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INSTITUTIONEN FÖR KULTURANTROPOLOGI OCH ETNOLOGI  
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# Yugoslavia Revisited: Contested Histories through Public Memories of President Tito



By Ana Cicic

Supervisor Dr Vladislava Vladimirova

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## **Abstract**

In the thesis, I aim to analyze how people remember their past in changed political circumstances, what and who affect that memory, and why and how does rapture between social memory and historical narratives come about. My subject of inquiry is the personality of Josip Broz Tito and above that the period of socialism and the years of his reign. Studying these my intention is not in writing his biography, rather I use him as an object through which I can get a closer look at the production of a new social memory. I analyze my ethnographic data by using the theory of collective memory and politics of memory theory. Those two main analytical tools are combined with more concepts and hypotheses. The inquiry is done on multi-sited places, by doing multi-local ethnography namely in Croatia and Serbia. I argue that the mnemonic communities like nations, social groups or power elites influence how people perceive their past and consequently remember historical facts. In times of unstable political circumstances like the change of communist order into capitalistic one, people tend to make sense of their complex past by producing different narratives which are often contested.

**Keywords:** collective memory, politics of memory, nostalgia, remembering, forgetting, nationalism, ethnicity, Josip Broz Tito, Yugoslavia

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*What is being annihilated with guns, grenades, murders, rape, the displacement of peoples, 'ethnic cleansing', the new ideology supported by the media-is Memory. What is being built on the ruins is the new truth, the one that will one day be the only memory.*

*Dubravka Ugrešić, 1998*

## Glossary

*Ante Pavelić* - (poglavnik) took over the power given to him by fascist Mussolini and Nazi Hitler and proclaimed NDH (Independent State of Croatia) on 10 April 1941.

*Bleiburg* - in the last days of WWII majority of the Ustashes did not want to surrender to the Partisans, but instead retreated to the border with Austria to surrender to the Allies (British troops). The British did not want to take over the army of NDH but hand it back to the hands of partisans. In a few days of early May 1945, tens of thousands of soldiers but also civilians that joined the army were killed by the Partisan on the Bleiburg field.

*Chetniks* - the original Chetniks were a Serbian elite guerrilla who fought in Serbian wars of liberation against the Ottoman authorities in the 19th and 20th centuries. In WWII they were Serbian nationalist fighters led by Draža Mihailović.

*Franjo Tuđman* - the first president of Croatian State proclaimed on 8 October 1991 which is today celebrated as the Independence Day.

*Jasenovac* - concentration camp organized by Ustashes. During wartime from 1942-1945, estimations say that some 80 000-100 000 people were killed in Jasenovac, of those numbers the majority were Serbs, but also Jews, Roma people, and Croats who did not want to collaborate with the fascist State.

*Josip Broz Tito* – a politician, leader of an anti-fascist movement, and president of FNRJ (Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia) and SFRJ (Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) from 1945-1980.

*Mnemonic Communities* – social groups like family, nation or ethnic group which influence how individuals remember or forget the past.

*NOB* - (Narodnooslobodilačka borba) National Liberation Struggle, an anti-fascist guerrilla movement organized by Josip Broz Tito and Communist Party in the Second World War.

*Partisans* - fighters of an anti-fascist movement in Yugoslavia, organized by Josip Broz Tito and the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in WWII.

*Ustashes* - Croatian nationalists and pro-fascist fighters of NDH led by *Poglavnik* Ante Pavelić.



# 1 Introduction

*Accordingly, over the past decades, the great statesman, the victorious leader of the Partisan resistance movement, a citizen of the world, a rebel who dared say No! to Hitler and Stalin (and survived), the most welcome guest, the father of self-management socialism, a cosmopolitan, a peacemaker and a co-creator of the “third way” in the then divided world (the architect of the Non-Aligned Movement), a charming host and a bon vivant, gradually became everything that is diametrically opposite: a war criminal, a typical tyrant, an anti-democrat, a charlatan, a mass murderer, a staunch Bolshevik, a traitor of the Croatianhood, a Serb hater and the hater/murderer/butcher of every Yugoslav nation in turn, a smug totalitarian leader, a godless person, a cheap demagogue, a Comintern agent, the Balkan Pol-Pot, Stalin’s best student while Titoism became a synonym for the type of socialist regime independent from the Soviet Union. (Velikonja, 2008:14)*

I was sitting in the Theater café on the very same corner where the event of taking off the plaque with Tito’s name took place. I opened the day’s newspapers and started reading the big headline on the first page: “TITO’S CURSE: The tragic end of a respectable Zagreb’s caterer, the man who took off the plaque from Marshal’s Tito square” (Cigoj, 2018, my translation). As I was reading the article, a thousand questions arose inside me as a student of anthropology and a strong wish to understand the background of this act of removing the plaque. What drives people in an impulsive act and how much are these actions encouraged by political ideology, social influence, or propaganda in media around us?

The article stated further: “The Zagreb caterer Neven Brajkovic (55), known as Brko, best known for having removed the street sign with the inscription of Marshal’s Tito square, suddenly tragically ended his life at the family cafe [...] Bruno has been depressed and nervous the last year. From the removal of Tito's plaque, everything went wrong. Many people stopped coming to the café [...] ” (Cigoj, 2018, my translation). It was a tragic epilogue of the events that took place just a year ago and which were the *spiritus movens* for writing this paper. During my stay in Croatia in 2017, I witnessed something that aroused my interest; the right-wing party demanded from Zagreb Council to change the name of the Marshal Tito Square in the center of town and this change of name initiated new political disputes about the past and its meaning. Many countries re-name the streets after the change of political order for the need of breaking with the past and building a new ideology (Burke, 1989). Naming and re-naming of the streets took place in the period of the formation of the socialist Yugoslavia after WWII

because the new government realized the power these changes could have as a symbolic charge. Then, again, this process began in the Croatian State in the early 90s and continued throughout the decade (Rihtman-Augustin, 1992). Although the name of the square remained, and after a long series of changes of other street names, the question arose as to why exactly it has been altered now, almost thirty years later? Being away from my homeland for four years I was astonished to realize that the confrontation with the memory of a historical person did not leave the political scene, and that made me explore why the shadows of the past constantly return in the society and what ordinary people think of former Yugoslav president Josip Broz Tito today. As noted by one of my informants, former Yugoslav president is a frequent topic of everyday discussions in Croatian society, which is why this research is interesting and needed.

But who was Josip Broz Tito? He was undoubtedly a controversial person; for some, he was a villain who suppressed the Croatian people during his rule, while for others he was one of the greatest 20th-century political leaders in this region. From the analytical perspective of this work, all these evaluations and opinions are interesting and valid, and my intention here is to listen to what my informers had to say about him in order to explore to what extent present-day ideology influences processes of memory formation. The power of anthropology as an academic discipline which studies social and political processes with the help of ethnographic methods can provide a unique first-person perspective to the research of memory.

Although a red thread of this work, it is not the personality of Josip Broz Tito that is the predominant subject of inquiry. My initial idea was to focus this study on the historical figure of Tito, but as my fieldwork progressed, I realized that my interest should be expended to the political concepts of socialism and Tito's reign more generally. The ideas of Brotherhood and Unity, Non-Aligned Movement or Self-management propagated in socialist Yugoslavia are all closely connected to Josip Broz Tito because his government introduced them. No study of the former president would be complete without a focus on these processes and the ideology that informed them. The change of name of the Marshal Tito Square made me wonder how important Josip Broz was as a historical figure and why some people thought he better be deleted from Croatian history and collective memory. If some parts of his policy are seen as contradictory, are there still some values of his time that can be appraised even today? How much is he judged today on the basis of his role in the Non-Align Movement and anti-colonial and anti-racist policy? These are the question I will address in subsequent chapters of the thesis. I find these questions important and relevant for further research because issues central to Tito's ideology and rule, like unity, solidarity, multiculturalism, anti-racism, ethnic co-

existence, and understanding are all still 'bones of contention' of the modern globalized world we live in. It is worth to notice that 2020 marks the 40-years anniversary of Josip Broz Tito's death and it will be interesting how this is commemorated in Croatia.

## 1.1 Research Aim and Questions

The initial impetus for this research was to understand *the pattern of memory formation in present Croatia and how it is manipulated politically*. Memory is not a constant phenomenon; rather, it is a dynamic process that varies through time and the interaction among people. That means that humans as social beings adapt to their social framework (their ethnic identity, social groups, nation-states, etc.) which then affect not just how they remember historical events, but also why they tend to remember some facts while others are left to "an erosion caused by oblivion" (Augé, 2004:20).

After the collapse of communism and the change of political system from socialism to capitalism in the early '90s, the new government in Croatia engaged in a process of distortion or inversion of historical facts, construction of new myths, and denigration of anti-fascist movement and Tito's role in creating Croatian history, all with an objective of legitimizing of the new political order (Ognjenovic & Jozelic, 2016; Ugrešić, 1998; Velikonja, 2008).

The central objective of this thesis is to describe how people perceive their past after the change of political order and how do mnemonic communities like society and state affect this perception and people's memory of their past. I aim to elucidate how memories are contested, especially when transmitted between generations. I will argue that political elites deliberately manipulate cultural symbols and historical narratives to construct myths with the purpose to obtain national cohesion and solidarity, which would ultimately enable elites to gain political and economic power. By using interviews as the main method of empirical research, I explore how people perceive their past, what is the role of history, state, and society in their memories formation, but most of all how much does the government's ideology influence how people comprehend their past. My main questions are as follows:

*How do mnemonic communities such as ethnic groups, state and power elites influence people's conceptualization of history in contemporary Croatia?*

*How do people in Croatia make sense of their complex, contradictory, and violent past in changed political circumstances?*

## **1.2 Social Relevance**

"Memory matters. It matters for the simple reason that memory is an anthropological given, since 'all consciousness is mediated through it' (Müller, 2002:1). With these words, Jan – Werner Müller opens his introduction in a book about memory and politics. This thesis aims to illustrate why memory matters, and what is the role of politics and ideology in shaping it. As will be shown throughout the thesis, the image of Josip Broz Tito for many Croats and in public discourse (media) is not one-dimensional. Tito does not signify only a dictator and hater of all Croats, rather many look at him from different stands and evaluate simultaneously his positive and negative sides. Current ideology cannot erase or radically misrepresent almost 50 years of history as if it never happened. People who lived throughout those years are still alive and have their own history and stories, and it is their voices that I prioritize in this research. In a way, this thesis aims to bring their voices into the public domain; I want to give them a forum to express their perspectives, frustrations, fears and even prognosis for the future. This study thus aims to present how there can coexist various interpretations of historical events that are contested. One dimension of this diversity which will be discussed here are social impacts provided within mnemonic communities; the latter influence how their members narrate and perceive their past. As my approach to memory is marked by pluralism and multiplicity of coexisting perspectives, an emphasis on emic ideas and voices is essential for this work.

The dominant nationalism in Croatia today that proclaims intolerance towards others and everything different influences how people think and consequently how they remember their past. Nationalism thus contributes to distortion of the official historical narrative (Klasić, 2019). In the past few years, it became evident that one part of Croatian society tended to deny the role of Partisans and their leader, Josip Broz Tito in the National Liberation Struggle from the Second World War and their achievements in the anti-fascist movement. Additionally, Josip Broz Tito was presented as the main obstacle to the realization of the Croatian nation-state after the Second World War, because the anti-fascist movement put an end to the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) proclaimed by pro-fascist Ustashas during the war.

Balkan history and especially that of former Yugoslavia is full of contested memories about traumatic, and complex historical heritage. A cult of Tito's personality was imposed for decades during his life, with its accompanying mythology. Even if his figure has been subjected to de-mythologization since the 1990s, the proliferating negative representations of him are equally biased and used for ideological brain-washing and political (nationalist) mobilization. In order to avoid future manipulative uses of Tito, whose symbolic power seems to have long over-lived his political power, his cult, and the myths about him, we need a new frame for public discussion of his figure. Such frame should be based on less biased representations of historical facts and events from the time of his rule, as well as a more pluralistic approach to evaluations of his politics, ideas, and activities.

I want to show that politics which selectively put forward a version of history that represents the opinions and interests of only one segment of the nation and discards all other perspectives poses dangers by not being conducive to future reconciliation of a still deeply divided society. Instead of bridging the gap by providing a discursive and epistemological space for people on different sides to come to terms with the past that was complex, contradictory, and traumatic, it deepened existing issues. Prominent Croatian historian, Hrvoje Klasić points to the increasing growth of intolerance, nationalism and historical revisionism in Croatian society today and concludes, "We probably will not even agree, or need to agree on the interpretation of past events. It is much more important to think about what kind of society we want to live in tomorrow. If it is not a society in which human rights, tolerance, solidarity and nonviolence are promoted, but, instead nationalism, racism, exclusivity, and conflict, then 'ustashas and partisans'<sup>1</sup> are, unfortunately, the least of our problems" (Klasić, 2019:22-23, my translation). Following his presumption, the contribution of this work goes along the ideas that for shaping a just society that can effectively strive to oppose racism and religious and national intolerance, Croatian society and politicians need to allow for a critical perspective on post-socialist practices of manipulating history and ignoring existing social traumas. Hoepken (1999: 204) emphasizes that not dealing with the violent past publicly or in schools "...paved the way for historical memory to be used for nationalist mobilization".

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<sup>1</sup> He refers to the common disputes in Croatian everyday life about the role of the Ustashas and Partisans in WWII and the crimes they committed.

Another issue I would like to stress here is the importance of multiculturalism in today's global world. It is an irony that Brotherhood and Unity propagated in socialist Yugoslavia was proclaimed undesirable in the newly formed democratic Croatia while at the same time the state entered in a new union of nations (EU) whose proclaimed values are multiculturalism, multi-ethnicity, and diverse religious groups living side by side.. All these were the values promoted through today stigmatized Brotherhood and Unity.

After all, can we learn a lesson from concepts like Brotherhood and Unity and can nostalgia be a positive force for future reconciliation of contested memories? I will discuss these questions below. Ognjenović and Jozić (2016:7) stated in their book *Titoism, Self-Determination, Nationalism, Cultural Memory*: "What 'brotherhood and unity' once was in the case of Yugoslavia, is what 'multiculturalism' represents today in the case of its successor states: after all, we have come around full circle".

### **1.3 Theoretical Framework**

The main theories for data analysis in this paper are *collective memory theory and politics of memory*. The former was introduced in social sciences by Maurice Halbwachs and explains how people remember their past under the influence of social frameworks. So, while collective memory explains how social groups can influence memories, it lacks to do so when it comes to the state as a powerful actor in the mnemonic process. *Politics of memory* fills that gap as it points to the role of state and power elites who affect our identity formation and through state ideology influence how people comprehend the history and historical events. Although in his study, Halbwachs refers to social groups like family, religious groups and social classes, for the need of my study I will use the concept of mnemonic communities as proposed by Barbara Misztal (2003). She defines mnemonic communities as "groups that socialize us to what should be remembered and what should be forgotten. These communities such as the family, the ethnic group or the nation, provide the social context in which memories are embedded and mark the emotional tone, depth, and style of our remembering" (Ibid: 160). The main focus of this work will be on the last two, ethnic groups and nation-states.

Besides these two main theories, I also make use of various concepts frequently employed in the memory process: remembering, forgetting, nostalgia, ethnic identity, and

nationalism and for the better clarity of this paper those concepts will be discussed at length in the ethnographic chapters.

In order to clarify the complex notion of memory, I will provide a short history of memory studies highlighting memory research in anthropology. This will be followed by an analysis of the problematic relationship between memory and history, and finally, I will address some critical points of view on existing research of memory.

### *1.3.1 History of Memory Studies*

Psychologists have been studying memory as a cognitive process with a major focus on the brain and its cognitive abilities (Misztal, 2003). But since memory is a way of remembering the past, it is also an object of study of history. The relationship between history and memory, however, is somehow fused and contested which will be explained below. Because we are social beings, memory inevitably became an object of sociological research, and consequently anthropological. More recently, memory has become a significant topic in Political Science as well.

Memory Studies is an interesting and exciting field and as humans change and evolve in their interaction with the surrounding environment so does memory. Although interest in memory was present in the works of social thinkers since the Greek philosophers onwards it only became salient in the late 19th and early 20th century when prominent sociologists like Emile Durkheim and Maurice Halbwachs and the historian March Bloch turned attention to it (Olick & Robbins, 1998:106). It is from then on that fascination with memory began, which then makes the main preoccupation of many social sciences like psychology, history, sociology, anthropology, and newly political science. But why did memory become so enchanting in the last few decades? Scholars like Berliner (2005), Misztal (2003) and Klein (2000) emphasize several important social factors which brought Memory Studies to the fore of the humanities in recent decades, namely an interest in multiculturalism, the fall of communism and the "politics of victimization and regret" as stated by Kammen (qtd.in Olick & Robbins, 1998:107).

There are many types of memory and scholars usually divide them in several primary forms. According to Halbwachs, there is *autobiographical* or individual memory, which refers to the lived experiences or memory of the individual's own past. This memory "about the self" in large extent "provides a sense of identity and of continuity" (Misztal, 2003:78). According

to Barclay, we reconstruct past events according to our self-schemata, or according to how we think and feel in our daily life events, and concludes that "memories of most everyday life events are transformed, distorted or forgotten because autobiographical memory changes over time as we change" (Barclay qtd. in Misztal, 2003:79). Further, there is a *semantic* or *declarative* memory which entails the memories of past events which are learned and obtained through historical records, and thus could be called *historical* memory (Misztal, 2003; Olick & Robbins, 1998). And finally, there is a *social* or *collective* memory which are memories influenced by the social group of which an individual is a member (Bloch, 1998; Misztal, 2003; Wang & Brockmeier, 2002). The latter is of primary importance for this study. The notion of memory has multiple meanings and definitions which is due to the fact that memory studies are a part of many different disciplines. Thus, we can talk about: official memory, public memory, national memory, historical memory, a family memory, political memory, etc. (Olick & Robbins, 1998; Verovšek, 2016).

### 1.3.2 *Anthropology and Memory*

A memory "boom" in anthropology came with the postmodernist turn and ongoing debate about the role of memory in history. Since the 80s, anthropologists have stressed the importance of the notion of memory as a phenomenological approach "which consists of capturing the way people perceive: they remember, forget and reinterpret their own pasts [...]. Such a perspective, which documents the existence of multiple and sometimes antagonistic visions of the past within the same society, has been copiously developed in anthropological studies since the 1980s" (Berliner, 2005:200).

The new interest in memory among anthropologists, argues Berliner (2005), came with the expansion of the label itself. Thus, as Klein states, memory is "replacing old favorites, such as nature, culture, language" (Klein, 2000:128). In a similar manner, Berliner argues that "memory helps us to think through the continuity and persistence of representations, practices, emotions, and institutions", all the ideas crucial for anthropological studies. In addition, Berliner highlights yet another important issue, that the word memory is overused and that the concept lost its meaning and became a "vague, fuzzy label" (Berliner, 2005:206). For this confusion, he holds responsible some of the most productive scholars in Memory Studies, such as Terdiman who states that "memory is everything or that everything is memory" and Connerton who wrote that "society is itself a form of memory" (in Berliner, 2005:206). Berliner concludes that by an expansion of the term memory becomes everything that is transmitted



through generations or stored in culture and becomes in a way indistinct from the concept of culture. Thus he raises the question: "by overextending the usage of this notion aren't we losing the specificity of what anthropology of memory is, i.e. understanding the way in which people remember and forget their past?" (Berliner, 2005: 206).

### *1.3.3 History and Memory: two different ways of understanding the past?*

The relationship between History and Memory is a complex one and dates back to the early days of historiography. Until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, these two interpretations of the past were complementary to each other where "memory reflects what actually happened, and history reflects memory" (Burke, 1997:43-44). But, after the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century history arose as an independent discipline and their harmonious relationship collapsed. Historians have now turned their focus to the research of prominent personalities, states, nations, and peoples. And in doing so, they used source critique as a scientific method to establish an objective history, thus turning away from memory. Additionally, in their search for 'objective' knowledge, historians tried to distance themselves from the tradition of oral representation that falls into the domain of memory. History is expected to be independent of the present. The present, however, is an important reference for memory, as, according to theorists, memory resides in the past's relations to the present. It was a widely spread idea among many academics that whereas memory includes mythological elements and is influenced by emotions it is more 'human' and subjective. History, on the other hand, is seen as an objective discipline which invokes critical examination of the past as registered in different documents (Miztal, 2003: 100; Berliner, 1995: 199).

History is dead memory, state Olick and Robbins (1998: 110), i.e. memory becomes history when people have no longer connection to it. Collective memory, on the other hand, represents an active past to which we still adhere and thus it forms our identities. According to Olick and Robbins, historical memory can be both dead and alive. It becomes organic when historical events are celebrated in the present by kipping them alive in our memory or they can be stored in historical records, "graveyards of knowledge" (Ibid: 111).

A new approach, which weakened this traditional perspective, came after WWII when historians turned their interest towards cultural history rather than the history of events (Miztal, 2003). Additionally, a new interest in memory came in the 1960s with the emergence of *oral history* and "history from the bottom up". These new research trends in history emphasized the role of memory, which blurred the differences between history and memory

even further. Pierre Nora sees memory and history as two different orientations onto the past. He describes memory as "vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation", whereas history "calls for analysis and criticism" (Nora, 1989: 8-9). Peter Burke thinks that history and memory are not as objective as they were traditionally thought to be. They are both the product of social groups rather than individuals alone. In this claim, he comes close to Halbwachs' theory that our memory of past events is socially dependent because it is our social framework that directs "what is memorable" and also how things should be remembered (Burke, 1997: 44). As memory can be influenced by our social group even news read in the newspaper or heard on television can become part of our individual past and memory. Burke claims: "memory may be described as a group reconstruction of the past" (Burke, 1997:44). Barbara Misztal concludes that interrelationship between history and memory should be accepted because every discipline has its reliable methods of inquiry. In other words, "Memory is a special kind of knowledge about the past, which stresses the continuity, the personal and the unmediated" (Misztal, 2003: 107-108).

#### *1.3.4 Contemporary debates*

In his critiques of Collective Memory Studies, Wulf Kansteiner (2002) touches on some important issues in memory discourse. He points to the fact that although collective memory is actually an abstraction without any organic basis, we should not look at it as metaphorical expression. Collective memories stem from shared communication about the content of the past that is located in the life-worlds of individuals who participate in the life of that collective. Thus, "collective memories are based in a society and its inventory of signs and symbols [...]" and "[...] exist on the level of families, professions, political generations, ethnic and regional groups, social classes, and nations" (Kansteiner, 2002: 189). Individuals are part of several mnemonic communities so collective remembering can take place in different places; in the private sphere or in the public domain. Kansteiner points further to the fact that collective memory is something like multimedia collages because it relays on various visual (pictures, media), or spatial elements (memorial sites, statutes, buildings). But it is interesting to notice, how regardless of the quality of the historical representations, it does not have to correspond with perception processes because media representations are often ignored or misused. Irwin Zarecka (qtd in Kanstainer, 2002: 192) states: "Individuals are perfectly capable of ignoring even the best-told stories, of injecting their own subversive meanings into even the most rhetorically accomplished 'texts' and of attending to only those ways of making sense of the past that fit their own".

### 1.3.5 *Collective Memory Theory*

I will here explain the collective memory theory, which helps to understand how social groups can shape people's conception of history and historical events.

Maurice Halbwachs, whom I mentioned above, is a French philosopher and sociologist perceived by many as the founding father of the field of Collective Memory Studies. It was his seminal work that introduced the notion of collective memory in the sociological discipline. Collective memory has since then become commonly accepted and used in many disciplines within the humanities and social sciences. In his book *On Collective Memory* (1992), Halbwachs argues, in line with his teacher Emile Durkheim's notion of collective psychology, that individuals are deeply connected to their social groups which constitute the framework for their memories and recollections. In his words: "it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories" (Halbwachs, 1992: 38). In many cases, it is the social environment that alters our memories. People surrounding us tend to ask us about our memories and in those realities we have a tendency to evaluate ourselves as being a part of the same group. According to Halbwachs, individuals recall memories relaying on the frameworks of social memory, "In other words, the various groups that compose society are capable at every moment of reconstructing their past. This leads to frequent distortion of the past in the act of reconstructing it" (Ibid: 182). He defines those collective frameworks as " [...] the instruments used by the collective memory to reconstruct an image of the past which is in accord, in each epoch, with the predominant thoughts of the society" (Ibid: 40).

For Halbwachs, the "past is not preserved but is reconstructed on the basis of the present" (Ibid: 40). He states further that if an individual wants to recall older memories, it is ample to put him in the entirety of the social group of which he is a member. He suggests that we cannot understand memories which occur in the individual's thought if we do not detect them in the thoughts of a group or of various groups of which he is simultaneously a member (Ibid: 53). According to Halbwachs, it is just a deception that our memories are independent because they utilize through general understanding. Thus, according to Halbwachs, individual memory detached from the collective memory of social groups like family, social class, and religious communities is meaningless.

Finally, although Halbwachs admits that it is the individual who remembers, he states that his memories are strongly dependent on social settings. He rejects Freud's idea that all

individual experiences are captivated in our brain unconsciously and could be retrieved back under certain circumstances (Olick & Robbins, 1998: 109).

He declines psychological assumptions which imply that individuals act as isolated beings and points to that matter further: "Most of the time, when I remember, it is others who spur me on; their memory comes to the aid of mine and mine relies on theirs [...] There is no point in seeking where they are preserved in my brain or in some nook of my mind to which I alone have access: for they are recalled to me externally, and the groups of which I am a part at any time give me the means to reconstruct them [...]" (Halbwachs, 1992: 38).

Although his ideas about collective memory were widely accepted in many disciplines, many scholars today part with Halbwachs' arguments in which he stresses the collective implication of memory which makes individuals just an obedient of collective will (Olick & Robbins, 1998:111).

This distinction between individual (autobiographical) and social (collective) memory dates back to the late 19th century. The French sociologist Emile Durkheim first provided the separation between the individual representation of memory and collective representation. This consequently led to the division between on the one hand individual or neuro-cognitive memory, which is the object of study of psychologists, and on the other hand, collective memory, which is studied by other social disciplines (Wang & Brockmeier, 2002). Following the same tradition, Durkheim's disciple Maurice Halbwachs deepened this division further. As already stated, according to him, there is no such thing as individual memory for individuals shape their memories through the collective/social frameworks in which they find themselves. The British anthropologist Maurice Bloch (1998) advocates for more collaboration between disciplines, mainly psychology and anthropology. He stresses that anthropologists should take into account psychological studies in order to understand the existence of the cognized past in the present (Bloch, 1998: 115). Psychology makes a distinction between recalling and remembering wherein by the former, people bring to mind their past through interaction with others. People remember a lot more than they can recall whereas psychologists suggest that " [...] nothing is ever completely forgotten that, under certain circumstances, cannot be recalled" (Ibid: 116). Bloch acknowledges Halbwachs' reasoning about the influence which society has in the process of recalling but contests his argument about the equation of autobiographical and collective memory. Instead, he thinks that autobiographical memory is a product of collective memory. Additionally, Bloch argues that because Halbwachs failed to make a clear distinction

between recalling and remembering, he misleadingly concluded that memories, which are not shared, are forgotten. Using empirical examples from his field research in Madagascar, Bloch showed how people when put in different situations or moods, can recall past events in much greater detail. This, in his words, shows how the presence of the past in the present is far more complex than scholars before he thought it to be (Ibid: 118-119).

In a comparative study of memory in the United States and East Asia, psychologists Qi Wang and Jens Brockmeier (2002), show how people start forming their system of beliefs and practices already since their earliest childhood. In order to address this phenomenon, Wang and Brockmeier proposed the concept of cultural memory which can bridge the gap between individual and social dimensions of memory. They concluded that cultural memory is not limited by the social forms of knowledge, experience or moral values, rather that individuals choose what in the culture is important for their self-identification and what is not (Ibid: 60). Another idea of Halbwach that has received criticism is that social identity is stable and unchangeable, which would mean static and "frozen" in time (Misztal, 2003: 55). As Misztal states, identity is a dynamic and changeable process. Their social memories can change just like their social and cultural context. This can explain why people tend to change their perception of the past after the changes in their social environment.

### *1.3.6 Politics of Memory*

*The "politics of memory" becomes materialized through the "industry of memory" (erection of monuments, a ceremony complex, annual holiday cycles, memorabilia production, "official" historiography production etc.), and as such it is an indispensable part of political, commercial, educational and concrete projects. Reckless revisions of modern history, new exclusivist ideologies, deliberate amnesia – all these precipitate not only an identity crisis but also serious ruptures in people's memory narratives, both personal and collective. (Velikonja, 2008: 25)*

Along with collective memory, I use the theory of politics of memory or as it is also known presentist memory approach. I do so in order to analyze the role of state institutions in the creation of collective memories. Collective memory theory, which was explained above, points out that people remember selectively and according to their social groups. I extend that notion by using the presentist approach, which gives an answer *who* is the subject that exploits and controls the content of social memories (Misztal, 2003: 56). It points to the state and power elites who use the methods of "socially organized forgetting and socially organized

remembering" to endorse their political orders. This theory explains how the past is formed to match present dominant interests and the studies in that domain show " [...] how nationalist movements create a master commemorative narrative that highlights their members' common past and legitimizes their aspiration for a shared destiny" (Misztal: 56). I have chosen this theory because it explains the instrumental role which state and power elites have on the process of remembering and forgetting.

Although studies of memory became a central point in history, psychology and cultural studies, it was just recently that memory became researched among political scientists; the book *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe: Studies in the Presence of the Past* filled that gap. It is a volume edited in 2002 by Jan-Werner Müller where the link between memory and political power is examined suggesting that memory is an important segment in studying nationalism or ethnic identity and thus contributes well to this work. Müller stresses that "the premise of this book is that memory matters politically in ways we do not yet fully understand; its purpose is to clarify the relationship between memory and power" (Müller, 2002: 2). The main purpose of the book is to research "how memory is personally reworked, officially recast and often violently re-instilled, especially after wars" and additionally "examine the ways in which memory shapes present power constellations, in particular the way in which collective memory constraints, but also enables, policies" (Ibid: 2). The book is focused on selected European countries which struggle to cope with the traumatic violent past of the Second World War. Tony Judt (2002), explains how the collapse of communism "unfroze" the memories on both sides of the former Iron Curtain. After WWII, the common aspiration of both sides was to forget the recent past and turn to the new future, in the West through trans-national unification; in the East through a social revolution. This disinterest to come to terms with the past influenced the distortion of memory during the long period from the end of the war until the collapse of communism in 1989. The process of "unfreezing" was quite simple in the West. But in the East and Central parts of Europe, this process turned to be more complicated; memory returned "with a vengeance that the West has been spared" and while "desacralized" and "democratized" in the West in East it was accompanied with founding myths (Ibid: 6-9).

Judt argues further that eastern Europe suffers from too much memory, "too many pasts on which people can draw, usually as a weapon against the past of someone else" (2002: 172). As it will be shown in the last ethnographic chapter, the collapse of communism and transitional process from the socialist political system to the democratic one in Croatia opened the space for new myths, and nationalist memories to emerge; while the old disputes hidden

beneath the surface during communism, re-burst on the political scene. Tony Judt explains how the communist era did not stimulate enough the creation of a new common identity but was trying to erase traces of the old ones thus making " [...] a vacuum into which ethnic particularism, nationalism, nostalgia, xenophobia and ancient quarrels could flow" (in Müller, 2002:176). This explains why after the collapse of communism, all former republics of Yugoslavia embraced nationalism as a main political concept.

Illana R. Bet-El (2002) points that the painful elements of historical events from the Second World War (the complicated connection between Partisans, Ustashas and Chetniks is described in the background chapter of this thesis) created the most "pervasive, and divisive, personal and collective memories" of these events. During Tito's Yugoslavia, these memories were banned from the official political sphere giving the space for the ethnic co-existence proclaimed through Brotherhood and Unity. This reluctance to come to terms with the traumatic past in former Yugoslavia paved the way for painful memories to be evoked in nationalist purposes. While referring to the last wars from the 90s in Yugoslavia, Illana concludes: "The warring sides entered the battlefield armed with memories [...]. But [...], the international community paid little heed to the meaning and power of memory in the Balkans" (Ibid: 221).

Additionally, for the purpose of new nation-building which emerged after the collapse of the Iron Curtain, the past needed to be interpreted and represented anew in order to sustain national self-determination. Monroe E. Price (2002: 139) states "Collective memory of defining events shapes and sustains national identity. Even in times of peace, states maintain-or even construct-such memories as sources both for shared national identity and for the legitimacy of state power".

The collapse of communism also created the need to discuss how to come in terms with the communist past. Timothy Garton Ash (2002: 10) for example, suggests that one comes in term with the past by: purges, trials, forgetting, or history lessons.

In this volume, a sharp distinction is made between collective or national memory and individual or personal memory (Snyder, 2002). The former is also seen as a "myth," a "social framework," or as Snyder puts it "an organizational principle, or sets of myths, by which nationally conscious individuals understand the past and its demands on the present" (Ibid: 50). National memory serves the purpose of preserving the dignity of people with which we identify thus strengthening our pride as human beings (Ibid: 55). Müller (2002) acknowledges that

memory is prone to political influence because collective memory is not a property but an ongoing process and thus subjected to various influences coming from politicians, historians, or even journalists. High politics through presidential speeches and other symbolic performances have a significant influence on it. The author suggests the existence of a circular relationship between identity and collective memory where identity is constructed according to what is remembered and /or forgotten (Ibid: 20-21).

I will argue throughout this thesis that politics which is controlled by power elites have a considerable influence on memory formation. Through the creation and spread of particular ideology, national elites influence how people conceptualize history and consequently remember historical facts. In the following analysis, I will also introduce the notion of forgetting as another mechanism used by the state to alter how people think of their past. The presentist approach to memory studies has been employed in the analysis throughout the thesis. It is therefore important to mention that the approach has been subjected to some criticism that produced innovative ideas in memory studies. The *Popular memory approach*, for example, is grounded in the presumption that the ways people recall their past are orchestrated from above. Thus, popular memory recognizes the possibility of manipulation over memory from below and is much less deterministic (Misztal, 2003: 61). It recognizes that social groups can maintain their version of the past. The Popular Memory Group in the early 1980s laid the foundations of the approach, in the book *Making history* (1982). The group opposed the presentist's view of dominant political order as monolithic, singular and totalizing. They rather see it as "dynamic, conflictual, fluid and unstable" field of contestation between the ruling elites and those whom they want to dominate (Ibid: 63-64). Thus popular memory is constructed from various layers and should be analyzed both through public representation and private memory (Ibid: 64).

Popular memory, in its turn, was criticized by Schwartz (2000) and Schudson (1989) for failing to explain important issues: what are the selection criteria for symbols, heroes or events to be integrated into public memory. Furthermore, they criticize the popular memory approach for conceiving of the past as a political reality and for exaggerating the role of those in power over the content of memory (Misztal, 2003: 67).

Finally, there is the *dynamics of memory approach* which sees collective memory as "an ongoing process of negotiation" (Ibid: 67). Although a relatively recent perspective, it relates to contemporary research on memory adding a new dimension of research. It asserts



that history cannot be "freely invented and reinvented" (Ibid: 73). This idea opens space for studying the ways in which people use the past.

## **1.4 Methodology**

I will briefly present here how my fieldwork was conducted, what were the limitations of it and my main position in the whole process, especially given the fact that I have done ethnography at home. In addition, I will explain which methods I used in acquiring my data which consequently brought me to the possibility of answering my questions.

### *1.4.1 Doing Multi-Sited Ethnography*

We live in a world that is considerably different from the one in which Anthropology as a discipline developed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today's world is a world of globalization and the internet, and boundaries between states, nations, and cultures are no longer sustainable, "a world that is culturally, socially and economically interconnected and interdependent space" (Gupta & Ferguson, 2007: 343). In this reality, Marcus' idea of multi-sited ethnography provides a better approach. It is not easy to find the old fashioned single-sited field anymore, and that is the reason why Marcus emphasizes multi-sited ethnography where "following connections, associations, and putative relationships" stand in the center of anthropological research (Marcus, 1995: 97). Following the path of multi-sited ethnography, I have traveled through former Yugoslavia studying how people relate to their socialist history through their memories. In the summer of 2017, I visited Belgrade, the capital of former Yugoslavia and today's capital of Serbia; in the summer of 2018, my journey led me through Croatia, from its capital Zagreb then Brioni Islands in Istrian archipelago and finally to a small Croatian village Kumrovec, Josip Broz Tito's birthplace.

Fieldwork was conducted in two periods, of ten days during the summer of 2017, and one month in the summer of 2018. During the time of my fieldwork in Croatia, the country of my origin, field research was intertwined with my personal life, and it was rather hard to tell when my work was done and to define when I'm in or out of my fieldwork. For that reason, at times it was difficult for me to focus fully on work I was set to carry out.

My primary method was semi-structured interviews which I think best suited my research topic. This gave me the freedom of omitting some questions which would be either unnecessary or inappropriate to ask, primarily given my informers' age. In addition, this type

of interview allowed my interviewees to recall events without interruption and my role was to guide them through the process and ask additional questions if necessary (Davies, 2008; Bernard, 2011). I interviewed nine informers and recorded all the interviews. Interviews lasted between half an hour and an hour and a half and just once did I carry out a group interview with two of my informers because they wanted to do it that way. Two interviews were unstructured because they occurred in spontaneous conditions. Nevertheless, I recorded them with the permission of my informants.

I had prepared fifteen questions that I planned to follow through the conversation so to be sure to grasp all the information important for my particular research interests. Only during my first interview, however, I managed to ask all of those questions. After that, I just gave my informers freedom to talk and to reveal everything that they had in mind using my questions as a guide and a reminder not to forget what I wanted to learn. Sometimes, I succeeded, sometimes maybe not; personal memory, as I hinted above in my theoretical section, is a sensitive process and one that cannot be led by structured questions. I was trying to keep my informants focused on the things that I found important. But many liked to talk about current politics, providing more comments on recent political events. On one occasion, I received information via e-mail. All in all, I have gathered data from two female interviewees and seven males, all between the ages of 35 and 89. They have worked in different spheres: a university professor, a former diplomat, two pensioners, a social worker, a museum curator, an official clerk, and two students. Most of the informants did not want to stay anonymous, on the contrary, some were eager for their personal voices to be heard, but I have nevertheless changed their names. My informers will easily recognize themselves in this thesis but given that the issues discussed in this work are still controversial in Croatian society, I decided not to reveal their real names. Some of them choose their names and for others, I made changes according to my personal criteria, but still, their names reflect their real gender.

I used my private connections to get in touch with interviewees, but I also contacted the Association of Anti-Fascist Fighters, and they were more than kind enough to help me and eager to convey their vision of Josip Broz Tito. Because of their expected bias and to achieve a balance I contacted the representatives of a right-wing political party which was behind the act of changing the name of Marshal Tito's Square in Zagreb in 2017. They didn't reply to my e-mail, so by their own choice, unfortunately, their voice will not be represented in this work.

In addition to interviews, which make the core of my research, I have done participant observation in different sites. I went to places that are closely connected to Tito's life and are still today conveyors of his memory. The first place I visited was The Memorial Center Josip Broz Tito in Belgrade where his coffin still stands today and which was in 1982 organized as a memorial complex. The next place I visited was Brioni Island in Croatia where Tito had his residence and where he welcomed some of the most important world politicians and other eminent artists from all over the globe and where a declaration of Non-Aligned Movement was signed. And finally, I visited Kumrovec in Croatia, a small and picturesque village where he was born and which was turned into the Memorial Museum of Marshal Tito in 1953. I wanted to see how those places were part of the process of constructing Josip Broz Tito's memory.

In order to document and understand multiple perspectives on history, I turned to other sources as well, amongst them, various catalogs gathered at the places I visited, audio-visual material, historical books, and newspapers which all turned to be an invaluable source of quantitative data.

#### *1.4.2 Limitations and Reflexivity*

##### *Selection of data and language*

Often during my research, I felt like Malinowski, sitting on my isolated island in a remote corner of coffee-bar thinking of how to get in touch with the locals or how to come closer and begin my research. However, with time I realized that I had to change my strategy. Talking to my acquaintances about my project, they offered their help in arranging interviews for me with the people they thought would be interesting for my research. So, although I worried about how to find people to talk to, this turned out to be relatively easy. Thus I used a snowball sampling technique in selecting people whom I will interview. Additionally, as already mentioned, I sent a few e-mails to the organizations that had some connections to Josip Broz. I thought that they could be interested in sharing their views with me. Only one of them answered to offer their cooperation to my research.

Many informants were quite interested in the topic of Josip Broz Tito, which eased building a connection with them and consequently made my job immeasurably easier. They were either politically involved in former Yugoslavia, employed in state organizations, even involved in NOB, or were informing themselves about Tito and his politics through a variety of media such as the internet, books, daily newspapers, etc. Anthropologists rely on the words and testimonies of their informers, and although we should be aware that this knowledge can

be partial or incorrect, we still have to believe that "what the respondents say is a representation of social and cultural realities" (Davies, 2008: 107). Having this in mind I hope my subjectivity did not in any way blur the clarity of data.

Since I did my research in Serbia and Croatia, all interviews were done in Croatian and this helped me enormously. Conversations could run smoothly, and with time people started to confide in me and share their thoughts and emotions. That is one of the advantages of doing research in your own country and language. Although that made my work immeasurably easier at that point, translating conversations into English could have modified meanings and nuances. Hopefully, I managed to preserve primary meanings and messages enough to present accurate information in this thesis and truthfully convey thoughts and emotions. If there are any mistakes in translations, I am the only one to blame. I just hope this did not alter the thoughts of my informers in any way.

### *Doing Ethnography at Home*

Doing ethnography at home gives the researcher a great possibility of understanding the context of the issues he is dealing with, but that also brings with it the risk of being overly subjective. As a previous student of history, I am familiar with the narrative of the Yugoslav past provided in history books. This knowledge created a biased view of the topic I was set to inquire, but also provided me with a broader knowledge of the context. In my new role of an anthropologist, I learned to treat critically the claims of objectivity and truth characteristic for positivist History. I had to silence a historian in me and be careful during the interviews not to impose my thoughts or values on informants. With regard to the "hot potato" and the theme that still separates society, my role as an objective researcher was difficult. I think that a researcher should put herself, her knowledge and emotions in front of the task she is set to carry out. Sometimes it was challenging, but the whole journey was fascinating, and I have learned a lot from my interlocutors for which I am grateful to them all.

## **1.5 Chapter overview**

**Chapter 1** is an introductory chapter where I present the main arguments of this thesis, put forward research questions, and explain the social relevance of this thesis. Further, I introduce the main theories I employ for analysis of my empirical data, *collective memory theory* and *politics of memory*. I connect the ideas of both theories with the aim to explain how people

remember under the influence of both society that surrounds them (family, social or ethnic group) and power elites through power institutions. Further in this chapter I describe and motivate the choice of methods used for collecting ethnographic data. The chapter ends with a reflection on my position in the field and the limitations I encountered during my fieldwork.

In **Chapter 2** I bring in the socio-historical context of Croatia within Yugoslavia in order to provide the background information needed to understand my research. Particular focus is put on the history of the post-WWII period which I think is of major significance for the origin of the events discussed in the thesis.

**Chapter 3** is the first ethnographic chapter which I start with a historical description of how former Yugoslav president Josip Broz Tito was commemorated on the day of his death. In the second part, I analyze the important process in the discourse of memory-remembering and forgetting. This section shows how individuals remember historical events according to their personally relevant criteria and their social position. The last section of this chapter explains the active role of the state and problematizes how power elites influence memory formation through the process of *damnatio memoriae*, or deliberate condemnation to the oblivion of unwanted socialist past. In this chapter I will explicitly focus on the memories about Josip Broz Tito as a person and material for this chapter is derived from interviews and participant observation conducted in Belgrade in 2017, and Kumrovec and Zagreb in the summer of 2018. Additionally, I will use textual sources like daily newspapers, books, and brochures to broaden my analysis.

**Chapter 4** discusses the most important segments of the foreign and internal policy of Yugoslavia, namely, Brotherhood and Unity, Non-Aligned Movement and Self-management. These processes will be analyzed through data obtained by interviews and participant observation in Belgrade (Serbia) and on Brioni Island (Croatia). Additional textual sources will also be examined. The first section of the chapter begins with a short historical background of Yugoslav socialism which is followed by a description of the exhibition *Tito in Africa-Pictures of Solidarity* which was installed in Belgrade, Serbia. In this part, the focus lies on the values which were promoted through the connection between Yugoslavia and African countries such as anti-colonialism, solidarity, anti-racism, etc. This part is connected with the main ideas behind the Non-Aligned Movement as one of the most important concepts of the foreign Yugoslav policy.

The second part of this chapter supplements the first section where I introduce the concept of Brotherhood and Unity and the main ideas behind that concept. I discuss how my informers look upon the socialist heritage today and additionally what is the role the state plays in these perceptions. Nostalgia, Yugonostalgia, and Titostalgia are in focus in the third section of the chapter. I discuss the possible potential of nostalgia to be a positive force towards future reconciliation of contested memories. The last section of the chapter is dedicated to the lessons for the future. It problematizes and opens a discussion if we can learn something from the ideas of Brotherhood and Unity as well as from the politics of non-alignment, and can Yugoslavia and Josip Broz Tito be recognized as a common historical heritage in Croatia?

**Chapter 5** is the last ethnographic chapter that aims to analyze the importance of nationalism that emerged in the late 80s and reached its peak in the early 90s in Croatia in the construction of a new state. The first section is dedicated to the phenomenon of nationalism and it starts with the discussion about the primordial and modernist theoretical discourses on nationalism and ends with how my informers perceive nationalism that took place in Croatia after the 90s.

Ethnic identity became an important segment of identification in Croatia from the early 90s and the second section of the chapter problematizes the concepts of ethnicity and identity and why are they so important for an individual. The focus of the third section lies in the political reconstruction of historical narratives through myths and mythologization of historical events and explains the active role of power elites in memory formation. I analyze examples of violent and traumatic events that are still today's issues of dispute and contested memories in Croatia. Those historical narratives are testimonies about Jasenovac and Bleiburg in particular.

I end this chapter by problematizing the contemporary commemorations which take place on Bleiburg field and connect them to a broader discussion that took place in May 2019. The chapter draws from the theory of politics of memory to help me understand the role of power elites and state in memory formation and besides interviews, it relies on other textual sources mainly daily newspapers.

**Chapter 6** is a concluding chapter where I give a synthesis of all three ethnographic chapters and provide answers to my research questions which were the red thread of this work. I argue that the personal memories of difficult past are formed in a particular way and are under the influence of mnemonic communities such as social groups and power elites. It is also argued

that people in Croatia tend to make sense of their past by different and contested memories. The last section highlights the broader impact that this study can have on academic debates of memory in Croatia and on Croatian society more generally. I will also delineate some areas where further research is necessary.

## 2 Background

One cannot fully comprehend the contemporary situation in Croatia without knowledge of the socio-historical context of this region. This is why I will begin with the historical analysis of Croatian and Serbian past; I will explain how South Slavs came and settled in south-eastern Europe in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. I will then continue to the establishment of their medieval kingdoms and specifically focus my attention on the nation-building process among Croats and Serbs in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which ended with the creation of the mutual state-first (royal) Yugoslavia<sup>2</sup>. The relationship between these two nations had the biggest influence on the dissolution of Yugoslavia at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and their relationship is still today an area of contestations.

After WWII new Yugoslavia was established. The period of the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was marked by communism and the reign of Josip Broz Tito. Historical background about second (socialist) Yugoslavia will be provided in more detail where I explain the main social principles (patterns) on which this new state was built, namely Socialism, Brotherhood and Unity, the Non-Aligned Movement, and Self-management. This is necessary in order to understand the origin and significance of these concepts which will be discussed in subsequent chapters. I would like to stress that the historical accounts which are put forward in this part represent only one version of history. Although historians see themselves as objective conveyors of historical facts we should be aware that there are diverse historical narratives and that different versions of history can be subjected to questioning and contestation both in academic circles or public opinion. Several of my informers invited me to read particular works or authors, where, in their opinion, I could find an objective version of historical events we discussed. Branimir, for example, indicated:

For me, it is a horror that a historian who shares my ideological stance and my way of thinking, says one thing and a historian who represents the opposite [side], says another thing. I mean, how many histories

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<sup>2</sup> The Kingdom of Yugoslavia was proclaimed in 1929 by Aleksandar Karađorđević, a Serbian monarch who changed the name of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in order to introduce unitarism. The royalist Yugoslav state ceased to exist after 1941. Under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito, Partisan resistance proclaimed a Democratic Federal Yugoslavia which after 1946 changed the name into the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia. Often in literature royal Yugoslavia is referred to as the first Yugoslavia and Tito's socialist Yugoslavia as the second one. In this paper, I also use these terms for better clarity.



do we have? [...] People, sit down and agree. Educate the young. Let us educate our kids as it should be. I am always for that. We will not change history.

The main sources for this part of the thesis are books by historians: Ivo Banac (1984), Ivo Goldstein (2008, 2011), Leslie Benson (2004), and John R. Lampe (1996).

## 2.1 Medieval Kingdoms

In the 7th century, the South Slavs were settled in the Balkan area, but they had not yet developed their own states; instead, they were organized into tribes. The main source of the South Slavs early history is the work *De Administrando Imperio* written by the Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus who relates that the Croats had come to these areas in the 7th century, occupied the land, sought and ultimately obtained protection from the Byzantine emperor Heraclitus. Croats, as well as Serbs, belonged to warrior nations organized into the tribe alliances that came to the Balkans to assimilate the domestic population (Romans and Illyrians) imposed their name on Slavic tribes which already settled there, and at the end of the 9th and 12th centuries created their own independent kingdoms. This became the main argument for claiming the right to create a national state in the upheaval of the national movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By the 9<sup>th</sup> century, Croats were converted to Roman Catholicism which has defined them through the centuries and distinguished them from other Slavic tribes in their vicinity, mainly Serbs. In the early Middle Ages, the Croatian state was organized as a kingdom with the first king Tomislav as their leader. However, in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the last king was murdered and its remaining nobility decided to join the Hungarian Kingdom marked by the *Pacta Conventa* agreement in 1102. It kept the Viceroy (ban) and the Assembly (sabor) as a historical bond to the medieval Croatian state on which will power elites at the end of 20<sup>th</sup>-century demand the right to create an independent Croatian state. From the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Croatia was a part of the Habsburg Empire and this position lasted until 1918 and the collapse of the Empire. The struggle for the restoration of a Croatian state from the medieval period of king Tomislav (when the territory was the largest and assembled Dalmatia, Slavonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina under king's rule) became a major aspiration of the 19<sup>th</sup> -century nationalist movement (Banac, 1984; Goldstein, 2008; Lampe, 1996).

Serbia spread from the central area of Raška and from that area medieval Serbian kingdom started to spread in the 12<sup>th</sup> century towards the east. Stefan Dušan overthrew his father in the second half of the 14th century and doubled the size of Serbian territory by

expanding to east and south and was finally crowned the Emperor. He ruled the empire stretching from the Danube to Etolia in eastern Greece and from the middle of the Drina to the western Thrace. After his death, the territory fragmented into smaller duchies which could not resist the Ottoman conquest. Ottomans occupied Serbia by the end of 1459 and only at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century did the Serbian Revolution for independence begin. Serbia was then liberated from the Turkish authorities thus forming the Kingdom of Serbia (Lampe, 1996; Banac, 1984).

It is important to note that the Croats were mostly converted by Aquilean missionaries and thus belonged to the Catholic tradition of Christianity. Conversely, the Serbs were ordained in the 13<sup>th</sup> century under the influence of the Tsarigrad patriarch. The St.Sava from the Nemanja dynasty received the right to establish an autocephalous Serbian Orthodox Church in 1219 from the Byzantine emperor and patriarch. The Serbian ecclesiastical organization was associated with the secular medieval Serbian state. Religion has thus become the main means of distinction of one ethnic group from another (Banac, 1984).

## **2.2 The Rise of Nationalism**

The national consciousness of the South Slavs appeared in the middle of the 19th century. Considering that both Croatia and a part of Serbia (Vojvodina) were within the Habsburg Monarchy, Croatian intellectuals came to an idea to bring together all South Slavs into a joined state. National revival in Croatia began in 1830 under the leadership of the intellectuals and nobility who were publishing newspapers, writing songs, theatre plays or operas in Croatian language (Goldstein, 2008; Banac, 1984).

Since Croatian intellectuals considered that all the Slavs originated from the ancient Illyrians they wanted to expand the nation's movement to all the countries belonging to the former Croatian medieval kingdom. They decided to re-name the movement to Illyrian Movement; so that it could include the other Slavic Slavs including Serbs. By that time, Serbs had already created their national ideology under the influence of Vuk Stefanović Karadžić. According to him, all people who spoke Stokavian and regardless of religion (i.e. Roman Catholic and Muslim) were Serbs (Banac, 1984: 85). This idea gained political significance after the Serbian uprising against Turkish sovereignty over previous Serbian territory under the Karadorđević dynasty (Banac, 1984: 87).

Ante Starčević was, on the other hand, the ‘designer’ of Croatian national ideology. He founded the Croatian Party of Right<sup>3</sup> and advocated for an independent Croatian state. He was criticizing the ideas of the Illyrian movement. Together with his close associate Eugen Kvaternik, he emphasized that the Croatian people have a historical right to their own state and to this territory on the basis of being first in the area since the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century (Banac, 1984: 90-91). Ante Starčević thus advocated the establishment of a "Great Croatian State" and his associate Eugen Kvaternik, who, referring to the aforementioned Byzantine emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus, claimed that Croatian state law is obeyed from the Alps to the Drina, from Albania to the Danube and that there are only two South Slavic peoples - Croats and Bulgarians hence repudiated to acknowledge Serbs as a nation (Ibid, 1984; Benson, 2004).

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Balkans, two opposite national ideologies clashed in their views of who has political and historical right to occupy the land of South Slavs. One was the idea of Great Serbia, grounded in Karađić’s ideas of Stokavian language unity, and the other, that of Great Croatia which occupy all the lands of South Slavs except those where Bulgarians live. After the Habsburg Monarchy was defeated in the WWI, the Croatian Parliament declared the independence of Croatia. Croatia had the aspiration to enter a union with the Serbian Monarchy. A Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was established on 1 December 1918 with Serbian King Alexander Karađorđević at the head of it. Although a Croatian deputation wanted the new Monarchy to be based on equality of all nations and federalism this never happened. In 1929, King Alexander introduced Yugoslav unitarism<sup>4</sup> and centralism; and after having abolished the constitution and dissolved the assembly he changed the name of the state to Yugoslavia. He introduced censorship and the work of political parties that had a religious or national character, were banned. Croat people were unsatisfied with their position but WWII changed the course of regional history: Croatia became part of Socialist Yugoslavia. Its socialist history is elaborated in the next section (Banac, 1984; Benson, 2004).

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<sup>3</sup> Many right-wing parties today arose from the Starčević’s Croatian Party of Right and they refer to his teaching. He was called by his followers “A father of the Homeland” because he was the first Croatian politician who advocated an independent Croatian state. The rights in the party’s name indicate Croatian historical right to independent statehood which was the main idea of his program.

<sup>4</sup> All peoples in Yugoslavia (Croats, Serbs, Slovenes and others) were considered as one Yugoslav nation.

## 2.3 Yugoslavia - Building a New State

*It took the destruction of two great empires to make room for the formation of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918, a new state created out of the marchlands straddling the Ottoman and Habsburg dominions (Benson, 2004:1).*

As indicated by Leslie Benson above, first Yugoslavia was formed in the last months of 1918 from the debris of two great powers-Habsburg and Ottoman Empire. Second Yugoslavia was also established on the ashes of another world conflict which had significant consequences on its development, and finally its division in the 1990s. This second Yugoslavia was a political continuation of the first one in the sense that it was formed within approximately the same borders where Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes were the major nations. It diverged, however, from first Yugoslavia in many ways, as its first communist leader, Josip Broz Tito, intended this.

After having defeated a large part of Europe, Hitler had to create a hinterland in the Balkans to secure his back in the planned attack on Russia. He signed an agreement with the Yugoslav government of Prince Petar Karađorđević which was met with demonstrations in Belgrade. The Communists claimed later that they had a decisive role in the coup; on this claim, they built up their political legitimacy as leaders of the country.

Hitler disliked what was happening in Yugoslavia, and his revenge was brutal; in a few days of *April war*<sup>5</sup>, Hitler's *Wehrmacht* defeated the Yugoslavian army, bombed Belgrade, ordered the destruction of Yugoslavia and set up puppet governments in Croatia and Serbia. Hitler gave power to Ante Pavelic and his Ustasha organization in Croatia, thus enabling the Croats to complete a centuries-old dream of having their own state. Soon, people became aware that this state was not independent but just a puppet state of Axis powers. It was territorially divided between German and Italian jurisdiction and was forced to give up much of its territory, mainly Dalmatia, to Italy. The state government proclaimed racist laws against mainly Serbs, Jews, and Roma people. They were sent to concentration camps and exterminated in places like Jasenovac, Nova Gradiška and others. These relations between Croats and Serbs produced long-term resentment on both sides. I elaborate this below in my discussion of nationalism and the role of ethnic identity (Goldstein, 2008)

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<sup>5</sup> The Axis Force attack began on 6 April 1941 and the capitulation was signed on 17 April 1941.

In Serbia, Hitler also set up a collaborationist government with general Milan Nedić as its leader. Other parts of Yugoslavia were divided among other Axis powers; thus first (royalist) Yugoslavia ceased to exist. While king Peter fled with his government to London in exile, the Chetniks in Serbia led by Drazen Mihajlović were organized as Yugoslav Army in the Homeland and proclaimed themselves as the guardians of the Homeland (royalist Yugoslavia) until king Peter Karađorđević returned to the country. (Benson, 2004:74-75). By 1943, Western powers had recognized Chetnik forces as their allies until it became known that both Ustashas and Chetniks collaborated with fascist and Nazi troops in the territory of now divided Yugoslavia (Ibid).

According to the official historical account, the partisan movement was founded by Josip Broz Tito and the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, and gathered in its ranks the population which had suffered and were fleeing from their homes attacked by Ustashas and Chetniks (Goldstein, 2008, 2011). Benson points out: "Serbs from Bosnia and Croatia, young men fleeing from Ustasha killings, also formed the backbone of the early Partizan formations, but the movement did attract support from other nationalities in the later stages of the fighting" (Benson, 2004: 77). More Croats joined the partisan movement after they witnessed the cruelty of Pavelić's regime thus participating in the People's Liberation Struggle.

From 1943 until the end of the war, Josip Broz Tito and the Partisans were recognized by the Western Powers as new allies and provided with money and weapons which helped the Partisan Movement improve its organization. In 1942, the Antifascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) was established in Bihać, a small town in Northwestern Bosnia. The communists introduced their program, according to which they planned to take over power in Yugoslavia after the end of the war. The program emphasized the anti-fascist struggle and the establishment of democratic authority. The Partisans came from diverse social groups, but the predominant part consisted of previous peasants. Tito stressed that the war was an imperialist war between great powers who wanted to occupy new colonies and enslave the small marginalized peoples (Mrkić, 2014: 88). Josip Broz Tito received his position as a state leader and the authority to organize the new state on the ground of the Partisans' victory in the war.

WWII ended on May 9, 1945, with the capitulation of Germany. Although the Partisan forces called the Ustashas army to capitulate, they refused to do so. Ustashe withdrew to the border of Austria and surrendered to the British army. They were afraid that the Partisans

against whom they had fought for so long would not be merciful. The British army had no political will to take over hundreds of thousands of soldiers and their families so they stopped and returned the army to Slovenia and back in the hands of the Partisans. There began the so-called Bleiburg's crossroad for tens of thousands of Croatian Ustasas, their families, but also for members of other armies that were not among the winners, such as Chetniks, Germans, Slovenian Domobrans and others (Goldstein, 2011; Lampe, 1996). This incident became a symbol of the tragedy of the Croats in Yugoslavia, and still today there is a controversy over the number of people who were killed without trial or died of torture. This traumatic history has been suppressed in collective memory during communism, which contributed to its mythologization and the circulation of exaggerated versions of it in the 90s. I will discuss these events further in Chapter 5.

## **2.4 Building Socialism in Yugoslavia**

After the war, it was necessary to organize and re-build the devastated state from the foundation. The Communist Party established a new government, and the values of Brotherhood and Unity were supposed to provide a new perspective orientation to citizens toward the building of a modern future. The most important economic plan of the new government was the renewal of the state in the field of industrialization and electrification. While the latter proved efficient by 1953, the first was not so effective. To use Leslie Benson's words: "The Plan [The Five Year Plan] was a Soviet-style blueprint for the construction of socialism and the Party intended to control all the resources - material, cultural, and political - needed to transform a peasant society into a communist industrial state" (Benson, 2004: 90). Industrialization has also had an advantage over agriculture, and the main goal was to create an industrial working class that would be loyal to a new regime.

In 1948 at a meeting in Bucharest, Cominform decided that the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ) did not lead a loyal policy toward the USSR and that capitalist forces were becoming stronger. Stalin also demanded from "healthy forces" within Yugoslavia to persuade leadership to correct their mistakes and to find the right way into socialism (Goldstein, 2011). Josip Broz Tito published the Resolution and broadcasted it on the media dismissing all allegations against the Yugoslavian Communist Party. Since then, Yugoslavia has started its peculiar (original) way into socialism becoming the first country to resist USSR successfully. After the break with Stalin, which came as a shock to many in Yugoslavia, Stalin became a

*persona non grata*. Those who did not renounce him became politically undesirable or the 'enemies of the regime' and were imprisoned on Goli Otok (Barren Island). Although events on Goli otok will not be addressed in this work, they are also a matter of public dispute in present Croatia. During socialism to talk about the events on Goli otok was considered a taboo. Suppressed for so long during socialism these narratives (as much as those of Bleiburg and Jasenovac) have taken on mythical proportions over the years and left space for nationalist manipulations after the collapse of the Yugoslav state. As already mentioned, not dealing with the violent past enables historical memory to be employed for the nationalist sentiment (Hoepken, 1999: 204) which happened with historical narratives mentioned above.

To demonstrate its way into socialism the communist party introduced social ownership or self-management where all enterprises were allegedly given to the management of workers. The breakup with Stalin damaged the country's economic balance since USSR and its satellites enforced an embargo on Yugoslavia. That made Tito turn to Western powers, mostly the USA from where he received considerable financial and other help (Lampe, 1996). This reflected positively on the liberalization of society during the '60s but did bring with it a problem. In the early '70s, a nationalistic movement started in Serbia and was followed with mass demonstrations in Croatia<sup>6</sup>.

## **2.5 Years of the Crisis (1980-1990)**

Josip Broz Tito died on May 4, 1980, at the age of 87. Already in 1979, the eight-man state Presidency was introduced, where every four years one Yugoslav Republic chaired the presidency. As Benson (2004: 133) states "Within a decade they were all ousted by a younger generation of leaders whose power was rooted in their native republics and who spoke in the idiom of nationalism". Many scholars pinpoint the fact that the communist government did not want to face the past but ignored the ethnic conflicts that came to light in the war. On the contrary, the government banned and suspended national sentiments in order to establish a new Yugoslavian nationality, invoking Brotherhood and Unity among all peoples and nationalities.

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<sup>6</sup> Hrvatsko proljeće (Croatian Spring) was a cultural and political movement in the early 1970s. The main goal of the movement was the greater economic and political independence of the Croatian state within the Yugoslav Federation. The movement was stifled and the Croatian leadership had to resign. In the first two years after the movement many participants were expelled from public life or were sent to prison.

After the death of a 'great leader', nationalism resurfaced and all the disagreements that were grounded in the first Yugoslavia and WWII crimes suddenly outweighed and destroyed the new Yugoslavian Brotherhood and Unity.

As already mentioned, WWII became a big disjuncture in the relationship between Serbs and Croats which had far-reaching consequences in the last decades of the 20th century. Ante Pavelić's puppet regime and fascist laws against Serbs triggered hatred between these two ethnic groups that resulted in mass killings and deportations on both sides. This recollection of the horrors of WWII was successfully used and misused by the power elite to initiate a new ethnic polarization and hence the war in the '90s.

During the war of the 90s, Croatia gained independence and the socialist one-party system was replaced with capitalist democracy. The new government of the Croatian Democratic Union led by the first Croatian President Franjo Tuđman started 'symbolic war' against previous values like historical and war heroes or historical and cultural narratives from the period of socialism and Tito was presented as the main enemy of the new state and new political order. In this context, the positive memory and nostalgia about Josip Broz Tito emerged in the last few decades which will be discussed in chapter 4 (Maksimović, 2017; Klasić, 2019).



### 3 Memory of Controversial Past

*There was a line of workers and the unemployed who carried the words of "food, labor and freedom!" Tito led them. There was a line of warriors who fought for freedom. Tito led them. There was a line of working men who fought for their bread and their work. Tito led them. Today the line, step by step, moves to pay tribute to their Tito who will lead them further. (Večernji list, May 8, 1980:13)*

This chapter's purpose is twofold; I set to examine what is the role of remembrance and forgetting in the process of memory formation. In doing so, I explain the concept of remembering and how people remember according to their social frameworks. Further, I introduce the ancient concept of *Damnatio Memoriae* meaning 'the condemnation to oblivion' to explain how the power institutions act upon the social amnesia and how they influence what will be forgotten and what will be remembered. My analysis is based on collective memory theory and politics of memory, while material for the data analysis derives from participant observations conducted in several locations (Zagreb, Belgrade, and Kumrovec), interviews and textual documents like newspapers, books, brochures, etc.

#### 3.1 *Finis Coronat Opus*<sup>7</sup>

*Belgrade 1980, 2017- Serbia*

It is 4 May 1980. Everybody in Yugoslavia is in a state of shock following a few minutes of silence that concludes with a visibly shaken journalist, Miodrag Živković, announcing on national television:

Tito died. This was announced by the Central Committee of the Alliance of Communists of Yugoslavia and the Presidency of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the working class, the working people and citizens, people and nations and nationalities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Muzej Istorije Jugoslavije, 2015).

The daily newspaper, *Večernji List*, on May 5, 1980, introduced a special edition and brought the words of the Presidency of the Central Committee SKJ about this event "The severe pain

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<sup>7</sup> The End Crowns the Work

and deep sorrows shock the working class, the peoples and nationalities of our country, every one of our men, workers, soldiers and warriors, peasants, intellectuals, every creator, pioneer and youth, girl and mother" (Večernji list, Umro je drug Tito [Comrade Tito died], 1980).

The next day, Tito's body was transported with the special *Blue Train* from Ljubljana where he died to his eternal resting place in Belgrade, where his tomb still stands today. On May 8, Yugoslavian people and many foreign delegations paid their last respects to President Tito during a solemn commemoration in The House of Flowers. Sources (Goldstein, 2011; Bilo je časno živjeti s Titom, 1980) testify that the commemoration was attended by 209 delegations from 127 countries, among them; four kings, five princes, seven vice presidents of the republic, 10 prime ministers, 12 foreign ministers, 20 government members, and 21 state officials; altogether 700 000 people. To this day, this remains the only event that has brought together so many eminent figures and politicians in one place.

Hundreds of thousands of people wrote their dedications in the book of sorrow, among them many politicians and famous people. The president of Zambia, Kenet Kaunda wrote: "A great big tree has fallen! But the roots of non-alignment of that tree cannot and will not die! Comrade Tito is greater in death than ever he was in life. He will live on and on and on. We all must work for that. May His Soul Rest In Peace! 07/05/1980" (Bilo je časno živjeti s Titom, 1980: 161).

One of my informers, Milan conveyed how he felt when the news announced that Josip Broz died:

I was at work when they announced that Comrade Tito passed away. We all took it with a dose of sadness. Everyone will lie if he is to say otherwise. Everyone was crying, everyone was crying very hard. The right-wingers and the left-wingers they all cried. Anyone who says that he didn't, lies.

Tito died after a 35-year reign and many thought Yugoslavia died, too. Was Tito Yugoslavia and Yugoslavia Tito? Was it possible that Yugoslavia could continue its life after the president's death? In his book, *100 Poznatih o Titu* (100 Famous People about Tito), Slavko Mrkić (2010) collected the statements of famous persons who testified their feelings about President Tito. Famous Yugoslavian actor, Boris Dvornik, said, "We have prepared ourselves for this, and again the sadness of the whole nation is endless. This country has never been so sad and I did not know that in this great sorrow our country can be so big, dignified and proud" (Ibid: 90, my translation). Milena Dravić, another famous actress from Yugoslavia stated "Comrade Tito gave to my generation, born in war, freedom, a happy childhood, youth and life

in freedom. I am happy to be able to spend a part of life and work as a contemporary of a great man, a great friend, and a great leader "(Mrkić, 2010: 104, my translation).

Kurt Waldheim, Secretary-General of the United Nations said on the occasion of Tito's death: "The death of President Tito is an irreplaceable loss for Yugoslavia and the world. President Tito is a great hero and with his death, the last great personality of our age disappeared" (Ibid: 27, my translation).

Thirty-eight years after his death, I am at the same place where his eternal resting place stands. After the exhibition *Tito in Africa-Pictures of Solidarity*, I wandered around the complex and visited Tito's grave that is situated in the House of Flowers. The prospectus from the museum states:

The House of Flowers was built in 1975, as a winter garden, in the close vicinity of the official residence of Josip Broz Tito. It is there that Broz lived for two years before his death. A garden with a fountain was placed in the central area, while the area on both sides, which today houses exhibition halls, used to be living space, consisting of rooms and a study. (Museum of Yugoslav History, 2018)

There was another exhibition at the museum which marked the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first baton relay race traditionally held every year on May 25. *The Baton relay* was established in order to promote the unity of Yugoslav people around the idea of the advancement of the socialist society. The sign in the museum explains the idea behind those relays:

Relay batons are the most distinctive gifts given to Josip Broz Tito. Due to its characteristics, symbolism and significance, they stand out among the many items that Tito received during his life. The tradition of giving a relay baton comes from the period of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and since 1945 relay races are held in honor of Tito's birthday. Each year the relay baton was carried throughout Yugoslavia from hand to hand in order to be given to Tito on May 25. Receiving, carrying and handing over the baton had the aim to symbolically present the communication between the leader and the people (Museum of Yugoslav History, 2018).

In 1954 the name of Tito's relay was changed to Relay of Youth (*Štafeta mladosti*) and Tito's birthday celebrated on May 25 was proclaimed the Day of Youth. It was celebrated until 1988 when the last such relay was held. The day of his birth became a national holiday and on that day massive performances were organized at the Yugoslav People's Army Stadium in Belgrade. It ended with handing over the baton to the president as a birthday present. Similar smaller races are still organized in various parts of former Yugoslavia, but today they have mostly local importance. Velikonja (2008) sees these manifestations as a form of *Titostalgia*

*culture*, a term which I discuss in the next section. Political opponents see in these events just an expression of Tito's cult of personality and a way of longing for the former president and state.

In this part, I analyze how the death of President Tito resonated throughout former Yugoslavia and the rest of the world. Additionally, a tradition of a baton relays was examined as a form of honoring president Tito's birthdays. Although massively celebrated during his life, these manifestations lost their meaning after his death and became a matter of dispute amongst republics. Those manifestations were seen by some as an imposition of Tito's cult of personality. Josip Broz Tito, who used to connect all peoples of former Yugoslavia, became a subject of dispute in Yugoslav successor states. In the next subchapters, through my interviews, I will analyze how people remember the former president today.

### **3.2 Remembering and Forgetting**

*...Remembering is forced to use all kinds of tricks to resist the villain's assaults and to guard the treasure-the accumulated wealth of past experience and knowledge. While Remembering strives to defend this precious treasure, maintaining it as untouched as possible, Forgetting never tires of trying to steal and destroy it (or at least to damage or, insidiously, to distort and falsify it). In this way, the conflict about the treasure of the past takes on still another dramatic dimension: it becomes a struggle for truth. (Brockmeier, 2002: 15)*

Jens Brockmeier (2002) accesses memory discourse from a psychological perspective. As the quote above shows, he brings into the center of attention the dichotomy between the "hero remembering" and the "villain forgetting". The latter was traditionally seen as a negative product of our cognition. According to him, memory and remembrance contain the essence of humankind, its history, and its future development; it is the memory where the whole knowledge of the world is stored.

For him, "today's memory discourse is all about the celebration of the struggling hero Remembering" (Ibid: 17). This struggle concerns the maintenance of rituals and commemoration of various important events for one nation, among other things, changing the names of streets, squares and even cities. The latter will be discussed in the next subchapter.

Brockmeier (2002: 21) suggests, however, that we should overcome this traditional conception of the permanent contest between remembering and forgetting and alternatively see them "as two sides of one process, a process in which we give shape to our experience, thought and imagination in terms of past, present and future". But given that experience is multi-temporal, he connotes that we should imagine memory as a "movement within a cultural discourse that continuously combines and fuses the now and then, and the here and there" (Brockmeier, 2002: 21). He proposes to see all memory constructions as being based on the mnemonic selection, which is arranged according to personally significant and meaningful criteria like, for example, cognitive and emotional relevance. This selection process means that individuals exclude information that is irrelevant to them, "information deemed to be obscured, repressed and forgotten" (Ibid: 22). Given that remembrance as a selective process, produces gaps and contradictions by ignoring those gaps, remembering generates new order and new coherences; thus, it organizes the selected process of memory into meaningful schemata. What is not incorporated in the schemata is left to oblivion (Ibid: 22).

French anthropologist, Marc Augé (2004) suggests that forgetting or oblivion is an integral part of memory. Because a person cannot remember all the details of his past, oblivion becomes an important mean of memory or as Augé puts it himself, "oblivion is the life force of memory and remembrance is its product" (Ibid: 21).

In a similar vein, Connerton states that we usually see forgetting as a failure, whereas remembering as a virtue. He suggests that forgetting shouldn't necessarily be perceived only as a failure. In his interesting and relevant analysis, Connerton proposes seven types of forgetting. The first three types are of most interest for the analysis in this paper, so I will elaborate them further here. Those seven types are repressive erasure, prescriptive forgetting, forgetting that is constitutive in the formation of a new identity, structural amnesia, forgetting as annulment, forgetting as planned obsolescence and finally forgetting as humiliated silence (Connerton, 2008: 59). In both *repressive erasure* and *prescriptive forgetting* the main agent is the state or ruling parties, whereas, in the third one, an individual is the main carrier of the forgetting process.

Although instigated by the state, the *prescriptive forgetting* differs from the *repressive erasure* insofar that the state perceives forgetting as publicly useful and in the interest of all parties (the state and the public). It refers to forgetting past injustices in order to avoid possible revenge. It is manifested in newly formed democracies where the state promotes forgetting as

much as remembering for the purposes of the common good. In the third type of forgetting, an individual intentionally forgets fragments of his past as a part of creating a new identity where "forgetting then becomes part of the process by which newly shared memories are constructed because a new set of memories are frequently accompanied by a set of tacitly shared silence" (Connerton, 2008: 63). The first type, *prescriptive forgetting* will be explained in the next subsection.

In the interest of this study, I asked my informants how they remember former Yugoslav president Tito. Milorad (89), one of my key informers, remembered him as a high authority who left a big impression on him. First, as a heroic figure during the war and later by his political ideas and the values he advocated. Milorad met the president once during Tito's unexpected visit to Sisak, the city where Milorad then worked<sup>8</sup>. He described him as a simple man who during his speech and lectures inspired everyone around him for new actions and engagements. He said, "We were all silent, we were silent because we all respected and appreciated him".

I heard about Tito during the war as SKOJEVAC<sup>9</sup>, Tito, Tito, but we did not know Josip Broz then, just Tito. That was, to say this, something as sublime, something that gives confidence, a man who understands, who knows, who guides us. That was Tito in the war. Of course, later as I was formed as SKOJEVAC Tito has become a top authority for me in the ideological-political domain, because it suited me and even today it suits me, I respond to this humanity, mortality, communication, righteousness, truth, not to lie ... help the poor, powerless, his care for the wounded.

Immediately after this remark, he said that he is a Serb and that he feels Serb when it comes to ethnic identification. In WWII he joined the Partisans. He commented that stories in those early years of the war had it that Croats and Serbs were fighting amongst each other.

Jasna (37) also made clear what she thinks of President Tito although she was too young to know him personally. During the interview, she was praising his foreign policy especially his politics of non-alignment and his role in creating world peace. "He is exactly what a

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<sup>8</sup> This event took place in April 1969.

<sup>9</sup> A member of a League of Young Yugoslav communists (Savez Komunista Omladine Jugoslavije)

communist should be, if you ask me. In that positive sense". She concluded our conversation with the words:

It is irrefutable to me when I see his work results [...]. For Tito, it is known what he is and he is God. If you ask me, he is God who was walking on earth, at least here. I am telling you seriously. I only resent him for hunting animals.

Another of my informants, Ivan (75) noted that we should be objective when evaluating Josip Broz Tito as a historical figure:

Every historical figure must be valued on the basis of the indicators and the facts that he has achieved in his life and what has been achieved thanks to the fact that he was the leader [of that country]. I do not want to divinize him, but I don't want him to be criminalized either.

In respect to Brockmeier's assumption of the mnemonic selection process which is influenced by personally relevant criteria, we can see how Milorad evaluates Tito according to the cognitive relevance, i.e., he appraises him according to his frames of values. From the war times, he remembers Tito as a brave guiding authority which in that time was very important. Later, Milorad judges him according to the ideological and political values Josip Broz Tito stood for, which correspond to his own life merits. It was interesting to notice how he added his ethnic affiliation which can also be seen as a frame through which he evaluates Tito. I will come to the importance of ethnic identification in a while.

After the collapse of the socialist Yugoslavia and the restitution of the independent Croatian state in the early '90s, the new government condemned the old political system and established new values on which society should rest. We can call them social frameworks that were instrumented to correspond to the intended consolidation of Croatian identity. Maksimović (2017:1067) states that "The new political elites have held the framework of the socialist Yugoslavia responsible for the war and other disputes among them [...]. Subsequently [...] they have pushed to demonize all that former common country stood for". A religion which was absent from the public life in Yugoslavia<sup>10</sup> became very important in present identification.

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<sup>10</sup> Although Yugoslavia was an atheist state, religion was not banned by law. Many controversies are still present in society and many claim today that people could not go to church or express their religious feelings in public. For more details see: Lampe (1996); <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6acfd6c.html>

Further, because the Serbs initiated the war in Croatia in the 90s, they became marginalized in society, and ethnic affiliation became a very important point of differentiation.

I met Luka (38) in the pizzeria next to the place he currently lives with his parents. Our conversation began with his assertion on how he agreed to be interviewed because of his interest in the topic but also because he likes to have a debate on political and current events in Croatia, and Josip Broz is one of the topics that always somehow pops up in conversations. After expressing his thoughts about Ante Pavelić, Luka revealed his emotions about Tito with these words:

And Tito was simply evil after evil<sup>11</sup>. For the Croatian people, I think he did a lot more harm than [Ante] Pavelić did [...]. Everything he did was against Croatia!

I asked him what he meant by that, and he replied:

He maintained Yugoslavia which was a kind of framework for the creation of Great Serbia. I look at him from a perspective that I think is mine. I am a member of this nation [Croatian], I love my country [...], and simply all I see, how I judge him, I see him through that.

It is interesting to note here that Luka's feelings about Josip Broz Tito were constructed in accordance with his social frameworks, mainly his ethnic affiliation. As Luka indicated, he evaluates Tito from his own perspective as a Croatian patriot and that is how he judges his politics and personality.

I arranged to meet Branimir (40) in a quiet and cozy cafe in the center of Zagreb where we would have peace for open discussion without disturbing voices around us or loud music impeding our conversation. He agreed to talk to me because he wanted to express his feelings about Josip Broz Tito. He opened our conversation with the assertion:

A catastrophe! For a native Croat that he can show so much hatred towards Croatian intellectuals towards Croatian writers, poets. That he shot so many of them, sent them to Goli otok, killed them, just because they expressed their opinion and only because they lived during Ante Pavelic's time and did not escape from Zagreb. Catastrophe, catastrophe! Dictator and assassin as far as the Croatian people are concerned, dictator, and killer...Basically, internal politics towards Croats is zero points for me, because it is unbelievable that a Croat can hate so much his own nation.

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<sup>11</sup> He refers to Ante Pavelić as evil, but for him, Josip Broz Tito was even more evil than Pavelić and did more harm for Croatia than Pavelić did.



Throughout the interview, Branimir reflected on his position in society and his identity. His parents are both Croats and Catholics and that is how they raised him; he thus referred to himself as a religious Catholic and pointed out the fact that he had many problems in the primary school because of his father's Catholic name. For example, his teacher who was Serb gave him a hard time. He stated further that in socialism people did not want to baptize their children because they were afraid they could lose their job. But, when I asked him if he could go to church freely, he said: "Absolutely! I was attending catechism from the first day". When talking about his political orientation he called himself liberal right-winger.

I wrapped up our conversation with my last question. I wanted to know what his overall evaluation of Tito was. He noted:

Opinions are opinions and the time will come when there will be no one to do such work on Tito because people will forget him. And they should forget him [...]. For me, I repeat for the one hundred and fifth time during our interview, killer, criminal, dictator, horrible man, Croat who hates Croats. Summary of everything [...] I do not like him, I will never like him. Moreover, the tilt of my emotions leans towards hate. But I repeat to the moment when the [...] smart heads<sup>12</sup> don't present the evidence and they say you are an idiot! And then I blush, I say, gentlemen, I am an idiot. I apologize to them, I apologize to you, I apologize to anyone whom I said one ugly word about this delightful gentleman.

Alike Luka, Branimir formed his opinion in accordance with his social framework where social (ethnic) identity (being Croat) and religious affiliation (being a Catholic) are dominant.

Halbwachs (1992:40) defines social frameworks as instruments used for reconstruction of the past which should correspond to the predominant thought of the society. He emphasized the importance of social frameworks in constructing a cohesive social identity and I show here how these frameworks affected both Branimir's and Luka's memories of Josip Broz Tito. To both of these men he is a personification of everything which is in opposition to the values they cherish today. Their ethnic and religious identification as Croats and Catholics plays a huge role in their judgments of the former president. They both denounce his devastating policies against Croat people which, in Branimir's words, were "catastrophic".

The examples above show how social frameworks are important in the way people remember their past and consequently influence their opinions. In the next subchapter, I explain

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<sup>12</sup> He refers to the historians whose job should be to look for historical evidence.

Connerton's concept *Damnatio Memoriae* or *repressive erasure* and use it to explain the role of state authorities in the process of memory formation.

### 3.3 *Damnatio Memoriae*

*The damnatio memoriae or "condemnation to oblivion" was an additional sentence passed on prominent public figures condemned for crimes of particular gravity, such as high treason (crimen maiestatis). The measure, voted by the Senate, involved the destruction and cancellation of every visible trace of the name and image of the condemned, hence the demolition of all their statues and the mutilation of their portraits, the obliteration of their names on inscriptions and monuments, even on coins... This systematic and violent destruction of every material trace of the memory of the condemned person was a deliberate and conscious rewriting of history and an emblematic case of the public manipulation of memory, including all visual records. (Museum sign in Colosseum, Rome, Italy)*

I already told the story of my choice of research topic when in the summer of 2017 I witnessed a new confrontation with the memory of Josip Broz Tito. It resulted in the change of name of one of the biggest squares of the capital Zagreb. Right-wingers had made similar attempts several times in the past but without success. In 2017, finally, after more than 70 years, the name of Marshal Tito Square was changed.

I went to see the place where the plaque once stood several times during my stay in Zagreb. I was especially interested in the graffiti on the wall that showed people's reactions to the change of name. The square is located in the center of the city, a famous location because it is surrounded by the National Theatre and the University of Zagreb. The first time I visited the place, I saw a naked wall on which the place where the plaque previously stood was still visible. The next time I walked by, somebody had written in red *Tito heroj* (Tito is a hero). Only a few days later, a new sign appeared saying: *Tito volimo te I poštujemo te* (Tito we love you and respect you).

I asked my informants how they look at events that took place in Zagreb, and their answers were contradictory. Ivan saw the change of the square name as "the lowest nationalist and anti-communist passions." Milorad added:

His name has been removed from the square around the theatre ... so it is purely stupid, non-productive politics that can denigrate and demonize the name of a man who even today has such a good reputation worldwide.

Jasna also thinks that this is ungrounded and retells an interesting account:

There was no reason. And as [Milan] Bandić<sup>13</sup> said nicely, he told me this [pointing to her boyfriend] when they asked him about the change of a name, he said: If [Franjo] Tuđman<sup>14</sup> did not change it why would I do it. Call for greater authority. Of course, it was not necessary. But I'm not surprised, given where this country is heading, in which direction.

It is interesting to add that even though the mayor emphasized that he supported Tuđman's position regarding the name of the square (that the name should remain) in the end however, the assembly headed by Milan Bandić changed the name. As the city's chief man, many thought that the mayor would not allow the change to take place, so many were disappointed with his decision. Jasna wanted to make a point that although the mayor did not want to change the name, under the influence of right-wing parties he was forced to change his mind because he needed their voices to obtain a majority in the assembly.

However, Luka had a different vision of the events:

I was really glad that this happened, really glad. For the way it happened to be honest, not so glad. That it had to be introduced with this political blackmail to make it ... [accomplish].

Damnatio memoriae is not a new phenomenon; it can be traced back to Egypt through ancient Rome. In contemporary times people tend to diminish the memory of *Persona Non Grata*, those who according to the political elites are no longer suitable to be in the nation's memory.

When talking about the representation of public memory, Jens Brockmeier (2002: 17) sees the naming of streets, along with other mnemonic practices, as a manifestation of a "culture of anniversaries" where commemorations of various kinds are a form of "societal rituals". He points out that "semiotically speaking, the semiosis of remembrance and recalling is based on the present signs, not on absent signs" (Ibid: 30). In this manner, we can look at the change of the square name of Marshal Tito. People remember what is visible and what is not is

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<sup>13</sup> Milan Bandić is the Mayor of the city of Zagreb.

<sup>14</sup> Franjo Tuđman, first president of the Croatian state.

condemned to oblivion, collective forgetting or *structural amnesia*. He acknowledges that "structural amnesia" consists in the deliberate destruction of commemorative symbols, among them, *damnatio memoriae* or the destruction of inscriptions (Ibid: 31).

Connerton (2008: 60) addresses *damnatio memoriae* or *repressive erasure* in his article about seven types of forgetting. It refers to forced forgetting with the aim to bring about a historical break but does not always have to take destructive forms; rather it can be enforced without violence and secretly. Moving the street sign with Tito's name was a symbolic act of one man who was against the politics of the former president. But this event prompted other significant changes where the re-naming of the Marshal Tito Square can be seen as an act of forgetting. As noted by Renan (1990: 11) memories go along with forgetting in order to sustain national cohesion.

Dunja Rihtman Auguštin, an appreciated Croatian ethnologist, brings a very intimate description of the changes that took place in the early 90s, just before the war was about to erupt. She criticizes the interference of the ruling elite and its semiotic political presence in domains of life such as architecture, urban geography, planning, and landscaping (Rihtman-Auguštin, 1992). She borrows Hobsbawm's term *invention of tradition* to try to understand changes that took place in Croatia in the early 90s. However, she concludes that this phenomenon of "hostile incursions into memory" has been happening regularly in history and it is "the rule, in the establishment of the legitimacy of political systems and their ideologies" (Auguštin, 2004:196).

In a collection of short essays, *The culture of lies* Dubravka Ugrešić, explains the situation in Croatia in the early years of the 90s. Trying to face the changes that took shape in a country in which only a few years before the different complex of values were promoted, she was astonished by the number of lies said not only by the elites but among ordinary citizens too. She calls this process a *culture of lies* or *war into remembering and forgetting*. In her own words: "One of the strategies with which the culture of lies is established is terror by forgetting (they force you to forget what you remember!) and terror by remembering (they force you to remember what you do not remember!)" (Ugrešić, 1998: 37). She sees the phenomenon of changing the streets' names as a method used in this *terror by remembering* where changes should introduce some new cultural values and even new identities. I analyze this in the last ethnographic chapter (Ibid: 39).

While communist countries have commonly used this practice of forced forgetting in constructing their new national identities, I argue, in line with Ugrešić's assertion, that it is not unique to communist regimes but widely used in democratic states as well.

Immediately after the death of President Tito in 1980, a confrontation with history began. Finally, it was possible to talk about the crimes of the Ustashas or the Chetniks which took place during WWII, but this provoked also discussions about crimes of Partisans (Bleiburg) and communist crimes against enemies of the regime (Goli otok). All these were taboo topics on which a ban was established in Yugoslavia. Aida Hozić (2014: 252) says, "In the years that followed, further complicated by new wars, new violence, and new state crimes, battles over collective memory included naming and renaming of streets, retouching of photographs and historical records, purges of public libraries and bookstores, rewriting of textbooks, cleansing and reconstruction of museum spaces, destruction and rebuilding of monuments, and massive movements of living and dead bodies". It became clear in this subchapter that the state had an active role in the process of forgetting by using the process of condemnation to oblivion and as Hozić concludes: "Forgetting communism-or actively confiscating the communist past-has thus been seen as the precondition for the construction of a national memory and, increasingly, for Croatia's Europeanization" (Ibid: 242).

### **3.4 In conclusion**

In this chapter, I have analyzed the concepts of remembering and forgetting and their relevance in memory processes. Using Halbwachs' theory of social frameworks and Jens Brockmeier's concept of mnemonic selection, I show that people tend to remember and forget past events according to their own sets of emotional or cognitive values, and social frameworks. It could be noted how my informants perceived President Tito differently in accordance with their position in society; they see and judge him through the lens of their ethnic and religious affiliation. These findings explain how individuals remember important aspects of their past and why these views can differ and be contested. Individuals thus can shape their memories through social frameworks but the state can also play a decisive part in the process. Connerton's classification of seven types of forgetting helps understand how government institutions or elites in power can influence the process of forgetting. Through the concept of *Damnatio memoriae* I explained the role of power institutions and how they influence what should be

remembered and what forgotten. The change of Marshal Tito Square's name is described as a mnemonic practice of power institutions intruding intentionally into memory formation and manipulation (Brockmeier, 2002; Rihtman-Augustin, 2004). This explained the role of the state as an active agent in the memory process in the *"terror by forgetting"* (Ugrešić, 1998: 78).

## **4 Memory of Complex Past**

In this chapter, I analyze the constitutive concepts on which socialist Yugoslavia was formed; in essence, the ideas of Brotherhood and Unity, Self-Governing Socialism, and Non-Aligned Movement. Further, I introduce the concepts of nostalgia, yugonostalgia, and titostalgia as mechanisms by which people try to resist present politics. I will finish the chapter by analyzing the important question: can we learn from socialism today and how much are the values promoted in that period important for contemporary society?

The material in this chapter is taken from my interviews and fieldwork conducted on the Brioni Islands and Belgrade. Theoretical analysis is anchored in Halbwachs' theory of collective memory and in Connerton's concept of forgetting in memory formation.

### **4.1 Socialism Goes Global**

As already emphasized, the break-up between Tito and Stalin in 1949 has had profound consequences not only in social terms but also in economic ones. With the loss of the Russian market, Yugoslav leadership was forced to find new markets for its products. This led Tito to turn to the West, and in 1949, Yugoslavia became the third non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. In 1951 it signed an agreement with the US on military aid (Lampe, 1996). President Tito's first visit to Britain took place in 1952, which marked the beginning of his diplomacy with the West. The normalization of relations with the East and the USSR came after the death of Stalin when Nikita Khrushchev and Tito signed a declaration in Belgrade on the normalization of relations between the two states, recognizing that there are different ways of building socialism (Goldstein, 2011). However, President Tito kept making effort to navigate the country along an independent path of development, independent from the East and the West, so he was looking for new allies. He searched among Third World Countries, which consequently lead to the signing of the Brioni Declaration between Tito, Nehru and, Naser. This marked the beginning of the Non-Aligned Movement.

In the time of the Cold War, when the world was divided between the influence of the West under the guidance of the USA, and the East, under the leadership of the USSR, small nations were expected to join one or the other political block. In these circumstances, small

states gathered around the movement of Non-alignment, saw a possibility for their own economic and social determination (Vukadinović, 1970).

Yugoslavia joined these flows early on. It turned its attention to the African countries, supporting their movements of independence and thereby creating the foundations for future economic cooperation.

In joining the Non-Aligned Movement and becoming a new political factor on the international stage, those countries saw a possibility to become active participants in international affairs. When explaining the beginnings of the Non-Aligned Movement, Vukadinović (1970: 409, my translation) brings in a part of the Tito-Nehru Declaration of 1954 that explains what were the main premises for the alignment:

President and Prime Minister want to announce that the policy of not joining the blocks, which their governments adopted and implemented, does not set, neutrality or neutralism, therefore nor passivity, as it is sometimes claimed, but active, positive and a constructive policy that strives for collective peace, on which collective security only can depend.

However, in the end, the realization of the Non-Alignment Movement failed. As early as 1979 at a conference in Havana, Tito understood that the countries gathered around the non-alignment and under pressure from Cuba are moving towards alliances with Russia (Lampe, 1996). Although disappointed with the direction this policy took, he was powerless to influence anything. After only a few months, or more precisely, on May 4, 1980, he died. Today the Non-Aligned Movement does not fully realize its potential and pivotal mission and this situation is mirrored in the words of one of my informant, Luka:

The Non-Aligned Movement during Tito was a genius story, a third thing in the block division. After Tito everything... [collapsed].

My research brought me to Brioni Island in Croatia. Today this group of fourteen small islands in the northern part of the Adriatic Sea is a part of the Croatian National Park. Appropriated after WWII from Italy, Brioni Islands became Tito's residence during the summer and place where he welcomed some of the most important world politicians and other eminent artists. Although Brioni had a leading role in his foreign diplomacy, the only place that reminds of President Tito today is a small museum located in Villa *Marica* where the exhibition *Tito in Brioni* was set up. On the top floor of the left corridor, photographs showing private scenes of Tito enjoying time with his family and friends are presented; on the other side



of the hall images dedicated to his political activity hang. The description of the exhibition explained:

The second exhibition hall deals with president Tito's thirty years long activity in foreign politics. On Brioni, Tito has hosted 90 state leaders from 58 countries all over the world, over a hundred prime ministers, ministers of foreign affairs and members of the diplomatic corps accredited in Yugoslavia. Here he received 250 foreign delegations, many politicians, scientists, artists, and other distinguished persons (Tito in Brioni, 2018).

After the fall of Yugoslavia and the change of political system in Croatia, the exhibition was subjected to disputes. Some thought that it was inadequate and that it should be removed because it is a reminder of "painful memory" (Pavletić, 2003).

In a book about the days spent on the Brioni Island, Vojmir Vuksanović (2013: 90) mentions an interesting detail. When Franjo Tuđman, the first Croatian president, visited the exhibition, he was asked what should be done with the display. He replied that Tito was not to be touched. In any case, the exhibition has remained until today, because the opinion prevailed that Tito, no matter what emotions he raises, was of great importance for the development and promotion of the islands (Ibid, 2013). Brioni also played an important role in the creation of Non-Aligned Movements, as it was the place where the Brioni Declaration was signed which marked the beginnings of a non-aligned policy. The sign from the exhibition says:

On Brioni islands, situated on border-line between different political systems, Tito, Naser and Nehru laid the foundations of Non-aligned policy of peace, peaceful coexistence, equality and cooperation between all states and nations. Thus, Brioni became the mainspring of the Non-Aligned Movement (Tito in Brioni, 2018).

President Tito's diplomatic travels through the African countries did not have just a propagandistic role. Instead, they had great importance in building the concept of the new world and ideas of anti-colonialism and solidarity which was also highlighted in the exhibition: *Tito in Africa-Pictures of Solidarity* installed in Belgrade.

#### *Exhibition Tito in Africa-Pictures of Solidarity*

I am in Belgrade, the capital of Serbia and former Yugoslavia. It is 30 degrees outside when I step out of my hotel room and enter the taxi which is about to drive me to the huge complex of the House of Flowers, the name which all use for the complex that is the Museum of Yugoslavia today. It is a place where the former president of Yugoslavia was buried and where his tomb still stands today. It is also a place where thousands of people gathered that rainy day on May

5 1980, to give the last send off to a man that was the head of a state from the end of WWII until his death. I visited this site some 15 years ago as a history student at Zagreb University. We were the first generation of history students invited by our colleagues from Belgrade University after the war in the '90s. Now, some 15 years later, circumstances changed but not much in the appearance of this vast complex which consists of three different venues and the Sculpture Park.

At the moment of my visit, the exhibition *"Tito in Africa-Picturing Solidarity"* was on display in the main building of *May 25 Museum*. It is a part of the international project *Socialism goes Global* which aims to show and promote some forgotten values from the period of socialism in former Yugoslavia. The exhibition featured photographs that present Josip Broz Tito's political journeys through Africa during which he was establishing or strengthening the economic and political connections between these two parts of the world. Additionally, some artifacts were showing personal memories of Tito from people all over the former Yugoslavia. One such object attracted my interest. It was a letter from a girl from Karlovac in which she expressed her wish to accompany Tito on his journey to Africa. The letter said:

Dear comrade Tito!

As I usually do, today I have been reading the newspaper about a journey you are set to embark on. I am a student at the Technical School in Karlovac. I like foreign countries very much, but sadly, I have no opportunities to visit and see them for myself. There are currently six comrades from Sudan attending our school. Their skin is black, but this makes them no different from us. They are our fellow students and we like them. It took me a while to find the courage to write to you. Will this letter ever arrive in your hands? I wish to visit countries that my school friends are familiar with. My presence at your trip would hardly be noticed [...]. A teenager from Karlovac sends you her regards, with a burning desire to accompany you on this journey. Jasna

One part of the photographs presented at the exhibition was taken from the Photo Archive of Marshal Tito's cabinet, where a photo service was formed in 1947 to track President Tito on his many journeys and political activities. Another part of the photographs came from the collections of photo albums that President Tito received from abroad and showcased his diplomatic visits to these countries. The third part of the photographs that make the exhibition comes from a private collection of photos that President Tito, a passionate photographer himself, took during his travels (Cukić, 2017).

Radovan Cukić, a curator of the photo-collection at the Museum of Yugoslavia, emphasizes the importance of the exhibition and stresses that it is primarily this collection of

photographs that testifies not only about the foreign diplomacy of Yugoslavia and the ties President Tito established with the African countries. It also has a great significance for a better understanding of the African countries themselves in the historical moments of their decolonization and helps us apprehend better their history, culture, and tradition in the moment of creating their new nations (Cukić, 2017: 79).

James Mark, chief researcher of the project *Socialism goes Global*, and a professor of history at the University of Exeter in the preface to the brochure of the exhibition, says: "From development to medical aid as well as through cultural exchanges and military support, Eastern Europe in its entirety, and Yugoslavia in particular, played a key role in creating a new world that claimed to be a victory over imperialism" (Mark, 2017:10).

The curator of the exhibition, Ana, was not present in the museum on the day of my visit. I wanted to know more about the background of the exhibition so I contacted her by mail. She kindly accepted to share with me some of her thoughts about the display and how the idea for the exhibition came about. She pinpoints the importance of the reaffirmation of anti-colonialism and the significant role which the exhibition plays for the future of that concept. As Ana put it, "to highlight it as our common affirmative inheritance".

I asked Ana how this exhibition came about, and she replied:

Our basic idea was to look at the largely forgotten and erased values promoted in Yugoslavia, above all, the idea of anti-colonialism, anti-racism, and solidarity. We felt it was necessary to present through the exhibition, something that corresponds to the contemporary moment. We did not want to celebrate the former Yugoslavia and its international politics uncritically, but by giving insight into certain realities of the time and politics of the time, we point the audience to the present values we wanted to emphasize.

Ana stated that the exhibition fulfilled the purpose because:

The exhibition brought closer to visitors one very important aspect of international politics of that time [...]. Judging by the media coverage of the exhibition it was obviously very interesting to many. Judging by the comments we have asked visitors to leave about the exhibition, the ideas we tried to convey - the ideas of anti-colonialism and solidarity - were obvious to the greatest number of visitors, and those with whom we had the opportunity to speak, they thought they gained something or that something was returned to them with this exhibition [...] As if they had been given a certain remembrance, certain ideas, which are not just empty story transcript but carry a certain message.

She concluded with the remark:

Non-Aligned Movement was completely deleted topic not only in our country but also internationally until about ten or less years ago. Only then, the first texts appeared [...] that are actually dealing with the term itself, the significance of the movement and the ideas behind it. An internet search on this topic some ten years ago gave very few results, while today it is in the center of interest. And it will probably be so until the resources and capacity for "discovery" of this topic are exhausted, and until they move to another [topic].

These words clearly show how political elites engaged in the process of forgetting and control over memory. For many decades after the fall of communism and the breakup of Yugoslavia, this part of common heritage and history was deleted from the collective memory. In line with Connerton (2008:59), we can recognize how power elites use *repressive erasure* in order to "bring about historical break" from the period that is seen as a threat to the new political order. Alempijević and Hjemdahl (2016: 174) state: "The political system that Tito built was proclaimed backward and suffocating, while negative connotations have been attached to the social era and its main figure".

I sent an e-mail to the League of Anti-fascist association in Croatia with the request if someone would agree to talk to me. They answered inviting me to come to their office. This is an excerpt from their internet page:

The Association of Anti-Fascist Fighters and Anti-Fascists of the Republic of Croatia (SABA RH) is the legal successor of the Association of Croatian Liberation Warrior Combat Associations (SUBNOR RH) founded on 16 May 1948 [...]. The Association is an independent, non-governmental, non-party, patriotic, voluntary, antifascist and democratic multi-association of citizens who accept the program goals and principles established by the statute (Savez Antifašističkih boraca i Antifašista RH, my translation).

The association is situated in the center of Zagreb. As I stepped into a big hallway, I was immediately thrown in the past. On one side, there was a fireplace that was no longer in use and had a table and chairs next to it that reminded of an office from the last century, the period of socialism. Walking up the stairs to the second floor, I looked at the large built-in shelf extending across the wall. The books were neatly stacked in a glass-enclosed case. A long corridor led to the office of the association, where I was greeted by Dragica, a secretary of the association, who was kind enough to find someone to talk to me. She pointed me directly to Ivan, a member of the JBT Association. His office was a big room with two working tables and one for the audience where he invited me to sit. The room was full of various memorabilia all showing Tito's figure, and a big calendar with pictures from Tito's life was hanging on the wall. I introduced myself to Ivan and told him about my research. He was cordial and open and

although he was in a hurry preparing for a vacation, he was kind enough to share with me some of his precious time. In the end, the conversation lasted for an hour and a half.

After greetings and a short discussion about my research and my life in Sweden, he started to talk about himself. Given that he spent 22 years in diplomacy both in former Yugoslavia and in Croatia, he was a valuable informant; today he is an active member of the Association of Josip Broz Tito Croatia. I asked him what he thinks about Tito's international politics and he started to praise the time of the Non-Aligned Movement. In his words:

The Non-Aligned Movement is one I would say the world process and the formation of a new concept of international relations that will be based on the equality of the strong and the weak, the small and the large. It is the nucleus of the struggle for fair interpersonal relations in the world and that is its greatest value. So it is a struggle for equal international political and economic relations. This is the essence of the policy of non- alignment. On the other hand, it has given Yugoslavia...transformed it [Yugoslavia] into a country of great importance in international relations that far exceeded its political, economic and military potentials. It is unbelievable for such a small country to position itself in international relations as a significant factor even to the large powers in a certain way.

He stressed further the economic benefits which Yugoslavia gained with the Non-Aligned Movement:

Tito visited almost all African and Asian countries and especially the big ones. In this way, we have politically opened the space for a strong step forward for our companies, our companies to the international market [...]. Thus, the Yugoslav economy has benefited from the development of non-aligned concepts. What I am saying today is that people are ridiculing the Non-Aligned Movement. Unfortunately, not knowing absolutely, and without knowing the elementary facts of what it was.

Luka (37) had a different point of view on Tito's foreign policy and socialism as such. Throughout our interview, he expressed his disagreement with the political decisions of former president and stated that the main problem for everything that happens in Croatia today is inherited from the period of socialism because as he states "[in the time of socialism] we were eternally fed by the cult of personality". While evaluating this period he asserted "all that was then was against what we wanted and what we are today" referring to Tito's socialistic ideas and unitarism versus democratic and capitalistic values promoted today in Croatia. He states further:

We still live in that Yugoslav heritage today. Everything that worked in Yugoslavia, all that pattern of behavior in Yugoslavia that worked back then, they do not work in the West which we want to be a part of.

When I asked Luka how much he knows about Josip Broz Tito's international policy, he replied:

As far as I know, he pushed this Non-Aligned Movement. What was that supposed to be, I honestly have no idea. Perhaps some middle between the East and the West, those two blocks. But I know it was like, we will be neutral. Now, maybe that was possible [then], today it is no longer [possible]. You have to align with one side, whether East or West.

Luka's words clearly show how he has a different vision of socialism and the concepts of Brotherhood and Unity, Self-management or Non-Align Movement. He emphasized the need for Croatia to take a different approach from the one proclaimed in socialism. In contrast to others who see the positive sight of the non-aligned policy, even now for the future of Croatia, he sees it as a part of the past that should be forgotten so that Croatia can be a member of the Western world.

His remarks bring us again to Connerton's distinction of 7 types of forgetting where the *constitutive in the formation of a new identity* explains Luka's aspirations towards forgetting and moving away from undesirable past. Luka sees Croatia as a western, democratic, capitalist country that is a part of the EU and thinks that in the light of this new identity, the old one should be forgotten and abandoned.

Timothy Garton Ash (2002: 12) points out that "the only fact that seems to matter about communism in the present is the fact that it is over". The ignorance about many important facts from Yugoslav past, as pointed by Ivan, Ana, and confirmed by Luka, verify the remark expressed by Ash. Since the political concepts from Yugoslavia, like the Non-Aligned Movement or Brotherhood and Unity, are dismissed from political discourse and national memory today, those ideas are left to oblivion and degradation. As Connerton explains: "pieces of knowledge that are not passed on come to have a negative significance by allowing other images of identity to come to the fore [...]. What is allowed to be forgotten provides living space for present projects" (Connerton, 2008: 63).

## **4.2 Brotherhood and Unity**

As highlighted in the background chapter (Chapter II), one of the important concepts the Yugoslav government sought to emphasize was the concept of *Workers' Self-management*. After the break with Stalin in 1948, Tito sought his way into communism to legitimize his

position but also to distance Yugoslavia from the system that from 1948 became unsolicited. In 1950 a law was passed that all companies were to be handed over to workers and thus became collective property. It was claimed that with this law the government wanted to make a move from state ownership to a higher level of socialist property, emphasizing that state ownership or Stalin's model is the lowest level of social ownership (Goldstein, 2011: 126). As a way of vindication against Stalin's accusations, Tito's main counter-argument was that a bureaucratic caste created in the USSR had lost sight of the working class's needs while the Yugoslav communists found the solution in the doctrine of self-governing socialism.

Another important segment of post-war Yugoslavia was the idea of *Brotherhood and Unity*. After WWII, it was necessary to organize the state and build it from the foundation. The Communist Party established a new government, and the words of *Brotherhood and Unity* were supposed to turn a modern society towards the perspective future.

By analyzing different official documents Nena Močnik (2016) explains the main premises on which Yugoslav idea of multiculturalism functioned. First, she emphasizes that all cultures in the former Yugoslavia were perceived as ancient where each of them had equal importance. Unification of different cultures helped to distinct Yugoslavs from others, not among each other. Second, economic equality was emphasized in order to prevent inequality on all other levels, like differences in language, religion, etc. The working class was the carrier of multiculturalism and "class stratification had very negative connotations, while all other cultural differences were perceived as bricks forming the beauty and diversity of Yugoslavia in a positive perspective" (Ibid: 223). Lastly, Brotherhood and Unity was not just a slogan but a "part of the official ideology deliberately created and precisely implemented into society" (Ibid: 225). Generations of people who grew up in Yugoslavia after the war associated this period with the Brotherhood and Unity, "which means Yugoslav multiculturalism, multilingualism and common supranational Yugoslav culture" (Ibid: 225).

In the article, Močnik (2016), examines further the phenomena of Brotherhood and Unity and European multiculturalism. She sees them both as ideologies that are implemented from above. After the collapse of Brotherhood and Unity as an ideology of mutual coexistence in former Yugoslavia, it is notable how the successor states are prescribed once again to revive multicultural ideas in order to gain mutual goal, "Living together peacefully and in tolerant environment" (Močnik, 2016: 217). Although new multiculturalism is supposed to be implemented in the new context, period and new political system, she suggests that

Brotherhood and Unity could be a reference point, because after all, it was successful and effective for so many years. (Ibid: 217). Subsequently, she highlights that some values, as cultural pluralism, multilingualism and alike, propagated through Brotherhood and Unity are actually values spread in EU which all former Yugoslav republics are a part of, or want to be a part of in the near future.

Although sustained by both people and leading political body, many pinpoint this very same ideology as the main culprit of the bloody inter-ethnic war in Yugoslavia and because of the political system (totalitarianism) many think Brotherhood and Unity was forcefully implemented and thus against people's interest and needs (Močnik, 2016: 218). Although perceived as an ineffective, because a brutal ethnic war which ensued, it can however, serve as an example for future mutual understanding regarding various cultures or as Močnik emphasizes:

It is why comparison between Brotherhood and Unity is so important to be actualized, brought back to the front and revived: it is not an abstract ideology but had its own material manifestation; billions of people have lived it, practiced it and distributed it. Understanding of Brotherhood and Unity helps to strengthen the stereotyped image of multiculturalism as balancing migrant policy toward regions, where the main challenges are not newcomers, but those who once fought for their historical territories (Ibid:241).

Former socialist countries which had a similar system of coexistence could set an example for setting the multicultural practices because of a longer tradition which the western democracies lack and therefore concludes:

In fact, differences among old and new systems are not so dramatic: multiculturalism, however named and when-/wherever created, with different details in ideological basis and differently involved in everyday life of different groups of people, were always created with the same peace-oriented aims (Ibid: 242).

We can see this research in the light of new attempts of rehabilitation of the socialist past and the values from which multiculturalism stands on the highest level.

I asked Milorad, one of my key informers what he thinks of president Tito's internal policy and his remarks go along with the ideas of rehabilitation of values behind the concept of Brotherhood and Unity:

But why is Brotherhood and Unity bad? That is what one needs to answer! And why is Social Self-management bad in relation to this soulless capitalism, where the employee decided on the collective.



He decided on his own personal income on his housing issues, income investments, investments, everything.

Do you think this system worked? I asked him. He replied:

It has worked absolutely and it will come again because this [capitalism] is unsustainable, this is inhuman, this destroys you ...the lowest you are the more powerless you become. It is simply not in the nature of the human race because mankind has not developed in terms of man's degradation, but vice versa, the liberation of man.

Additionally, he expressed his disappointment with present politics and said:

This hunt of Brotherhood and Unity is, in fact, a chase on the pedestal on which Yugoslavia was founded and on which Self-management was founded because there is no Self-management without Brotherhood and Unity and vice versa. One was supporting the other.

He adds further:

Those who were born in the 90s can only value Socialism and Self-management through books. And we who have lived through it, we carry it in ourselves and we think this is a system of the future. Now whether it is called Self-management or otherwise, the name is not important, but the essence is that people are equal in the process of work and creation, and in the process of distributing what they have created.

Throughout our interview, Milorad was often emotional and the feelings expressed by about socialism and its main concepts can be seen as a nostalgic perception of his past. This brings us to the phenomenon of (yugo) nostalgia which will be discussed in the next subchapter.

### **4.3 Nostalgia/Yugonostalgia**

*Precisely because of the elusive nature of nostalgia the authorities in the new states of former Yugoslavia have coined the term Yugo-nostalgia and given it an unambiguous meaning. The term Yugo-nostalgic is used as political and moral disqualification, the Yugo-nostalgic is a suspicious person, a "public enemy", a "traitor, a person who regrets the collapse of Yugoslavia, a Yugo-nostalgic is the enemy of democracy. The term "Yugo-nostalgia" belongs to the new terminology of war. (Ugrešić, 1998: 231)*

### *Kumrovec 2018, Croatia*

It was the middle of the week when I met Milan (69) in Kumrovec, a small and picturesque village in the northern part of Croatia-Zagorje. This is where Josip Broz Tito was born and was turned to the Memorial Museum of Marshal Tito in 1953 or as a brochure from the village states:

Meet Staro selo [Old Village] Museum, the biggest open-space ethnographic museum in the Republic of Croatia. The unique quality of the Museum are forty or so housing and farming facilities preserved *in situ*, which house permanent exhibits of traditional Hrvatsko Zagorje crafts and customs of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. (Staro Selo Museum, Kumrovec, 2012)

Kumrovec is also known as a place where thousands of antifascists meet to celebrate the birthday of Josip Broz Tito every year. This event fuels the tensions among many in Croatia who think that Tito was a criminal and as such should not be commemorated and praised. It is the Association Josip Broz Tito which organizes these celebrations every year on 25 May. In an interview given to the newspaper *Glas antifašista*<sup>15</sup>, one of my informers, Jovan, stated about celebration which was about to be organized in 2012:

Unlike earlier organizational approaches this year's will differ in so far that Tito's birthday will be the motive for putting the emphasis on the civilizational values that the NOB and the Communist Party of Yugoslavia led by Tito initiated, to assemble in the defense of those values. They are strongly attacked not only by individuals and some political structures but also by the system in which we live. It is a tragedy, not for us or Tito, but for the future of this youth, this society, and this state (Kopač, 2018).

Just as Maja Maksimović (2017) points out celebrations and commemorations taking place each year can be seen through the prism of nostalgia or in this case *yugonostalgia*.

Nostalgia is a neologism created quite recently in the 17<sup>th</sup> century by a medical student Johannes Hofer. Although coined essentially as a word describing the psychological condition of *Nostos* (a Greek word for return to the native land) and *Algos* (Greek for suffering or grief) it nowadays signifies not just the melancholy for home (or homesickness as the word nostalgia was about to replace) but also a melancholy for past as such; past experiences, way of life, position in society; everything that is gone and can never return. (Boyer, 2006: 364).

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<sup>15</sup> "Voice of the Anti-Fascists" - Official newspaper of Anti-Fascists of the Republic of Croatia

The melancholic longing for a vanished time flourished in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe, which was generated by the rapid changes that came along with the industrialization and urbanization (Angé & Berliner, 2014). The new interest in nostalgia reappeared in the 1960s and 1970s, time of big social transformation and this interest is apparent to these days especially in the social sciences like anthropology.

Mitja Velikonja (2008: 27), a Slovenian researcher in cultural studies brings his own definition of nostalgia. For him it is:

a complex, differentiated, changing, emotion-laden, personal or collective, (non) instrumentalized story which dichotomously laments and glorifies romanticized lost times, people, objects, feelings, scents, events, spaces, relationships, values, political and other systems, all of which stand in sharp contrast to the inferior present. It is a mourning for the irreversible loss of the past, a longing for it, and it frequently involves a utopian wish and even an effort to bring it back.

Yugonostalgia as a derivative of nostalgia is widely used word among peoples in every country of former Yugoslavia for trying to explain the longing for the socialist period in which Josip Broz Tito was the main political, economic or ideological figure. This word is often brought into direct opposition to nationalism, and many disputes among Croatian citizens today end up with the division among those perceived as Nationalists or Yugonostalgics<sup>16</sup>, mainly by others and mainly in negative connotation (Maksimović, 2017).

But why did (yugo) nostalgia become so popular in the last few decades? After almost thirty years of persistent silencing of everything connected to Josip Broz Tito, now, a few decades ago, he has become an object of newly published books<sup>17</sup>, research projects, documentaries, various touristic offers<sup>18</sup>, etc. (Alempijević & Hjemdahl, 2016; Velikonja 2008). Socialist Yugoslavia became center of nostalgic memories. Maksimović (2017: 1068) explains that it is not the political ideologies as communism or socialism that drives people to

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<sup>16</sup> Yugonostalgics are often seen as "traitors" and "enemies of the nation" because nationalists see the values they stand for in direct opposition to the values they themselves are promoting. See Maksimović, 2017:1072.

<sup>17</sup> In 2009 Tito's archive was open to the public which initiated a new interest in researching Tito's life and policy. Many authors of various backgrounds wanted to present their truth about a famous president. See for example: Despot Zvonimir: Tito-tajne vladara, Simić, Pero: Tito-fenomen stoljeća.

<sup>18</sup> Like for example taking the Blue-train from Belgrade to Bar (see: <http://serbianrailways.com/blue-train/>) or a yugi-tour through Belgrade in a Yugoslav Zastava car for "a legendary ride from the rise to the fall of Yugoslavia". (See: <https://yugotour.com/>)

the longing for past rather it is socioeconomic and cultural values and characteristics promoted in the former state which are neglected in the newly formed state like for example, an international reputation, economic welfare, economic and social security, solidarity, etc. Nostalgia can be traced in the other former socialist countries as well, which constitutes a phenomenon known as *Red Nostalgia*, or nostalgia for socialism; for example, an *Ostalgie* represents nostalgia for socialism in East Germany, or *Soviet nostalgia*, an nostalgia for socialism in the former countries of SSSR (Boyer, 2006; Maksimović, 2017; Berliner, 2014).

It appears as a direct response to the circumstances or problems of today. Nostalgia does not point towards how it used to be but primarily indicates what is bad and deficient today. In this way, nostalgia becomes the critique of the society we know; through nostalgia, people express their dissatisfaction with the political or economic situation in the societies in which they live today. It does not manifest itself through loud political gatherings or in the streets, but quietly in the closed circles of one's own home where stories of a better life were being transmitted.

In explaining which family narratives, parents passed on to him, Zoran adds what they told him about the days they spent in socialism:

When I started to ask them what was before, they were telling me, that it was better, you had time, life was easier and I got this family heritage [...]. Before it was socialism, it was much better it was much safer. I am citing my father "that state was a fairy tale.

Zoran revealed at the beginning of our conversation how his father considers himself as a nationalist (a Croat) and politically oriented to the right-wing party. He, nevertheless, thinks very positively of the life he had in the former regime which he obviously transmits only in the narrow circle of his family. Thus, it becomes a family narrative, *a family heritage as Zoran calls it*.

Jasna points to other things which marked that period, a sense of security and hope. When I asked her how she remembers those early days of her life she replied:

From Yugoslavia? Well, very fragmentary, but I remember that it was...yes, I lost that feeling. I do not know, maybe because as a child you feel protected, I lost that sense of security, there was some hope...

I sat with Milan in the only cafe bar that worked that day as it was the middle of the week and started our conversation. Milan was polite but little constraint; he answered my questions briefly and concisely not going into politics or commenting on the daily events in Croatia or former Yugoslavia for that matter, and our conversation ended quickly after only a

half an hour. I asked him how it was to live in Tito's time given that he did spend most of his youth in the time of socialism.

My life was more fulfilled than today, but there are also differences in years. We were poorer but happier. We lived happier in any case. The security was far greater than today. Unlike today, you could sleep in the park without anyone touching you.

Did you feel threatened as a person? I followed.

No, never. I went to church when I wanted and nobody forbid me anything, from the system that was in power, we had no problem with it.

After finishing our interview we went to the nearby Tito's birth house in front of which the big sculpture of Marshal Tito stands. This is the work of a renowned Croatian sculptor Antun Augustinčić, and the same one stands in the park of Museum of Yugoslavia in Belgrade. It is the central house that today holds a historical and ethnographic exhibition. Historical one is dedicated to Tito's memorabilia and the other one presents the way of living back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century or more precisely, the time of his youth. There is also a crib standing in the middle of the room, presenting the similar one in which Josip Broz Tito was sleeping as a baby, which leaves a strong impact on visitors. A museum visitor's book is standing at the entry. I peered inside and some of the inscriptions written there convey many different emotions:

"I do not remember that time, but in the stories of the old ones, you were a hero" (Kumrovec, May 2018).

"You live in my heart eternally. Thank you" (Kumrovec, May 2018).

"My comrade Tito, while you were alive everything was fine" (Kumrovec, May 2018).

"We used to love and smile a lot. No one can take that away from me." (Kumrovec, May 2018).

"We had everything, now we have nothing" (Kumrovec, May 2018).

Milan added to the book the date of our visit and his dedication: "You live in our hearts" (Kumrovec, July 2018).

I went to the only gift shop in the village, which was, full of Tito's memorabilia, but everything looked cheap and commercial. One can buy a T-shirt, various kinds of mugs and glasses, jars, ashtrays, pens and pen holders, posters, fridge magnets, lighters, vases and other things imaginable all with his picture on, but when I asked the lady selling the tickets if they

have any book about Tito she replied that they used to have Ridley's biography<sup>19</sup> but not anymore. So I bought a postcard with his image and went my way.

Mitja Velikonja (2008) refers to this longing for Tito's time as *titostalgia*. He makes differentiation in how people express their yugonostalgia between a *culture of titostalgia* and *titostalgic culture*. The former is also perceived as a "nostalgia for profit" and refers to the various forms of using his character for commercial purposes (which is manifested through various tourist attractions, cafes or restaurants bearing his name, souvenir shops, etc. ), and whose main motive is to gain profit.

We can perceive souvenir shop in Kumrovec in the light of what Velikonja (2008) describes as a *culture of titostalgia* or a "nostalgia for profit", but we can also look at it from a broader perspective. As a contribution to the inquest of *Ostalgie*, Jonathan Bach (2014) examines the symbolic and economic values of socialist "nostalgia objects", the objects that are purchased and collected after the demise of the socialist German Democratic Republic. He sees those items as transmitters of cultural knowledge; they became objects of commodification for the new owners by re-entering the life circle in which they gained new symbolic meaning (Bach, 2014: 124). Thus "nostalgia objects are kept alive and gradually turned into a 'normal' part of the landscape" (Ibid: 125). With this new life, consumers transformed "the trash items to nostalgia objects" (Ibid: 126). But what meaning can these objects have for an individual? According to Bach's inquiry he concludes that the socialist items so meticulously kept, purchased or collected in museums or private collections provide a "identity-affirming experience" mostly for older people to whom these objects can awake childhood memories (Ibid: 129); on the other side, they can be used as transmitters of history to the new generations of young people (Ibid: 133). The objects bought in the souvenir shop became something of commodity fetishism which can be, either, priceless for the holder thus carefully preserved or could be left on the margins of one's home and forgotten as a "junk of the past" (Alempijević & Hjemdahl, 2016:179).

The second feature of yugonostalgia as proposed by Velikonja (2008), the *titostalgic culture* refers to the personal memories of Josip Broz Tito manifested in the private collection of pictures with his character occupying special places in the privacy of the home; maintaining

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<sup>19</sup> Jasper Ridley: Tito: A biography.

a relay baton race as mentioned in the previous chapter; but also people's narrative of the socialistic period, the ones from bottom-up or the ones retold in the narrow family circles as a *family heritage* just as Zoran explained to me in conversation.

The feelings my interviewees conveyed align with the Velikonja's formulation of "titostalgic culture" or personal memories of Josip Broz Tito. They perceive the days spent in socialism as safer and more fulfilled but also economically more stable compared to the present days. Those perceptions could be seen in line with the assumption that nostalgia does appear as a direct response to the social deviation of the present time where the economic and social instability and uncertainty are seen as the major problems. They see it as a "shelter from an unsatisfying present" (Maksimović, 2017: 1070). But these nostalgic narratives contrast the institutional accounts communicated by the state where Josip Broz Tito was frequently seen as a: traitor of the Croatianhood, a war criminal, a typical tyrant, an anti-democrat, a mass murderer, etc. (Velikonja, 2014: 14).

Emotions play a big role in any recollection because "memories not tagged by ongoing social emotions tend to fade out" (Misztal, 2003: 80). For that reason, the role of emotions in the process of remembering is regularly discussed in the studies of trauma but if we look at nostalgia as a condition of emotion we can see the importance of nostalgia in the memory process.

Many perceive nostalgia as an inability for individuals to face the reality of the present situation which is the main reason why people refer to it merely as yearning for past times. Maksimović (2017: 1068) explains how yugonostalgia is often perceived as being "oriented toward 'past fantasies' - unfulfilled dreams, lost opportunities, and elusive ideals of the socialist Yugoslav past; toward all that was probable back then and seems so inaccessible today". But can nostalgia be a positive and driving force aiming for a better future?

In a similar manner as Velikonja (2008), Maja Maksimović (2017) suggests that nostalgia doesn't need to have only negative connotations for something that is elusive and lost rather it can be a powerful and binding concept for future cooperation between all the nations of former Yugoslavia. By using the concept of nostalgia as a selective and enhanced process of remembering it gives the possibility for reconciliation among two contested mnemonic processes. There are plenty of potentials for the future development of societies and mutual relations among nations. As mentioned in the *Lexic of Yu Mythology* yugonostalgia is "valuable

evidence that it makes sense remembering, because it represents the only identity-pledge for those who refuse to allow their remembrance to be modulated by others” (Pančić, 2004).

Thus it becomes a critique of political decisions and actions which can often be prone towards the nationalist and neo-fascist manifestations as will be further analyzed in the last ethnographic chapter. It becomes a platform for cultural dialog among all peoples of former Yugoslavia provisionally separated by war thus being the opportunity for reconciliation among conflicting and opposing sides (Serbs and Croats in Croatia; Serbs, Croats and Muslim Bosnian in BiH, etc.); but most of all it becomes a possibility for influencing power elites decisions for producing better socioeconomic conditions, with the main aim to achieve a better future for all. Velikonja (2008) brings an extensive list of the survey pools done in the last decades in most of the republics of former Yugoslavia about the popular opinion of Tito. Results could be shocking for some and yet reasonable for others. Surveys in Croatia (conducted in 1998, and 2003 by daily newspaper *Jutarnji list* and by national television) showed that the majority of Croats perceived the former president as a positive historical figure. In the survey from 1998, he was selected as “the most important Croat of the millennium” (Velikonja, 2008: 90). Similar surveys were obtained in other countries of the former state and they all showed pretty much the same results<sup>20</sup>.

My informant Jasna confirms these assumptions. When she was in Belgrade in 1999 she remembered how shocked she was to see in their newspaper *Blic* that Tito was selected as the greatest Serb of all time. Then coming back to Croatia she was again surprised to see that in *Jutarnji list* Tito was again on the front page as the greatest Croat of all time.

And although the new research would be of great significance to make more valid estimations we can, however, conclude that the majority of people do not share the same opinion the state imposes on them; first of all that former president was: the hater of everything that is Croatian, a killer and dictator (Velikonja, 2008); they rather want to remember their past as it was, valuating Josip Broz Tito as a historical person with all the good and bad sides of his rule, because it is a part of their history after all. Maksimović explains why yugonostalgia could be an answer for future tolerance, peace and reconciliation between contested memories. It could

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<sup>20</sup> For example, In Serbia 1998 he was selected as the greatest Yugoslav politician of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; In BiH 59 % of people saw him as a positive historical figure; in Slovenia this number was as high as 84,3% in 1998, and 90% in 2003. See in Velikonja, 2008.



be a solution because "for yugonostalgics, the past-usually a divisive factor- is not the issue; it is rather the present, in which they are equal in sharing common problems and worries, despite their ethnic or religious determination" (Maksimović, 2017: 1078).

#### 4.4 Lessons for the future

I asked my informants what they think of the influence of socialist heritage on contemporary Croatia. Ivan sees the project of non-alignment as one of the foundations Croatian state can be proud of and use in every aspect of its policy even today. In his own words:

So, even for us now, Croatia as a state, the fact that we had Tito, who was the creator of Non-aligned politics, and today, not only in the political but also in economic terms, that word opens the door, which unfortunately we rarely use. Not only that we do not use it but discard it, which is insane.

I followed up with the question if foreign and Croatian politicians could learn from Josip Broz Tito's policy even today. He replied to that:

Absolutely yes! The time and context are different today. The historical and political system is different. But the messages from it are global because all that the Non-Aligned Movement fought for was not realized. This concept and its realization is a matter of process rather than something that can be established at once. The struggle for equal international relations in the world, the struggle against bloc divisions in the world are current even today and that are all things that can still be used by the world when used in the right way.

As already mentioned Ana thought that the exhibition *Tito in Africa-Pictures of Solidarity* clearly showed and lifted some of the forgotten values of socialism, such as the pre-mentioned multiculturalism, solidarity and anti-colonialism, which still today have great importance and can be a good foundation for future. In her words:

Pointing people to values that may have been forgotten is the same as giving them something of a gift. There are very few of these values that go beyond the one-dimensional and articulate national narrative that is most common in the public sphere, and these are something we are trying to reappear as museum professionals.

She stated that young generations are not aware of the main ideas behind the Non-Aligned Movement which is additionally confirmed by the words of informants, Jovan and Nikola alike. The main aspiration of history is to educate young generations and one way of doing it could be through exhibitions as Ana emphasized. She sees the contribution of the exhibition in the

battle against forgetting as a gift given to the people who may forget or to people who want to remember. Ana pinpointed that we should reaffirm values from socialism and bring them closer to new generations because ideas of mutual ethnical and religious coexistence, solidarity, multiculturalism, are ideas the new globalized and united Europe rests upon.

She added to this subject further:

However, before the criticisms, I think it is necessary to restore the values that make sense to us today, and anti-colonialism and solidarity certainly must be one of them. The first message was: anti-colonialism and solidarity were something that existed in the public speaking of a certain time, these are the values that are represented and proclaimed. Even if these messages were lost with the deletion of other elements of Yugoslavian experience, it is still a part of our common heritage that we have the right to be proud of - in the end, does it not offer a good basis for further development?

She concluded this topic with these words:

The foreign policy of Yugoslavia had an important influence on the Yugoslav identity that was formed at that time when the Yugoslavs began to perceive themselves as citizens of the world. Cooperation channels that opened up with countries with which cooperation so far did not exist, greatly contributed to the change of this image. As I have said, there is plenty of room for criticism, but it is the very idea of Non-alignment in the block division in the political and social sense that is ingenious - the idea of a network that overrides the geographic determinants and is very modern. Since it has been so neglected, even forgotten, and given the awakening of its interest in the world, it not only has the potential to redefine the historical interpretation of Josip Broz Tito, but also Yugoslavia itself and its historical, many ways avant-garde roles.

Nena Močnik (2016: 240) states in her article that the ideas of European multiculturalism focus on youngsters just as was the case in Brotherhood and Unity. She states: "Ideology of youth and power they can carry while changing the conventional social patterns, has become back to life after more than 20 years, now dressed into a more modern and more convenient European coat". Can Tito be a symbol of new Croatian identity the one which will rest upon the reaffirmed Croatian history by building its continuity in values, respected in the Yugoslavian past and claiming a share in Yugoslav heritage is yet to be seen.

## 4.5 In Conclusion

According to Connerton (2008:60), *repressive erasure* is a tool used by the state in order to send to oblivion 'enemies of the state'. In that way politics control what (or who) should be

remembered and what (or who) should be forgotten. As noted, the absence of Josip Broz Tito from the Brioni Islands was highly visible. Although former Yugoslav president had great importance in promoting the island, his presence was reduced to a small exhibition of his photographs, which is a frequent target of criticism even today. While on Brioni Island the exhibition dedicated to Tito, in Belgrade he was brought closer to the public arena. Through exhibition *Tito in Africa-Pictures of solidarity*, museum employees highlighted the importance of some of the socialist concepts from Yugoslavia, like multiculturalism, anti-racism and anti-colonialism as concepts important for future coexistence. These ideas correspond with thoughts expressed by my interviewees. Tito and Yugoslavia should be perceived as a common heritage for all the successor countries and Croatia should use positive concepts from the socialism for a reaffirmation of its own national identity; especially now when it is a part of Europe which strives to be multicultural, solidary and ethnically inclusive.

The process of nostalgia was described as a mechanism for the reconciliation of contested memories. By reflecting on how my informants look at their past spent living in Yugoslavia it was noted that they often express emotions that could be defined as nostalgic. If we observe nostalgia as an emotional state then it has a big influence on how people remember their past, because emotions can be powerful triggers of recollections and can also induce political changes as described in this part. Using Mitja Velikonja's and Maja Maksimović's explanation of the power of (yugo) nostalgia I concluded this chapter with the notion that nostalgia can be seen as a direct critique of present political actions and as such a driving force of future political and socio-economic changes.

In this chapter, I have highlighted some of the main ideas and political concepts of former Yugoslavia. I have described how the control of the state in the mnemonic process influenced people's perception of historical events. Institutions of power in Croatia dismissed the political concepts of former Yugoslavia from the national memory. Thus, younger generations do not have enough knowledge of the events from their past, rather construct their narratives according to the commonly accepted perceptions; as deviant and contrary to the values of contemporary society and the state.

## 5 Memories of Traumatic Past

In this chapter, I will analyze the concepts of nationalism and ethnic identity. Modernist and primordial views on both concepts will be discussed with the focus on their importance in self-identification. Additionally, the role of state ideology in constructing the myths which result in the reconstruction of historical narratives will be examined. Theoretical analysis is anchored in the politics of memory whereas empirical data for this chapter comes from interviews.

### 5.1 Nationalism and National Identity

*[...] nationalism lies at the basis of this world (Greenfeld, 1992: 3).*

Rebirth of nationalism after the break of communism is a process that many scholars wrote about, but what consequences did this leave on a social memory is what I study. In memory formation, nationalism had a great role in serving politicians as an instrument with whom they influence how people think and remember their past. These are the reasons why I apply the instrumentalist theory of nationalism, where polity has the central place in manipulating people's sentiment for power elites to achieve their own political and economic objectives.

Nationalism is a very complex phenomenon of today's modern world, and we cannot but approach it in this manner. Anthony D. Smith (1998) calls it a red line that arose in late 18<sup>th</sup> century France and America and then stretched throughout all the continents of our world. He states: "In its wake come protest and terror, war and revolution, the inclusion of some, the exclusion of many. At last, the red line becomes blurred, fragmented, faded, as the world moves on. [...] Though its forms are many, it is all one red line. The story of its progress is one of emergence and decline, the rise and fall of nations and nationalism" (Smith, 1998:1).

In a half century long discourse of the origins of nationalism, many prospective social scientists agree that nationalism is a modern process and not a primordial one. The modernist theory appeared in the late 1960s with the works of Kedourie and Gellner which from then onward became and remained immensely influential in theoretical discourse. Scholars like Kedourie, Gellner, Anderson, Breully, and Brass argue that nationalism is a mere product of modernity i.e., that it is a modern social construct. For Anderson (1991: 4) nation is a "cultural artifact of a particular kind". Gellner (1983: 1) sees it as "primarily a political principle" that appeared in the industrial age of the history of mankind while Paul Brass (1991: 8) underlines

that nationalism and ethnicity are suitable instruments of elites' manipulation and sees them as "social and political constructions".

On the other hand, there are many theorists, among them many medieval historians, who challenged the premises of a constructivist idea stating that nationalism and ethnicity are primordial and congenital phenomena because all nations derive from old ethnic ties (see in Lawrence, 2016; Calhoun, 1993). They are skeptical about the modernist formation of the nations because it cannot explain why so many people are willing to fight or even to give their lives for the nation if it is seen as a constructed concept. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz believes that ethnicities are the remains of "former quasi-kinship" or "assumed blood ties" (qtd. in Lawrence, 2016: 183), while Smith as a critic of the modern notion of nationalism stresses that we cannot understand modern nationalism without former ethnic attachments and memories, because for every modern nation we can trace ethnic segment from the past (Lawrence, 2016). What is it then that makes the nation? We can find one answer in Ernest Renan's work *What is a nation?* his seminal text from 1882. Although it is widely accepted presumption that it is language, religion, geography (borders) or ethnic bounds that make the core of nation-building, Renan gives his point of view on that matter. He said that "a nation is a soul, a spiritual principle" thus two things constitute nation; plentiful legacy of memories from the past and the consent to live in common state preserving common heritage because after all "of all cults, that of the ancestors is the most legitimate, for the ancestors have made us what we are" (Renan in Bhabha 1990:19).

But, what is the importance of nationalism in memory formation? As already emphasized in chapter 3, in her book *Theories of Social Remembering*, Barbara Misztal points to the mnemonic communities which influence what should be remembered or forgotten. Besides family or social groups, she emphasizes the importance of the nation and ethnic groups in people's memory formation. She states that "mnemonic communities, through introducing and familiarizing new arrivals to their collective past, ensure that new members, by identifying with the group's past, attain a required social identity" (Misztal, 2003: 15). What this means is that people have to identify themselves with the common past in order to construct their identity in a socially acceptable manner. Monroe E. Price (2002: 139) states that "Collective memory of defining events shapes and sustains national identity. Even in times of peace, states maintain- or even construct-such memories as sources both for shared national identity and for the legitimacy of state power".

So how do nations construct identity? Every nation needs "usable past", i.e. the history which can represent the cohesive image of heroic past and 'golden age' (Renan, 1990: 17-18). To do so, memory goes along with forgetting in order to sustain this cohesion, because not everything from the past is appropriate for a nation to remember, so to unite people in mutual solidarity. This is where the process of forgetting takes shape or fabrication of historical narratives comes to the fore. Renan (1990: 11) reminds us that, "Forgetting, I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation, which is why progress in historical studies often constitutes a danger for [the principle of] nationalism".

Thomas Hylland Eriksen concludes on this matter "Nationalism is a functional ideology for the state in that it creates loyalty and facilitates large-scale operations, and it is functional for the individual in that it replaces obsolete foci for identification and socialization, notably the family" (Eriksen, 1999: 278).

When talking about present politics in Croatia Ivan made it clear what he thinks of Croatian politics today.

Croatia, as well as other states in these areas, were created on one I would almost say the same concept. That's a miracle. The newly-formed states in Yugoslavia are similar to eggs. They are based on nationalism, mythology, irrational, on the story of Yugoslavia as a prison of nations [...]. I do not know if something coherent long-lasting and successfully can be developed on the concept of nationalism and not just nationalism in a positive sense of the word but simply chauvinism as a prevalent conception[...]. However, I think that, in the long run, an even greater misfortune and tragedy to this place and to these states bring about the fact that all moral principles are run over. We are atomized as a society.

He sees the main problem in the political elite which imposes the collective memory of the time of Tito's reign as a period of "dark age"

They say we lived in the "dark age", which is, from the facts I stated nonsense. However, this is the predominant psychology, the common way of thinking today in Croatia.

I followed with the question if he thinks it is the predominant way of thinking? He replied:

Absolutely prevailing! Political nomenclature thinks so. The political nomenclature bombards this nation every day. Electronic media, newspapers, they all say so. It is the predominant model of thinking today, and it is based on lies, which is dangerous for the future development and advancement of this society.

Ivan suggested that present Croatian politics is based on nationalism and reconstruction of the past to suit the present political needs. Political elites imposed the narrative of former Yugoslavia as a 'the prison of nations' or period of 'dark age' in Croatian history. These

connotations of the socialist past are common in everyday discourse in Croatia even today, but there are also many more such terms. Kuljić (qtd. in Maksimović, 2017:1067) notes: " [...] national(istic) rhetoric sees Yugoslav Communism exclusively as a 'rule of political terror', '50 years of darkness', 'the kingdom of lies', the 'prison of nations', or 'Tito's despotism' [...]". Memories of common communist past were undesirable and banned from the public sphere, "they were replaced with conflicting narratives of World War II crimes and strategies for national reconciliation, or buried behind denials of crimes from the new wars and layers of myths and legends from the ancient past" as Aida Hozić (2014: 234) describes.

I agreed to meet Jasna in the popular café bar in the center of Sisak, an old Croatian town of rich history situated some 50 km south of Zagreb. Since her boyfriend was interested in the subject as he was educated as a political scientist, she asked me if he can join us as well. I agreed, of course, because he was born in the '90's so with no direct memory of Tito's period of reign. I came earlier armed with my papers and questions which I was about to ask them. However, the interview ended in a conversation rather than a structured interview. Zoran (27) is an interesting young man, and he started his long story with his family genealogy and how it influenced his views about historical narratives. He wanted to show me how he had influences from both sides (left and right-wing parties) but chose his path. As he revealed to me, he had both Partisans and Ustashas in his family, and while he was more inclined to the left side, his father was a right-winger. In his own words:

My dad was raised nationally from the beginning [...] my mom is not a nationalist, although during the war, she is from the psychological profile of sleepers...just let me survive [...] but when it is critical, family legacy emerges.

Jasna is almost ten years older than Zoran and was born in 1980 seven months after the death of Josip Broz Tito. Although she did spend her childhood in a time of socialism and Yugoslavia, she does not remember much about Tito himself. Her family did not have much influence in forming her opinion, but as she got older she started to research on her own, to read books and newspaper articles and formed the picture of who Tito was. She expressed her feelings about nationalism in Yugoslavia and the role it plays in contemporary Croatian society. When referring to the domestic policy of former president she noted:

I like that he [Josip Broz] stifled nationalism, although it broke out again as a lump.

Zoran agreed with her assertion about nationalism and added:

I like very much that nationalists were pressed, but they did not press enough those nationalists within the [Communist] Party.

When I asked her if she thinks that Croatian society and politics should renounce Josip Broz Tito, she expressed her disappointment with the part of the Croatian public which does not want to interfere in matters that are of importance for the whole nation.

I think a large part of Croatia [Croatian people] wants to renounce him because nationalism rules. Or maybe they are loud [nationalists]. I do not know. I think that there is this silent, what they say the silent majority. Those are just people who do not want to...involve. I think for me they're also a catastrophe. I think such a situation [in Croatia] is due to them.

Moreover, she adds her worries about the future:

I just felt that this nationalism was in the midst of 2000, until this [economic] crisis began in 2008. Then, it started towards nationalism again, and now it is really awful. Before I would not be afraid to tell my opinion; now, I am cautious.

The above remark of fear of publicly expressing her opinions points to the notion expressed by Dubravka Ugrešić (1998), known Croatian dissident in the early 90s. She explains how Croatian government treated people who were critical of the newly established regime or expressed different thoughts in the public discourse and points to the measures used in order to create a cohesive image in the early 90s or as she calls it "the truth about Croatia":

The patriotic duty of every citizen-to spread the truth about Croatia-has legitimized a method which they always employed in any case with great zeal whenever invited to: denunciation of people who think differently: skeptics, "Yugonostalgics", intellectuals who once said something critical about the present regime [...]. The citizens, meanwhile, as always in such cases, sincerely believe that they are carrying out a little, honorable, patriotic task (Ibid: 74)

Interviews with Jasna, Zoran and Ivan show how they see present Croatian politics and how they think nationalism became the main ideology and the main political tool of power elites. Jasna sees nationalism as the main reason why people want to renounce Josip Broz Tito and consequently the period of his reign which was, as stated by Ivan, perceived as a 'dark age' of Croatian history. In order to impose their ideologies nation-states use myths or forgetting as a tool to obtain national cohesion or national identity based on ethnicity as will be closely discussed in the next part.



## 5.2 (Ethnic) Identity

*The terror of remembering is, of course, also a war strategy of setting up frontiers, establishing differences: we are different from them (Serbs), our history, faith, customs and language are different from theirs. In the war variant this complex (which profoundly penetrates the Croatian collective consciousness) is used like this: we are different from them (Serbs) because we are better, which is proved by our history; we always built, they always only destroyed; we are a European, Catholic culture, they are only Orthodox, illiterate barbarians. And so on and so forth. (Ugrešić, 1998: 81)*

What is ethnic identity and how come ethnicity became so crucial in perceiving oneself and others in the early '90s in Croatia and still is an important way of self-determination? To be able to explain this, we should first describe how identity is comprehended. Identity theory stems from the writings of George Herbert Mead, who develops the idea that human social behavior is shaped through the society or the social networks in which we realize ourselves and the roles we play in everyday life and change them according to the social context (Stryker & Burke, 2000).

On the other hand, Tajfel's social identity theory explains how people socially identify each other based on their surrounding or more specifically identify their own group in comparison with others, or as Tajfel explains, "the definition of a group (national, racial or any other) makes no sense unless there are other groups around. A group becomes a group in the sense of being perceived as having common characteristics or a common fate only because other groups are present in the environment" (Tajfel, 1974: 72). This definition brings us to the main problem of ethnic polarization or the process of distinguishing 'us' from 'them' which played a decisive role in the outbreak of war in former Yugoslavia to which I will return in a little while.

For an individual's social identification four concepts are of crucial importance: first, social categorization, i.e. the process through which humans try to simplify the surrounding environment by labeling things and putting them into categories which becomes a system of orientation for one's place in society (we can add stereotypes here as well); the second concept is the social identity which points to the fact of how the individual conceives himself/herself in relation to a membership to a specific social group to which he attaches specific emotional significance. Social comparison is a third concept of self-identification which implies how

individuals evaluate their opinions comparing them with others in their surroundings; and lastly a psychological distinctiveness (Tajfel, 1974).

In his book, *Ethnic groups and boundaries* (1969), Fredric Barth challenged, at the time the traditional anthropological view of ethnic groups. This view sees ethnic groups as population which share the same biological prepositions, same culture, language and are members of the same group that differs from other groups. Barth states that this ideal type model "implies a preconceived view of what are the significant factors in the genesis, structure, and function of such groups" (Barth, 1969: 11). He thus suggests that it is not the culture itself that underlines the differences which delineate ethnic groups; rather it is social interaction and social organization that makes the fundamental difference. He notes further that, "Since belonging to an ethnic category implies being a certain kind of person, having that basic identity, it also implies a claim to be judged, and to judge oneself, by those standards that are relevant to that identity [...]. In other words, ethnic categories provide an organizational vessel that may be given varying amount and forms of content in different socio-cultural systems" (Ibid: 14). He adds further that the main focus should be on ethnic boundaries that determine the group, not the cultural stuff it encloses because the culture is constructed by choosing "items from the shelves of the past and the present" (Ibid:15). It changes through time, and it can be "borrowed, blended, rediscovered, and reinterpreted" (Nagel, 1994:162).

Barth's notes further that it is not important how differently people behave rather the fact that "[...] if they say they are A, in contrast to another cognate category B, they are willing to be treated and let their own behavior be interpreted and judged as A's and not as B's; in other words, they declare their allegiance to the shared culture of A's" (Barth, 1969:15). To sum up, it is the definition of ingroup and how members of social groups perceive themselves regarding others what matters in ethnicity.

Joane Nagel (1994: 153) argues that ethnicity is a social construct and is continually changing. So to understand how ethnicity is fabricated she proposes to look at the identity and culture as generators of constructions of boundaries and constructions of meaning. She argues that people change their ethnic identity according to social context but sees ethnic identity as both optional and mandatory. Although one can choose which identity is most important for him in a specific context, one cannot choose from countless ethnic identities because they are limited by their birth and the notion of how others see them. Greenfeld (1992: 20) adds that

"identity is a set of ideas, a symbolic construct. It is a particularly powerful construct, for it defines a person's position in his or her social world".

One important question should be emphasized here; how can we, after all, define ethnic identity, and why is ethnic affiliation so important for an individual?

The concept of the ethnic group derives from the Greek word "ta ethne" which denominated the alien group of people (Greenfeld, 1992: 4). Today, however, this term represents a group that has some shared features like for example culture, language, historical narratives or even religion which differs one group from the other. Similar to nation, some scholars recognize ethnic identity as primordial, something gained by birth in specific communities with which we share the same language, religion, culture, etc. thus it is not subjected to our personal affiliation (Eriksen, 2001: 44). On the other hand, many other theorists (instrumentalists) agree that the notion of ethnic identity is subjectively chosen by an individual because of the possible benefits one could obtain from it. Thus it is instrumented usually by politics and socially constructed by power elites to advance their political agenda (Brass, 1991; Nagel, 1994).

Brass agrees with the primordialist notion about the influence of childhood attachments acquired from descendants which can influence their social and political grouping in adult life. He rejects, however, other primordial attachments like language, religion, kinship, etc., which he sees as changeable through time. Nevertheless, he does see the possibilities for reconciliation of these two perspectives; primordialists and instrumentalists one; namely, he states: "one possible route toward reconciling the perspectives of primordialists and instrumentalists may lie in simply recognizing that cultural groups differ in the strength and richness of their cultural traditions and even more importantly in the strength of traditional institutions and social structure" (Brass, 1991: 74). What that means is that in ethnic mobilization, leaders of ethnic movements will carefully choose those aspects of the culture they think will bring about beneficial cohesion and unity within the group, thus as he puts it "the study of ethnicity and nationality is" after all "the study of politically-induced cultural change", and "the study of the process by which elites [...] select aspects of the group's culture, attach new value and meaning to them, and use them as symbols to mobilize the groups, to defend its interests, and to compete with other groups" (Brass, 1991: 75).

In the article whose main point of interest is Saami people, and whom he uses as a point of departure for research of ethnicity, Hugh Beach (2013) adds to this debates that it is not only important how ethnic groups might see themselves but also how they are recognized by others,

the surrounding majority, or even in academic discourse. The main argument of his article, in short, is, that we can and should link essentialist and constructivist theories of ethnicity by including a concept he calls "internalized fluid capacities" which are understood as an essence which is genetically available but should be further developed into social attributes through sociocultural influence. He argues that there are vital qualities that a group of people can perceive as essential to them. In his words "While it is true (as the constructivist school of anthropologists continually remind us) that so-called ethnic "essences" are themselves simply ossified cultural constructs, it is also true (as the essentialists maintain) that there is a big difference between freely chosen social constructs and those persistent, relatively inflexible social features that can last through many centuries" (Beach, 2013: 130).

It can be evident from all the accounts put forward in this part of the paper that ethnic identity is socially constructed and that people can change their identity according to the reality that surrounds them. Thus, it can also be influenced by changes in the social context and manipulated by power elites in various ways as will be explained further down in this chapter. The importance of ethnic identity for politics can be read in Nagel's words: "The tactics used in ethnic movements rely on the presentation, and sometimes the reconstruction, of cultural symbols to demonstrate the ethnic unity, to dramatize injustice, or to animate grievances or movement objectives" (Nagel, 1994: 167).

Eriksen (2001) emphasizes that ethnic affiliation can change according to social situations. One can in some occasions express and elevate their ethnic attachments while in some other social context their ethnic ties become unimportant, sometimes even unsolicited. In this manner, we can see the salience of ethnic identity in the Croatian state compared with the one in the former Yugoslavia. As already explained in the background chapter, ethnic identity in Yugoslavia was not so important for the people, at least not in the public sphere of political and social life (it could be different in the closed areas of one's private home), but it did become very important after the 1980s and on the eve of the outbreak of war in 1990s and continues to this days to be the most decisive elements of one's identity (Eriksen, 2001: 48).

Jasna explained to me that she did not know who Croats or Serbs were or what her ethnic identity was at the time of the former Yugoslavia because she was raised as Yugoslavian. She became aware of her Serbian ethnic identity when she went to Serbia as a refugee at the beginning of the war in Croatia. In her words:

Then I figured out the differences, and then it was a scary cognition for me. But then, with the time you realize how artificial and miserable this is, how people are the same! I'm still a Yugoslavian! And last time on the census I declared myself as a Yugoslavian. I am one of us three hundred and eleven [who declared themselves as Yugoslavians] who are not admitted by the Constitution. We are neither a minority nor anything. My mom and I are two of those 311.

We can read in Jasna's words how little meaning she used to attribute to her own ethnic identity. In accordance with Nagel's assumptions we see that Jasna chose her identity according to her position in the social world or rather how she sees herself in that world. But, nevertheless, her choice was limited to several identities to which her past can relate. Although ethnically Serb, and although she lives in Croatia, she has chosen a Yugoslav identity which declares her allegiance with the shared culture of others who identify themselves as such.

Luka, on the contrary, highlights the importance of his ethnic identity which for him is the framework through which he evaluates the period of Yugoslavia and President Tito. While explaining to me how he sees differences among nations he adds how he perceives Croatian identity. In his words:

Croat-the first association: squares<sup>21</sup>, Catholics, Adriatic Sea, Dalmatian klapa<sup>22</sup>, in Slavonia bećarci<sup>23</sup>.  
Why would anyone have to change this, burst into the very core of that nation?

His words reveal how he sees ethnic identity as a question of shared religion and culture, and this brings us to one important issue: why do people attribute importance to their ethnic identity? For an answer, we can turn to Eriksen (1999; 2001) again, who states that it is the sense of continuity with the past that puts an ethnic identity on the pedestal of identity-making. It is a kinship connection or rather a fictive kinship, the notion of shared ancestry, shared tradition which gives a sense of ethnic groups being natural thus "every ethnic ideology offers a feeling of cultural belonging and security" (Eriksen, 1999: 267).

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<sup>21</sup> He refers to the coat of arms of the Republic of Croatia which consists of 13 red and 12 white fields or squares.

<sup>22</sup> Klapa is a *capella* singing performed by 5-8 singers originating from southern Croatia (Dalmatia). In 2012 it was included in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity List

<sup>23</sup> Bećarac is a form of folk song originating from rural Slavonia, which was in 2011 listed on the UNESCO of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity List.

### 5.3 Political Reconstruction of Historical Narratives

Through the process of narrativization, people tend to simplify and bring order to their experiences. They "mentally transform the flow of more or less unstructured events into relatively coherent narratives" states Zerubavel (qtd. in Rydgren, 2007: 232). While individuals create narratives out of their autobiographical memory, narrativization is nevertheless socially influenced. We often use stories from our surroundings, from religion, myths, science, rumors, etc. (Rydgren, 2007). What is important to note here is that people tend to select the narratives to fit their perception of the past, to justify or glorify their past or to create a positive self-image. If this presentation of past events collides with the presentation of other ethnic groups, this can lead to the mnemonic battles over the "correct" presentation of the past historical events (Zerubavel, 1996: 295).

According to Vjekoslav Perica (2002), myths are the cornerstone in the building of nation-states. He highlights the importance of the 'national' history in the construction of a nation where the past becomes mythological and patriotic instead of factual on account to emotionally affect the people of that nation and bound them to the national ideas. He sees the Croatian nation as an ethnic one whose foundations were established on myths formed already in the time after the Second World War, maintained through the period of Communist Yugoslavia and waiting to burst after the crisis and disintegration of the state. He claims that the nations rely on myths in tailoring the past, which also implies deliberate forgetting and stressing the importance of the myths of martyrdom about the agony of the entire nation in the war or an individual sacrifices.

Ivan, one of my key informers, conveys his thoughts supporting the above assertion. He expressed his concerns for the future of the Croatian state and its people. When I asked him how he looks at the change of the square bearing Tito's name, he disappointingly said:

Those are the lowest nationalist and anti-communist passions [...]. Unfortunately, our political space is burdened with a terrible mythological story, full of mythology that has nothing to do with reality. It is mythology I would say the basis on which we are trying to build a modern state. It's disastrous. It can never give a real result. We are in a situation that facts don't mean anything in this society.

What Vjekoslav and Ivan called a myth, Milorad called political fabrication and reconstruction. Milorad supported the idea of a political ideology which influences how narratives about the past can be constructed and said:

Croats and Serbs have never fought each other before this war. Never! And they say that we have been fighting for hundreds of years. It's a pure fabrication! Pure reconstruction! You have constructions as much as you want, it is launched out there, and it is repeated continuously. Let's take Jasenovac! Now [they say] there was no crime [there] that it was a working camp. And they continuously repeat and repeat it by that Goebbels: [repeat] a lie thousand times, and it will become the truth, for the one who listens. Who is more stupid, he accepts it earlier!

Nagel (1994) stresses the importance of reconstruction of previous historical culture and the construction of the new ones. It is the practice one could clearly see in Croatian society in the early 90s, as was confirmed in Milorad's and Ivan's statements. New myths were created, many historical narratives became salient and were restored again because of their palliation during a long time of communism. Memories of common communist past were undesirable and banned from the public sphere and were replaced with some new ones. As Hozić states, "they were replaced with conflicting narratives of World War II crimes and strategies for national reconciliation, or buried behind denials of crimes from the new wars and layers of myths and legends from the ancient past" (2014: 234).

Mythologisation is a significant problem in how history is perceived. On the examples of Jasenovac and Bleiburg, which will be discussed in the next subchapters, we can see how the opposite sides (Serbs and Croats) manipulate the historical truths so to become martyr nations. While there was a 'memory blockade' in the time of socialism, which was replaced by some new myths about Brotherhood and Unity, following the collapse of the social system, these myths re-emerged on the surface and faced each other in hatred and desire for vengeance. As already mentioned, Ernest Renan emphasizes that the most important segment of nation formation is the memorial legacy of past and glorious heritage and adds: "where national memories are concerned, griefs are of more value than triumphs, for they impose duties, and require common effort" (1991: 19). Common sacrifice in the past presupposes the same solidarity in the future and that is one of the reasons power elites often use violent past for the national cohesion as will be explained in the following parts.

### *Jasenovac*

As I explained in the Background chapter, NDH, or the Independent State of Croatia was formed in 1941 and Ante Pavelić became its *poglavnik* (*leader*)<sup>24</sup>. Similar to the Nazi regime,

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<sup>24</sup> Similar to Hitler's title Führer and the Mussolini's title of the Duce, Ante Pavelic took the title Poglavnik.

Ustasas saw Croats as an Aryans of Goth having Iranian origin and thus in danger to be "contaminated by contact with non-Aryan Jews or Slavs" (Lampe, 1996: 207).<sup>25</sup> Following this presumption and the fascist policy the government brought racist laws against Roma people, Jews, and Serbs as the most numerous ethnic minorities and soon open the concentration camps to solve the problem of undesirable ethnic groups in Croatia. The biggest concentration and extermination camp, composed of 5 units were open near a small town of Jasenovac in the southern part of Croatia, near the border with Bosnia and Herzegovina but far from being the only one. In Jasenovac, during the wartime from 1942-1945, estimations say that some 80 000-100 000 were killed off that majority Serbs, but also Jews, Roma people, and Croats who did not want to collaborate with the fascist government. The same as with the Bleiburg field, the numbers are constantly manipulated, from 1 million people, estimations given by Serbs to only 20 000 in the new Croatian historical narratives which also testify that it was actually a working camp regardless of hundreds of thousands of witnesses telling otherwise.<sup>26</sup>

Croatian state had a difficult transition from socialism to democracy and was additionally burdened with the legacy from the WWII as a Nazi collaborator, thus it was important to build new national symbols which would consolidate the nation. One of those symbols became Bleiburg, a small Austrian town where partisans killed an unidentified number of Croats Ustasas (and other collaborators) at the end of World War II. Disputes around numbers are still current but what is also problematic in this dispute is that the soldiers killed there were Nazi collaborators who did not want to lay down their weapons after Germany proclaimed surrender in 1945. In 1995 Croatian Parliament decided to be a sponsor of the official commemoration that takes place every May 15 on the Bleiburg field thus forming their own version and truth of these events. (Hozic 2014: 240-241).

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<sup>25</sup> One of the myths very popular in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was a theory about origins of Croats which put their origins from the Persian satrapy named Harauvatiš dating their existence back to the 3000-4000 years B.C. (Goldstein, 2008). This theory, although known from the 18<sup>th</sup> century gain popularity in the early 90s when it was important to show the long ancient ethnical lineage that Croat as a people derived from.

<sup>26</sup> Jasenovac concentration camp became a site of constant manipulation of the number of Serbs and Jews killed there. It is estimated that from 40 000 Jews who lived on the territory of NDH, only 9000 remained after the war. As for Roma people, from the estimated number of 15000 not many of them survived, most of them were sent to Jasenovac concentration camp in the year 1942. The question of the Serb population was very difficult because there were some 2 million Serbs on the territory of NDH prior to the war. Ustashe tried to solve the problem with the conception of "one third to be killed, one-third deported, and one third convert to Christianity". For more details see Goldstein (2008), Lampe (1996).



In Robert Kaplan's book, *Balkan Ghosts*, one can read his interview with Monsignor Djuro Koksa from Zagreb Archdiocese. In addition to other topics, they touched the issue of Jasenovac. Monsignor Koksa said on that matter:

We can't deny everything. What happened at Jasenovac was tragic; maybe sixty thousand were killed, maybe a little more, certainly not seven hundred thousand [...] Croatia is the martyr of all Yugoslavia. Our nationalism is young, it's not even actualized [an interview was done in the early '90's]. But all this is too complicated for you to understand. It is a question of mentality." (1993:14)

This remark shows how even the highest religious authorities tried to minimize the number of people killed so to mitigate the role of the Ustasha Croat state as if the fewer numbers of victims still is not a war crime.

The newly formed Croatian government and official politics have failed to distance themselves from the Ustasha regime and their crimes since the creation of the Croatian state; even more, the fact that after a long time Croatia gained independence was seen as a positive tradition (Hoepken, 1999: 216). When the new government decided to use the symbols from the period of NDH as official representations of a newly established state (like Croatian currency-kuna, flag, and emblem), it became evident that dissociating from that period is not something they take into consideration. From then onwards, political elites still flirt with the symbols of past very often downplaying the violent basis NDH was built upon (Klasić, 2019: 22). In the swing of the election campaign in 1991 and before the prominent Croatian emigration he called from abroad, future Croatian president, Franjo Tuđman stated:

Our opponents see nothing in our program but the claim for the restoration of the independent Croatian Ustaše state. These people fail to see that the state was not the creation of fascist criminals; it also stood for the historic aspirations of the Croatian people for an independent state. They knew that Hitler planned to build a new European order." (Silber and Little, 1996:86)

Ilana Bet-El (2002: 212) sees in those words crave for recreation of the past, which given its bloody imprint cannot give peace and forgiveness. She says "The power of such words is immeasurable- as fuel to both Croat nationalism based on heritage and Serb nationalism based upon fear [...]. They are words that make memory into currency of war".

In my interview with Luka, I wanted to know what he thinks about Jasenovac. He criticized the constant exaltation of the number of people killed there and said:

No one here [...] should lose his job if someone publicly says in Jasenovac[ ... ] not a couple of hundred thousand people were killed, but 20-80 000 which they managed to identify. Okay, another historian will

come who will find them 10 [more]. Let's add them to that list, so who gets 700.000. It cannot be 700.000 from the beginning like they are, now... those fish in the net, so they will say there are 700 000 of them. Well, there is not!

Branimir stated on the problem of Jasenovac and the disputed number calling for a common agreement for future generations:

For me it is horror, that historian of my ideology, of my way of thinking, talk one thing and the historian from the opposite [side] another thing. I mean, how many histories do we have? People, sit down and agree. Educate those young. Don't let me talk to my Paola [his daughter] that Jasenovac was just a labor camp that the Partisans exaggerated [the number of people killed] if Ustashe really slaughter there, I do not know, 1 million people; every year it is 100 000 more. Let us educate our kids as it should be. I am always for that. We will not change history.

Disputes about the numbers of victims that reverberates the academic discourse also resonate in the society being a bone of contestation between people today. Tony Judt (2002: 173) writes about the double crisis of history which burdens eastern European countries. On the one hand, he points: "cynism and mistrust pervade all social cultural and even personal exchanges, so that the construction of civil society, much less civil memory, is very, very difficult", on the other hand, "there are multiple memories and historical myths, each of which has learned to think of itself as legitimate simply by virtue of being private and unofficial. Where these private or tribal versions come together, they form powerful counter histories of a mutually antagonistic and divisive nature".

We see how both Branimir and Luka point to the numbers of victims which indicate one side of the story and their version of history and historical facts. Prescriptive forgetting, as proposed by Connerton explains the need for deliberate forgetting of crimes and wrongdoings in order to establish democratic institutions that rest on violent past. On the other hand, many contest those views and thus confirm the above notion of multiple memories and counter histories that clash and are divisive in essence.

Mirko lost a significant part of his family in Jasenovac and other places of the mass slaughter of the Serbian population in NDH. Although in his late 80s, he is eloquent, talkative, and still very active. He commenced our interview with childhood memories when he was just a 12 years old boy who joined partisans in their battle against Nazis and Ustashas. Due to his age, he could not be involved in the direct fight but participated in the NOB as SKOJEVAC (the League of Young Communists of Yugoslavia). Because of his years, his task was a background activity which in his case meant carrying the letters that the Supreme Staff

(Vrhovni štab) sent from Bosnia through Banija and further to Slavonija<sup>27</sup>. His brother, a cousin and two uncles were separated in Jasenovac and were killed there. His activities as SKOJEVAC, as he explained later, saved his life because at the time Ustashas entered his village and murdered women, children and old people who were left there, he was officially absent from the village. In this mass murder, his mother and grandmother became victims too, and he still remembers the day when he saw his mother for the last time. With trembling voice, he adds "I still remember when she said goodbye to me. And the next day it happened [the slaughter]". After a few moments of silence and with tears in his eyes he continued our conversation. Mirko criticized the official Croatian policy which he sees as an amnesty of NDH and the terror associated with it:

They want to use this Homeland War<sup>28</sup> to grant amnesty to the Ustashas movement and the Ustashas themselves that is, their parents and grandparents, by amnestying their crimes.

While Croats were constantly downplaying the scope of the Ustashas crime committed in Jasenovac, as also witnessed in Mirko's words, Serbs were continually trying to produce myths about Jasenovac and the substantial suffering of the Serb people. As Perica (2002) highlights, the problem was not so much in the number of Serbs killed there, but the fact that they insisted on the idea of genocide against Serb people which was primarily motivated by religious hatred, calling it even a religious war<sup>29</sup>. However, by increasing the suffering of their ethnical group they completely undermined other ethnic communities who have lost their lives in Jasenovac, among them many Croats who did not agree with the Ustashas regime.

### *Bleiburg*

If Jasenovac signifies the Serbian agony in the Second World War, Bleiburg than can be seen as the symbol of Croatian sufferings inflicted by the Partisans.

The Second World War left profound consequences for the entire population of Yugoslavia. After a tough four years of fighting with their inner and outer enemies (Fascist and Nazi forces and their collaborators, Ustashas and Chetniks) and counting their dead in hundreds of thousands, Partisans along with their leader Tito were the winners in the bloody ethnic war.

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<sup>27</sup> The regions in Croatia

<sup>28</sup> Homeland war is a name used in Croatia for the war from 1991-1995.

<sup>29</sup> Serbs are Orthodox Catholics while Croats are Christian Catholics.

Since 1943, they were recognized by the Western powers as their allies in the battle against the fascist forces within the borders of Yugoslavia. In those war years, the main foe was fascist Italy and Nazi Germany and not Communist Russia, so the fact that the Communist Party of Yugoslavia founded the Partisans movement was not so important. At the end of the war in the May of 1945 partisan army called all the armed forces to capitulate, but the majority of the Ustasas refused to lay down the weapons and went to the border with Austria to surrender to the Allies (British troops). The British did not want to take over the army of NDH but hand it back to the hands of Partisans. In a few days of early May 1945, tens of thousands of soldiers but also civilians were killed by the partisan army on Bleiburg polje (field). Unfortunately, those numbers are constantly manipulated by Serbs or Croats alike.

The democratization process that started in Yugoslavia after Tito's death prompted many to write about disputes that were not subjected to discussion or mentioned under Tito's regime. One of those issues certainly were the events that took place on the Bleiburg field and developed into death marches. After the fall of Yugoslavia, individuals started to manipulate the numbers of Croats killed during these events and downplayed the fact that those were mainly remains of Ustashe army group who refused to surrender to the victorious army.

Tomislav Dulić (2004) critically analyzed one such survey done by Rudolph J. Rummel who claimed that using proper methods for mass murder estimations he concluded that Tito's regime was guilty of 1 million deaths in the period from 1944 to 1987. Dulić demonstrated that this survey was rather incredible because Rummel mainly used biased and unverified, thus unreliable sources. His estimations lie primarily on the book of Nikolai Tolstoy<sup>30</sup>, a book of Prcela & Guldescu, and additional authors who in many ways were somehow connected to the NDH and who "remained active in the nationalist emigration and exploited the Bleiburg symbol for propagandistic purposes" (Dulić, 2004: 93). The author states further: "Of course that is their prerogative, but one has to keep in mind when assessing their standing as reasonably authoritative and credible sources" (Ibid: 93). Namely, some of those sources are: Ivo Omrčanin, who worked in the NDH foreign ministry, Vjekoslav Maks Luburić, the main contributor to Prcela & Guldescu's book and a head of UNS (Ustasas Supervisory Service) and commander of the Jasenovac concentration camp. Nikolai Tolstoy's *The Minister and the Massacres* book was released in 1986 and immediately raised many contradictory opinions.

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<sup>30</sup> Tolstoy, Nikolai, 1986. *The Minister and the Massacres*. London: Century Hutchinson

The main premise of the book is that British headquarters headed by Harold Macmillan, repatriated the troops of Ustasas, Chetniks and other soldiers to the hands of partisans although they were aware of the possible retaliation. Dulić criticizes Tolstoy's work for relying on biased and unverified sources while basing his arguments on emigrant authors without taking into account the works of the other side, Yugoslav sources. In sum, Dulić states that the numbers of Tito's victims are exaggerated but in the end, and I have to agree with him, the exact number is not so important. What is more important today, besides the uncritical use of sources, is the fact that by intentional inflation of those numbers author adds fuel to the fire in a heated atmosphere of the disputed matters that divide the nation even today as will be seen further in my analysis.

Milorad conveyed his views on the problem of innocent victims killed in Bleiburg:

Croats question Bleiburg- that there were a number of innocent people killed there. But even those innocent are victims of those who retreat them and who promised them... the United Kingdom will receive us; there is 'honey and milk', we will flee from those who will kill us. Propaganda! Even people from Zagreb [capital of NDH] themselves said that it was propaganda. Accordingly, a large number of these innocents were misled. But, all who were movable and civil were liberated, not murdered. It is not true that the civilians were killed.

He also added further:

... Of course it is a big crime, but living at that time and watching how it happened that was the other thing. First, those who have departed [Ustashe], they have in four years embittering the lives of those who fought in the war and whose companions and friends and relatives and parents were under the earth ... Accordingly, the revenge is, I do not say revenge should be but could not be avoided. It had to be [happen].

Jasna had her own opinion on this matter and adds in a similar manner:

Let's say this with Bleiburg and that. What was he supposed to do, exactly what was he supposed to do with this? Let somebody explain it to me. Feed them, put them on forcible work, and again they would say what kind of scum he is, for having those camp for forced labor? What would others from West [Western countries] do?

On this subject Luka conveyed a different point of view:

Or I do not know about that Bleiburg; I do not know. It is like everyone who was killed there were fascist. Well, they weren't. It is stupid to judge from this time without being aware of the context.

In analyzing the myths and memory in post-war Europe, Tony Judt refers to the mutual collective violence done by Germans and their collaborators, who were seen as a war criminal, and the purges done by newly liberated authorities. Thus he concludes, two sorts of memories emerged, that of things done by 'them' to 'us' and by 'us' to others, or to paraphrase him: "Two moral vocabularies, two sorts of reasoning, two different pasts" (2002: 163).

This notion gives meaning to the contested image of the past given by my interviewees. They have their own views of the events that took place in Bleiburg asserting their own reasoning of these events. Milorad, who was an active participant in the anti-fascist movement in Yugoslavia look upon the Bleiburg as a historical force of circumstances that could not be stopped. Jasna also sees this event through the context of that time. Contrary to their beliefs, Luka proposes to put events into their historical context, but from a different point of view. He downplays the fact that the multitude of people killed there were just armed men stressing that many women, children and old men were also part of these executions.

### *Contemporary Commemorations*

In the spring of 2019, new disputes about Bleiburg emerged. It all began when the Austrian government banned the mass at Bleiburg under the pretext that "Mass in the field near Bleiburg has become part of the manifestation that is politically instrumentalized and is part of a political-national ritual that serves the selective perception and interpretation of history" (Boban-Valečić, 2019, my translation).

This decision caused a massive protest by a number of people in Croatia and among them a large number of political elite mostly of the right political orientation but also the Croatian Catholic church. Among many, Ruža Tomašić, a Croatian representative in the European Parliament, condemned the ban on maintaining the mass, calling it a "scandalous and shocking act worth every condemnation". In an open letter sent to the bishop of the Gurk-Klagenfurt diocese, she says: "The Austrian diocese's assertion that massacre on the Bleiburg polje is part of a political -national ritual that serves the selective interpretation and perception of history can be clearly interpreted as a purely political act that has its source in the influence of aggressive and unscrupulous left-wing lobbies at the very top of the hierarchy of the Austrian Catholic Church" (HINA, 2019, my translation).

More predictive were the words of Tomislav Karamarko, former HDZ president and former vice-president of the Croatian government. He commented the situation on his Facebook page which was then transmitted in many daily newspapers.

Whole Croatia is Bleiburg![...]. The only true state response to these perfidious efforts to eradicate Bleiburg from the historical memory of the Croatian people is that one day of May in a year is proclaimed a national day of mourning, prayers, and memories of the innocent victims of genocide originating in Bleiburg. A dignified memory of Bleiburg, the strong insistence on the truth about crimes and criminals, is the last line of defense of the state and the nation. If we fall as a people on this exam, we will soon testify of the undermining of "Storm"<sup>31</sup> and "Vukovar's Colony of Memories"<sup>32</sup> and the revival of new "crossroads" that are already manifested in the terrifying exodus of those who leave Croatia. (Vecernji.hr, 2019)

Jakob Ibounig, a Chancellor and Judge Vicar of the Diocese of Klagenfurt clarified this decision of the Carinthian Church: "Holy Mass remains a part of the political-national ritual, which serves the distorted and selective interpretation of the history of the Second World War. In this way, the good intention of praying for the victims of the Bleiburg Field has been used for the wrong interpretation" (24sata, 2019).

The mayor of the town Štefan Visočnik was worried about the fact how the Bleiburg is perceived: "We have a problem here, when you enter Bleiburg in Google, on the first page, it is a meeting place of the Nazis. This is not good for us and for our promotion ..." (24sata, 2019)

The contemporary discussions about Bleiburg discourse clearly show that the disputes about contested memory are not over and that they constantly appear on the surface of Croatian mundane life and show how important it is to reconcile with the past so to turn to the future.

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<sup>31</sup> He refers to the "Operation Storm" in which, from August 4 until August 7 1995, Croatian Army released the occupied territories of the Republic of Croatia which were by that time under the control of rebel Serbs.

<sup>32</sup> He refers to the Serbian occupation of Vukovar which lasted 87 days. After the fall of the city into Serbian hands, the horrors of war culminated when all men were taken from Vukovar hospital and murdered on Ovčara farm near the town (around 200 men). Every year, in the name of these events, a parade through Vukovar sponsored by the state is organized.

## 5.4 In Conclusion

Through chapters 3 and 4 it became clear how the state as a mnemonic community has a great role in defining what parts of the historical events will be highlighted thus transferred through generations and saved in collective memory, and what parts should be left to oblivion. In this chapter, I have explained how my informants look at nationalism and how they see it as the main culprit for present politics in contemporary Croatia. The social transformation from communism to capitalism was seen as a period of uncertainty and in this "black box" situation (Rydgren, 2007) national narrative entered the public space and filled the "vacuum of memory" left by the fall of communism (Hoepken, 1999:201).

Nationalism and ethnic identity were used by power elites as a source for shared national identification and the legitimacy of their power (Price, 2002: 139). A few of my informers stated their disagreement with the nationalistic rhetoric the power elites turned to after the war of the '90s. Others see nationalism and ethnic identity as an essence of the contemporary Croatian state. As it became clear ethnic identity can be a powerful tool for individual self-determination and power elites successfully use these concepts for their political goals.

In the previous chapter, it became obvious how the forgetting was used by power elites, while in this chapter the main focus was on the creation of new historical narratives and myths of the martyr history with an aim to bring cohesion among Croatian citizens. Both discourses about Jasenovac and Bleiburg show how the state has a great influence on creating the myths and historical narratives about events from the past, especially those of horrid acts that happened in tragic events during the Second World War. Additionally, these examples illustrate what important role the state plays in the creation of what can be called collective memory, especially among the younger generations that did not directly participate in the events mentioned above.



## 6 Concluding discussion

The Homeland war of the 90s in Croatia marked the line of demarcation between the past and the present. Croatia gained independence from Yugoslavia, changed the political system from one party to multiparty, from socialism to capitalism, and was also engaged in the bloody civil war. In these "black-box situations" (Rydgren, 2007) of uncertainty and confusion, people make sense of the past in different ways, which was and still is under the vast influence of power elites.

In this thesis, I examine the *process of memory formation and how it is politically manipulated*. I illustrate how people comprehend their past in times of political changes and how mnemonic communities like ethnic groups and nation-state act upon these perceptions. I have used *collective memory theory* and *politics of memory* to analyze data obtained through interviews and participant observation. Those theories served as the primary analytical tool, which was additionally combined with more concepts and hypotheses.

Here I will wrap up the analysis initiated in the previous chapters with particular focus on the research questions, stated in the beginning of the thesis:

*How do mnemonic communities (ethnic groups and nation-state) and power elites influence people's conceptualization of history in contemporary Croatia?*

*How do people in Croatia make sense of their complex, contradictory, and violent past in changed political circumstances?*

### 6.1 "Terror of Remembering and Forgetting"

Drawing on Halbwachs' theory of social frameworks which direct people's memories, and extending this notion further by borrowing insights from other scholars, I explained how informants shape their narratives about the character of Josip Broz Tito and their socialist past. According to the concept of multiple social frameworks (Brockmeier, 2002) and *frames of meaning* (Bartlett qtd. in Misztal, 2003), individuals designate what values and relevance they ascribe to the events from their past. It is the cognitive and/or emotional relevance that shapes how they select and construct their memories and additionally what narratives will be remembered and which do not have so much emotional significance for them and can be forgotten. That brings us to the Connerton's distinction between seven types of forgetting. Although traditionally perceived as a negative side of our cognition, forgetting acquired new

relevance in the memory process. It became a "life force of memory" (Angé, 2004: 21) because it is not a "unitary phenomenon" rather can have different meanings (Connerton, 2008: 59). Through Connerton's third type of forgetting (*constitutive in the formation of a new identity*), he explains how individuals tend to forget those parts of their past which do not have any practical purpose for their present identity.

One way of opposing the prevailing ideology in society is through nostalgia. In line with Mitja Velikonja (2008), I have differentiated between the culture of titostalgia which refers to the nostalgia for profit, and titostalgic culture of personal memories manifested in private collections and narratives of Josip Broz Tito. As it was argued and proved by my informers, nostalgia (or in our case yugonostalgia and titostalgia) gives people a framework for expressing their dissatisfaction with current policy and economic and social instability. It can be a positive and dynamic force that generates mutual coexistence of all nations on the territory of former Yugoslavia and serves as a connection between peoples and ethnicities which were disrupted by the inter-ethnic war in the 90s.

Politics of memory is an especially powerful tool in organizing collective memory. As introduced in the theory part, the fall of communism "unfroze" the memories where the old disputes reappeared on the surface of the political scene and in the process of new nation-building a new past had to be (re) invented. Drawing on these presumptions, I have illustrated how after the collapse of communism, nationalism and ethnic identification became increasingly important for self-identification of an individual. In line with the instrumentalist approach to both ethnic identity and nationalism, I have argued that it is the state or power elites who attached meanings to the cultural change that was going on in Croatia. For a few of my informants, it is Croatian politics today that determines what will be the predominant way of thinking using nationalism and mythologization of historical narratives as a tool by which they shape memories formation. Renan (1990) calls the nation a soul and spiritual principle and points to the fact that memories from the past constitute nations. But what memories are desirable and "usable" is up to the state to decide because not everything from the past is convenient to remember (Miształ, 2003).

Through *Damnatio Memoriae* or repressive erasure (Connerton, 2008), I explained the role of power institutions in determining what parts of history should be forgotten. By changing the street names ruling elites interfere into "hostile incursions into memory" (Auguštín 2004:196)

and introduce what Dubravka Ugrešić (1998: 80-81) calls terror by remembering and forgetting.

Nationalism gained its power after the breakup of Yugoslavia and reentered the political scene in Croatia after the collapse of communism and the war that ensued. From then onward, it became a powerful tool of imposing people's sentiment and their identification with the newly formed state.

My informants appoint different and opposing values and relevance to the Yugoslav past and heritage. For some, it is a period Croatia should discard from its history so the new state can turn to its prospective, European future. For others, the values propagated through Yugoslav socialism like Brotherhood and Unity, Social self-management, solidarity and policy of non-alignment in international affairs, are of considerable value and as such should be used as a common heritage that Croatia can be proud of and use as a basis for further development of the society. In this manner, I have analyzed how the main ideas behind the Brotherhood and Unity can be useful in new attempts for using this positive practice from Yugoslavia for the project of multiculturalism in Europe (Močnik, 2016). Croatia, as a member of the European Union, has an obligation to sustain this ideology, to apply it and advance it; and reflecting on the past can be an effective way to do so.

## **6.2 "We Think this is a System of the Future"**

The central argument of this thesis is that memories of the past and popular interpretations of history are formed under the influence of mnemonic communities, i.e., nations, various social groups and ideologies imposed by power elites. By developing feelings of belonging and identifying with such groups, the individual's memories are pre-formed and influenced in particular ways.

Collective memory points out that individuals recall memories through the collective frameworks of their social groups which correspond to the predominant thought of society (Halbwachs, 1992). As pointed in this work, memory constructions are based on the personal criteria which are meaningful to the individual. An individual can choose which of the memories are valuable to him according to his cognitive or emotional relevance; thus it influences which memories are desirable to remember and which should be discarded as useless for his social identification.

After the collapse of communism and the establishment of a new Croatian government with a different political system, social identity was also transformed. Ethnic and national identification became a more important way of self-identifications for individuals as it was shown in this work.

Although, we should remember and value historical person according to his political achievements just as my informant Ivan stated, it often happens that people tend to form their narratives and consequently their memories through the influence of their social groups and how they form their identity in that society. Being a Croat seems to be an important nominator for a few of my informers and for them this is an important parameter by which they make their judgments and form their memories about the time spent in socialism. Accordingly, they see Yugoslav president Tito as the main "enemy" of Croat people, killer, evil and dictator as pointed by Branimir and Luka. I have to emphasize here that this certainly is not a unique representation and it does not mean that all individuals who have strong patriotic feelings toward Croatia condemn or discard Yugoslavia or Josip Broz Tito in the same way. Particular memory formation can be influenced by the specific configuration of mnemonic communities of which an individual is simultaneously a member. Although Halbwachs sees social identity as a stable concept, I have explained that social identity can change according to social interaction (Barth, 1989), or social context (Nagel, 1994). These changes socio-cultural systems have an influence on how individuals perceive their past and interpret historical events. In that manner, memories formations can be influenced by other factors as well, like for example age, family narratives or some other social communities one identifies with. Just as my informer Branimir stated, if he is provided with new evidence (about Josip Broz Tito), he would gladly change his mind!

The active role of the state in memory formation is also significant here. When determined to erase the past events that do not suit its present purpose, power elites diminish its importance or completely remove it from official history. This is the point made by Ana and curators of the exhibition *Tito in Africa-Pictures of Solidarity*. For many years, Josip Broz Tito and time of socialism were taboo (both in Serbia and Croatia after the '90s) and this made the young generations know very little about their (socialist) past. Thus, these historical narratives were easily subjected to degradation and/or incorrect representations as stated by my informers.

But what was the role of power-elites and nation-state in the memories' formation process? To sustain the national cohesion of its members, power elites use ideology to gain and maintain power. As has been demonstrated in this thesis, they use various methods of "

intrusion into memories” to gain their political goals. By reconstructing the history and fabricating historical facts, power elites can influence to a great extent what will become a collective memory and what should be remembered and what should be forgotten.

Additionally, in changed political circumstances where new cultural values come to the fore, as was in the case of Croatia, people tend to make sense of their complex, contradictory and violent past by establishing different narratives that are often contested just as it is shown in this thesis.

We can testify the increasing growth of nationalism and historical revisionism today in Croatia. How people come to terms with the past should be of the primary interest for government and power elites. The contribution of this work goes along with the idea that the open and critical discussion about complex historical processes is necessary in order to come to terms with the traumatic and often violent past in building a tolerant and just society which is open for ethnic co-existence and multiculturalism.

After all, can we learn a lesson from concepts like Brotherhood and Unity or Non-Aligned Movement and can Nostalgia be a positive force? This work illustrated that the ideas behind the concept of Brotherhood and Unity go along with the ideas of multiculturalism which are promoted in the European Union, namely: multilingualism, cultural pluralism, solidarity and coexistence of people of different ethnicities. The same ideas are spread through different political systems and different times but are equally important for the future of our society as a whole. For some of my informers, the concepts of socialism and Self-management are systems of the future and nostalgia can be their way to cope with the present actuality. As it was illustrated, nostalgia for socialism is a widely spread phenomenon among many post-communist countries and it increases popularity in the last few decades. A reasonable explanation may be that through nostalgia people express their dissatisfaction with current problems and becomes an effective critique of political, social or even economic reality.

### **6.3 Implications and Recommendations for Further Research**

While my research offers some understandings of what influences an individual’s memories and their vision of history, at the same time, it raises many more questions and possibilities to go about in researching these topics. Memory is a very difficult phenomenon to grasp, not just from the anthropological standpoint, but also from psychological and historical and as such

raises many issues. I will here briefly state the main questions and research opportunities that this thesis lifted but for the scope of its research could not give an answer to or address them properly. But let me first put forward a broader academic relevance of this research.

As this thesis started as a quest of what people think of one historical personage, it became evident that this was a too narrow quest and through my interviews, I was induced in the real political and social disputes that reverberates Croatian daily life. As stated by one of my informants, Josip Broz Tito always somehow pops up in everyday conversations thus becoming a central point of the political discussion which has far greater consequences for Croatian society as a whole. Not just the personality of Tito but the whole heritage from the period of socialism is seen as contested and is disputed among many. That is the reason why this study, first and foremost, contributes to the general attempts for consolidation of the very much divided societies of post-Yugoslav republics. By using ethnographic methods like interviews and participant observation anthropology can contribute immensely because it offers a first-person perspective *sui generis*.

So, let me now state the suggestions for further research. As mentioned above, because of the scope of my research I did not have enough time and possibilities to address every one of the issues analyzed in this thesis; I couldn't pay enough attention to each of the concepts I introduced in specific chapters. However, I think that each and every one of them can provide a starting point for new research.

When entering the field and while finding my interviewees I was warmly accepted by the Association of Anti-Fascist Fighters. As I corresponded with them by an e-mail, they added me to their mailing list, and I was and still am receiving their notifications of important events and commemorations they are attending.

As I wanted to hear the reasons behind the events of taking down the street plate of Josip Broz Tito I contacted the right-wing party that initiated these changes but did not receive any response. I was disappointed for the time being that I could not hear their side of the story and how they look upon the former president. Interesting research in the future would be to follow, interview, and observe both opposing sides, the Association and the right-wing party, to see how their contested representations of the former president were shaped and how their actions could be used in the light of future, mutual understanding.

Even now, two years after my fieldwork, tensions between two contested sides are not silencing, on the contrary, the disputes of divided society are becoming more and more violent and turned towards and against the ethnic minorities in Croatia; these facts provide a space for more research on the development of better coexistence among various groups. A research of the common heritage of ideas behind the Brotherhood and Unity as proposed by my informants and the aforementioned research of Nena Močnik could bring the mutual coexistence to the fore and underline those ideas as a possible path to multiculturalism as proposed by European Union today.

In general, given the importance of the memory and instrumentalized role of political ideology in its formations, every research on the field of contested memories can and should be a bridge for a better understanding of societies that struggle to cope with their past. Such studies are of crucial importance in the world where the ideas of globalization and mutual coexistence are fundamental priorities.

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## Appendix - Pictures



Picture 1 - The empty place where street plaque used to be, Zagreb. Photo: Author



Picture 2 - Tito's tomb in the House of Flowers, Belgrade. Photo: Author



Picture 3 - Commemoration in honor of Tito held in the House of Flowers, Belgrade. Photo: Museum of Yugoslavia



Picture 4 - Relay batons-birthday gifts which President Tito received from all peoples of Yugoslavia on May 25.



Picture 5 - The founders of Non-Alignment: Tito, Nasser and Nehru signing the Brioni declaration in White Villa, July 19, 1956. (Photo: Museum of Tito on Brioni Island)



Picture 6 - Kumrovec -Tito's birth house and Augustinčić's sculpture of Marshal Tito in front of the house. Photo: Author





Picture 7 - Souvenir shop in Kumrovec. Photo: Author



Picture 8 - Former Yugoslav States with marked places where my fieldwork took place.

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cicic.ana@gmail.com

Institutionen för kulturanthropologi och etnologi

Uppsala universitet

Box 631

SE-751 26

Tel. +46 (0) 18 471 22 85

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