework meets personal memories of the time. The latter emphasise both the pressure by the authorities and the need to keep one's religious practice secret, and simultaneously, quite intensive contacts (in the last thirds of the 20th century) between cells in neighbouring Macedonia, Kosovo and South Serbia, as well as trans-local connections (for example, with Sarajevo) which have become especially active after the dissolution of Yugoslavia.[6]

1 Walton, "On Institutional Pluralization"; Brian Silverstein, "Sufism and Governmentality in the Late Ottoman Empire," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Vol. 29,* No. 2. (2009): 171-185; Nathalie Clayer and Xavier Bougarel, *Europe's Balkan Muslims. A New History* (London: Hurst & Company, 2017), 70-78; 95-122; 150-158.

2 Fikret Karčić, The Other European Muslims. A Bosnian Experience (Sarajevo: Center for Advanced Studies, 2015), 63-79, 135-136.

3 Karčić, *The Other European Muslims,* 135-136.

4 "Odluka o prestanku rada tekija u NRBiH," *Glasnik Islamskog Vjerskog Starejšinstva* III (1-4) (1952): 199.

5 "Starješinstvo IVZ za NR Makedoniju," *Glasnik Islamskog Vjerskog Starejšinstva* XIII (1-3) (1962): 186; Clayer, Europe's Balkan Muslims, 150-158; Popovic, "The Contemporary Situation".

6 David Henig, "Tracing creative moments. The emergence of translocal dervish cults in Bosnia-Herzegovina," *Focaal – Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology* 69 (2014): 97-110.

Shaykh Rashid smiled ironically: *"You shouldn't talk spiritually in public. Islamic Community might start surveillance for that. For you are not an imam (hođa), you're a shaykh…"* (Skopje 2014) Within this broad narrative framework, mosque if often presented as an agent of the local official Muslim organisations and promotes its discourse of "orthodoxy" intended to challenge, criticise and exclude the "inconvenient" voices of the intra-confessional polyphony.[1]

"There are many schools (sekta) in Islam; the state does not trust us, it is afraid of us. What if we're engaged in terrorism or something like that?" (Skopje 2014) A fragment of shaykh Rashid's talk annually opening the Great Dhikr (*Zikir Šerif*) timed to Nowruz celebrations (*Sultani Nevruz*) is inscribed in this context. The talk in general is of historiographical nature and aims to explain to the participants the significance of the date for the fellows of Sufi orders. At the same time, it includes remarks, that could add up to a kind of identity manifesto: *"Alevis do not make up a separate branch of Islam, as some believe they do. Alevism is not an innovation. We will not allow to call as a kind of sect in Islam or a kind of extremism in Islam. We – dervishes are not only a part of Islam. We are the vanguard of Islam. We have always been and will remain the vanguard of Islam, in the forefront representing integral Islam and Islamic brotherhood"* (Skopje 2017). Importantly, shaykh Rashid quotes the talk given by the shaykh Xhemali Shehu from Prizren, that was previously published in 1985 in a regular issue of Community of the Sublime Islamic Dervish Orders (ZIDRA) association's bulletin[2]. This association united Sufi communities (except for majority of Roma Sufi groups) from the 1970s mostly in Kosovo, but also in Macedonia and Bosnia, and came in public confrontation with the official Islamic Religious Community[3]. Apart from numerous nuances that make the image of that confrontation quite complex, it is the reproduction of the self-positioning narrative, that deserves particular attention. This fragment places shaykh's talk in a specific socio-cultural environment, localises it and the general order of things that it refers to links various epochs and specific contexts. The mistrustful relations become a routine and set the way of things on various levels of the relations.

Mistrust

Another repetitive plot of my interlocutors' memories illustrating the distance between Roma Sufi fellows and urban mosques communities, concerns an issue of inter-ethnic relations among local Muslims. Shaykh Rashid repeats on occasion: *"But it was very hard. It was scary. Back then [it is about the second half of the 20th century] the Roma were afraid of the Albanians. The latter would not leave them alone. For a Roma to come to a mosque, to pry among the Albanians, you do understand, right? No, they were not looking well at us."* (Skopje 2014).

This remark refers to a situation one may witness in Skopje, same as in several other cities in the region where local Roma claiming to be "practicing Muslims" seldom attend central city mosques (including for the Friday prayer) preferring cult spaces organized right in the Roma neighbourhoods. My interlocutors – believers from the Roma communities – disagree in their suggestion on whether this practice was inherited from the "Turkish times" or it was formed relatively recently and is connected with socio-political and economic transformations which accompanied the dissolution of Yugoslavia and were timely in the post-conflict environment broken by various borders.

It is clear in their interpretations that they tend to explain the current social order, including the tension observed, though the prism of ethnic/national identity, as well as to project this logic to the intra-confessional level. Thus, the image of a believer undergoes certain adjustment[4] in every-day social practice, as well as understanding of sta-

1 Some of the older masters, through their experience, are sensitive even to the subtle tensions on the grounds. Their ironic remarks and fears do resonate with general findings regarding internal religious policies. See Walton, "On Institutional Pluralization"; Rexhepi "Macedonia".

2 Džemali Šehu, "Govor Hadži Šejh Džemali efendije na dan svečanog merasima povodom "Sultani Nevruza"," *Bilten Hu* (1985): 8

3 Duijzings, *Religion and Politics*, 106-120; Clayer, *Europe's Balkan Muslims*, 150-154; Dragan Novaković, "Delovanje zajednice derviških redova alije (ZIDRA) na Kosovu i Metohiji 1974-1991," *Istorija 20. veka*. 2 (2002):103-115.

4 Thus, there is a distinction in the every-day discourse of "weak" and "strong" (consistent and strict) believers. Within the context of identity forming, such ideal images "frame social experience in the racial, ethnic and national terms". Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups* (Harvard University Press, 2004), 73. As a result, a narrative appears and is reproduced: about the Roma as "weak in their faith", about Albanians as "fat from Islam and the issues of faith" or about Turks as "close to the true tradition". Certainly, this narrative can contain individual clarifications which do not contradict its basic provision: such as, Roma self-identified as Muslims are described as "weak in their faith", yet at the same time Roma communities from Kosovo show more conscience in their religious practice. (interview with the imam in Niš, Serbia, 2011).

-ble patterns of relations between the believers associated with certain ethnic groups is formed.

That said, the ethnicity factor might both add to differentiation based on a distinct ground and not be considered in occasional assertions. And even though numerous situations my respondents found themselves in suggested critical reconsideration of the existing understandings, the stereotyping principle remains a basic tool of explaining the social reality. Instrumentalisation of ethnicity at different degrees and for different purposes can also be observed in the religious leaders' and "ordinary" believers' situational interpretations and practice. A certain set of understandings and expectations related to the "brother in faith" associated with a different ethnic community illustrates and, as may be supposed, is a derivative of a long-term complex process of forming identity of the local urban Muslims.[1]

Shaykh Ibrahim with his disciples often returns to the issues of current tendencies in inter-ethnic relations: *"So, now one nation wants to crush another nation"* (Skopje 2014/2019). This refrain setting the background for perception of daily interconnections at the grassroots is in contrast to the common memories about the ways of things in the socialist Yugoslavia where representatives of different peoples "worked together as equals." Touching the theme of social changes in the Macedonian society in their narratives, they underline that relations between the ethnic communities forming Muslim communities in the city were filled with mistrust. *"Once communism fell, hatred appeared. You're Albanian, I am this, you are that. And religions clash"* (Rashid, Skopje 2014). Such attitude naturally leads to tension and distance between different communities which might take various shapes in practical terms. Interpretations by different spiritual leaders and their followers often include and reproduce the same episodes of collective experience telling about "special treatment" (discrimination) and about aggression to the Roma by believers from the macro-community.[2] Even though such stories – constructing the urban narrative at that stage – very often *contradict personal experience of many of my interlocutors*,[3] being transmitted they form an interpretational scheme capable of mediating relations among local Muslims.

Freedom

"Freedom" – as well as its derivatives such as "lack of freedom" and "unfreedom", is an element that along with the "it's been hard" formula shapes the discourse of the past, which my interlocutors share with me and among themselves. What is important about "freedom, a lexeme, that is frequently used in retrospective stories and some daily observations? First and foremost, "freedom" acts as a quick link to a certain period, sets up or revitalizes a certain discourse without going into details and nuances of the situation narrated. "Lack of freedom" is a clear reference when the period of Socialist Yugoslavia and, particularly, the pattern of state-religious relations are in question.

Many spiritual leaders and older dervishes with whom I many times discussed this question describe the time of Yugoslavia as a period of "unfreedom" or pressure in the context of practice and spread of belief, as well as in the context of articulating their religiosity. This is how shaykh Rashid recalls certain episodes of his experience and of that of "the elder": *"So, Islam was not free. Say, in times of Yugoslavia. […] It was extremely hard for those generations. They kept to their belief in great torment, supported Islam. And if gatherings were held somewhere, one had to stay alert to watch for anyone to come and interrupt the prayer." (*Skopje 2014) Expansion of the network of Sufi communities and its maintenance was in practice not only due to tekkes that have obtained permission for religious activities (those being both affili-

1 Eran Fraenkel, "Urban Muslim Identity in Macedonia: The Interplay of Ottomanism and Multilingual Nationalism," in *Language Contact – Language Conflict,* ed. Eran Fraenkel and Christina Kramer (Peter Lang, 1993), 27-41; Ina Merjanova, *Rediscovering the Umma. Muslims in the Balkans between Nationalism and Transnationalism* (New-York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

2 As an example, a tale of an unarmed Roma murdered after daily prayer in the yard of one of the central city mosques is told. Shaykh Rashid dates this episode back to the 1970s.

3 Both shaykh Ibrahim and his son Ahmed – a popular young religious leader (imam of the community founded on the basis of a tekke) – emphasise the key significance of certain meetings and people on the path of their spiritual development and religious education. All these people, with no exclusion, belonged to what my interlocutors present as macro-community (Rom.: gadjikano musliman // Non-Roma Muslim) – Albanians, Torbesh, Turks, etc. Ethnicity is a marker uniting these figures and is by the way contextually articulated in a narrative - in the framework of mutual critics among spiritual leaders from the Roma community; or to stress the unusual attitude of these teachers to the representatives of the Roma community – are rather exclusive for the way of things suggesting estrangement and distance.

-affiliated with the Islamic Community and the semi-legal ones), but also due to the meeting halls established in private houses of the new spiritual leaders: *"But gatherings were only allowed in special places: either in tekkes, or in mosques. It wasn't a free time back then (unlike now). We had rooms, but inside a house and in secret. Someone had to keep a lookout both when dhikr was performed and the prayer was read and during the Ramadan. So that one day a policeman would not come. There was communism and it was not allowed in Yugoslavia (frequent religious meetings). So, everything was discreet. That is, that was the way before the dissolution of Yugoslavia."* (Skopje 2014) The later shaykh Ismail who was himself arrested for organising gatherings at his meeting hall[1] evaluates the dervishes' experience in time of Yugoslavia as follows: it was at the same time a reminiscence and a continuity of the Prophet's practice as a reference (ideal) image for any Muslim and likening with the partisans of the WWII, a heroic image of the socialist period. *"We inherited these places from the Prophet (a.s.). In times of the Prophet, when he was attacked, when he was broken he hid in a place like this, he performed dhikr. He read the Quran in similar places, in hidden places. Same as we did, partisans at the time… When we were occupied by Germany and we hid in the mountains, hit from there. That is why the Germans fled."* (Skopje 2011).

"Freedom" is often the thread in observation memories when epochs following one another are united in a comparative perspective. "Freedom" or its absence, as well a certain degree of freedom are markers in the "before and after" and "then and now" narrative. For instance, it is quite clear when my interlocutors touch on the visibility/invisibility issue and the formal possibility to articulate one's religiosity and religious identity. Shaykh Rashid notes that *"It is much freer now; say, the state allowed (gatherings). As a shaykh, I have registration, approval (for religious activities), etc. We feel freer, dress (according to the tradition)"* (Skopje 2014). And this issue is significant for the young leaders, such as Ahmed, although it can be set by a different context – for example, by participation of the Muslims from the region in the Middle-Eastern conflicts, in search for the way of life according to the Sharia: *"Macedonia allows azan (a call for prayer). Macedonia allows me to wear a beard. Macedonia allows me to speak about Islam (preach) wherever I am"* (Skopje 2012).

In this very context, within the comparative framework, "freedom" becomes a sort of a discursive variable: it becomes a subject of spontaneous situational observations and interpretations (negotiations) which might be united in a single narrative. A view on the ways of things (formal and informal social structures and relation) verbalised through "freedom" and its contextual understanding, nuances the perception of an epoch and reveals multiple subjectivities: *"Now I have a document allowing me to have gatherings, preach. That is, we now live in a democracy. This is democracy. But it is harder for us now, too. Any time during any gathering, police may come and check documents: who we are, what are we doing, what kind of gathering this is, what's happening, what are people talking about, etc"* (Skopje 2014).

The current way of things creates different kind of limitations for shaykh Ismail: *"It is freedom, it is democracy. No one bothers you, mind your business, pray to God any way you like: as a Christian, as a Muslim, as a Catholic. No one bothers you. Freedom. Do you understand? […] At the same time, democracy is ruling and you have no right to say anything to anyone, you see."* Shaikh Ibrahim's comment refers to "sectarianism" as an effect of active circulation of diverse religious ideas in the former Yugoslavia region and the lack of order and control which accompany the state of unfreedom, but build clear and predictable patterns of relations of power between various actors. While freedom in the narratives of my interlocutors creates a semantic connection with the lack of order, instability, unpredictability, lack of transparency, protection and violence. And such observations, "discrepant events"[2] refer to the past, its idealisation, produce nostalgic accounts. Shaykh Ismail put Tito's portrait within his sema'khane placing it in the mihrab among the images of imam Ali, imam Hussein and ritual objects. For him, Tito is the embodiment of order, a symbol of the age of order and opportunities. Despite the postulated lack of freedom of religious activities, his way as a religious leader (same as that of other leaders from the early generations of shaykhs) has become possible at that time thanks to the way things were on site. *"Communism will return. Communism is the best of all. We have lived in Tito's Yugoslavia for 50 years, in one state, that is communism. The Communist party of Yugoslavia. And nothing more, no other parties. A Turk, an Albanian, a Roma and a Serbian were all one party. It was good. There was work and social guaranties, no problems. For 50 years, we have lived as brothers, you know. And it was free in Yugoslavia"* (Skopje 2011).

1 As the shaykh himself told, he was soon released because no political rhetoric was found in his activities or relation to the Albanian political activists (entrepreneurs). This comment moves the memory to a different plane, that of ethnic policy in the region.

2 Ochs, "Narrating the Self," 27.

Conclusions

It is obvious that touching on the issue of opportunities and fulfilment within the context of spiritual continuity and institutional development and wider, sketching an image of a certain epoch as a sort of background for individual episodes, my interlocutors use different understanding of the term "freedom". Justifying their interpretation with distinct criteria, they easily navigate between its "negative" and "positive" interpretations. "Caricatural version of negative freedom"[1] is mainly observed in a cycle of memories about the position of the Roma Muslims in the Sufi communities in the Ottoman Empire and during the transition period[2] and creates a broad (hypostasised narrative) about stigmatisation and discrimination of believers by ethnicity amid ethnic policies and the grass-roots inter-communal relations. The image of the subsequent periods of active spiritual inheritance are more complex, with more nuances: along with the popular narrative formulas about lack of freedom during the oppressive period, there are various assertions supported, among other things, by personal history about the long-term internal constraints (first of all, about poor religious education) and about the opportunities to overcome them to integrate and improve one's position among the Sufi communities and wider, in the current religious every-day life. The motive of autonomy forms the understanding of agency which unravels in two planes in the interlocutors' memories and observations. First, self-sufficiency in terms of relations between the fellow believers' ethnic communities can be emphasized. Second, autonomy is fixed on the intra-confessional level through constant layout of imaginary boundaries of statuses between various communities and leaders forming the confessional unity (such are, for example, boundaries between the local figures of a shaykh and an imam).

Retrospective narratives explored in this essay are built on the intertwined threads: about exclusion, social distance, mistrust and autonomy (agency). As far as I could observe so far, these plots are addressed situationally during conversations as a response to specific issues, and are transmitted mostly by the shaykhs or their senior fellows. These story-lines – snapshots of social attitudes (ways of things) explicated first and foremost along the ethnic and confessional lines at various levels, can act as schematic narrative templates in the context of oral history shared by religious leaders.

The narratives shared by spiritual leaders and backed by their authority in the community reinforce its self-image and self-presentation as being vulnerable. Vulnerability is embedded in a discursive way of things and might be to some extent (re)produced in daily interactions on the ground. The rhetoric of oppression and discrimination, which shapes the image of the Roma as a social group, is quite common and in particular is constantly repeated by human right activists. The strategic perspective ("Roma as a special case")[3] is instrumentalized into social integration projects and the formation of Roma political subjectivity. The narrative of vulnerability as the one that oversees the aforementioned narrative templates seems to be "convenient": it is simplified enough to be applied to various contexts, to frame and explain complex social interactions at the grassroots, including obstacles in integration of Sufi leaders at the intra-confessional scale.

Being located on the social and confessional margins (according to the dominating discursive tradition) is presented in discussions of some of the religious leaders and their disciples as a certain existential constant which shapes both the diverse processes of social – including institutional – integration and formation of religious subjectivity within that process. As Catharina Raudvere accurately noted: "The imperial past and extended stretches of authoritarian rule in the 20th century have cast long shadows over personal and collective memories alike and, signific-

1 Charles Taylor, "What's Wrong with Negative Freedom," in The Liberty Reader, ed. David Miller (London: Routledge, 2016),142

2 This period can only conditionally be limited by the establishment of the separate Sufi communities among the Roma Muslims (mass process started in the 1970s).

3 Aidan McGarry, "Roma as a Political Identity Exploring Representations of Roma in Europe," *Ethnicities* V. 14 Issue 6 (2014): 756-774.

-antly, live on the idea of the Other that evolved in the nineteenth century, helping shape coherent identities"[1] The very narration of the social distance towards the Roma communities by the macro-community in the frames of memory construction can be viewed as an element of heritage from the "past times" and as a reproducible way of things out of time. Such type of heritage is a result of discursive work and is formed within the "perception" perspective, i. e. reconstruction and retrospective evaluation of the historic past, historical process (Todorova 2009, 168).

The motives listed can be viewed as a template for retrospective narratives embedded in collective remembering and building up cultural constraints for particular historical subjectivity. The plots proposed form a sort of representation strategies which are actuated every time during the discussion of the issues of tradition and continuity in the studied Muslim Roma communities of the former Yugoslav countries. Noteworthy, these retrospective narratives tend to integrate with the current standard discourse and the motives of estrangement, mistrust and autonomy can be further approached as a by-product of the discourse of building a national state.

1 Catharina Raudvere, "Loss and Creativity: Affect and Effect. Political and Cultural Representations of the Past in South-East Europe," in *Nostalgia, Loss and Creativity in South-East Europe*, ed. Catharina Raudvere (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 3-4.

The Effects of Europeanisation on Memory Politics in the Balkans

by **Ana Milošević** and **Tamara Trošt**

Abstract

In the Western Balkans, dealing with the past remains a formal-informal condition for EU membership. However, divergent interpretations of history, including the Second World War and the Yugoslav wars, continue to trigger confrontations between neighbouring countries and hinder their EU perspective. Regional "memory wars" also have a European dimension and have become a tool to either support or oppose Europeanisation. Politics of memory is thus used not only to foster an EU identity and endorse so-called EU values, but also to support nation- and state-building agendas. The tensions that derive from the past, however, continue to persist even after achieving the strategic goal of entering the European Union, making the Europeanisation of memory politics more performative than fundamentally progressive. In the following chapter, we present an overview of the interaction between Europeanization processes and memory politics in the Western Balkan states. We first introduce the idea of European memory and the European Memory Framework and how they interact with candidate and member countries. Second, we examine the proces of Europeanization of memory politics in more detail, by examining the processes through which candidate countries download and upload European memory politics, and how timing (i.e. the stage of EU integration) affects this interaction. In the third section, we examine the effects of Europeanization of memory politics, highlighting both positive effects and unintended consequences.

Europeanised memory politics in itself is a slippery slope. Symbolic politics is actively used by all interested parties – EU, member states, candidate and potential candidate countries, to communicate stances, viewpoints and expectations – beyond legally prescribed rules and conditions. As such, Europeanised memory can be actively manipulated for the sake of appearances, and attainment of symbolic and political gains to underpin and even undermine broader Europeanisation processes. For instance, Europeanising memory by advocating for a multifocal interpretation of the past can be used to pacify tensions and gain a deeper understanding of what the past was, inducing hence some sort of reconciliation. On the other hand, historical legacies can be used as a tool to undermine Europeanisation, obstruct and sabotage EU Integration process, as bilateral disputes show. The EU memory framework can be manipulated by elites and political parties in their endeavour to co-opt those aspects of Europeanisation process that fit their needs, as way to challenge, reframe, reinterpret, support, oppose or rehabilitate certain views, narratives, values and meanings projected onto the past. The application of European memorial norms in the Western Balkans suggests that the past can serve as a useful commodity and effective tool to attain symbolic capital, political advantages and benefits on both national and transnational level. However, on the ground, historical narratives about the past remain fundamentally unchallenged by the process of Europeanisation.

Introduction

In September 2020, Bulgaria blocked North Macedonia's progress in the EU negotiations by using its EU member veto, citing demands that North Macedonia formally recognise the historical Bulgarian roots of the Macedonian language. This demand was met with the remarks of North Macedonian Primer Minister Zoran Zaev: "It is not European to write the history of another nation"[1]. This move represents yet another explicit demonstration of the interplay between Europeanisation and memory politics. Indeed, EU Integration – narrowly defined as the process of the Balkan countries in joining the EU – has affected memory politics and mnemonic practices in many ways. Memory as politics is malleable, as its meaning and roles are subject to the purposes and interpretations of many different actors at the local, national and international levels. The role played by the Europeanisation process in local memory politics has occurred at both the top-down and bottom-up processes; linking these processes constructs a story that intertwines the complex realities of the role of collective memory in politics and the process of EU integration itself.

On the top-down level, memory politics are imposed by external actors and led by the EU. While there are no formal requirements regarding memory politics in the accession criteria, there is nonetheless an expectation that the candidate countries will adhere to the EU memory framework, a number of soft laws and decisions that define shared attitudes towards the past[2]. By doing this, the candidate countries signal their alignment with EU norms of remembrance, indicate their European identity, and confirm their commitment to a future of peace and togetherness[3]. Milošević 2017). To adhere to the joint future in Europe translates into accepting EU norms of remembrance, values of peace, reconciliation and overcoming the past. For instance, endorsing the EP resolution on Srebrenica had as one of the intended results to condition Serbia to provide acknowledgement and recognition for the victims by adopting a similar resolution in the national parliament.

At the bottom-up level, the candidate countries have reacted to these soft requirements of the accession process in different ways. Here, memory politics have played the dual role of a cognitive device and a political instrument that has provided elites, individuals, organisations, and institutions the power to pursue particular interests. As a political instrument, the EU framework has been used – and in many cases co-opted and manipulated – by elites and memory entrepreneurs at the national level: for instance, in Croatia, subsuming particular WWII events into a broader European memory framework has allowed for a "EU washing" of injustices committed by Croats. The broader "We shall never forget" framework of Holocaust remembrance has also allowed for the solidifying of the narrative of two totalitarianisms, fascism and communism, allowing for the relativisation of crimes committed against communists.

At the same time, the process of Europeanisation has brought power asymmetries to the forefront: countries that have already become EU members have disproportionately more power in coercing the not-yet-EU members to deal with memory issues. These power asymmetries are most visible in the preaccession process that highlights the importance of bilateral disputes. Past grievances and broadly historical matters between a member and not-yet-EU member can affect the pace of EU integration. The "Macedonia" dispute between Greece and North Macedonia lasted for many years, obliging the aspiring member to politically intervene in the interpretation of their national history and memory in order to advance on the EU path. The Prespa agreement (2018) that put the end to this dispute prescribed clear guidelines for corrective measures to be introduced, ranging from state renaming to the removal of (Greek) Macedonian symbols in the public space. As such, the agreement represents diplomatically

1 Statement by Prime Minister Zoran Zaev, "PM Zaev: Bulgaria's veto is an irresponsible mistake, we remain committed to a solution convinced that it is possible without disputing the Macedonian identity". Official website of the Government of North Macedonia, https://vlada.mk/node/23463?ln=en-gb, December 9, 2020.

2 Ana Milošević and Heleen Touquet, "When Reconciliation Becomes the R-Word: Dealing with the Past in Former Yugoslavia" in *Reconciliation in Global Context: Why It Is Needed and How It Works, ed. B. Krondorfer* (New York: SU NY, 2018).

3 Jasna Dragović-Soso, "Collective Responsibility, International Justice and Public Reckoning with the Recent Past: Reflections on a Debate in Serbia" in *The Milosevic Trial - An Autopsy*, ed. T. Waters (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1–26; Ana Milošević, "Back to the Future, Forward to the Past: Croatian Politics of Memory in the European Parliament," *Nationalities Papers* 45/5 (2017), 893-909.

forged consensus on dispute resolution, yet it is also a paramount example of how memory can be redesigned for the sake of attaining political objectives.

Political actors such as parliaments, political parties and elites, are not alone in instigating changes in domestic memory politics. Non-state actors can too be drivers of that change with a view of absorbing but also challenging Europeanised memory. EU integration processes have also allowed actors at the local and grassroots levels to contest or adapt to the memory framework, for instance by relying on the EU to address grievances from past issues that national elites chose to ignore. This has been particularly relevant for victims' organisations and survivors that seek to counter domestic politics of forgetting and selective remembering, by escalating their grievances to the transnational level and hence interpreting their experiences through the EU memory framework. Other actors, such as war veterans in Croatia, have been adamant about Europeanisation in the post-accession process: seen as a threat to national memory and identity, non-state actors opposed the adoption of the Istanbul convention to argue against gender and sex-based equality.[1]

In the following chapter, we present an overview of the interaction between Europeanisation processes and memory politics in the Western Balkan states. We first introduce the idea of European memory and the European Memory Framework, and how they interact with candidate and member countries. Second, we examine the process of Europeanisation of memory politics in more detail, by examining the processes through which candidate countries download and upload European memory politics, and how timing (i.e. the stage of EU integration) affects this interaction. In the third section, we examine the effects of Europeanisation of memory politics, highlighting both positive effects and unintended consequences.

A European memory

When we speak about an EU memory framework that now represents the cornerstone of EU memory politics and defines joint attitudes towards the past, it is important to remember that this memory framework developed gradually, without "a grand design", as the fruit of anniversaries and opportunities.[2] However, the very foundational narrative of the EU, as an entity that would emerge "out of the darkest hour of Europe" and would break the cycle of conflicts, is seen as a "victory over history."[3] De Cesari and Kaya argue that this move from "war to peace", representing the EU as a mission of peace, cohesion and stability, combined with economic integration, confirms that the EU itself is a product of memory work.[4] (In our view, EU memory politics should be seen instead as the product of various self-narrations in search of their own identity and legitimacy over time). Forging such a transnational view of history is based on a "discontinuity with the past,"[5] which allows a shared, universal and European set of principles and practices[6] to transcend the boundaries of nation-states.[7]

While the broader narrative of a European memory was clear from its outset, actual policy on memory gradually developed after the Cold War. The EU's retroactive coping with the past could be seen as a tool of restorative justice , aiming at reconciling divergent views on the past in a continent that was long divided by the Iron Curtain.

1 Dunja Obajdin and Slobodan Golušin, "Narratives of Gender, War Memory, and EU-Scepticism in the Movement Against the Ratification of the Istanbul Convention in Croatia" in *Europeanisation and Memory Politics in the Western Balkans*, eds. A. Milošević and T. Trošt (London - New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 205-230.

2 Ana Milošević, "Historicizing the present: Brussels attacks and heritagization of spontaneous memorials," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 24/1 (2018), 53-65.

3 Jan-Werner Müller, "On 'European Memory'. Some Conceptual and Normative Remarks" in *A European Memory? Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance*, eds. M. Pakier and B. Stråth (New York: Berghahn, 2010), 25–37; Catherine Guisan, *A Political Theory of Identity in European Integration: Memory and Policies.* (London: Routledge, 2012).

4 Chiara de Cesari and Ayhan Kaya, *European Memory in Populism: Representations of Self and Other* (London: Routledge, 2019).

5 Małgorzata Pakier and Bo Stråth, *A European Memory? Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance* (New York: Berghahn, 2010); Georges Mink and Laure Neumayer, *History, Memory and Politics in Central and Eastern Europe: Memory Games* (London - New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Laure Neumayer, *The Criminalisation of Communism in the European Political Space After the Cold War* (London: Routledge, 2018).

6 Müller, "On 'European Memory.'"

7 Klas-Göran Karlsson, "The Uses of History and the Third Wave of European Integration" in *A European Memory? Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance*, eds. M. Pakier and B. Stråth (New York: Berghahn, 2010), 38–55.

In Western Europe, the cornerstone of this common framework represents the memory of the Holocaust, while in the Baltics, Central and Eastern European states, the memory of Communist crimes and the "other totalitarianism" was additionally brought to the forefront.[1] Broadly speaking, the core of European politics of memory includes the rejection of all totalitarianism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and racism, and a respect for human rights, freedoms and protection of minorities.[2] Intertwined processes of democratisation, transitional justice and EU Integration combined to produce EU politics of memory, which are forged and disseminated through a number of mediating (f)actors that act both on national and transnational, European level. For instance, the European Parliament introduced a number of soft laws, days of remembrance, monuments, memorial plaques, European commemorations[3] to express political positions on the past in the light of the present.[4]

In line with the gradual development of a European memory, academic work started paying more attention to European memory over the last two decades, asking whether we can observe "the formation of a kind of 'Europeanisation' of collective memory or even a clearly discernible "supranational European memory."[5] Early works focused largely on policy building and mapping out the actors that are involved in the process of Europeanising the past,[6] taking it to be instrumental to EU legitimacy and identity building.[7] Most prior studies are interested in compliance in the context of normative conditionality following the EU accession of Central and Eastern European countries and the Baltic states.[8] These studies focus on the question of how conflicts about the past impact the post-communist states' foreign policy.[9] Other works are concerned with the European dimension of Holocaust remembrance - its actors, policies and practices.[10] Gradually research started detecting the extent of selectiveness of the contents of EU memory which excludes shared historical experiences of EU member states such as colonialism. Equally important, recent works have emphasised the lack of a gender perspective in EU's self-narrations, for instance in mythologising the Founding fathers of the EU (e.g., Manners, cited work). This research, however, can be positioned on the horizontal axis of Europeanisation, that is, as a process happening among EU members with aims and outcomes in service of in-group dynamics. Until recently, scholarship only passively questioned the effects of Europeanisation of memory on candidate countries as "an EU entry ticket":

1 Cecilie F.S. Banke, "Remembering Europe's Heart of Darkness: Legacies of the Holocaust in Post-war European Societies" in *A European Memory? Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance,* eds. M. Pakier and B. Stråth (New York: Berghahn, 2010), 163–174; Marek Kucia, "The Europeanization of Holocaust Memory and Eastern Europe," East European Politics & Societies and Cultures 30/1 (2016), 97-119; Krzysztof Kowalski and Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, "Europeanization of Heritage: About the Moral Involvement of a Certain Notion," Zarządzanie w Kulturze 18/4 (2017), 549-569; Neumayer, *The Criminalisation*; Jelena Subotić, "The Appropriation of Holocaust Memory in Post-Communist Eastern Europe," *Modern Languages Open* (2020).

2 Neumayer, *The Criminalisation.*

3 Ian Manners, "Symbolism in European Integration," *Comparative European Politics* 9/3 (2011), 243-268; Wolfram Kaiser et al. (eds.), *Exhibiting Europe in Museums: Transnational Networks, Collections, Narratives and Representations* (New York: Berghahn, 2014); Ana Milošević and Philippe Perchoc, "The European Parliament and Memory Politics (Special Issue)," *Politique européenne* (2020).

4 Milošević and Perchoc, "The European Parliament."

5 Müller, "On 'European Memory.'"

6 Sarah Gensburger and Marie-Claire Lavabre, "D'une mémoire européenne à l'européanisation de la mémoire,'" *Politique européenne* 37/2 (2012), 9–17; Oriane Calligaro, *Negotiating Europe: The EU Promotion of Europeanness Since the 1950s* (London - New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Mink and Neumayer, *History, Memory and Politics; Neumayer, The Criminalisation; Aline Sierp, History, Memory, and Trans-European Identity: Unifying Divisions* (London: Routledge, 2014).

7 Pakier and Stråth, *A European Memory?*; Karlsson, "The Uses of History"; A. Littoz-Monnet, EU Politics of Commemoration: Can Europeans Remember Together? West European Politics 35/5 (2012), 1182-1202.

8 Georges Mink, "Between Reconciliation and the Reactivation of Past Conflicts in Europe: Rethinking Social Memory Paradigms," *Czech Sociological Review* 44/3 (2008), 469–490; Carlos Closa Montero, "Negotiating the past: Claims for recognition and policies of memory in the EU," IPP (2010).

9 Maria Mälksoo, "The Memory Politics of Becoming European. The East European Subalterns and the Collective Memory of Europe," *Journal of International Relations* 15/4 (2009), 653–680; "Criminalizing Communism: Transnational Mnemopolitics in Europe," International Political Sociology 8/1 (2014), 82-99; E.C. Onken, "The Politics of Finding Historical Truth: Reviewing Baltic History Commissions and Their Work," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 38/1 (2007), 109-116; S. Kattago, "War Memorials and the Politics of Memory: The Soviet War Memorial in Tallinn," *Constellations* 16 (2009), 150-166; P. Perchoc, "Les députés européens baltes et les débats mémoriels, entre stratégie politique et engagement personnel (2004–2009)," *Revue internationale de politique comparée* 22/4 (2015), 477–503; Neumayer, *The Criminalisation.*

10 Banke, "Remembering Europe's Heart of Darkness"; Kucia, "The Europeanization of Holocaust Memory"; Kowalski and Törnquist-Plewa, "Europeanization of Heritage"; Neumayer, *The Criminalisation*; Subotić, "The Appropriation of Holocaust Memory."

a key element in the processes of democratisation and European unification.[1]

As EU enlargement processes continued, more work began examining the effect of the enlargement policies on various domestic structures and processes in the candidate countries. This new research area – the Europeanisation of memory politics – is defined as "the processes of construction, diffusion and institutionalisation of shared values, remembrance practices, policies, discourses, narratives, beliefs and norms associated with the past – which are first defined and consolidated in the EU policy process and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, practices and public policies of member states and acceding countries.[2] This involves two processes: the uploading and downloading of EU memory politics. **Uploading** relates to the member states' projection of their policy preferences, practices and narratives to the EU, during which memory entrepreneurs "seek acknowledgement, endorsement, recognition or alternatively the promotion of their own views and interests which are projected onto the past"; those memories that do become integrated into the EU memory framework become situated in a broader historical context receiving symbolic recognition.[3] **Downloading** involves the "selective and tactical transfer of rules, models, and ideas, associated with the past", whereby candidate countries mirror so-called European values and canons of remembrance by for instance, condemning the Holocaust and embracing universal moral lessons to prevent future violence. On the one hand, the mirroring and selective downloading of the EU memory framework can occur as a result of soft pressure and/or as a political decision to gain symbolic capital and/or support objectives on national or transnational level such as the advancement of the EU path. These two processes – of uploading domestic preferences and downloading the European memory framework – are described in more detail in the following section.

Downloading European memory and uploading domestic preferences

Downloading of the European memory framework

Prospective EU countries signal their Europeanness in two ways: formally, through accession requirements by endorsing the so-called European values (e.g., rule of law, protection of human rights, minorities), but more importantly, informally, by aligning with EU memory norms and practices. Residing outside formal accession requirements, symbolic politics play an important role to underpin a wide variety of political objectives for the EU, member states and candidate countries. For instance, EP soft laws on the Srebrenica genocide directly in the adopted text invite the Western Balkan countries – and in particular Serbia – to acknowledge the war time atrocities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although not legally binding, and not part of the official requirement for the EU accession, the resolutions exert soft pressure on Serbia to deal with the past. In addition, the resolutions also prescribe the required response: to adopt and assimilate a similar resolution in the national parliament and subsequently in remembrance practices. While Srebrenica remains a singular historical experience of the Western Balkans that made it into the EU memory framework, it also shows that the EU and in particular EP can use soft laws to induce a desired outcome (dealing with the past, recognition and acknowledgement) beyond the EU Acquis. Desired outcomes, such as changes in national memory politics, have been taken to be markers of a "positive" change in progress reports that track advancement of a country on its EU path. Apologies for injustices inflicted or joint commemorations between former warring parties are evaluated and endorsed by the EU as signs of reconciliation and good neighbourly relations – formal requisites of the Accession process.[4]

The Europeanisation process in turn is marked by the manipulation and instrumentalization of historical events by elites, intellectuals, political parties and institutions. Each country, drawing from its own specific historical back-

1 Henry Rousso, "French Memory Laws. For a Better Past," IHTP (2017).

2 Ana Milošević following C. Radaelli, "Europeanisation: Solution or Problem?" *European Integration Online Papers* 8/16 (2004).

3 Milošević, "Back to the Future"; J.P. Olsen, "The Many Faces of Europeanization," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40/5 (2002), 921–952; T. Börzel, "Europeanization: How the European Union Interacts with Its Member States" in *The Member States of the European Union*, eds. S. Bulmer and C. Lequesne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Milošević and Trošt, *Europeanisation.*

4 Milošević and Touquet, "When Reconciliation Becomes the R-Word."

-ground, sculptures a "usable past" to reinforce and adduce the most dominant traits of their Europeanness by reinterpreting its own history. The interventions in national memory politics can be constructed to attain advantages or as imposed by external actors. The Greek-Macedonian dispute discussed above illustrates the power play behind the imposed changes in North Macedonian memory politics. The adoption of the Serbian Resolution on crimes committed against Hungarians in the aftermath of the Second World War provides an example of a politically constructed memory trade-off between Hungary and Serbia: Serbian resolution-making, with the proclaimed aim of "dealing with the past" and "for the sake of reconciliation" was a one-sided symbolical action that embraced EU vocabulary in order to attain political advantages. For the purpose of getting Hungarian approval for the start of EU negotiations, Serbia assembled the Parliament to vote and adopt a symbolic resolution in view of obtaining support for its EU aspirations overnight.[1] While addressing the matters of the past only on paper, Serbian Parliament members justified their memory entrepreneurship as a requirement of the EU Integration process. In this view, the resolution was a political win-win with no costs involved: it was presented as a symbolic restorative justice tool looking at the past, while serving the political favours needed for the present. This suggests that memory, in all its shapes and purposes, is seen as a commodity and a currency that can be traded with.

On the one hand, EU institutions lack the jurisdiction, capacity and voice in judging memorial entrepreneurship of its own member states, who remain monopolists over their own interpretation of history. On the other hand, the EU memory framework, as a result of politically constructed and negotiated common understanding of experiences, serves as the most evident litmus test of one's own Europeanness. Therefore, candidate countries canvas through the EU memory framework and tactfully download its contents to underpin domestic political objectives. Two main pillars of the framework are crucial in this endeavour: the (re)interpretation of the Holocaust and the anti-totalitarian stance of the EU. Where the (re)interpretation of the Holocaust is concerned, in the pre-accession phase, many Western Balkan countries restored Holocaust memorials, opened new museums, and adapted their exhibits to emulate cosmopolitan forms of remembrance. Skopje excelled regionally by building such a Museum in 2005. As these countries slowly advanced on their EU path, formal membership application to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance was submitted. Memorials and commemorations at the place of memory were used as public display of "dealing with the past" by fostering inclusive remembrance, and consequently as endorsement of "European values": rejection of anti-Semitism, xenophobia and racism. However, these expected effects of Europeanisation of memory tend to wear off after the EU Accession: the post-accession phase is marked by an important decrease in political interest for and distancing from previously enacted symbolic politics.

The Downloading of the second pillar of the EU memory framework, its anti-totalitarian stance, provides memory entrepreneurs the space to reinterpret the struggle for liberation from Nazi-Fascism, into the narrative of the two totalitarianisms, fascism and communism, ultimately leading to the rejection of Yugoslavia as a totalitarian state. Alignment with EU memory norms in this regard equally means alignment with the dictatorial and totalitarian experiences of countries that were once behind the Iron Curtain. Not only does it suggest that the Yugoslav political system was totalitarian, but it depicts former anti-fascists and Yugoslav era communists as oppressors, and defeated ideologies of the Second World War as "victims of communism" – of a "Red Holocaust." Although to a different degree, the tendency to narrate Yugoslavia though EU's anti-totalitarian narrative can be traced across the whole region. Slovenia, an EU member state since 2004, endorsed the consolidation of anti-totalitarian interpretation of its past in 2009 as the first Western Balkans' EU member state. The Slovenian anti-totalitarian stance translated into national memory politics with the construction of a monument to "Victims of All Wars."[2] The monument, in the centre of Ljubljana, illustrates this overarching interpretation of the national past. In the context of Serbia's path towards EU membership, political elites, revisionist historians, and non-state actors advocate for a clear cut with the communist past as an aspect of Serbia's "return to Europe". The most relevant reference for legal and symbolic rehabilitation of the *četniks* and justification for revisionist tendencies within Serbia is precisely the anti-totalitarian paradigm that travels from the European Union to nation-states and back. As anti-totalitarian antifascists, the *četniks* are seen as both the ideal ancestors of the contemporary nation-state,

1 Milošević and Touquet, "When Reconciliation Becomes the R-Word."

2 Taylor McConnell, "Erasing Yugoslavia, Ignoring Europe: The Perils of the Europeanisation Process in Contemporary Croatian Memory Politics" in *Europeanisation and Memory Politics in the Western Balkans*, eds. A. Milošević and T. Trošt (London - New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 49-74.

as well as the perfect companions of Serbia on its path towards the EU membership.[1]

Uploading of domestic preferences

As described above, in the pre-accession phase, countries selectively and tactfully "download" the contents of the EU memory framework to demonstrate their place in the European family of nations, but also to pursue symbolic and political objectives. While power asymmetries play an important role in making interventions in national memory politics, after the EU Accession, new members reverse roles and project domestic discourses onto transnational level. Once the receivers of EU memory politics, new members (might) use the power asymmetry to pursue a pragmatic foreign policy towards non-members who are (in)directly threatening their own views of the past. This suggests that once locally and regionally fought "memory wars" tend to escalate into "European memory wars". In this endeavour, the EU serves both as a memory arena and a political opportunity structure for the *uploading* of *domestic preferences*, that is, national narratives about the past.

In the region of the Western Balkans, power asymmetries arguably play a more important role than in the case of other regions (such as the Baltic countries) that joined the EU. These countries have not only an effectively shared past in another union (Yugoslavia), but importantly have a legacy of violent conflict among them that in certain cases lasted for many years. Regionally there is no widely accepted consensus on the causes nor consequences of the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Each country pursues domestic memory politics that suits its nation and state building objectives. As such, the clashing views about the past continue to cause tensions, resulting in the multiplication of bilateral disputes. Differential stages of their EU path, hence, demonstrate that timing plays an important role and slows down rather than accelerates the broader process of Europeanisation of the region. Countries in the Western Balkans are in different places on their path to EU membership: some are still relatively far from accession (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo), some are in the midst of the accession process (Montenegro, Serbia, North Macedonia), and some have already joined the EU (Slovenia, Croatia). The position of the country in its accession process importantly affects the nature of the Europeanisation-memory politics interplay. The first to join the EU club, Slovenia, played a crucial role in establishing and solidifying the narrative of anti-totalitarianism at the EU level. During its EU presidency in 2008, Slovenia initiated a Pan-European process to examine crimes committed by totalitarian regimes in Europe. This process involved reports and proceedings of the European public hearing organised by the Slovenian Presidency and in response to the request made by the Justice and Home Affairs Council of the EU.[2] The results of the Slovenian memory intervention at the EU level contributed to the equal treatment of Nazi and Soviet crimes, and the interpretation of Yugoslav political regime as totalitarian. Croatia, the second Western Balkan state to become an EU member, endorsed similar views at the EU level – most notably at the European Parliament – using it as a political opportunity structure to pressure Serbia, a candidate country, to deal with the legacies of the 1990s wars while simultaneously narrating its Yugoslav past as totalitarian.[3] This again highlights the importance of power asymmetries, as Slovenia and Croatia, the first countries to join the EU, are in a privileged, "gate-keeper" position, with capacity to shape the EU memory framework, upload their own historical materials, but also to impose their own interpretation of the past on those who wish to become EU members.

Effects of the Europeanisation of memory in the Western Balkans

The Europeanisation of memory is motivated by the utilitarian value of symbolic politics and clearly marked by the variety of purposes that memory actors and entrepreneurs assign to it. On the one hand, Europeanised, transnational approaches to national and locally grounded historical experiences, are said to promote learning from the past and to support justice and reconciliation processes. On the other hand, to Europeanise memory means also to transnationalise national grievances, escalating them to the EU level. Memory, therefore, becomes a dimension of

1 Jelena Đureinović, "Building upon the European Union's Anti-fascist Foundations: The Cetniks and Serbia's Memory Politics Between Europeanisation and Russia" in *Europeanisation and Memory Politics in the Western Balkans,* eds. A. Milošević and T. Trošt (London - New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 29-48.

2 "European hearing on crimes committed by totalitarian regimes", European Commission, 8 April 2008, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_08_230

3 Ana Milošević, "Back to the Future."

power and a tool to obtain political objectives without necessarily endorsing and practicing the "ideals" behind EU memory politics. This clash between intended and produced positive and negative effects of the Europeanised memory is at the heart of its own conundrum.

The effects of Europeanisation of memory manifest themselves in a multiplicity of ways. The desired effect of Europeanisation of memory remains essentially a positive one. Seen through the lens of restorative justice, a multifocal approach to memory is seen as a key to rebuilding the political, legal, and social fibre, restoring peace, and providing guarantees of security and non-repetition, so that the victims can henceforth live without fear or mistrust. Inclusive memory politics, mindful of other's past, victimhood and suffering, expand the interpretation of victimhood and evidence, and diversify based upon age, gender, religious, sexual, ethnic belonging to a group. By allowing for multiple identities to exist, memory politics take away the monopoly states have over the interpretation of the past, self-serving in reinforcing or ascertaining certain narratives and viewpoints. To Europeanise memory, hence, is perceived as an attempt at pacifying tensions, providing acknowledgement, making amends for and dealing with the past by bridging differences, embracing multiperspectivity in telling one's own history, and, hence inducing reconciliation.

While the EU's own member states can abuse the EU memory framework in order to instigate changes in the candidate countries' memory politics, the EU has very limited power in tackling historical matters in the EU accession process aside from tying them to the respect for rule of law and principles of good neighbourly relations. This is best seen in the reconciliation aspect of the EU Enlargement process in the Balkans. Drawing largely from the EU's very own reconciliation template of Franco-German rapprochement after the end of the Second World War, a number of initiatives have been introduced to induce these positive effects. One such example is the Joint History Project of the Committee for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe (CDRSEE). Co-financed by the EU, the textbooks seek to change the way history is taught in schools across the Balkans, yet they are only used on a voluntary basis and have thus, in the absence of state-level adoption, had limited on-the-ground effects.[1] In Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, such a reconciliatory frame was imposed onto citizens with the complicity of local non-political actors, leading to unintended consequences: the EU memory framework was used to reinterpret locally owned memories of the Second World War, leading towards erasure and obliteration of Yugoslav socialist past and local anti-fascist legacy.[2]

"The dead open the eyes of the living" WW2 memorial in Jasenovac, Croatia. Photo by Ana Milosevic (2017)

1 Tamara Trošt and Jovana Mihajlović-Trbovc, "History textbooks in war-time: The use of Second World War narratives in 1990s war propaganda in the former Yugoslavia," *War & Society* 39/4 (2020): 290-309.

2 Aline Cateux, "European Union Guidelines to Reconciliation in Mostar: How to Remember? What to Forget" in *Europeanisation and Memory Politics in the Western Balkans*, eds. A. Milošević and T. Trošt (London - New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 75-96.

At the same time, there is a noticeable frustration with the lack of EU involvement in particular memory issues. In Kosovo, there is an expectation that the EU should act as a stabilising factor and support the right to memory/truth, as restorative justice measures are seen by many as proof of the so-called European values.[1] In other places, actors at the grassroots level instigate the change, pressuring the state or the EU to induce and support their plea for intervention. Prijedor is a very instructive case to show how memory actors, through evocations of the Holocaust, appeal to international and local communities to see the common humanity in victims of the Bosnian war, and not just vessels for inscription of a particular ethnic history. The main carriers of this process are non-state actors, victims' groups, survivors and artists, who contest complicity between international capital and local nationalism in denying the victims their right to remember.[2] The privatisation of the Omarska mine, for instance, reduced all the commemorative practices at the site to an issue of private property management, concealing the war-time memory from the wider public; by Europeanising the discourse of war time atrocities that took place in Omarska, grassroots actors aspired to achieve acknowledgement and recognition on the local, national and transnational levels.[3]

However, the involvement (or perceived involvement) of the EU in memory issues has also a darker side: as mentioned above, elites and political parties have effectively co-opted and manipulated those aspects of the Europeanisation process that fit their needs, a so-called "EU-washing" of responsibility.
This is most visible in the use of the EU's anti-totalitarian stance in the rewriting of the national history of the Second World War. As a result of uploading in the previous EU enlargements of the Baltics, Central and Eastern Europe, the focus of this particular pillar of EU memory framework has been on the indirect equalisation of Nazi-fascist and communist regimes in Europe. Endorsed by Slovenia and Croatia, as EU members, this frame serves to reinterpret the Yugoslav past of the Western Balkans states as totalitarian. The EP soft laws on this particular aspect of EU memory framework suggest that it is indifferent towards what type of oppressor regime inflicted the harm upon victims. In itself, such a "victim-centred' approach to different experiences and complex histories tends to brush away differences between the Holocaust and other mass-crimes of the past. It allows also for relativisation of responsibility and accountability and can assist continued efforts at relativisation, leading towards more polarisation on the ground. Enacting the Holocaust canons of remembrance in Croatia's Jasenovac Memorial,[4] for instance, provided Croatia a way of signalling the EU-compliant moral lessons from the past, however, as Zaremba shows, the motivations of memory entrepreneurs that supported the "Holocaustisation" of Jasenovac diverge.[5] Her study makes an excellent example of how - Levy and Sznaider - "cosmopolitan narratives" of Europe mean very little beyond elite-led and elite-practiced forms of remembrance. Apparent mnemonic consensus is frequently just a "dress up" by elites, lacking deep on-the-ground effects. As we argue elsewhere,[6] we cannot simply take for granted that the enactment of cosmopolitan and ethical models of remembrance and reconciliation are indeed producing the desired effect of learning from and dealing with the past. The application of the Holocaust framework in the Croatian case shows that the rift between political processes and on-the-ground effects is very deep: this is most visible in the evolution of the state-promoted commemoration in Jasenovac, which has been boycotted for several years by the human rights activists, victims' associations and representatives of Serbs, Roma and Jewish minorities in Croatia.[7]

Another unintended consequence of the effect of the Europeanisation process on the Western Balkans has been backlash. In the example of Croatia, LGBTQ+ rights, as advocated by the Istanbul Convention, were framed as "western" and European or non-European in accordance with the desired political outcomes of the advocates.

1 Abit Hoxha and Kenneth Andersen, "Violence, War, and Gender: Collective Memory and Politics of Remembrance in Kosovo" in *Europeanisation and Memory Politics in the Western Balkans,* eds. A. Milošević and T. Trošt (London - New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 263-284.

2 Manca Bajec, ""Effects of Europeanised Memory in 'Artworks as Monuments'" in *Europeanisation and Memory Politics in the Western Balkans,* eds. A. Milošević and T. Trošt (London - New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 121-150.

3 Zoran Vučkovac, "Against Institutionalised Forgetting: Memory Politics from Below in Postwar Prijedor" in *Europeanisation and Memory Politics in the Western Balkans,* eds. A. Milošević and T. Trošt (London - New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 231-262.

4 Karlsson, "The Uses of History."

5 Alexandra Zaremba, "Constructing a Usable Past: Changing Memory Politics in Jasenovac Memorial Museum" in *Europeanisation and Memory Politics in the Western Balkans,* eds. A. Milošević and T. Trošt (London - New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 97-120.

6 Milošević and Trošt, *Europeanisation.*

7 Zaremba, "Constructing a Usable Past"; McConnell, "Erasing Yugoslavia."

Memory entrepreneurs opposing the convention framed the EU as an enemy that threatens the national foundational narrative and dismantles Croatian identity, whereby the EU and LGBTQ+ people were used as symbols of foreign incursion.[1] In Bosnia and Herzegovina, reinterpreting the symbol of Mostar through the EU memory frame allowed for the erasure and suppression of the specific context of what is otherwise locally grounded memory. As Cateux demonstrates, the reconciliation frame imposed by the EU in the case of the Mostar's Partizansko Groblje led to polarisation on the ground around the symbol of the city and reinterpretation of its native meanings. Cateux concludes that the process of the Europeanisation of memory in Mostar reinforced rather than bridged local divisions by relying on superficial assessments of different aspects of post-war Mostar, at the same time excluding the population from the process of reconstruction and reformulation of the city.[2] Similarly, the North Macedonia's "Skopje 2014 project", which was supposed to bestow the capital city with a European identity and reaffirm national identity, ended up having significant divisive potential in the domestic and foreign political sphere. Opposition to the project eventually led to the so-called "name dispute" between North Macedonia and Greece on the official usage of the name "Macedonia" and illustrates how mnemonic entrepreneurship triggered protests and inter-ethnic resentment.[3] Finally, after Montenegro's independence referendum in 2006, in order to represent itself as a former member of the "European family of nations" that lost its status of independent country after the First World War, elites crafted a new historical narrative by systematically revising the history of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and the Mojkovac Battle, in turn further fuelling ethnic divisions.[4]

Conclusions

Europeanised memory politics is in and of itself a slippery slope. Symbolic politics is actively used by all interested parties – the EU, member states, candidate and potential candidate countries – to communicate stances, viewpoints and expectations beyond legally prescribed rules and conditions. As such, Europeanised memory can be actively manipulated for the sake of appearances, and attainment of symbolic and political gains can underpin and even undermine broader Europeanisation processes. On the positive end of the spectrum, Europeanising memory by advocating for a multifocal interpretation of the past can be used to pacify tensions and gain a deeper understanding of what the past was, inducing some sort of reconciliation. At the grassroots and local levels, groups with historical injustices left unaddressed or purposely ignored by the state can appeal to the EU's memory framework to gain consideration of their grievances.

In the opposite manner, however, as bilateral disputes show, historical legacies can also be used as a tool to undermine Europeanisatić and obstruct and sabotage the EU Integration process. The Europeanisation of memory politics in the Western Balkans is an open field in which various memory entrepreneurs seek to promote their own views of the past, with an aim of attaining advantages. Because the EU memory framework is devoid of direct references to the historical legacies of the Balkans, it leaves an empty space for interpretation. Instead, the two dominant EU canons of remembrance, namely the Holocaust and Anti-totalitarianism, are juxtaposed to an entire region without taking into account its own rich and specific history and memory. As described above, much of this application across the region has been symbolic and performative: while of instrumental value in obtaining "points" at the EU level, performative memory politics have limited (if any) effect on the populations concerned (e.g., victims, broad public) and lack long-term sustainability. Memory politics are seen as an imposition and hand-twisting (as in the case of the "Macedonia" dispute, where the memory trade-off between Greece and (North) Macedonia ended the bilateral dispute, but lacked its intended benefits as the country did not advance on its EU path), but can also be seen by victims and survivors as simply being the "currency" in the EU integration game, something the public expects the EU should be preventing, not encouraging: a commodity that can be used as a shortcut to EU membership, or as an instrument to rehabilitate defeated ideologies. The various intended and

1 Obajdin and Golušin, "Narratives of Gender."

2 Cateux, "European Union Guidelines."

3 Naum Trajanovski, "'Skopje 2014' Reappraised: Debating a Memory Project in North Macedonia" in *Europeanisation and Memory Politics in the Western Balkans,* eds. A. Milošević and T. Trošt (London - New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 151-176.

4 Nikola Zečević, "Europeanising History to (Re)construct the Statehood Narrative: The Reinterpretation of World War One in Montenegro" in *Europeanisation and Memory Politics in the Western Balkans,* eds. A. Milošević and T. Trošt (London - New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 177-204.

unintended consequences and by-products of the interplay between Europeanisation and memory politics described above thus confirm the malleability of memory and emphasise the rift between the desired and actual effects of Europeanisation.

CIP - Каталогизација во публикација
Национална и универзитетска библиотека “Св. Климент Охридски”, Скопје

316.728:316.347(497.7)]:398
327.51.071.51(4-672ЕУ:497.7)
342.228.1(497.7):327(495)
327(497.7:495)”19”
327(497.7:497.2)”19”
342.228.1(497.7):327(497.2)

CULTURES and politics of remembrance : Southeast European and Balkan Perspectives / [authors Stefan Troebst, ... [и др.] ; editors Naum Trajanovski, ... [др.] ; proof-reader and translator Galina Ivanovska]. - Skopje : Forum Ziviler Friedensdienst e. V. (forumZFD) - branch in Skopje, 2021. - 127 стр.

Фусноти кон одделни трудови. - Останати автори: Tomasz Kamusella, Ljubica Spaskovska, Tanja Petrović, Vjeran Pavlakovic, Zrinka Blažević, Mariglen Demiri, Filip Lyapov, Vasiliki P. Neofotistos, Miladina Monova, Ksenia Trofimova, Ana Milošević and Tamara Trošt. - Останати уредници: Petar Todorov- Editor, Biljana Volchevska- Editor, Ljupcho S. Risteski- Editor, Galina Ivanovska-Proof-reader and Translator

ISBN 978-608-4956-04-4

1. Troebst, Stefan [автор]
а) Етничка култура -- Традиции -- Македонија б) Интеграции -- Европска унија -- Македонија в) Македонија -- Надворешна политика -- Грција г) Македонија -- Надворешна политика -- Бугарија д) Грција -- Надворешна политика -- Македонија -- Конфликти -- 20 век ѓ) Бугарија -- Надворешна политика -- Македонија -- Конфликти -- 20 век

COBISS.MK-ID 55345669

forumZFD, Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology and Institute of National History
Skopje, 2021