

**Tito, Yugoslavia, and
Communism: Historical
Revisionism of the Second
World War and its Competing
Memories**

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ABSTRACT

The Second World War had a traumatizing effect on Yugoslavia and its people. In addition to being partitioned by Italy, Germany, and other foreign powers, Yugoslavia also experienced a bloody, fratricidal war. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the communist Partisans of Yugoslavia, who were victorious against the Nazi occupying powers, attempted to heal the country's wounds by preaching brotherhood and unity amongst the different nationalities. However, for some, the period after WWII and before the break up of the country in 1990s, was nothing but an illusive compromise. By the 1990s, competing claims of victimhood resurfaced, fostered by anti-communist, neo-fascist political elites who advocated for Yugoslavia's disintegration. Since then, history books have been revised, socialist-era narratives have been challenged, and sites of memory relating to Tito and Yugoslavia have been destroyed, all which has resulted in dissonant collective memories. This thesis assesses how memories of WWII contributed to the violence of the 1990s and discusses the role of new ruling elites in creating myths of victimhood in order to justify their own power, as well as armed conflict, ethnic cleansing, and political polarization.

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INTRODUCTION

On June 28th 1989, Slobodan Milosevic, then president of the Socialist Republic of Serbia, addressed a crowd of 300,000 at Gazimestan¹ to commemorate the 600 years since the Battle of Kosovo, where the Serbs lost their medieval state to the Ottoman Turks. Milosevic proclaimed, "On this place, in the heart of Serbia, in Kosovo, six centuries ago...one of the greatest battles of that time was fought..."² He went on to say that "We [the Serbs] are facing and are in new battles. They are not armed, although even those should not be counted out."³ Although he emphasized that the main battles would be fought on economic, political, and cultural fronts, the most memorable part of the speech for non-Serbs was his ominous remark not to count out armed conflict. Two years after his speech, Croatia and Slovenia declared independence and were followed by Bosnia and Herzegovina and by Macedonia a year later. The break up of Yugoslavia resulted in 100,000 lost lives and over a million refugees. It is correctly cited as the bloodiest conflict in Europe since the end of WWII.⁴

According to some assessments, the conflict was the most discussed and analyzed war in history while it was still under way.⁵ For this reason, this paper will not focus on the origins of the Balkan wars in the 1990s. Instead, the focus of

¹ Seven kilometers southeast from the Field of Blackbirds, the scene of the 1389 Battle of Kosovo.

² Slobodan Milosevic Speech in Kosovo, 1989. 2011. Accessed December 19, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vdU6ngDhrAA>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ "Balkans 1940s to 1999." The Washington Post. 2000. Accessed December 10, 2016. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/longterm/balkans/timeline.htm>.

⁵ Gow, James. "After the Flood: Literature on the Context, Causes and Course of the Yugoslav War: Reflections and Refractions." *The Slavonic and East European Review* 75, no. 3 (1997): 446-84. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4212415>.

this paper will be on the conflicting memories that have developed since the 1990s as a result of the Second World War in Yugoslavia. More specifically, the paper will address the fight over Tito's legacy as a symbol of anti-fascism in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia & Herzegovina; the legacy of communism since the end of the Cold War; and Yugoslavia and its disintegration. The historical revisionism of WWII began with the rise of new political elites and clergy who have openly attacked Tito and the unitary state he presided over for more than three decades. Since the death of Tito in May of 1980, both Serb and Croat nationalists have attempted to portray "their people" as victims of communism, asserting that the disintegration of Yugoslavia was an inevitable outcome of "fifty years of living in darkness." Moreover, both parties feel a sense of victimhood in relation to each other—Serbs identifying as victims of Croatia's genocidal policies towards its Serb population and Croats feeling marginalized as a result of living under Serb-dominated Yugoslavia for over 70 years. Therefore, this paper will attempt to answer the following questions: How have Serb and Croat policymakers, clergy, and ruling elites exploited the historical memory of the former Yugoslavia and of WWII during and since the Balkan Wars of the 1990s? Further, how have the policies of political rehabilitation of fascist and quisling WWII individuals and movements during the 1990s been shaped and reshaped by that historical memory?



(Figure 1.1 Yugoslavia's President (1945-1980), Josip Broz Tito).

Answering these question will help add to the already burgeoning scholarship on the questions of history and memory in former Yugoslavia. Much of this scholarship deals with the trauma of the several wars throughout the 20th century. In addition, many of the authors depict how ruling elites have been able to channel that trauma and transform it into political capital. As many of them have correctly pointed out, ruling elites have engaged in this manipulation of victims and their stories to legitimize their own policies and to further entrench the public into polarized ethno-religious camps. Their primary target has been Tito and Yugoslavia. As is often the case with historical revisionism—the attempt to explain the past through the lens of the present, instead of interpreting the present through the events of the past—the current ruling elites have had to justify the current dismal state of political, economic, and social affairs in the former Yugoslav republics. They have tried to do so through historical revisionism of Tito and Yugoslavia, the memory of which continues to be a powerful force. Tito, as someone who enjoyed genuine and popular support throughout his presidency,

in many ways serves as a model leader for modern ruling elites. For this reason, Tito continues to be what the French historian Pierre Nora referred to as a “site of memory” or a place of remembrance. Nora’s critique, however, is that history is not only being taken over by memory but also by politics. Nora argues that “Memory has taken on a meaning so broad and all-inclusive that it tends to be used purely and simply as a substitute for history and to put the study of history in the service of memory.”⁶ Although Tito has been dead for over thirty-seven years the collective memories of his legacy continues to spark debates and stir emotions.



(Map 0.1, Socialist Federal Republic Yugoslavia with the

1943 AVNOJ borders)

Tito and Yugoslavia, however, paradoxically serve as both *lieu de memoire* and *milieu de memoire*. The French historian Pierre Nora described *milieu de memoire* as real environments of memory which tell the story of a nation’s development. However, with historical revisionist tendencies to find the

⁶ Rieff, David. *In Praise of Forgetting: Historical Memory and Its Ironies*. 2016, 63.

“true” memory, sites of memory have expanded to mean many different things to many different people of the same nation. Therefore, according to Nora, today we have *lieu de memoire* as realms of memory—tangible places, objects, or gestures—that symbolize a break with the past. Tito and Yugoslavia, as places of remembrance, they invoke collective memories both of trauma, whether imagined or real, and of nostalgia and a yearning for better times. Their symbols include names, WWII Partisan monuments, and annual events that evoke nostalgic or traumatic memories. The ruling political elites, who have ushered in widely unpopular neoliberal policies, such as the massive privatization of state industries, sense that these nostalgic collective memories continue to undermine their political goals. In response, they have produced opposing narratives that distort these memories by questioning Tito’s legacy as a historically significant anti-fascist leader who led a relatively prosperous and peaceful nation for over three decades.

Nationalist parties and revisionist historians have politically rehabilitated former Nazi and fascist collaborators as Tito’s legacy has come under attack. Additionally, great efforts have been put into the selective commemoration and the building of memorials for “victims of communism” from the 1990s through the present. This is especially true regarding the WWII ultranationalist Croatian Ustashe and Serb Chetniks. However, as the ultimate goal for these post-communist governments is to join the European Union, which continues to nurture anti-fascism, they are faced with a paradox they themselves created. While the political program of both Serb and Croat nationalists during the ‘90s

was vehemently anti-communist, they were confronted by an undeniable historical reality: it was the communist Partisans who led the struggle against fascism in former Yugoslavia. Their solution, a rather successful one, was to obscure the meaning of fascism and, ultimately, to redefine it. As Friedrich Nietzsche argued, the interpretation of the past is a function of power rather than truth. Post-Socialist governments, among others throughout the 20th century, have nourished a “common delusion about [their] ancestry.”⁷ The new ruling elites focused on creating new national myths, largely deriving their inspiration from the Second World War. The Bleiburg massacre and the Jasenovac concentration camp, for example, were both used to invent myths and to resurrect new *milieu de memoire*, invoking victimhood and nationalism to replace the “brotherhood and unity” clichés of Yugoslav-communist *lieu de memoire*.

While analyzing the historical revisionism of Tito and Socialist Yugoslavia, this paper will also provide the historical background of the relevant parties—the Ustashe, the Chetniks, and Tito’s Partisans. The atrocities of the Jasenovac concentration camp and the Bleiburg massacre linked these parties together, not only during WWII but during the 1990s as well. Since the 1990s, Serb and Croat ruling elites have cynically evoked these atrocities for political purposes, to further entrench Serb and Croat competing claims of victimhood, to justify the conflicts of the 1990s, and to justify current political polarization.

The third section of this thesis will focus on Bosnia and Herzegovina. As a microcosm of the larger Yugoslavia in terms of its religious and ethnic diversity,

⁷ Ibid, 57.

Bosnia is especially instructive when examining the manifestation of the battles between collective memories in the post-socialist era. Bosnian Serbs and Croats have largely appropriated the collective memories and narratives from their neighboring “mother countries.” Bosniaks, however, are in a unique position; due to their Islamic faith, they are religiously distinct from Orthodox Christian Serbs and Roman Catholic Croats. Nevertheless, their collective memories have also been shaped by the disintegration of Yugoslavia and by the civil war in Bosnia itself. Bosniak collective memories are largely characterized by a sense of victimhood as a result of ethnic cleansing and genocide during the 1990s. In the words of one Bosniak observer , “Bosniaks have for generations learned about the trauma of other people, why shouldn’t others today learn about the trauma of the Bosniak people?”⁸ While there is a general international consensus about the disproportionate number of Bosniak victims during the 1990s, the role of the Bosniaks during WWII is much more contentious. The community was split between supporting the Ustashe against Serbs, outright collaboration with the Nazis, pro-Communist and pro-Partisan sentiment, and finally a pro-Serb orientation. These varying political and even ethnic orientations were dangerously politicized during the 1990s, leading Bosnia’s Muslims to create not only new collective memories about their past, but also a distinct ethno-religious national identity.

⁸ Haman2. "Forum Klix.ba." REVIZIJA PRESUDE PROTIV SRBIJE - Page 160 - Forum Klix.ba. February 27, 2017. Accessed March 20, 2017. <http://forum.klix.ba/revizija-presude-protiv-srbije-t145754s3975.html>.



(Map 0.2 Demographics of Yugoslavia)

Two Yugoslavias—from Monarchy to a Socialist Republic

The title of this thesis, “Tito, Yugoslavia, and Communism: Historical Revisionism of the Second World War and its Competing Memories,” may imply to some readers that I will discuss all the republics of the former Yugoslavia—Slovenia, Montenegro and Macedonia, as well as Croatia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and Serbia. This study, however, is limited to Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia & Herzegovina. The historical experiences of these three nations, while unique to each state, are also inextricably tied together. In addition, the relationship between history and memory in these three republics, as discussed in my paper, can also be applied to the other Yugoslav republics. However, the three nations discussed in this study, in the context of Yugoslavia, share the most common historical experiences which have shaped the collective memories of their peoples, although not necessarily in the same mold. In order to provide greater context, I have

included a brief introduction of the state formation of Yugoslavia as a result of South Slav national movements in the 19th century and early 20th century.

The earliest and most prominent movement aimed at unifying the South Slavs was the early- to mid-19th century Croat-led Illyrian Movement. Croatian intellectuals such as Ljudevit Gaj (1809-1872) argued that South Slavs are descended from the ancient Illyrians, peoples who inhabited the Balkans from the 4th century BCE to the 2nd century CE.⁹ However, according to Professors John Fine and Robert Donia, “the names ‘Serb’ and ‘Croat’ were drawn from a second group of migrants, two probably Iranian tribes which bore those names, which later in the seventh century [CE] appeared in the northern part of what was much later to become Yugoslavia.”¹⁰ Nevertheless, the Illyrian Movement failed in great part due to the fact that it “heavily depended upon Croat national and cultural traditions” and thus “failed to attract the other South Slavs.”¹¹ In Serbia, a comparable proposal was made by the country’s foreign minister, Ilija Grasanin (1812-1874), in the 1844 document named *Nacertanje* (Outline). Grasanin proposed the unification of all South Slav lands where Serbs lived.¹² Grasanin’s *Nacertanje* document fathered the idea of Greater Serbia. Like Gaj’s Croat-centric proposal, Grasanin’s Serb-centric proposal did not gain much traction amongst non-Serb intellectuals. However, in the latter half of the 19th century, two Croats, Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer (1815-1905) and Canon Franjo Racki (1828-

⁹ Frazee, Charles A., *World History: Ancient and medieval times to A.D. 1500*. Hauppauge, New York; Barron’s Educational Series, Inc, 1997, 225.

¹⁰ Donia, Robert J., and Fine, John V. A. *Bosnia and Hercegovina: A Tradition Betrayed*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, 71.

¹¹ Banac, 78,

¹² *Ibid*, 83.

1894) championed the cause of Yugoslavism. They asserted that the essence of their program “was the spiritual unification of South Slavs, founded upon a common culture and literary language.”¹³ In an 1878 letter to Britain’s former Prime Minister, William Gladstone (1809-1898), Father Strossmayer expressed disappointment towards Britain’s position in allowing Austria-Hungary to occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina. He stated:

England is about to commit a gigantic crime. Before the war, during the war, England could have made a peaceful compact with Russia she could do so even now, if she really wished it, and so safeguard her own interests as well as those of Europe. Instead of that she prefers to ally herself with the Hungarians, who know no policy save that of blind hate and aversion towards the Slavs. A strange business! The words of your new Minister for Foreign Affairs come straight from the soul of every true Magyar, from the very mouth of Count Andrassy. In the Austrian monarchy the Slavs are oppressed by the Magyars and the Germans...¹⁴

Strossmayer’s and Racki’s idea was more egalitarian as it did not suggest the Prussianization¹⁵ of a future South Slav state—which was precisely what had been proposed by the Illyrian Movement and Grasanin—and thus it attracted a much wider appeal. According to Dedijer, Strossmayer preached a unity that would bring “closer relations among the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.”¹⁶

¹³ Ibid, 89.

¹⁴ "Letter of Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer to Mr. William E. Gladstone, April 11, 1878." Josip Juraj Strossmayer to William E. Gladstone. April 11, 1878. Accessed February 10, 2016. <https://ecommons.cornell.edu/handle/1813/2168>.

¹⁵ After the 1871 unification of Germany, Prussia played the most prominent and dominant role in German politics. In the Yugoslav context, some Serb proponents of unification of South Slavs, such as Ilija Grasanin, Serbia’s Foreign Minister during the second half of the 19th century, advocated that Serbia play the central role in the process much like Prussia did in Germany.

¹⁶ Dedijer, Vladimir. *The Road to Sarajevo*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966, 76.

The national aspirations of Yugoslavs for a Slavic state were realized in July 1917 with the Corfu Declaration. Negotiated by Serb, Slovene, and Croat intellectuals, it created a "constitutional, democratic, and parliamentary monarchy," under the Serbian Karadjordjevic dynasty.¹⁷

The royal Yugoslav era can be divided into two periods: royal parliamentarianism from 1918-1929, and royal dictatorship from 1929-1941. In the first period, the monarchy experimented with parliamentary democracy until the assassination of Stjepan Radic in 1928, leader of the Croatian Peasant Party. His party boycotted the parliamentary debates and sought support for Croatian separatist movements from abroad. In 1929, King Alexander nullified the constitution and declared a monarchical dictatorship that lasted until the Germans invaded Yugoslavia in 1941. The result of the monarchical dictatorship was anti-government movements that were operating abroad, none of which was more notorious than the Ustashe, Croatian fascists—operating under Benito Mussolini's protection—who favored the destruction of Yugoslavia and an independent Croatia. The Ustashe carried out their first significant act in 1934, when they assassinated King Alexander during his visit to Marseilles, France. These anti-government forces abroad, backed by foreign allies interested in the elimination of Yugoslavia, became increasingly powerful and continued their activities against the state in the period before World War II.

¹⁷ Ibid, 120.

After the assassination of King Alexander, the regent, Prince Paul, began to lead the government and, along with the Prime Minister, Milan Stojadinovic, tried to reach a compromise with the new leader of the Croatian Peasant Party, Vladko Macek. Stojadinovic and Macek, however, disagreed over which issues Yugoslavia should focus on. The core issue for Stojadinovic was the rapid rise of German and Italian power, and he sought to solidify positive relations with Hitler and Mussolini. In March 1936, for example, Stojadinovic traveled to Berlin and selected the German firm *Krupp* over French and Czech firms to modernize steel plants at Zenica, in Bosnia.¹⁸ On the other hand, Vladko Macek was concerned with greater autonomy for Croatia within Yugoslavia. Therefore, after failing to reach an agreement with the Croats, Regent Prince Paul replaced Prime Minister Stojadinovic with Dragisa Cetkovic in 1939. Faced with increasing political divisions and a growing threat of German and Italian invasion—especially after the invasion of Albania by Italy in 1939—the Cvetkovic-Macek Agreement was signed conceding greater autonomy to Croatia, as well as granting it part of Herzegovina and parts of the Serb-administered territories of Baranja and Sryem (See Map 0.1).¹⁹ The agreement replaced the *banovina* system of cantons (See Map 0.2). However, extremists remained unhappy on both sides and calls for similar greater autonomy amongst Slovenes and other national groups emerged. These calls were exploited by the Germans after they dismembered the Yugoslav state in April of 1941.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 131.

¹⁹ Banac, Ivo. *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics*. (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1984), 180.



(Map 0.3 Enlarged Croatia as a result of the Cvetkovic-Macek

Agreement of 1939)



(Map 0.4 Kingdom of Yugoslavia's *banovinas* prior to the

Cvetkovic-Macek Agreement)

On March 27th 1941, Yugoslavia's Royalist officers took a brief stand against the neutrality pact signed between Prince Paul and Hitler. People filled the streets supporting the officer's coup, chanting, "Bolje Rat Nego Pakt!" (War is better than the Pact). On April 6th 1941, Hitler and his allies invaded Yugoslavia and partitioned the country into nine units. Slovenia was split between Italy and Germany; Croatia's Dalmatian coast and Adriatic islands were annexed by Italy; Montenegro and Kosovo were partitioned between Albania and Italy; the Germans and Hungarians seized Serbia's northern Vojvodina region; Bulgaria reoccupied Macedonia and parts of southern Serbia; and the Serb puppet government of Milan Nedic administered central Serbia. In addition, going

beyond the Cvetkovic-Macek Agreement of 1939, the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) was created under the German-backed Ustashe regime, which included the territories of Croatia (except those annexed by Italy), most of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and parts of northwestern Serbia.

The most successful political and military movement to resist the occupation of Yugoslavia was that of the communist Partisans under the leadership of Josip Broz “Tito.” The Communist Party of Yugoslavia met twice during the war, once in 1942 and again in 1943, to form a provisional government, declare the illegitimacy of all governments in exile, and proclaim Tito as the “Marshal” of all resistance forces in occupied Yugoslavia. The provisional government was named AVNOJ or the Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia. Over 140 delegations hailing from all parts of Yugoslavia convened in the Bosnian town of Jajce in November of 1943 to sign onto the agreement. A third AVNOJ session was held after the war in 1945 to draw up the borders of the future state. Six federal republics were recognized largely based on ethnic lines. Bosnia and Herzegovina was also recognized as a separate republic to the detriment of Croat and Serb nationalists. Its borders and its diverse population, constituting Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks, were based on the Austro-Hungarian borders after the 1908 annexation of the former Ottoman province.

The most significant were the 1974 constitutional reforms, in which two integral parts of Serbia—Vojvodina in the north and Kosovo in the south—were recognized as autonomous regions within the Socialist Federal Republic of Serbia

(See Map 0.5). Serb nationalists complained that this was further weakening of Serbia's role within the federalist structure of Socialist Yugoslavia while others have argued that both Vojvodina and Kosovo did not have a Serb majority and therefore its people should have greater self-government rather than being dominated by Belgrade. The government structure of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) was hierarchical with the powerful Politburo—run by Tito and his close associates at the top, followed by the elected Federal Assembly, Premiership, and the Communist Parties within each Socialist Republic. While the Politburo held centralized authority over the army, foreign policy, and the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, a large degree of autonomy was given to the Communist Parties in each Socialist Republic.



(Map 0.5 Serbia's two autonomous provinces of Kosovo and

Vojvodina)

In terms of economy and government structure, Balkan historian Misha Glenny identified two important factions within the Yugoslav League of Communists—liberals and conservatives. The liberals, who largely identified with non-Serb Communist Party members, agitated for greater economic and federal decentralization. The conservatives, or “unitarists,” on the other hand, became

associated with Serb nationalism due to their advocacy for centralization in terms of government and economy.²⁰ However, by the 1970s, a threat to Yugoslavia's very existence came from both camps—especially from Serbs and Croats—who began to openly advocate for greater “national rights” for each national group. Tito moved swiftly to quell rising nationalist tensions and several Serb and Croat communists—including many of his close associates and members of the Politburo—were purged. After Tito's death, a “collective presidency” was established, which Glenny described as a system of “musical chairs” in which “senior positions would be rotated every year to prevent any single republic or politician from accumulating too much power.”²¹ This system worked relatively well for next several years before the Communist Parties of Yugoslavia's republics became dominated by conservatives and nationalists. The latter half of the 1980s was characterized by trade wars between the republics, nationalist propaganda through the media, tax revenue battles, and the emergence of “victimhood” narratives espoused by the nationalist leadership of each republic, who began to place blame on their neighbors rather than dealing with pressing economic and political problems. Tensions were further exacerbated by the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the dissolution of the Soviet Union as the West placed pressure on Yugoslavia to reform internally. Consequently, nationalists—primarily Serb and Croat—recycled their bitter rivalries from WWII

²⁰ Glenny, 590.

²¹ *Ibid*, 623.

and from as far back as the 19th century, setting the country on a path towards a tragic and bloody disintegration.

Literature Review and My Contribution

Since the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, there has been a growing interest in the subject of history and memory relating to that region. The pioneers of the study of history and memory are the German sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945) and the French historian Pierre Nora (b.1931). Maurice Halbwachs argued that memory is a social construct and that it can be deformed, changed, or destroyed.²² It is in society, according to Halbwachs, “that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memoires.”²³ With the exception of our dreams, individual memories do not exist. Instead, adherence to societal norms conditions individual memories. We depend on external groups to provide us with our own construction of memories. As Katarina Ristic asserts in her book, “Imaginary Trials: War Crime Trials and Memory in Former Yugoslavia,” an individual’s memory functions “only as realizations of collective memories through the acceptance of collective identities.”²⁴ Meanwhile, Nora has focused Halbwachs’ work on the dichotomy between *milieu de memoire*—living sites of memory—and *lieu de memoire*—a vestige of a waning past. Nora’s work has enabled social scientists to identify breaks in historical continuity. According to Nora, sites of memory are

²² Halbwachs, Maurice. *The Collective Memory*. 1st ed. Harper Colophon Books; CN/800. New York: Harper & Row, 1980, 61 & 83.

²³ *Ibid*, 38.

²⁴ Ristić, Katarina. *Imaginary Trials : War Crime Trials and Memory in Former Yugoslavia*. Global History and International Studies ; 9. Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2014, 81.

symbols of the remnants of what has become a struggle over contested history and narratives. Nora writes, “In the past, then, there was one national history and there were many particular memories. Today, there is one national memory but its unity stems from a divided patrimonial demand that is constantly expanding and in search of coherence.”²⁵ What Nora implies here is that memory is malleable and therefore in service of those with the power to construct national narratives.

Collective memory, therefore, is a phenomena that not only social scientists concern themselves with, but also ruling elites. They have recognized the capacity of collective memories to “reconstruct, frame, reject or transform narratives of the past into the usable identity sources.”²⁶ On the other hand, as Michel Foucault argued in his essay on counter-memory, “forgotten memoires” do not conform to the dominant narrative, and are capable of giving voice to the marginalized and silenced. Thus, memory can function both as a unifying source and something more fluid and irresolute. In addition, Tzvetan Todorov has provided another important perspective arguing that collective memory is “not a memory at all, but a variety of discourses used in the public arena.”²⁷ In Todorov’s view, collective memory paradoxically requires forgetting complex, irrelevant, and unpleasant issues.²⁸ This is not a novel idea, as the 19th century French historian Ernest Renan stated in his 1882 Sorbonne lecture, “Forgetting, I

²⁵ Nora, “The Era of Commemoration” in *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past*, vol. 3

²⁶ Ristic, 85.

²⁷ Todorov, 127.
Ristic, 85.

²⁸ Ristic, 85.

would even say historical error, is an essential factor in the creation of a nation and it is for this reason that the progress of historical studies often poses a threat to nationality.”²⁹ In Renan’s view, memories can both challenge and support the dominant narratives of a nation. For the ruling elites, selectivity on which memories to preserve is essential. The American writer David Rieff has also written on the subject of memory and advocated in favor of forgetting. He has argued that “too much memory” can be poisonous to a society attempting to recover from traumatic events such as war, genocide, and ethnic cleansing.

Building off of the theoretical work done by Halbwachs and Nora, scholars in the West and in former Yugoslavia have applied those ideas in exploring the changing memories in the region. In 2008 and again in 2011, a number of academics hailing from all parts of former Yugoslavia came together to address the changing memories in relations to WWII and the conflict of the 1990s. The result was two books, titled “Kultura Secanja: 1941” (Culture of Remembering: 1941) and “Kultura Secanja: 1991” (Culture of Remembering: 1991), consisting of a compilation of essays that analyze the “change in memory” from the pre-to-post-socialist period. Two of the featured authors were especially instructive: Serbian historian Dubravka Stojanovic and the Bosniak historian Sacir Filandra. Stojanovic’s focus is on the changing narratives of Serbia’s school textbooks. Her research traces the rehabilitation of the Chetnik movement in Serbia beginning in the 1990s and gaining full traction after the fall of Slobodan Milosevic in October of 2000. Filandra, on the other hand, focuses on Bosniak

²⁹ Renan, Ernest. *Qu'est-ce Qu'une Nation? = What Is a Nation?* New Ed.} ed. Toronto, Ont.: Tapir Press, 1996.

identity building and the consequences of their varying ideological orientations during WWII.

The focus of post-socialist regimes on WWII and its different actors has reintroduced the issue of fascism into these societies. Sociologist Todor Kuljic, one of Serbia's leading leftist academics, focuses on analyzing the reemergence of the far-right and fascist ideologies. He defines fascism as a "reactionary ideology" in which nationalism "incorporates racism, anti-Semitism, anti-communism, anti-masonry, protects feudal-corporate hierarchical vision of capitalism, and have a charismatic leader."³⁰ His work assesses the reemergence of fascism in former Yugoslavia from the ashes of the Second World War. He concludes that the emergence of fascism is more likely in societies that have had experience with fascism in the past. Similar work has been done by the Croat historian Dragan Markovina. Markovina has focused his work largely on the relationship between Croats and their neighbors, Bosniaks and Serbs. He argues that the current Croat view of the Other is dominated by the perspective of the nationalist right. He asserts that the "narrative established during the 1990s, after the fall of socialism and disintegration of Yugoslavia, lives on and functions today..."³¹ That narrative claims that only a homogenous Croatia can serve the interests of Croats—a goal that Croatia has been able to achieve during the 1990s. Markovina also points to the whitewashing of Croatia's role in the persecution of Serbs during WWII and

³⁰ Kuljić, Todor. *Anatomija Desnice : Izbor Iz Publicističkih Radova, 1978-2013*. Beograd: Čigoja štampa, 2013, 57.

³¹ Markovina, Dragan. *Između Crvenog I Crnog : Split I Mostar U Kulturi Sjećanja*. Zagreb : Sarajevo: Plejada ; University Press, 2014, 282.

how a similar stance has been taken on Croatia's role in the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Western authors have also taken an acute interest in former Yugoslavia through the lens of history and memory. For example, David Bruce MacDonald's book "Balkan holocausts? Serbian and Croatian victim-centered propaganda and the war in Yugoslavia," offers a new approach to conflict analysis. Just as the title of his book suggests, he lays out the competing claims of both Serbs and Croats vis-à-vis Bosniaks, and how Serbs and Croats are attempting to claim the coveted trait of victimhood.

Anida Sokol, in her essay on war monuments in Bosnia and Herzegovina, examines the three competing narratives that have arisen since the 1990s—Serbs as defenders, Bosniaks as victims of Greater Serbian and Greater Croatian ambitions, and Croats as victims of Greater Serbian expansionism and Bosniak religious fundamentalism. Sokol also finds the importance of anti-fascist struggle during WWII in the narratives of all three groups, especially the Serbs and Bosniaks. Sokol documents attempts by the new ruling elites to establish legitimacy by drawing continuity with Partisans in WWII and their anti-fascist struggle.



For the general history of the region, I have relied on both Western and Yugoslav authors. Marko Hoare in recent years has written several well-researched books on the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina. His book, “Genocide and Resistance in Hitler’s Bosnia,” offers a particularly insightful and thought provoking history of Bosnia and Herzegovina during the Second World War, relying on Serbian, Croatian, and Bosnian state archives. As a recent study, Hoare’s findings confirm what several historians of the region have concluded in previous studies about Chetnik collaboration: that Tito’s Partisans were responsible for the bulk of the fighting against Nazi occupying forces. For the broader and general history of Bosnia, I relied on American historians John Fine and Robert Donia, and their joint work “Bosnia and Herzegovina: A Tradition Betrayed.” Although published during the break up of Yugoslavia, the book provides a good overview of Bosnia’s history, going as far back as the Slavic migration into the Balkan peninsula in the sixth century. Donia and Fine’s key argument is that, for the greater part of Bosnia’s history, the country cultivated a tradition of coexistence. However, during the 20th century, due to internal and external factors, that tradition has been unfortunately betrayed. Furthermore, I also relied on the Bosnian historian Evner Redzic and his book, “Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Second World War.” Redzic, a Bosniak, fought with the Partisans during WWII and offers an insider’s perspective. I was especially reliant on his findings on the role of Bosnian Muslims during WWII.

The works of historians Jozo Tomasevich, Ivo Banac, Dennis Hupchick, and Misha Glenny have provided me with a solid foundation for the history of

former Yugoslavia. Glenny's book, "The Balkans," address the major events of the last 200 years in the region, helping me focus my work on the key issues that relate to my thesis. Meanwhile, Ivo Banac's work has brought much nuance to Hupchick and Glenny. Banac's book, "The National Question in Yugoslavia," traces the origins of intercommunal conflict Yugoslavia's royalist period (1918-1941) and the inability of Croat and Serb political elites in the 1920s to settle on the government structure of the unified country. Croats favored federalism while Serbs favored a strong central government. The question dominated the interbellum and spilled over into the Second World War. One of the leading historians of WWII in Yugoslavia is Jozo Tomasevich, whose work has helped me further my understanding of Yugoslavia's history during this period. As my thesis research led me to investigate socialist era history as well, I also relied on the two most prominent historians of the period, Dusan Bilandzic and Branko Petranovic. Although Bilandzic became heavily involved in Croatia's politics after its secession from Yugoslavia in 1991, his work from the Yugoslav era remains seminal in understanding the Yugoslav point of view.

The work on history and memory in former Yugoslavia is burgeoning and ever changing. My contribution to the subject has been threefold. I have combined the works done by historians and scholars relating to the broad history of the region, and specifically on WWII, the 1990s, and the present, and provided a unified narrative on how this history is vital to understanding the current ethno-religious polarization in the region. This polarization is not limited to ideological, economic, and political difference. It also manifests itself in the realms of

memory. In my view, the study of history and memory is a crucial interdisciplinary approach to better understand the past and present. History, on its own, may seem abstract at times. However, combined with the study of memory, history becomes a more tangible experience. Thus, my approach in this thesis towards the addressed historical questions are through the lens of the dissonant collective memories of various ethno-religious groups.

This brings me to my second contribution to the study of history and memory in former Yugoslavia. As I mentioned in my literature review, a number of authors have assessed the changing memories and revisionist histories being written in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia & Herzegovina. However, my work focuses solely on the effects of WWII on the conflict of the 1990s and the new national narratives that have arisen since. My research has led me to conclude that the ruling political elites have tolerated and in some instances supported rehabilitation of fascist movements and ideologies that spawned during the Second World War. The inability of Yugoslavia's communist authorities to resolve the national question in Yugoslavia, combined with the liberalization of the 1980s, allowed reactionary nationalist intellectuals and movements to challenge state authority. This culminated with the rise of political opportunists such as Milosevic, and hardline nationalists such as Izetbegovic and Tudjman to gain political power. My work has focused on their biographies, actions, and legacies since the 1990s. I find striking parallels between political elites of today and political elites from the WWII era, specifically in their cultivation of chauvinist nationalism.

Lastly, as I noted previously, there has been growing scholarship in former Yugoslavia dealing with the topic of history and memory. Their works have not been translated into Western languages and thus have been inaccessible to western audiences. The works of Todor Kuljic, Dubravka Stojanovic, Dragan Markovina, amongst others, are not often, if ever, cited by western scholars who study the region. Their contributions, insights, and analysis are essential to obtaining a better understanding of the revisionism in post-socialist societies, conceptualizing old and new nationalisms, and challenging some of the traditional narratives about WWII in Yugoslavia and its disintegration during the 1990s.

My holistic approach has combined the three countries discussed in this thesis into one study. Previous scholarship has addressed these countries individually, or simply compared Serbia and Croatia. Furthermore, these studies have been limited to specific themes, such as the effects of trauma on these societies, rise of “victim culture,” or revisionism in school textbooks. I have combined the aforementioned themes, demonstrated how they intersect, and analyzed the work done by previous scholars, specifically how they relate to WWII. The constant reference point throughout this thesis will be WWII and its role in shaping the conflict of the 1990s, identity politics, and collective memories of the affected parties.

Summary of Chapters

Chapter I of this thesis addresses Croatia and its rehabilitation of the fascist Ustasha movement from WWII. As this thesis will demonstrate, part of nation building involves consolidating memories and creating national myths. For

Croatia's leadership during the 1990s and since, the national myth has been the Bleiburg massacre and the "Homeland War" of the 1990s. The massacre took place at the end of the Second World War and was perpetrated by communist Partisans. As most scholars agree, even some Croat politicians, the vast majority of those killed were members of the Ustasha, their sympathizers, and even some Serb Chetnik units and Slovene Home Guard. In Croatia since the 1990s, Bleiburg has become part of a larger narrative of Croat victimhood under real and imagined Serb hegemony.

Chapter II discusses the rehabilitation of the WWII Chetnik movement and its leader, Draza Mihailovic. Starting in the 1990s, Mihailovic's Chetniks came to be an antifascist movement just as the communist Partisans. Since the fall of Milosevic in 2000, the dominant narrative in Serbia has elevated the significance of the Chetniks over the Partisans in the struggle to liberate Serbia from Germans, Italians, and others. In fact, as children read in their school textbooks, Tito and the Partisans have been accused of lacking moral capacity in waging their guerrilla warfare whilst the Chetniks were genuinely concerned with "biological preservation" of the Serbian people. This narrative does not stand up to serious historical inquiry as this thesis will demonstrate.

Chapters III and IV deal with Bosnia and Herzegovina. As the least homogenous republic in former Yugoslavia and perhaps with the most complex history, the chapters were split into two with III dealing with general history from antiquity to the end of WWII and Chapter IV addressing the socialist period (1945) to the present. Because the country is comprised of Serbs, Croats, and

Bosniaks, no single dominant narrative or collective memory has been able to be established. During WWII and the socialist period, communist authorities stressed the uniqueness of Bosnia's distinct identity. However, due to the events of the 19th century and the two World Wars, it became nearly impossible to resolve Bosnia's national question. The thesis traces these dissonant narratives and memories of Bosnia's history, WWII in particular, and the effects they had on Bosnia since the 1990s.

Primary Sources and Translations

The sources used for this thesis consist of both English and Serbo-Croatian-Bosnian (SCB) materials. The translations from SCB to English are entirely my own. Furthermore, for some of the translations utilized by western authors into English, I have made minor adjustments in accordance with my fluency in SCB. As a disclaimer on my usage of primary sources, in addition to traditional oral histories, journals, memoirs, government documents, and so on, I have used school textbooks and history books written during the socialist period as primary sources. This thesis has required me to compare the histories and interpretations of the Second World War to those written today, thus necessitating the usage of texts from this period as primary sources.

CHAPTER I

Background: The Ustashe, Partisans, and the Myth of Bleiburg

With the rise of Mussolini in Italy and Hitler in Germany during the interbellum, fascist parties and organizations were also forming in the Balkans – most notably the Ustasha in Croatia and the Iron Guard in Romania. They were strongly chauvinist, anticommunist, clerical, and anti-Semitic. The ideological base of the Ustashe was laid, however, during the late 19th century as a result of the work of the Croat nationalist politicians Ante Starcevic, Eugen Kvaternik, and Josip Frank. Starcevic and Kvaternik founded the Croatian Party of Rights. Frank split from the group and founded his own party, the Pure Party of Rights, in 1895. Frank organized anti-Serb protests in 1902 where according to Croat eye-witness, “the rioters had a chant, ‘Srbe na vrbe!’ – Hang the Serbs on vines, which became an especially infamous calling under the Croat fascist [Ustashe] regime during the Second World War.”³² The Ustashe (literally meaning those who rise, insurgents) formed in the 1930s under the leadership of Ante Pavelic, a Croatian lawyer from Herzegovina, in response to the monarchial dictatorship of King Alexander of Yugoslavia (1918-1934). The organizations goal was to destroy what many perceived at the time as a Serb-dominated Yugoslavia and establish an independent Croatian state. Croat historian Jozo Tomasevich asserts that the Ustashe were both revolutionary and fascist, stating that “Pavelic deliberately included terrorist features in the Ustashe program. He wanted to

³² Glenny, Misha. *The Balkans : Nationalism, War, and the Great Powers, 1804-1999*. 1st American ed. New York: Viking, 2000, 263.

cause as much damage to Yugoslavia as possible.”³³ The Ustashe were successful in assassinating King Alexander during his visit to Marseilles, France in October of 1934.³⁴

The Ustashe did indeed proceed to implement their anti-Serb program after Hitler’s Germany destroyed and occupied Yugoslavia in April of 1941. On April 10th, 1941, the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) was proclaimed with Ante Pavelic and his Ustashe at its helm (See Map 1.1 and Figure 1.2). Their anti-communism was only surpassed by their anti-Serbism. According to Tomasevich, “The most reprehensible aspect of Ustasha policy toward the Serbs was the program of physical annihilation.”³⁵ The physical annihilation of not only Serbs, but also the Jewish and Roma populations, began almost immediately. In the summer of 1941, a series of laws were passed, such as the Law Decree on the Deportation of Undesirable and Dangerous Persons to Detention and Labor Camps, and a series of concentration camps were established, the largest being Jasenovac. The slaughter of over 1,000—mostly Serbs—by Ustasha Petar Brzica is one example of the brutality that befell that inmates in these camps. The Ustasha developed a knife that one wore much as a glove with a blade sticking to its side, naming it *srbosjek* or “Serb cutter.” According to one account, Brzica won a competition on a night in August of 1942 for slaughtering over 1,000

³³ Tomasevich, Jozo. *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945. Occupation and Collaboration*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001, 33.

³⁴ Kostov, Chris. *Contested Ethnic Identity : The Case of Macedonian Immigrants in Toronto, 1900-1996*. Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 77.

³⁵ Tomasevich, 397.

inmates with this tool. He won a golden watch and a roasted pig for his killing
orgy.³⁶



(Figure 1.2 The Ustashe leader Ante Pavelic)



(Map 1.1 Axis Partition of

Yugoslavia in 1941 and the creation of the Independent State of Croatia—NDH)

It is important to note, as Tomasevich does, that the Ustashe did not represent the popular sentiments of the Croatian people during the Second World War. German reports from summer of 1941, the Ustashe's “senseless outrages in the cities and the countryside’ has caused a considerable decrease in the already

³⁶ "The Jasenovac Extermination Camp Page <http://www.HolocaustResearchProject.org>." The Jasenovac Extermination Camp Page <http://www.HolocaustResearchProject.org>. 2008. Accessed December 19, 2016. <http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/othercamps/jasenovac.html>.

limited popular support for the government.”³⁷ Towards 1945, that support further waned as the public became more aware of the atrocities committed by the Ustasha regime. By the conclusion of the war in May of 1945, between 300,000-700,000, most of whom were Serbs, perished in Ustasha concentration camps.³⁸ The terror campaign against the Serbs drove many to the forests, either to join the royalist Serb Chetniks or to join the communist Partisans.

Bleiburg: May 1945

Much of the Ustasha leadership, including Pavelic, escaped justice by fleeing to Australia, Canada, Germany, Spain, and Latin American countries. Others were not so fortunate. While retreating with the defeated German army, some of the Ustashe units attempted to surrender to the British on the Austrian-Slovenian border, near the Austrian town of Bleiburg. According to British reports, 25,000 Ustasha and sympathizers, including civilians, were rounded up and handed over to the victorious Partisans. Croatian émigré circles inflate the numbers to 200,000-500,000. Yugoslav (communist) sources put the number closer to 100,000.³⁹ Other Ustashe troops fought vigorously to avoid being captured by the Partisan forces. The issue is further complicated by the geographic reality, where retreating collaborationist troops were spread out in an area stretching 40 to 60 kilometers. Tomasevich concludes, using Partisan and Ustashe sources, that “under no circumstance could they [Ustashe] have all

³⁷ Tomasevich, 352.

³⁸ "Jasenovac." Jasenovac. Accessed November 19, 2016.
<http://www.jasenovac.org/whatwasjasenovac.php>.

³⁹ Tomasevich, 761.

surrendered at Bleiburg.”⁴⁰ Yugoslav historian Vladimir Zerjavic found that some 125,000 collaborators were killed in total—65,000 during the war and 60,000 on the border with Austria during their retreat.⁴¹ Nevertheless, as Tomasevich states, “When Stalin ordered Tito to withdraw his troops from Carinthia and Trieste in the third week of May, the Yugoslavs promptly acquiesced. But this was too late for the collaborationist forces.”⁴² The fact still remains that there are no reliable numbers and detailed accounts about those killed near Bleiburg. Croats have played up the numbers of Croatians killed in Bleiburg because “...the larger the number of victims, the greater the responsibility of perpetrators. If the number of victims is very large, then the perpetrators cannot be individuals or groups, but the whole people.”⁴³ The historical void of reliable and objective accounts created by Yugoslavia’s communist government after WWII due to its unwillingness to address Bleiburg was filled by émigré circles. During the conflicts of the 1990s, the returning émigrés, along with the Tadjman government and Catholic clergy, were successful in creating a new collective memory of Bleiburg martyrology as an attack on the Croatian people as a whole. They used contemporary concerns— independence from the “Serbo-communist” Yugoslavia—to determine what ought to be remembered and how it ought to be remembered.⁴⁴

It is estimated that some 20,000 Ustasha and their sympathizers escaped mostly to Germany, Canada, Australia, the United States, and Argentina after

⁴⁰ Ibid, 764.

⁴¹ Ibid, 765.

⁴² Ibid, 759.

⁴³ Neill, Debra. *Jasenovac and Memory: Reconstructing Identity in Post-war Yugoslavia*, 2007, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, 115.

⁴⁴ Novick, Peter. *The Holocaust in American Life*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999, 3.

Bleiburg.⁴⁵ These émigrés cultivated the martyrology of Bleiburg and the myth of Croatian independence in the NDH. Pal Kolsto, Professor at the University of Oslo, argued “To gain acceptance of a historical version that portrays people who fought on the side of the Nazi Germany during World War II as innocent victims, and indeed martyrs, would presumably be an uphill battle, but that is precisely what the contemporary Croatian nationalist mythmaking is about.”⁴⁶ Following the war, Tito’s communist government suppressed discourse over Bleiburg. Moreover, because the Yugoslav communist leadership never addressed the events that took place there in May of 1945, it deprived the Croats of the opportunity to come to terms with their trauma. This attempt to bury the past allowed the “wounds to remain open, in large part because no serious effort has been made to establish consensus about what happened and who was responsible...”⁴⁷ The taboo imposed on Bleiburg by communist authorities allowed the pro-Ustashe narrative to be dominant. And as Kostol notes, “mythologies thrive in culture of silence and suppression.”⁴⁸ The commemorations of Bleiburg were, however, commemorated by the émigrés who began gathering in southern Austria in the early 1950s. In 1966, former Ustashe and their sympathizers purchased a plot of land where future annual commemorations were held. A decade later, a small monument was built, and in

⁴⁵ Tomashevich, 760.

⁴⁶ Kolstø, Pål. "Bleiburg: The Creation of a National Martyrology." *Europe-Asia Studies* 62, no. 7 (2010): 1153-174, 1153.

⁴⁷ Popkin, Margaret, and Nehal Bhuta. "Latin American Amnesties in Comparative Perspective: Can the Past Be Buried?" *Ethics & International Affairs* 13, no. 1 (1999): 99-122, 106.

⁴⁸ Kolsto, 1154.

1987, with funds from Australian Croats, a larger monument was erected.⁴⁹ The monument reads, “In honor and glory of the Croatian soldiers who fell in the struggle for their Croatian fatherland as they were extradited back to the fatherland and disappeared, May 1945.”⁵⁰ These commemorations take place on May 15th, All Saints Day, with large participation by Roman Catholic clergy.

Croatian Clergy and Bleiburg

The most problematic case of the role of the Croatian Roman Catholic clergy was that of the Archbishop of Zagreb during the NDH period (1941-1945), Alojzije Stepinac. Tomasevich writes, “...from the beginning to the end of the Ustasha state, the entire Catholic press in the Independent State of Croatia supported Pavelic and the Ustasha regime.”⁵¹ There were also Croat Catholic clergy present at the death camps throughout Bosnia and Croatia. The most notorious was Jasenovac. Tomasevich writes, “The existence of Jasenovac remains a dark blot on the conscience of many Croats. It is difficult to reconcile a thousand-year old Croatian culture that Croatian nationalist boast about with the barbarities perpetrated at Jasenovac by the Ustasha.”⁵² The Croatian Catholic priest, Monsignor Augustin Juretic, who fled the NDH, testified in 1942, “The concentration camp in Jasenovac is a real slaughterhouse. You have never read anywhere—not even under the GPU and Gestapo—of such horrible things as the ‘Ustashi’ commit there...”⁵³ On a rare occasion when Stepinac did intervene in

⁴⁹ Ibid, 1159.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 1159.

⁵¹ Tomasevich, 370.

⁵² Tomasevich, 400.

⁵³ Ibid.

Jasenovac, it was when the Ustashe killed seven refugee Slovene priests “who were accused of working against the Croatian state.”⁵⁴ The Ustasha butchers were lauded by the Catholic clergy for fighting against abortion, practiced by Serb and Jewish physicians, fighting communism, and Freemasonry.⁵⁵ The Croatian Catholic clergy stayed loyal to the Ustasha regime to the wars end, issuing a pastoral letter in March of 1945, “urging allegiance to the state, but also strongly condemning Communist and the Yugoslav Partisans.”⁵⁶ After the war, Stepinac as the highest ranking cleric in the NDH, was put on trial by the new communist government. He was imprisoned for five years and spent the rest of his life under house arrest, dying in his home village in 1960.⁵⁷ Despite overwhelming evidence against Stepinac and the complicity of the Croatian Catholic Church in the crimes of the Ustashe during the NDH period, the Croatia of the 1990s resurrected Stepinac as one of the emblematic symbols of Croatian martyrology under communism.

The religious overtones of Bleiburg operate in conjunction with the secular political demonstrations that accompany the Catholic mass. This dual role of religion and secularism in perpetuating the martyr myth of Bleiburg in Croatian society took on a larger role in 1990, when Croats of Croatia were first allowed to participate in the commemoration events. The initial attitude of Croats of Croatia towards the Bleiburg commemorations was ambiguous but quickly became transformative. In 1990, a Croatian newspaper referred to the dead in Bleiburg as

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 372.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 550.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 562.

“quislings.”⁵⁸ The following year, the same paper referred to them as “the Cavalry of the Croatian people.”⁵⁹ During Croatia’s War of Independence (1991-1995), Bleiburg was established as a new collective memory. Peter Novick argued that “collective memory is understood to express some eternal or essential truth about the group—usually tragic.”⁶⁰ The new Croatian elites—from clergy to policymakers—related the new collective memory of Bleiburg to the country’s present concerns—anti-communism and anti-Yugoslavism.

The ritualization and commemoration of Bleiburg have become an annual event. Once only attended by émigrés, today it is attended by tens of thousands of Croats, mainstream politicians, and Roman Catholic clergy. For these groups, Bleiburg is a site of “colossal national tragedy.”⁶¹ For modern-day Croatian society, an injustice was committed against Croatia at Bleiburg in May of 1945—one which no one has answered for and one which so little is known about. Religious overtones are a common method to commemorate those at Bleiburg. Kolsto argues that the political right was largely successful in not only portraying these groups as innocent victims but also as *mucenini* (martyrs). “They died for the Croatian cause, so that the Croatian nation could live.”⁶² The trails leading to Bleiburg where retreating Ustasha were executed are referred to as *krizni putevi* (stations of the cross) – evoking the path Jesus had to take through Jerusalem to

⁵⁸ Kolsto, 1161.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Novick, 4.

⁶¹ Knight, Robert. "Transnational Memory from Bleiburg to London (via Buenos Aires and Grozny)." 2010, 3.

⁶² Kolsto, 1154.

the point of his crucifixion.⁶³ In 2005, on the 60th anniversary of the Bleiburg massacre, a Mass was officiated by a Bishop and a Cardinal for the first time.⁶⁴ In 2007, the Archbishop of Zagreb and the head of the Croatian Catholic Church, Cardinal Josip Bozanic celebrated the Mass in Bleiburg.⁶⁵ The vice-speaker of the Croatian Parliament (*sabor*) thanked the Church for “keeping alive the memory of Bleiburg” and calling its role ‘immeasurable.’⁶⁶ Furthering the religious overtones the attendees are referred to as “pilgrims.”⁶⁷ By the mid 2000s, secular and religious modes of commemoration were joined together to serve a common purpose to redefine anti-fascism. This trend towards anti-anti-fascism was in concert with the fall of communism throughout Eastern Europe.

Fall of Communism: Rise of Tadjman and the Secularization of Bleiburg

Tudjman, an officer in the Yugoslav army, historian, devout Catholic, Croat nationalist, and ardent anti-communist, ushered in a political program in Croatia based on these tenets. However, his biography shows a more complex individual wrought with contradictions. Born in 1922, he was a Partisan in Tito’s army and eventually became the youngest general in Yugoslav history.⁶⁸ He joined the Communist Party and became a Political Commissar. Much like Tito became at a young age, he was a devout communist. However, as Yugoslavia

⁶³ Ibid, 1155.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 1167.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 1170.

⁶⁸ MacDonald, David Bruce. *Balkan Holocausts?: Serbian and Croatian Victim-centred Propaganda and the War in Yugoslavia*. New Approaches to Conflict Analysis. Manchester; New York: New York: Manchester University Press; Distributed Exclusively in the USA by Palgrave, 2002, 99.

politically, socially, and economically liberalized in the 1960s, a new wave of nationalism shook the country. There were political protests in 1968 in Kosovo with the Yugoslav army having to step in and put down the protests. Kosovo disturbances were followed by the “Croatian Spring” in 1971,⁶⁹ echoing the “Prague Spring” a few years earlier. The Yugoslav communist authorities did see this as a threat to the nation's stability, however, instead of sending in tanks into Zagreb as Russia did in Prague, several student leaders and communist officials were arrested, expelled from universities, or fired from their jobs. As one historian noted, twenty-years earlier some of them may have lost their lives.⁷⁰ Tudjman was imprisoned where his transformation from a communist into a right-wing nationalist took place. As a trained historian, he wrote several books while in prison, mainly focused on revisions of the Second World War and the “re-examination of Croatian history.”⁷¹

Re-examinations of history was a common theme in Eastern Europe during this period, especially in former Yugoslavia. The most fertile period became the Second World War. Tudjman's work became popular with Ustashe émigré circles, many of whom helped raise money for his Croatian Democratic Union party (HDZ). Tudjman was the new face of Croatian nationalism and struggle for independence. He was also instrumental in historical revisionism of the Second World War—questioning the official numbers of Serbs, Jews, and Romas killed in Ustashe death camps (which by the 1990s, the most common

⁶⁹ Ibid, 100.

⁷⁰ BBC Documentary: Josip Broz Tito. 2015. Accessed October 15, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAq5dBBuiD4>.

⁷¹ MacDonald, 100.

number used was 700,000), asserting 50,000 were killed.⁷² He claimed in his book, "Horrors of War," that the Serbian Orthodox Church purposely inflated the numbers of dead in order to "divide Serbs and Croats..."⁷³ In the same book, he accused Jews of inventing ethnic cleansing and, writing on the Holocaust, that "The estimated loss of up to 6 million dead is founded too much on emotional, biased testimony and on exaggerated data in the post-war reckonings of war crimes and squaring of accounts with the defeated."⁷⁴ As a head of state, he claimed that administrators of Jasenovac were entirely composed of Jewish *capos*.⁷⁵ Nowhere was Tadjman more influential than in leading the assault on Yugoslavia, communism, Tito, and de facto Croatia's anti-fascist movement.

And while Tito's legacy, as a son of a Croat and a Slovene, was nowhere nearly attacked as he was in Serbia, an open season in Croatia was declared on his work – Yugoslavia, anti-fascism, and communism. The new ruling elites of Croatia faced an uphill battle. According to a survey conducted throughout Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia between 1992-1998, Croats remember Tito as an important statesman who brought prestige to the country. Collective memories, as the French historian Pierre Nora points out, develop out of groups and belong to groups, while history belongs to everyone and no one.⁷⁶ For Tadjman and the political right, memory was an obstacle while rewriting history became an opportunity. Tito continued to represent a *milieu de memoire* – a living site of

⁷² MacDonald, 167.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 167-168.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 168.

⁷⁶ Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux De Mémoire." *Representations*, no. 26 (1989): 7-24.

memory. And because the memory of Tito evoked strong feelings of nostalgia for “better times,” destroying Tito as a site of collective memory required an aggressive propaganda campaign against his life’s work. The preferred of these targets was Yugoslavia and communism. Yugoslavia was referred to as a “Serbo-Bolshevik” creation which deprived Croatia of independence.⁷⁷ However, coinciding with the fall of the Berlin Wall and communism throughout Eastern Europe, the monopoly over memory, commemoration, and written history held by Yugoslav communist authorities on WWII also waned.

Communist authorities attempted to instill anti-fascism into the population in Yugoslavia from a very young age – from “pioneer” school children’s parades – to annual commemorations and rituals celebrating the Partisan victory over fascism. Croatian professor of philosophy, Vjeran Pavlakovic, asserts that “commemorations of tragedies of the Second World War were exclusively subservient to the ruling communist ideology.”⁷⁸ By the late 1980s and early 1990s, the commemorations of Partisans became less prevalent, not only because of the smaller number of veterans but also because communist ideology gave way to re-emerging nationalism.⁷⁹ As communism was crumbling throughout Eastern Europe, symbols used by communist governments had to be replaced with new ones. The anthropologist Paul Connerton asserts that “...it is now abundantly clear that in the modern period national elites have invented rituals that claim

⁷⁷ Kuljic, Todor. "Tito U Novom Srpskom Poretku Sećanja." *Sociologija* 45, no. 2 (2003): 97-116, 108.

⁷⁸ Bosto, Sulejman., Cipek, Tihomir, and Milosavljević, Olivera. *1941 : Kultura Sjećanja: Povijesni Lomovi I Svladavanje Prošlosti*. Biblioteka Srednji Put ; 9. Knj. Zagreb: Disput, 2008, 115.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

continuity with an appropriate historic past, organizing ceremonies, parades and mass gatherings, and constructing new ritual spaces.”⁸⁰ Tadjman needed to show continuity of anti-fascism because anti-fascism continued to be one of Europe’s core principles. However, he did not want to use communist symbols. The ruling elites found a solution to this quagmire by challenging Tito’s anti-fascist legacy and portraying Croatia as a dual victim of fascism and communism.

For this to work, the collective memories of the brutality of the Ustashe and the NDH had to be challenged and new understandings had to be formed. Thus, the political right in Croatia began to politically rehabilitate the Independent State of Croatia (NDH, 1941-1945). While many Croat historians agree that the NDH was neither independent nor a state nor Croatian, far-right elements of Croatian society throughout the 1990s to the present have commemorated the Ustashe and Pavelic as uniquely Croatian, and used Bleiburg as a symbol of their victimhood. The anti-left rhetoric and movement towards the political right was not anomalous to Croatia. Similar trends took place in Italy as Alessandro Portelli, in his well-researched book, “The Order Has Been Carried Out.” Portelli describes the Fosse Ardeatine Rome massacre in March of 1943 perpetrated by Germans against citizens of Rome in response to the killing of 32 German policemen. Portelli asserts:

Popular belief and political distortions of memory, perpetrated by the popular press, the media, the Church, and conservative political forces, have generated a widely believed narrative according to which the Germans asked the partisans to delivery themselves: and only after the partisans failed to do so did they proceed with retaliation. This belief has bred, in turn, a great deal of defamation of the partisans involved and of

⁸⁰ Connerton, Paul. *How Societies Remember*. Themes in the Social Sciences. Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 51.

the anti-Fascist struggle as a whole...these events have been obfuscated by popular beliefs and narratives drenched in ignorance and misinformation that turn responsibility around and do not so much accuse the Germans of perpetrating the massacre as accuse the partisans of causing it by an “irresponsible” act and by not turning themselves in to prevent the retaliation.⁸¹

When the right-wing government of Silvio Berlusconi came to power in 1994, the narrative on Foessa Ardeatine was strongly challenged. Similarly, the Tudjman government in Croatia began to challenge the legacy of Tito’s Partisans.

Moreover, greater emphasis to commemorate Croatia’s War of Independence (1991-1995) to dissociate the country from Ustasha of 1941, Yugoslavia, and communism. Nevertheless, ultra-right segments of Croatia’s society refused to give up on the Ustasha, which the Tudjman government found useful in its ability to obscure the past.

After the 1990 multiparty elections were held in Croatia, Tudjman’s Croatian Democratic Union Party (HDZ) won the plurality of the votes. And just like Berlusconi found a coalition partner with the far-right National Alliance Party, Tudjman found similar partners in Croatia. Starcevic’s Party of Rights was renewed whose leadership openly commemorated April 10th, 1941 (the ascension of Ustasha to power in Croatia), as Croatia’s day of independence.⁸² However, the party did not join the government until after the parliamentary elections held after the war in Croatia (1991-1995). Throughout the war, its leadership criticized Tudjman for not embracing the Ustasha symbols openly. They called for Tudjman

⁸¹ Portelli, Alessandro. *The Order Has Been Carried out : History, Memory and Meaning of a Nazi Massacre in Rome*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, 3.

⁸² 1941, 119.

to “announce the (re)creation of NDH.”⁸³ While Tadjman never openly embraced the commemorations of NDH and the Ustashe, he certainly tolerated them. He didn’t have much of a choice as most of the funds for his HDZ party were from diaspora Croats who “promoted the Ustashe as a genuine nationalist and revolutionary movement, one that was pro-independence and anti-Nazi.”⁸⁴ According to Pavlakovic, Tadjman’s silence allowed “the rehabilitation of NDH” and for the ultra-right to “portray the Ustashe as misunderstood patriots and anticommunists.”⁸⁵ He decorated former Ustashe administrators, such as Ivo Rojnica, who infamously claimed that 250,000 Serbs were expelled to Serbia from the NDH, rather than being murdered, and only 420 Serbs were forcibly converted to Catholicism.⁸⁶ Tadjman did not veil the parallels of Ustashe coming to power in 1941 and his own rise fifty years later—with attacks on “Serboslavia” being part of the main narrative. As Connerton stressed, due to the need of political elites to show continuity, the ultra-right in Croatia was able to portray continuity between the Ustasha coming to power in 1941 and Croatia’s independence from “Serbo-Bolshevik” Yugoslavia in 1991. However, Tadjman did tread more carefully, attempting to reconcile these diametrically opposing forces. In order to neutralize Croatian guilt from WWII, Tadjman encouraged Bleiburg commemorations in addition to Jasenovac commemorations. Drawing inspiration from Spain’s Franco’s chapel in Toledo commemorating “both sides” of the Spanish Civil War, Tadjman suggested in the 1995 Nation Address that

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ MacDonald, 137.

⁸⁵ 1941, 122.

⁸⁶ MacDonald, 137.

“victims of communism” and “victims of fascism” ought to be buried side by side in Jasenovac.⁸⁷ Tudjman himself never visited Bleiburg publically, however, in recent years it has become common practice for Croat government officials to visit both sites.

Since Tudjman’s death in 1999, mainstream government officials have been visibly present at the Bleiburg commemorations. In fact, the Croatian government donated 125,000 Euros to purchase an additional piece of land in order to enlarge the commemoration site.⁸⁸ Moderate government officials have used the opportunity to speak and call for reconciliation amongst Croats—those of the Partisan tradition and those of the Ustashe. In 2001, the Speaker of Croatia’s Parliament, Ante Simonic, stated “Bleiburg field is one of the places where all Croats could and should call each other brothers and sisters.”⁸⁹ The following years, the first Croatian Prime Minister to visit the site was the leftist Social Democrat Party (SDP) leader Ivica Racan. As he laid the wreath he offered a “sincere apology to and sympathy with” the “victims” of Bleiburg “tragedy.”⁹⁰

Those present are also able to purchase pictures, calendars, and other symbols of Pavelic and the Ustashe. Young men and women walk around in black t-shirts with the Ustashe “U” prominently placed on their chests. As Kolsto suggests, “whether or not this is a fringe phenomenon that should be ignored or one which reveals ‘the true nature’ of the Bleiburg commemorations is hotly

⁸⁷ Ibid, 168.

⁸⁸ Kolsto, 1162.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 1163.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 1164.

disputed.”⁹¹ The Church and the political right in Croatia have attempted to turn the Bleiburg massacre into a national cause. The Church’s weekly paper, *Glas Koncila*, has described Bleiburg as “the greatest tragedy of the Croatian people throughout its 1300 year history.”⁹² Others have been much more careful in the way they characterize Bleiburg. The last president of Yugoslavia, the Croat Stipe Mesic, stated in 2008 that those killed by the Partisans in May of 1945 were victims in the sense that they were not given due process. However, as for the claim that they were killed “simply because they were Croats” he regarded as “pure manipulation.”⁹³ Additionally, Mesic stated that “none of those who were killed in Jasenovac were responsible for what happened in Bleiburg, while those killed at Bleiburg may already have committed atrocities.”⁹⁴

WWII in Croatian Textbooks

One of Tudjman’s first acts as President of a newly independent Croatia was to set up a new school curriculum which instituted vigorous revisions of WWII. The British military historian, Michael Howard, once said that one of the expectations of historians is to forge views of the past through selectivity to “create or sustain certain emotions or beliefs.”⁹⁵ Historians are entrusted to maintain the flames of patriotism and loyalty. In keeping the flames bright, they

⁹¹ Ibid, 1161.

⁹² Ibid, 1172.

⁹³ Ibid, 1165.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ "Teaching War. How Croatian schoolbooks changed and why it matters (Textbook series – part one) - Croatia - Reports - ESI." Teaching War. How Croatian schoolbooks changed and why it matters (Textbook series – part one) - Croatia - Reports - ESI. September 16, 2015. Accessed March 29, 2017. http://www.esiweb.org/index.php?lang=en&id=156&document_ID=167.

are erase “dark history” from the nation’s past. For example, in the 1980s, the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform advocated for protection of the Japanese youth from “dark history” or “they will be left ‘confused and no longer proud of their nation.’”⁹⁶ Tadjman, as a trained historian himself, wanted to reconcile the “sons and daughters of Ustasha” and the “sons and daughters of the Partisans.”⁹⁷ The socialist-era narratives of brotherhood and unity were purged and replaced with a victim-villain narratives—the Croats being the victims and the Serbs villains.

In 1991, Tadjman appointed former history teacher Ivo Peric as Minister of Education to write the new school textbooks. Peric’s textbook focused on Croatian statehood. Students in Croatia were taught that “as an old European nation, Croats had their own state since the mid-ninth century...It was only when Croatia became part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, after the First World War that ‘Croatia lost, for the first time after 1,000 years, its statehood.’”⁹⁸ Of course, not only does this have no basis on history, but it is also contrary to what Croat nationalists such as Starcevic argued during the 19th century, which was that Croatia needs independence from the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Peric, in addressing the Ustasha and NDH from the Second World War, stated that it was a quisling and fascist formation, as well as an “expression of the historical aspirations of the Croatian people for an independent state.”⁹⁹ When characterizing the genocidal policy of the Ustasha towards the Serbs, the textbook

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

stated that the regime carried out “terror against Jews, Gypsies, and Serbs” but failed to mention any explicit killing against those populations.¹⁰⁰ Ante Pavelic, the leader of the Ustashe, “was neither criticized nor linked to any concrete crimes.”¹⁰¹ The schoolbooks ascribed most of the war crimes to Serbs.

Stating that Serbs committed the majority of war crimes was part of Tudjman’s “reconciliation program.” In fact, Serbs were blamed for the Bleiburg massacre. The argument was that towards the end of the war, many Chetniks joined the Partisans. Peric’s textbook states, ‘Those former Chetnik/Partisans hated anything Croatian and Catholic...and showed it everywhere, committing crimes: theft, maltreatment, killings.’¹⁰² Crimes committed by the Ustashe were omitted, and emphasis was placed on the regime’s reforms in cultural and economic spheres. This narrative dominated Croatia’s curriculum throughout the 1990s. New textbooks with a considerably more critical assessment of WWII were finally printed in 2000 after Tudjman’s death. However, the emphasis is still on anti-Serb narratives.

Conclusion

For Croatia in the 1990s it was important to offer a different interpretation of the past to justify its secession from Yugoslavia. What stood between Croatia’s independence and its troubled Ustashe past during WWII was the foundation of anti-fascism Tito built and cultivated during his life time. The Europe Croatia was trying to enter was anti-fascist and anti-communist. The latter was not

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

difficult to demonize in a period and culture of anti-communism after the fall of the Soviet Union. It was difficult for Tadjman's government, however, to uphold the virtues of anti-fascism when they were so deeply synonymous with Tito, Yugoslavia, and communism. The political right was able to utilize "toxic memory" to obscure the role of Ustasha during WWII, since the understanding of "enemy" was also contiguous – Serbs playing the role during WWII and the 1990s. As Kimberly Theidon argued, toxic memory "emerges from experiences of intense, direct violence within a community or between neighboring communities for which there is no recourse, no sense of the possibility of social justice, nor remorse from the perpetrators."¹⁰³ According to the current Croatian narrative, Bleiburg was an attack on the Croatian identity. The victims were martyrs for their nation and their faith and they ought to be remembered as such. This narrative has gone largely unchallenged in the mainstream. However, a new generation of Croat historians, such as Hrvoje Klasic and Dragan Markovina. Klasic stated in an 2015 interview that "those killed in Bleiburg were not Croats but enemies of the state."¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, the success historical revisionists have enjoyed vis-à-vis Bleiburg has largely been the result of the silence of communist authorities during the Socialist period (1945-1980s) which allowed the myth of martyrology to fester and be prone to exploitation by émigré circles. Their success is further evident as participation to Bleiburg has become a litmus test of

¹⁰³ Theidon, Kimberly. "Justice in Transition: The Micropolitics of Reconciliation in Postwar Peru." *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, no. 3 (2006): 433-57, 49.

¹⁰⁴ Zahran, Petra. "Klasić: U Bleiburgu nisu ubijani Hrvati, nego neprijatelji države." *Direktno.hr*. May 17, 2015. Accessed December 19, 2016. <http://direktno.hr/en/2014/direkt/15177/Klasi%C4%87-U-Bleiburgu-nisu-ubijani-Hrvati-nego-neprijatelji-dr%C5%BEave.htm>.

patriotism. For this reason, the political left has adopted a much more conciliatory position on the Bleiburg massacre. Leading leftist politicians have argued that Croats from both traditions of leftist anti-fascism to far-right fascism ought to bury the hatchet for the sake of national unity and healing.

Serbia has taken a similar approach since the 1990s in its own attempt to reconcile its anti-fascist and fascist past. The following chapter will address challenges faced by Serb nationalists and solutions they offered, which interestingly parallel those of Croats.

CHAPTER II

Chetniks, Communism, and Jasenovac

On November 11th 1941, at a hotel near the Divci¹⁰⁵ railroad station, Colonel Dragoljub “Draza” Mihailovic—the leader of Serbia’s Royalist Chetnik movement who pledged loyalty to the exiled King Peter in London—and the representatives of Nazi Germany’s occupation forces met for a meeting which lasted nearly ninety minutes.¹⁰⁶ The Germans were represented by General Franz Bohme who insisted on complete Chetnik collaboration against the communist Partisans. The Chetnik representatives were lobbying for armaments. According to one of the representatives, Colonel Pantic, the Chetniks ““recognized that the country was defeated and that the Germans possess the rights of occupation.””¹⁰⁷ The meeting was the culmination of the fighting between Partisans and Chetniks that began during the summer of 1941. Tito’s Partisans were successful in liberating a large swath of territory surrounding the western Serbian city of Uzice. Chetniks, already concerned about post-war order and territorial settlements, turned their weapons against the Partisans. In Divci, Mihailovic insisted that “he was ‘neither the representative of London nor any other government.’”¹⁰⁸ His promise to the Germans, in exchange for weapons, was to ““reduce and thwart [the Communist] terror.””¹⁰⁹ This was the beginning of the German-Chetnik

¹⁰⁵ A small town outside of Valjevo, in western Serbia.

¹⁰⁶ Milazzo, Matteo J. *The Chetnik Movement & the Yugoslav Resistance*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975, 35.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid 36.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 38.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 38.

collaboration that would characterize the royalist movement throughout the war. However, it wasn't until the 1980s that this narrative of Chetnik collaboration began to be challenged by nationalist ideologues in Serbia.

Today's revisionist history of Serbia insists that there were two anti-fascist movements during WWII—the Chetniks and the Partisans. Some on the far-right assert that the Chetniks did all the fighting against the Germans while Partisans hid in the forests and mountains of Bosnia and Herzegovina. These narratives proliferated during the 1990s, and today, they go virtually unchallenged. The former narrative stems from the ideologically confusing period of the thirteen-year rule of Slobodan Milosevic (1987-2000). During his tenure, still a self-proclaimed socialist, Serbia continued to recognize the Partisans as anti-fascists. School children continued to learn about Tito as a leader of the anti-fascist Partisans forces. This recognition was in concert with Milosevic's insistence that he tried to preserve Yugoslavia's unity during this period. During his speech in Gazimestan, he continued to argue that Yugoslavia is a multinational country that can only exist with equal rights for all members of society.¹¹⁰ After the fall of Milosevic in October of 2000, succeeding coalition governments of unlikely allies with competing ideologies found something that they can all rally behind: anti-Communism and thus anti-Titosim. Therefore, it was necessary for the post-Milosevic governments to create new narratives, new traditions, newly revised history, and in fact new memories aimed to demonize Tito, socialist Yugoslavia,

¹¹⁰ Slobodan Milosevic Speech in Kosovo, 1989. 2011. Accessed December 19, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vdU6ngDhrAA>.

and to exonerate the Chetniks. In order to achieve this, a thorough reinterpretation of the Second World War in Serbia commenced.

That the Chetniks were an anti-fascist guerrilla movement has been propelled by two historical axioms. First is that the Chetniks did wage guerrilla warfare against Germans, Italians, and other occupation forces between April and November of 1941. Second, western allies did recognize Mihailovic twice as the leader of an anti-fascist movement; once in 1943 and again in 1948. There is hardly any contention that the Chetniks were one of the first, if not the first, guerrilla bands to form specifically for the purpose of fighting occupying forces. Despite the best efforts of the Regent Prince Paul of Yugoslavia to keep Yugoslavia neutral during WWII, a group of officers, primarily Serbs, staged a coup d'état on March 27th, 1941. The coup was staged in opposition to the Regent's acquiescence to German demands of using Yugoslavia's territory for the free movement of Wehrmacht troops in the Balkans. The coup was popular. People throughout Yugoslavia poured into the streets protesting the pact with Germany chanting, "Bolje Rat Nego Pakt!" (War is Better than the Pact!). Hitler was outraged by the removal of a pro-German government in Belgrade. That same afternoon, Hitler laid out his objectives,

Politically, it is especially important that the blow against Yugoslavia be carried out with inexorable severity and that the military destruction be carried out in a lightning-like operation... It is to be expected that the Croats will take our side when we attack. They will be assured of political treatment (autonomy later on) in accordance with this. The war against Yugoslavia presumably will be very popular in Italy, Hungary, and Bulgaria, as these states are to be promised territorial acquisitions: the

Adriatic coast for Italy, the Banat for Hungary, and Macedonia for Bulgaria.¹¹¹

On April 6h, 1941 the German air force, Luftwaffe, bombed Belgrade to rubble followed by the ground invasion by the Wehrmacht and Yugoslavia's neighbors. The Yugoslav army attempted to put up a resistance, however, by April 17th, it had collapsed. Yugoslavia was partitioned between the Germans, Italians, Hungarians, Albanians, Bulgarians, and regional autonomy was given to loyal groups such as the Ustashe in the so-called Independent State of Croatia (NDH). Serb officers who refused to capitulate fled to the forests of central Serbia in an attempt to organize a resistance movement.

One of these officers was Colonel Mihailovic. They organized into small brigades called *chete* (hence the Chetniks) reminiscent of the Serbian-supported Macedonian *chete* who fought the Ottomans during the Balkan Wars (1912-1913). By May of 1941, Mihailovic began organizing these Chetnik groups with the hope that other remnants of the Yugoslav army would join their struggle. He found that only seven officers and twenty-four noncommissioned officers would join him atop of the leadership in addition to fifty to sixty soldiers.¹¹²

Furthermore, he quickly realized that "they were faced with the decision of whether to surrender belatedly to the occupation authorities, and probably face stiff punishment, or to become themselves the nucleus of a resistance movement. Mihailovic and his men chose the second alternative, and thus began the life of a

¹¹¹ Tomasevich, Jozo. *The Chetniks*. Tomasevich, Jozo, 1908-1994. War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945. Y. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1975, 54.

¹¹² Tomasevich (1975), 122-124.

very controversial resistance movement in Yugoslavia.”¹¹³ For his effort, in 1943 Mihailovic was awarded the prestigious French military honor, Croix de Guerre, and in 1948, the US Legion of Merit award, by President Harry Truman.

However, these awards have their own historical context which will be discussed in the following section. Nevertheless, they are part of historical reality pertaining to Mihailovic and the Chetniks which have been used by revisionist historian and modern ruling elites in Serbia in their anti-communist and anti-Titoist crusade.

Both the British and the Americans sent missions to occupied Yugoslavia in an attempt to find allies willing to fight the Germans. Mihailovic, fully aware that he would need a foreign sponsor if his guerrilla campaign were to succeed, began to court western allied missions in occupied Serbia. The British were the most generous in their support. They sent Mihailovic financial and military support beginning in November 1941—just as Mihailovic was secretly negotiating with the Germans—to the summer of 1943.¹¹⁴ The Germans, however, did not place their full trust into Mihailovic. According to Milazzo, Germans wanted unconditional surrender from Mihailovic and his full subordination to the quisling government in Belgrade. The Germans found a reliable ally to head the Serbian government in the summer of 1941, when they installed General Milan Nedic. The Germans also empowered openly fascist and anti-Semitic groups such as Dimitrije Ljotic’s *Zbor* movement. The Chetnik bands were unreliable guerrillas but were nevertheless used by both Germans and Italians in their anti-Partisans campaigns throughout the war. The British and the

¹¹³ Ibid, 123.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 302.

Americans were not fully aware of what was going on in Yugoslavia. As far as the western allies were concerned, the government Mihailovic expressed loyalty to the exiled King Peter in London, and, unlike Nedic and Ljotic, early on he did not openly collaborate with Germans.

As a recognition by western allies, Mihailovic was awarded the Croix de Guerre by Charles de Gaulle in February of 1943.¹¹⁵ The second award Mihailovic received, was in March of 1948, the Legion of Merit award given to him, posthumously, by President Harry Truman. Both of these decorations have been touted as evidence of Mihailovic's anti-fascist merits by modern-day Serb nationalists and Chetnik sympathizers. It's important to contextualize both of these awards, however. Charles de Gaulle presented the Croix de Guerre to Mihailovic in February of 1943, three months before the British mission arrived to meet Tito's Partisans fighting the occupying forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to the Serbian historian Dubravka Stojanovic, de Gaulle was basing his assessment of Mihailovic off of British reports up until that point, which viewed him favorably.¹¹⁶ In the summer of 1943, after a British mission met with Tito in Bosnia, Allied support for Mihailovic began to diminish. By November of 1943, meeting in Teheran, Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt recognized Tito's Partisans as the sole resistance force in occupied Yugoslavia promising more military aid.¹¹⁷ Truman's award to Mihailovic in March of 1948 was for the rescue of hundreds of downed American airmen in Chetnik-held territories in 1944. By this

¹¹⁵ Drapac, Vesna. *Constructing Yugoslavia : A Transnational History*. European Studies Series. Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, 37.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Tomasevich, 316.

time, however, the war for Germany was going bad—Italy had capitulated the previous years and the Soviets had just beat back the Germans in Stalingrad. Mihailovic was looking for new allies. According to Tomasevich, “The Chetniks badly needed support from America, and naturally they tried not only to cultivate the American mission but also to make the greatest political and propaganda capital out of the rescue of the downed airmen.”¹¹⁸ For this, Truman awarded Mihailovic with a prestigious military award. However, the award was also given to Mihailovic, who was captured, tried, and executed in 1946 by the new Communist government in Yugoslavia, in the context of the Cold War. Tito was viewed in the West as Stalin’s most loyal adherent.¹¹⁹ Therefore, both of these awards by Western Allies have to be understood in these contexts and not selectively as is often portrayed by pro-Chetnik Serbs today.

Chetnik Collaboration

As previously mentioned, the initial informal agreement between Mihailovic and the Germans was formed in November of 1941. By the following year, collaboration took a more open form in which Chetnik units under different commanders actively participated in German offensives against Tito’s Partisans. What exactly informed Mihailovic’s decision to collaborate with Germans and fight the Partisans—who were also largely Serbs? The Serbian journalist, Miroslav Lazanski, assessed that Mihailovic viewed collaboration with the occupying forces as tactical and temporary necessity while he viewed Tito and the Partisans as a long-term threat in a post-WWII competition for governing

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 380.

¹¹⁹ Drapac, 57.

rights.¹²⁰ Others have argued that Mihailovic—as General Nedic in Belgrade—was concerned for the “biological preservation” of the Serbian people.¹²¹ Both of these assessments are probably true. In a December 1941 directive to his officers, Mihailovic outlined his post-war vision

(1)The struggle for the liberty of our whole nation under the scepter of His Majesty King Peter II; (2) the creation of a Great Yugoslavia and within it of a Great Serbia which is to be ethnically pure and is to include Serbia [meaning also Macedonia], Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Srijem, the Banat, and Backa; (3) the struggle for the inclusion into Yugoslavia of all still unliberated Slovene territories under the Italians and Germans (Triese, Gorizia, Istria, and Carinthia) as well as [of areas now under] Bulgaria, and northern Albania and Scutari; (4) the cleansing of the state territory of all national minorities and a-national elements; (5) the creation of contiguous frontiers between Serbia and Montenegro, as well as between Serbia and Slovenia by cleansing the Moslem population from Sandjak, and the Moslem and Croat populations from Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹²²

Furthermore, the bloody German reprisals during the summer of 1941 convinced many Serbs that fighting the Germans and its allies was futile and ultimately self-destructive. This belief was reinforced on October 21st and 22nd of 1941, when 2,000 people were executed in the Serbian town of Kraljevo, and another 3,000 in Kragujevac.¹²³ After the Partisans attacked German-stationed garrisons in these towns, Hitler ordered a severe punishment on the civilian population: For every German soldier or official killed, 100 Serb civilians were to be executed and 50 civilians for each wounded.¹²⁴ Most of the victims were women and children. One

¹²⁰ Lazanski, Miroslav. "Дража, у име народа." *Politika Online*. May 17, 2015. Accessed November 3, 2016. <http://www.politika.rs/scc/clanak/327817/Draza-u-ime-naroda>.

¹²¹ MacDonald, 142.

¹²² Tomasevich (2001), 170.

¹²³ Tomasevich (2001), 69.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

of the most famous post-war poets in Yugoslavia, Desanka Maksimovic, described the massacres in her poem *Krvava Bajka* (The Bloody Fairy Tail),

It was in the land of peasants
In the mountains of the Balkans
A company of schoolchildren
Died a martyr's death
In one day...
... Whole rows of students
took each other by the hand
and from their last class
marched peacefully towards slaughter
as if death was nothing.¹²⁵

Even before the war's end these images of Serbs slaughtered, not only by Germans, but also the Ustashe in the quisling Independent State of Croatia, had a powerful effect in perpetuating the "biological preservation" argument. Nevertheless, many Serbs did take up arms against occupying forces rationalizing that death can come either in their home village or in the mountains or forests with a guns in their hands.

The Communists did not sit idly between April and June of 1941—before the Germans attacked the Soviet Union. During this period, they organized street demonstrations and spread anti-German propaganda in order to portray themselves as a "patriotic force wholly committed to the defense of the country."¹²⁶ However, they were put in an awkward position due to Stalin's directives to communist parties in Europe not to militarily engage the Germans. Stalin's directive stemmed from the 1939 Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact—a non-

¹²⁵ Maksimovic, Desanka. "Krvava bajka - Serbo-Croatian Poetry Translation." Google Sites. Accessed November 10, 2016.

<https://sites.google.com/site/projectgoethe/Home/desanka-maksimovic/krvava-bajka>.

¹²⁶ Tosasevich (1975), 80.

aggression agreement between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. After Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union in June of 1941, however, the Yugoslav Communist Party (KPJ) under Josip Broz Tito quickly organized into an effective fighting force. Since 1921, the KPJ operated underground and clandestinely due to its banishment by Yugoslav monarchial authorities.¹²⁷ Ironically, two decades of being forced underground during peacetime proved valuable experience during wartime, as the KPJ quickly became a formidable fighting force almost immediately engaging in guerrilla warfare against the Germans, Italians, and other occupying forces.

Between July and September of 1941, Partisan forces carried out over 600 anti-German operations killing over forty German and Bulgarian soldiers.¹²⁸ Simultaneously, during the same period, the Chetnik's carried out 280 anti-German operations killing 22 German and Bulgarian soldiers.¹²⁹ As a result of disproportionate fighting against the Germans, Tito's Partisans liberated a large swath of territory in west-central Serbia and established a quasi republic with its capital the city of Uzice. This, perhaps more than the foreign occupation, alarmed the Chetniks. Mihailovic correctly perceived Tito's communist-led movement as a revolutionary force bent on replacing the old order. He had a "deep devotion to the dynasty to the Serbian-dominated political order in Yugoslavia..."¹³⁰ As a result, dozens of deaths occurred as there were clashes between the two competing groups. Tito and Mihailovic met personally in the fall of 1941 in an

¹²⁷ Banac, 5.

¹²⁸ Tomasevich (1975), 206.

¹²⁹ Ibid, 206.

¹³⁰ Ibid, 131.

attempt to find common ground and coordinate attacks against the occupiers. The talks resulted in minor agreements and major disagreements, namely over the issues of common operational staff and administration of temporary local governments.¹³¹ When Mihailovic reached a tacit understanding with the Germans in November of 1941, coupled with the openly declared support by the British, Mihailovic never again sought cooperation with the Partisans, and instead his Chetnik forces participated in German and Italian offensives against them.

The most well known Chetnik-German cooperative efforts came during German offensive codenamed *Operation Weiss*, lasting from January to April of 1943. The previous year, Tito's Partisans were beaten back from western Serbia into Bosnia and Herzegovina where they fought and evaded the Germans between 1942 and 1944 before going on the offensive. The Germans, Italians, and the Ustashe, had the Partisans encircled. According to Milazzo, "Mihailovic had his opportunity to participate in the destruction of the Partisan movement."¹³² In addition to the Italian, German, and Ustashe forces, some 17,000 Chetnik and gendarmerie auxiliary forces attacked Tito and the Partisans. *Operation Weiss* sought to push the Partisans from western Herzegovina eastward where they would be routed by Chetnik and Italian forces. The results for the Chetniks were devastating. According to Tomasevich,

The Partisans routed the Chetnik forces defending the left bank of the river and with their main force and sick and wounded crossed into an area considered Chetnik domain. These reverses were followed by a series of engagements in eastern Herzegovina and southeast Bosnia that took place between about March 20 and the end of April, in which the Partisans

¹³¹ Ibid, 147.

¹³² Milazzo, 112.

defeated some of the best Chetnik units and forced the remaining Montenegrin Chetniks back into Montenegro.¹³³

Following *Operation Weiss*, British support shifted from Mihailovic to Tito and in November of 1943, the Allied powers in Tehran recognized Tito as the sole anti-fascist movement in occupied Yugoslavia.

Jasenovac Concentration Camp and Socialist Yugoslavia

In 1988, Serbian journalist Slobodan Kljakic in his book, “Conspiracy of Silence: Genocide in the Independent State of Croatia and Concentration Camp Jasenovac, claimed that “the influence and instruments of the state and the institutions of the Catholic Church intertwined in the “conspiracy of silence” to cover up the Ustasa “crimes of genocide” committed during WWII.”¹³⁴ Kljakic argued that leading members of the Croatia’s Communist Party, namely Andrija Hebrang and Stevo Krajcic, ordered the demolition of the Jasenovac camp to destroy evidence.¹³⁵ A monument commemorating the victims was finally erected in 1966, after people in the region “started insisting that the camp and the memory on hundreds of thousands of victims be remembered in an appropriate manner.”¹³⁶ For Kljakic, the “conspiracy of silence” deprived the Serbs of justice. It wasn’t only journalists, politicians, and scholars who echoed these sentiments. The Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church also chimed in during the early 1990s,

Nothing can be worse than Jasenovac, where during four years of war, 700,000 people were killed...Jasenovac is the scene of the most important horrors committed against the Serbs, the place of...their annihilation, their

¹³³ Tomasevich (2001), 144.

¹³⁴ Neill, 133.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

extermination, their execution, their torture, where they suffered under a blood lust, the like of which could not be paralleled by the antichrist himself... This is the new crucifixion of Christ. This is the sin of sins.¹³⁷

How much merit was there to this claim of “conspiracy of silence”?

The most horrific and tragic episode in the Yugoslav theatre during WWII was the Ustashe murder and persecution of Serbs. As with the Bleiburg massacre, disagreements exist with the number of Serbs killed by the Ustashe. The numbers have ranged from 50,000—a claim made by Tadjman—to 1.7 million, claimed by Yugoslav Communists after the war.¹³⁸ For the communists, manipulation of numbers meant maximizing the value of war reparations from Germany. However, the Communist authorities were also concerned in resolving the national question, which proved more difficult after claiming such inflated numbers. Professor Ivo Banac defined the nationality problem in Yugoslavia as having to do “with the conditions (by definition inadequate) for the free and independent development of nations and national communities—inadequate, because were it otherwise the question would not exist... To this day, its [Yugoslavia’s] political and social life is dominated by a particularly complex, long-standing, and troublesome nationality problem.”¹³⁹ This nationality problem in the interwar period was mostly characterized by the conflict between Serbs and Croats. According to Banac, “the nationality question cannot be attributed to rivalries over distribution of wealth or to the choleric temperament of entire nations. On the contrary, mutually exclusive national ideologies have been most

¹³⁷ MacDonald, 163.

¹³⁸ MacDonald, 161.

¹³⁹ Banac, 12.

responsible for the tensions between particular nationalities.”¹⁴⁰ The Communists partially agreed with Banac’s assessment in that the national question existed due to ideological differences amongst nationalities, Serbs and Croats in particular. However, the new Marxist ruling elites insisted that class was also an important component of the conflict and that it would need to be addressed as part of the new state’s socialist agenda.

While the atrocities committed by the Ustashe against the Serbs in Jasenovac and elsewhere were well recorded, part of the mandatory education curriculum during the socialist period, monuments built for the victims, and even prosecuted, these facts do not figure into the collective memories of many Serbs today. One of the main reasons for this was due to the revisionist histories written beginning in the 1980s after Tito’s death. For example, Serb historian Svetozar Stojanovic claimed “The communist victor in Yugoslavia never seriously looked into Ustashi genocide as an issue or a problem. Instead of carrying out denazification through education, he limited himself to the liquidation of captured Ustashi.”¹⁴¹ Stojanovic goes on to say that the Ustashi genocide was covered up by “silence and repression.”¹⁴² Another Serb historian, Srdja Trifkovic, has argued that the edifice of Tito’s Yugoslavia was built on three myths: equal contribution to the Partisan victory by all ethnic groups, equal suffering by all national groups, and equating Ustasha crimes against Serbs with crimes

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 13.

¹⁴¹ Stojanović, Svetozar. *The Fall of Yugoslavia : Why Communism Failed*. Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1997, 77.

¹⁴² Ibid, 89.

committed by the Chetniks against non-Serbs.¹⁴³ However, how true are these claims?

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) Steven Spielberg Collection in Washington D.C. houses a compilation of video-recorded trials of Ustashe by the communist authorities in the aftermath of WWII.¹⁴⁴ Hundreds of Ustashe officers and politicians were put on public trials and prosecuted for their roles in the murder of Serb civilians. Some of the individuals were high ranking Ustasha officials, such as Mile Budak, the chief ideologue of the NDH. Osman Kulenovic, the vice president of the NDH. Juraj Rukavina, Ustasha military officer. Nikola Mandic, NDH's Prime Minister. Alojzije Stepinac, the Archbishop of Zagreb. With the exception of Stepinac, who due to international pressure and intervention from the Vatican was sentenced to house arrest, the overwhelming majority of the Ustashe leadership was tried, convicted, and executed. The leader of the Ustashe, Ante Pavelic and the commander of the Jasenovac camp, Maks Luburic, escaped through the so-called "rat lines."¹⁴⁵ Luburic is thought to have been killed in Spain in 1969 by the Yugoslav secret police—UDBA. Pavelic also temporarily escaped justice, first settling in South America, before making his way to Spain. In 1957, in Buenos Aires, a failed assassination attempt was made on his life by UDBA. Pavelic moved to Spain

¹⁴³ Trifkovic, Srdja. *The Krajina Chronicle : A History of Serbs in Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia*. Chicago ; Ottawa: Lord Byron Foundation for Balkan Studies, 2010, 207-208.

¹⁴⁴ "War crimes trials of Ustasa." United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. 2001. Accessed March 20, 2017.

https://www.ushmm.org/online/film/display/detail.php?file_num=4523.

¹⁴⁵ A system of escape routes for former Nazis and their collaborators fleeing Allied armies in the aftermath of WWII. Many Nazis and fascists made their way to Latin American countries but also some western countries.

afterward where he died from his wounds in 1959.¹⁴⁶ Trials of former Ustasha continued throughout the socialist period. In 1986 Andrija Artukovic¹⁴⁷, Minister of the Interior and Justice in the NDH, was extradited by Yugoslavia from the United States to face charges of war crimes from the Second World War. He was sentenced to death, however, in 1988 he died in prison of natural causes.

What about children's textbooks during the socialist period? How did they treat the Ustashe regime and the Jasenovac concentration camp? What about Yugoslavia's historians writing during this period? The Second World War during the socialist period was an integral part of the curriculum. It was a period from which Tito and Yugoslavia's Communist Party derived their legitimacy. The nation's myths were built around the heroism of the People's Liberation Movement (the Partisans) and its charismatic leadership—Tito, Milovan Djilas, Aleksandar Rankovic, Edvard Kardelj, and so on. Already in the second grade, children in Yugoslavia learned about WWII. Citing a textbook from 1984, while the textbook largely focuses on the Partisans, the Ustashe are said to have come to power with the "help from the occupiers."¹⁴⁸ In eighth grade, students are taught about the Second World War in greater detail. A textbook from 1980, begins its section about the Ustashe with discussion of Jasenovac, titled "Jasenovac—Death

¹⁴⁶ Matkovic, Hrvoje. "Povijest Nezavisne Drzave Hrvatske." [Www.hercegbosna.org](http://www.hercegbosna.org). 2002. Accessed March 9, 2017. http://www.hercegbosna.org/STARO/download-hr/Matkovic_Povijest_NDH.pdf, 108.

¹⁴⁷ Kaufman, Michael T. "AT COLLABORATOR'S TRIAL, YUGOSLAVS FACE THEIR PAST." *The New York Times*. April 15, 1986. Accessed March 29, 2017. <http://www.nytimes.com/1986/04/16/world/at-collaborator-s-trial-yugoslavs-face-their-past.html>.

¹⁴⁸ Djordje Knezevic, Zoran Peric, and Bogdan Smiljevic, *Istorija Sa Elementima Istorijskog Atlasa; za drugi razred usmerenog obrazovanja*, (Beograd: 1984), 94-95..

Camp.”¹⁴⁹ Jasenovac is put into context of other death camps during WWII such as Auschwitz.

Historians during the socialist period also addressed the atrocities committed by the Ustashe against the Serbs. One of the most prominent, Branko Petranovic, characterized Jasenovac in his history of Yugoslavia from 1918-1988 as following, “Serbs were killed in the most bestial manner: slaughtered like cattle, burned in their churches, thrown into pits. No distinction was made between men and women, young and old; those killed even included children.”¹⁵⁰ Petranovic goes on to accuse the Roman Catholic Church of acting as the spiritual guide of the NDH and acquiescing to anti-Serb, anti-Semitic, anti-Roma, Ustashe doctrine.¹⁵¹ Bosniak historian and WWII Partisan, Enver Redzic, writing on the atrocities committed by the Ustashe in eastern Herzegovina region, “the Ustasha committed numerous crimes and acts of genocide against the Serbian population in the districts of Nevesinje, Gacko, Bileca, and Ljubinje, as well as in other parts of eastern Herzegovina.”¹⁵² Redzic, citing a conversation about the Ustashe’s persecution of Serbs between Ante Pavelic, leader of the Ustashe, and Dzafer Kulenovic, Vice President of the NDH, “What can you do? This is a revolutionary time.”¹⁵³ According to Redzic, “The Ustashe revolution was rooted in genocide.”¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁹ Djordje Grubac, *Istorija Citanka za VIII razred osnovne škole*, (Beograd: 1980), 122.

¹⁵⁰ Petranović, Branko. *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918-1988*. Beograd: Nolit, 1988, 128.

¹⁵¹ Petranović, Branko. *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918-1978*. 2. Izd. ed. Beograd: Nolit, 1981, 207.

¹⁵² Redžić, Enver. *Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Second World War*. Cass Military Studies. London ; New York: Frank Cass, 2005, 74-75.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 75.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

What about Croat historians from the socialist period? Jozo Tomasevich, as cited in Chapter I, thoroughly documented and assessed Ustashe crimes against Serbs. Dusan Bilandzic, another prominent Croat historian, writes, “The most tragic aspect of the NDH regime was its racist politics. Those persecuted were Jews, Romas, and Serbs.”¹⁵⁵ Bilandzic stresses the three-pronged Ustasha policy towards Serbs—convert a third, expel a third, and liquidate a third.¹⁵⁶ Therefore, the current accusations by Serb nationalists and ruling elites that atrocities committed by the Ustashe against Serbs, or the horrors suffered by the victims in Jasenovac, were part of a “conspiracy of silence” are not based on historical evidence but the top-down manipulation of historical facts and memory.

What about the communist leadership of Yugoslavia? How did Tito, a Croat and Slovene, address the suffering of Serbs during WWII? Tito’s 1952 speech commemorating eleven years since the uprising of the Croatian people against fascism employed this delicate attempt to neutralize ethnic nationalism and replace it with a collective Yugoslav nationalism. Tito referred to the Ustashe leader Pavelic as a “butcher” a “beast” and a “traitor” who sold “our land” to occupiers and allowed a foreign king to govern.¹⁵⁷ Tito was referring to an agreement Pavelic made with Italians and Germans, in which Croatia would render much of the Dalmatian coast to Italy and would crown an Italian King as its figurehead.¹⁵⁸ In the same speech, Tito stated that this was not an attempt to

¹⁵⁵ Bilandzic, 124.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 125.

¹⁵⁷ Broz, Josip Tito. "Tito o Paveliću koji je utekao (govor iz 1952)." YouTube. March 30, 2009. Accessed December 19, 2016.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TTrwUdFuHrU>.

¹⁵⁸ Tomasevich (2001), 300.

exterminate one people by another, but instead the NDH concentration camps murdered both “progressive Serbs and Croats.”¹⁵⁹ He implored the people of Yugoslavia not to blame “an entire group of people” for the actions of a “small governing clique.”¹⁶⁰ In the last portion of the speech, Tito warned of reactionary elements and those “who look backward” in order to counter the “socialist revolution” and urged the citizens to “purge” these elements from society.¹⁶¹ He finished the speech by stating that “our most cherished values are the socialist revolution and the brotherhood and unity of our people” and to uphold these values is the duty of every member of Yugoslavia’s society.¹⁶² Tito’s 1952 speech was emblematic of how the new ruling communist government was going to address the national question—promote unity through loyalty to Yugoslavia and the socialist revolution.

In a 1961 speech, in which Tito expressed criticism towards the United States for allowing members of the Ustashe to participate in a memorial parade for fallen American soldiers during WWII. “Is there a greater irony than for the Ustashe to participate in a memorial parade for American fallen soldiers whom Pavelic’s cutthroats also fought against?” Tito rhetorically asked in the speech. “Can the 150,000 Ustashe who died fighting against our People’s Liberation Army be equated with fallen American soldiers...we cannot accept that the American people who lost their sons in the struggle against fascist and quisling armies, in which category Pavelic’s cutthroats fall under...cutthroats who

¹⁵⁹ Tito’s Speech (1952).

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

slaughtered hundreds of thousands of Serbs and Croat patriots...and for the Congressman who insists on [the participation of the Ustashe] in this military parade, ought to visit our country, and to visit at least one place where Ustasha death camps once stood, for example Jasenovac, and to find out what the Ustashe did during the war in our country.”¹⁶³ Tito and the communist leadership did attempt to resolve the national question based on the principles of “brotherhood and unity.” However, as shown in previous paragraphs, this was not at the expense of genuine Serb victimhood as some have claimed since Tito’s death.

The exploitation of these collective memories by new ruling elites served to mobilize the Serbs throughout Yugoslavia towards another confrontation with Croats. In this endeavor, a thorough revision of history was necessary. Elizabeth Jelin, argued that “What can change about the past is its *meaning*, which is subject to reinterpretations, anchored in intentions and expectations toward the future.”¹⁶⁴ Despite Yugoslavia’s communist government’s best attempts to create a cohesive and unitary state by cultivating a Yugoslav form of nationalism, it were the political, economic, and social realities of the 1980s and early 1990s that contributed to the dismembered of the state. The Milosevic rule intensified the need to reinterpret the past to accommodate a new sectarian, nationalist, and anti-communist ruling clique.

¹⁶³ TheCPS666. "Tito o ustaskoj emigraciji u SAD - Uzice 1961.wmv." YouTube. September 29, 2011. Accessed March 29, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NgM5YOYUhbU>.

¹⁶⁴ Jelin, Elizabeth, Rein, Judy, and Godoy-Anativia, Marcial. *State Repression and the Labors of Memory*. Contradictions (Minneapolis, Minn.) ; 18. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003, 26.

Milosevic's Yugoslavia (1987-2000)

The rise of Slobodan Milosevic coincided with the discontent in Kosovo. The bureaucratic favoritism within the Communist Party of Serbia propelled him to its helm. Milosevic, a former accountant, joined the Communist Party of Serbia in the early-1980s and quickly rose through its ranks. After a scuffle with police outside of the auditorium where Milosevic was speaking, an elderly Serb man asked him why was the police beating them; in a euphoric and equally arbitrary statement, Milosevic declared that, "no one will beat you again." He became a superstar overnight, as the sound bite was run throughout every television and media outlet. Soon he gained full control of Serbia and was recognized as the champion of Serb interests within federally structured Yugoslavia.

Milosevic, similar to Tadjman's approach towards the resurrection of the Ustashe movement in Croatia, tolerated and when politically necessary encouraged rehabilitation of the WWII Chetnik movement. He was somewhat of an enigma. He championed socialism, Serb nationalism, and the territorial preservation of Yugoslavia. During his rise to political prominence in the 1980s, he was referred to as "little Lenin" because of his "communist orthodoxy."¹⁶⁵ Coinciding with his rise, was the decline of the Yugoslav economy and intensification of ethnic discontent within the federal republics. In a US intelligence report from January of 1983, titled SNIE 15-83— "Yugoslavia: An Approaching Crisis?" the document looked at possible ways in which the USSR and the West could "influence the situation" in the post-Tito era. The document

¹⁶⁵ Ramet, Sabrina P. *Thinking about Yugoslavia*. Cambridge University Press, 2007, 163.

also stated that the "continuing need for Western financial support will maintain pressure in Yugoslavia to correct mismanagement practices and hold to more severe austerity goals."¹⁶⁶ By 1990 all financial support from the West had ceased. Another declassified CIA document, dated October of 1990 and titled NIE 15-90— "Yugoslavia Transformed," analyzed that within a year Yugoslavia will cease to function as a federal state and probably dissolve within two. In addition, it stated that "there is little the United States and its European allies can do to preserve Yugoslav unity."¹⁶⁷ However, between October of 1989 and January of 1990, the Polish government of Tadeusz Mazowiecki received over \$5 billion in emergency aid, credits, loans, and grants from European governments and additional funding from the World Bank and the IMF.¹⁶⁸ In October of 1989, the Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, Ante Markovic, went to Washington to meet with President Bush, Secretary of State Baker, and Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady. The meeting was an utter failure as the American hosts preferred to talk about Markovic's views on Gorbachev's reforms, not the desperately needed financial assistance.¹⁶⁹

The lack of financial assistance exhausted the Yugoslav economy and in turn, fueled discontent amongst the various ethnic groups. According to a study done in 1992 by Egon Zizimond, author of "The Collapse of the Yugoslav

¹⁶⁶ Central Intelligence Agency. Special National Intelligence Estimate 15-83: Yugoslavia, An Approaching Crisis, January 31, 1983, 647.

¹⁶⁷ Central Intelligence Agency. *National Intelligence Estimate 15-90: Yugoslavia Transformed*, October 18, 1990, pg. 656.

¹⁶⁸ Glaurdic, Josip. *Hour of Europe: Western Powers and the Breakup of Yugoslavia*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011, 68.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 67.

Economy,” over the course of 1990 manufacturing production fell by 10 percent, while the unemployment rate grew by the same number.¹⁷⁰ As a direct result of the economic downturn, the popular confidence in the government also declined. Milosevic used the debilitating conditions to his advantage by tapping into Serb nationalism. The conflicting memories about the Second World War were instrumental in this endeavor. The Serb survivors of the NDH genocidal regime were still alive and their “memory box” was waiting to be opened. Historian Steve Stern described the notion of memory as a closed box as a type of emblematic remembrance in which “violence as deeply troubling, divisive, and even dangerous affairs” is “best put away and forgotten.”¹⁷¹ As Professor John Fine assessed, “Ustashe rule left a legacy of bitterness and brutality that was brought to life again by participants in the strife that erupted in 1991 and 1992.”¹⁷² Everyone from Milosevic to the Serbian Orthodox Church to the media, participated in opening up this memory box.

During Tito’s lifetime, the communist authorities did all that they could to keep the “memory box” of WWII closed. After Tito’s passing in 1980, the new ruling elites did not possess the charisma and legitimacy that Tito commanded during his rule. The situation was further exacerbated by the fall of Communism throughout Eastern Europe. Yugoslavia stood as one of the last states on the continent with a communist government. Serb nationalists viewed communism as

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 121.

¹⁷¹ Stern, Steve J. *Reckoning with Pinochet : The Memory Question in Democratic Chile, 1989-2006*. Stern, Steve J., 1951- Memory Box of Pinochet's Chile ; Bk. 3. Y. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010., 111.

¹⁷² John R. Lampe, Russell O. Prickett, Ljubiša S. Adamović, *Yugoslav-American Economic Relations Since World War II* (Duke University Press, 1990), pg. 83.

antithetic to Serb national aspirations and began to resurrect the “Greater Serbia” rhetoric—which called for a Serbian state wherever the Serbian language was spoken.¹⁷³ One does not need be an expert on the region to understand why certain national groups who virtually spoke the same language, namely Croats and Bosniaks, would find this problematic and an act of aggression. Milosevic, however, was instrumental in portraying Serbs as victims—a favored cultural status—rather than aggressors.¹⁷⁴ Lenard Cohen, author of a biography on Milosevic, asserts that Serbs have a history of “collectivist nationalism” exciting the popular imagination “rooted in the mythic lore passed from one generation to another.”¹⁷⁵ He went on to say,

This historical experience of Serbs—especially under the long period of Turkish domination, and the nineteenth and twentieth century struggles with Austria-Hungary’s and Germany’s intervention in the Balkans—also created a deep sense of victimization in the Serbian political psyche and political culture.¹⁷⁶

Serbia’s new rulers were rather successful in exploiting what Cohen described as a deep sense of victimization. This was possible in a climate characterized by a genuine sense of confusion triggered by the ideological tug of war between ethnocentric nationalism and Yugoslav oriented socialism. According to Milosevic and his propaganda machine, Serbs were primarily victims of the “new world order” proclaimed by George H.W. Bush, which did not envision communism on Europe’s soil as part of it. However, to appease his

¹⁷³ Banac, 40.

¹⁷⁴ Linenthal, Edward Tabor. *The Unfinished Bombing : Oklahoma City in American Memory*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, 3.

¹⁷⁵ Ramet, 166.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

chauvinist base, Milosevic couldn't appear to be attempting to preserve the communist system either. After nearly fifty years of communism, Tito's Yugoslavia represented a *milieu de memoire*—a place of remembrance, a positive historical phenomenon, engraved in the collective memories of its citizens.¹⁷⁷ Therefore, in order to build their own legitimacy after leading the country into a civil war, it was politically strategic, no matter how cynical, for Serb nationalists to demonize Tito, demonize communism, and to demonize Yugoslavia under guise of asserting the collective interests of Serbs throughout the country.

Historical Revisionism in School Textbooks

The introduction of anti-Titoism, anti-communism, and anti-Yugoslavism into Serbian nomenclature also coincided with the rise of Milosevic. Towards end of the 1980s, Professor of sociology at the University of Belgrade, Todor Kuljic found the proliferation of terms and phrases such as *komunjare* (a term for a communist with a negative connotation), “red bandits,” “communist terror,” “fifty-years of [living in] darkness,” “[communism] as an evil that befell us,” “despot Tito,” “communist despotism,” “bloodthirsty Tito,” and so on.¹⁷⁸ All of these terms and phrases became part of the new lingo employed by new conservative ruling elites of Serbia, which were soon introduced into school textbooks. However, the school curriculum Tito's time lionized the communist Partisans and Tito as the sole anti-fascists in Yugoslavia during WWII. Tito, who stood up to Mussolini, Hitler, and eventually Stalin, was an undisputed anti-fascist

¹⁷⁷ Manojlović-Pintar. "O Revizijama, Dijalozima I Kulturi Sećanja." *Tokovi Istorije*, no. 1-2 (2009): 207-13, 207.

¹⁷⁸ Kuljic, Todor. "Tito U Novom Srpskom Poretku Sećanja." *Sociologija* 45, no. 2 (2003): 97-116, 100.

and anti-Stalinist. Changing this narrative meant the de-Titoization of Serbia. It also meant the de-antifascization of Serbia, for it was under communist symbols that Serbia earned that title during WWII.¹⁷⁹ Kuljic described what was happening in Serbia during this period as a “climate of anti-communism” where fascism became a preferred alternative.¹⁸⁰ Perhaps was this nowhere more apparent than in children’s textbooks.

In school textbooks throughout the Socialist period, Tito was lauded as an emblematic symbol of anti-fascism and anti-Stalinism at home and abroad. The mere fact that over 120 nations were represented at Tito’s funeral in 1980 cemented Tito’s legacy as a revered personality in the 20th century.¹⁸¹ During the same period, school children learned of the anti-fascist struggle of Tito’s Partisans and the treachery of the “domestic collaborators”—Ustashe and the Chetniks, amongst others. Under Milosevic’s rule, however, Mihailovic’s Chetniks began to be rehabilitated. Historians loyal to the Serb nationalist cause were given the opportunity to rewrite the textbooks in order to create a new master narrative built on anti-Titosim, anti-communism, and anti-Yugoslavism. Elizabeth Jelin, analyzing cases throughout Latin America, found this to be a common type of collaboration between ruling elites and professional historians. She asserts, “In this process of construction of the master narratives of modern nation-states, professional historians have had a central role. Official master narratives are written by professional historians whose link to power is crucial to their task.”¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ridley, Jasper Godwin. *Tito*. London: Constable, 1994.19.

¹⁸² Jelin, 28.

Serb historian, Dubravka Stojanovic, in assessing the textbooks during Milosevic's rule, beginning in 1993, found the most historical revisionism was devoted to the Second World War.¹⁸³

At first, both the Chetnik and Partisan movements were described as anti-fascist. One of the most interesting examples Stojanovic found is how by the end of the 1990s, the role of the Partisans in the struggle against fascism becomes diminished. The first few pages of the eight-grade textbooks were solely devoted to Mihailovic and the Chetniks. Only after several pages students finally learned about the Partisans.¹⁸⁴ The picture of Tito was found eight pages into the lecture on WWII in Yugoslavia.¹⁸⁵ Another interesting detail Stojanovic found in the school textbooks were the biographical sidebars of Tito and Mihailovic located in the margins. Tito was characterized as the “notorious agent of the Comintern”¹⁸⁶ while Mihailovic was described without such negative connotations, as someone who was educated in France, and who enjoyed French literature.¹⁸⁷

The issue of Chetnik collaboration was addressed by not addressing it. The authors of the textbooks asserted that Partisans attacked the Chetnik's first in the summer of 1941 thus igniting a Serb civil war.¹⁸⁸ As Stojanovic points out, the fact that it was the Partisans who first liberated large swaths of territory in Serbia and who were subsequently attacked by both Germans and Chetniks, forcing them

¹⁸³ 1941, 158.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 160.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Third Communist International (1919-1943), communist advocacy organization.

¹⁸⁷ 1941, 160.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

to flee to Bosnia, is completely omitted.¹⁸⁹ The reinterpretation of *Operation Weiss* was especially problematic. Over 15,000 Chetniks participated in a German-led offensive against Tito's Partisans. In order to reconcile this inconvenient historical fact, the authors of the textbook stated the following: "This is how began the most dramatic moment between the two armies and the moral dilemma faced by the Chetnik commanders who feared for the civilians in case of the crucial battle. Partisans commanders did not face such moral dilemmas."¹⁹⁰ The subsequent attack by the Chetniks and Italians on the colonies of wounded Partisans was also omitted.¹⁹¹

After the fall of Milosevic in October of 2000, Mihailovic and Tito no longer sat on equal footing in school textbooks. Milosevic's paradoxical ideological tendency towards both communism and chauvinist nationalism tolerated both movements. By 2002, however, a complete revision of history was instituted in Serbia's school curriculum in which semantics played an important role. General Milan Nedic, quisling leader of Serbia under German occupation, was described as someone who tried to "preserve the biological substance of the Serbian people."¹⁹² Dimitrije Ljotic, a self-proclaimed fascist whose volunteer units worked directly under German SS units, was described as a "fanatic" whose fanaticism "even exceeded that of the communists."¹⁹³ The chief of the secret police under General Nedic, Dragi Jovanovic, is only Dragi Jovanovic. Gestapo is

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 161.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid, 159.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

only Gestapo. One of the most notorious agents of Jovanovic's secret police, Bosko Bcarevic, is only Bosko Bcarevic. There were no adjectives added, as was the case with Tito when he was referred to as a "notorious agent of the Comintern," to any of these individuals. Conversely, adjectives with negative connotations are ascribed to institutions and organizations from Yugoslavia's communist era. What came out of this historical revisionism was that student textbooks have become fields on which politically motivated historical manipulation of the past would occur.

In addition to changes in the nomenclature when discussing the Second World War, beginning in 2009, resources have been spent to find the remains of Mihailovic so that a proper commemorative site could be built. This has been in concert with a general effort in Serbia to commemorate "victims of communism." However, "victims of communism" are not the actual victims who were imprisoned as suspected Stalinists after the 1948 Tito-Stalin split.¹⁹⁴ No, they are individuals like Mihailovic and the 146 Chetniks killed by Partisans between 1944 and 1945.¹⁹⁵ How strange would it be for anti-communist Serb nationalists to be mourning Stalinist victims of Tito? This, nevertheless, has been a confusing period for the Serb general public, especially the generations who were educated

¹⁹⁴ The Tito-Stalin split of 1948 was a result of a series of Soviet attempts to undermine Yugoslavia's independence, such as planning to exploit Yugoslavia for its natural resources. For example, Churchill and Stalin, at a meeting at Teheran in 1944, had agreed on a "fifty-fifty" deal that would split Yugoslavia in two zones of influence after the war. Tito, however, came to power without Soviet assistance, and he refused to accept the role of a satrap in his own country. On June 28, 1948, therefore, Stalin expelled the Yugoslav Communist Party from the Cominform (Communist Information Bureau).

¹⁹⁵ Stanković. "SRPSKA MEDIJSKA KULTURA SEĆANJA." *Tokovi Istorije*, no. 1-2 (2006): 265-83, 275.

during Tito's time. For this reason, it was important for the ruling elites to delegitimize Tito, communism, and Yugoslavia and propagate, as James Young called it, an "illusion of common memory."¹⁹⁶ In 2004, the Serbian Parliament voted to recognize Mihailovic's Chetniks as an Allied army committed to fighting against the Axis Powers. This was contrary to the decision made in Teheran between Allied Powers in 1944, to the 1945 Nuremberg statute Law Number 10, and the 1946 United Nations General Assembly Resolution 39, all of which recognized the Partisans as the sole resistance force in Yugoslavia.¹⁹⁷ The rehabilitation of Mihailovic, which was completed in Serbia's Supreme Court in 2015, when the justices found that Mihailovic was not offered a fair trial and thus his execution in 1946 was illegal.¹⁹⁸ Those championing Mihailovic's cause were vindicated in their assertion that he died a martyr's death. Therefore, Serbia's ruling elites have been largely successful in recreating the collective memories of people through a concerted de-Titoization campaign, rewriting history books, and eventually rehabilitating quislings from the Second World War.

¹⁹⁶ Young, James. "The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning." *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 4, no. 1 (1989), 6.

¹⁹⁷ Lazanski.

¹⁹⁸ Lazanski, Miroslav. "Дража, у име народа." *Politika Online*. May 17, 2015. Accessed November 3, 2016. <http://www.politika.rs/scc/clanak/327817/Draza-u-ime-naroda>.

CHAPTER III

Introduction— History of Bosnia from Antiquity to the End of WWII

In contrast to its neighbors Croatia and Serbia, the Second World War for Bosnia and Herzegovina was not marked by one particular traumatic event. Instead, it was the setting for bitter and prolonged intercommunal fighting amongst the three dominant ethno-religious groups—the Serbs, Croats, and Bosnian Muslims, or Bosniaks. The post-War communist authorities attempted to unify the different ethno-religious groups by constructing a shared history of anti-fascist struggle against the occupiers and their collaborators. However, after the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, and the intense sectarian war within Bosnia and Herzegovina itself, three mutually exclusive narratives, along ethno-religious lines, have developed to reinterpret the Second World War in former Yugoslavia. These narratives have inevitably formed dissonant memories amongst the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The country's political elites have harnessed the polarizing effects of these memories into political capital, promising that each ethno-religious group's interests can be best served in a weak and decentralized state. The goal has thus been the marginalization of the common Yugoslav history and its communist past.¹⁹⁹ This, however, has resulted in the very palpable possibility of the disintegration of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This chapter will briefly explore the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina up until WWII, followed by an overview of the War, and lastly the effects of WWII on the

¹⁹⁹ Sokol, Anida. "War Monuments: Instruments of Nation-building in Bosnia and Herzegovina." *Politicka Misao* 51, no. 5 (2014): 105-26, 109.

conflict of the 1990s and the reemergence of fascist ideologies in the country since.

The dissonant memories and narratives that have developed since the 1990s amongst the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina have their roots in the Second World War. For the Serbs, the conflict in Bosnia (1992-1995) was a civil war which is referred to in official discourse as the “The Defense of the Fatherland War” (*odbrambeno-otadžbinski rat*). Furthermore, The Defense of the Fatherland War is articulated by Serbs as a continuation of Serb wars of “liberation” in both World Wars. Monuments to fallen Serb soldiers of the 1990s are being built throughout the Bosnian Serb entity within Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Srpska, next to the monuments of the victims of fascism from WWII. Therefore, the anti-fascist struggle during WWII is morally equalized with the conflict of the 1990s.

For Bosnian Croats, similarly to Croats of Croatia, the Second World War prior to the Bleiburg massacre is best understood through the phenomenon which David Rieff called “too much memory.”²⁰⁰ For Croats of both Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, there has been a dual process of either promoting collective amnesia in regards to WWII because of their Ustasha past, or to a lesser degree outright glorification of it. This has primarily manifested itself after the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, where Partisan monuments have been destroyed for two reasons: they represent the Yugoslav common past and thus

²⁰⁰ Rieff, David. "The cult of memory: when history does more harm than good | David Rieff." *The Guardian*. March 02, 2016. Accessed March 29, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/mar/02/cult-of-memory-when-history-does-more-harm-than-good>.

according to the current narrative, represent Serb hegemony over Croats, and secondly, they remind of the notorious legacy of the Ustasha regime.²⁰¹

In the view of the Bosniaks, they are the defenders of Bosnia's territorial integrity against Serb and Croat aggression and the country's centuries long tradition of coexistence amongst the various ethno-religious groups. In relation to identity building, however, the conflict of the 1990s has had a much more profound impact on the Bosniak community than WWII did. After the Second World War, Bosnia's Muslims could identify themselves as Croatian Muslims, Serbian Muslims, or Yugoslavs. In the 1960s, they were recognized as a separate ethnic group and finally in 1971 as a nation called Muslims.²⁰² The term Bosniak, although it has been used interchangeably throughout the last several centuries with "Bosnian"—all inhabitants of Bosnia—became an ethno-religious term in the 1990s, referring specifically to Bosnian Muslims..²⁰³ Nevertheless, WWII has played an important role in the narrative of Bosniaks as well, framing the conflict with Bosniaks as the victims, and drawing continuity between themselves and victims of fascism from WWII.

The memory of the Second World War played a crucial role in fueling the conflict of the 1990s and mobilizing the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina into polarized ethno-religious camps. According to Sokol, the "suppressed memories from that period [Second World War] fueled hate and legalized the use of force at the beginning of the 1990s."²⁰⁴ Therefore, for the purpose of this chapter, it will

²⁰¹ Sokol, 117.

²⁰² Ibid, 112.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid, 122.

be necessary to delve into the complex history of Bosnia and Herzegovina prior to WWII, and how the fratricidal conflict that arose during WWII contributed to the revamping of nationalism in the 1990s. Furthermore, the chapter will look at how the memories of WWII have been subject to historical revisionism, as in Croatia and Serbia, in order to allow political elites to maintain power.

History, Geography, and Demographics

In the late sixth century, tribes of Slavic peoples made their way to the Balkan peninsula. As the Serb and Croat tribes settled in roughly where their current boundaries lie, so did Slavic tribes in the areas of modern-day Bosnia and Herzegovina. The country's name denotes two geographical locations. According to Fine, "In the early Middle Ages the region was divided into small units or countries; and the one centered around the source of the Bosna River was called the county of Bosnia."²⁰⁵ The Herzegovina region is not clearly defined but it is generally accepted that the region is the southern portion of the country—from Livno in the northwest to Trebinje in the south and from Gacko in the east to Croatia's Dalmatia region in the west (See Map 3.1).²⁰⁶ In the center of the region is its biggest city, Mostar. Because of the Serbian influence in Herzegovina between 1168 and 1326, the region largely adhered to the Serbian Orthodox Church.²⁰⁷ In fact, the name Herzegovina comes from the term *herceg*, or duke. The term was the title of St. Sava founder of the autocephalous Serbian Orthodox

²⁰⁵ Fine, 13.

²⁰⁶ McArthur, James R. "Herzegovina 1991." Map. www.wikipedia.com. 2016. Accessed March 20, 2017.

<https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a4/Herzegovina1991.png>.

²⁰⁷ Ibid, 18.

Church in the early 13th century. On the other hand, the Bosnia region to the north was largely Catholic due to Hungarian influence.²⁰⁸ As a result of Hungarian interference in Bosnian affairs, Bosnians rejected the Hungarian-appointed Bishop in the 13th century, thus severing ties with the Roman Catholic Church.²⁰⁹ Subsequently, Bosnians established an independent Church, known as the Bosnian Church.²¹⁰ However, according to Fine, the Bosnian Church “retained its basic Catholic theology throughout the Middle Ages.”²¹¹ The establishment of the independent Bosnian Church played an important role in the nation-building of Bosniaks, whose intellectuals during the 1990s asserted that because Bosnia had an independent Church during the Middle Ages, they were neither Croats nor Serbs, and are in fact the “oldest native inhabitants of the country.”²¹²



²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid, 19.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

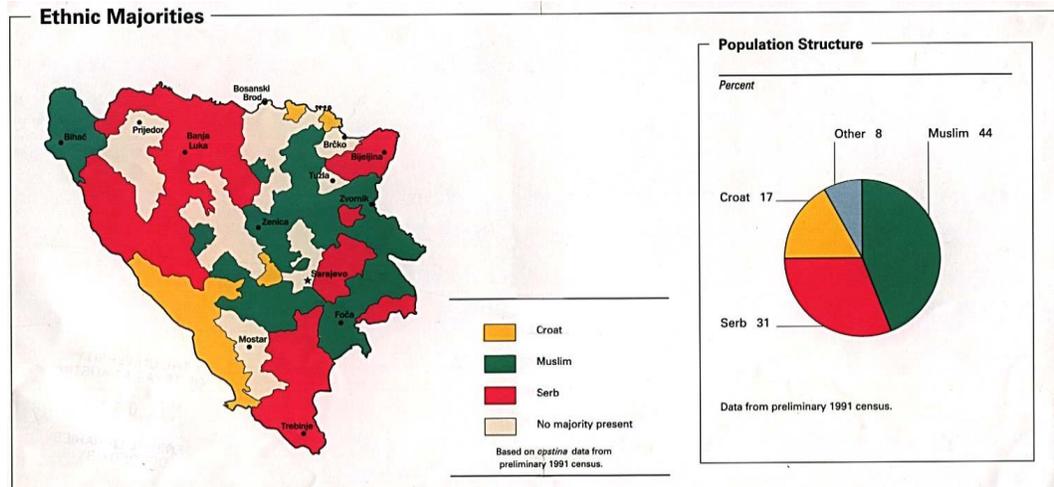
²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Sokol, 111.

As the least homogenous country in former Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Herzegovina has held an important role as a symbol of ethno-religious coexistence (See Map 3.2). It was often referred to as a miniature version of Yugoslavia. In his appropriately titled book, “Bosnia and Herzegovina: A Tradition Betrayed,” John Fine asserts “...Bosnia – for centuries a pluralistic society – has shown over these centuries that pluralism can successfully exist even in a Balkan context.”²¹³ In 1931, the last census in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia before WWII found that the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina was just over 2.2 million. Just over a million of this was comprised of Orthodox Christians, or today’s Bosnian Serbs (44%), Muslims—today Bosniaks—were just under 720,000 (31%), and Catholics—today Bosnian Croats—were just under 550,000 (23.5%).²¹⁴ In 1991, the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina was around 4.3 million, with 43% being Bosniaks, 31% Serbs, and 17% Croats. The most recent census conducted in 2013, found the total population at 3.8 million, with Bosniaks constituting 50%, Serbs 30%, and Croats 15%. The other 5% includes the Roma people, Albanians, and other nationalities from neighboring countries.

²¹³ Fine, 9.

²¹⁴ Statistika. "POPIS STANOVNIŠTVA 1991 I STARIJI – Stranica 3 – Federalni zavod za statistiku." POPIS STANOVNIŠTVA 1991 I STARIJI – Stranica 3 – Federalni zavod za statistiku. Accessed March 29, 2017. <http://fzs.ba/index.php/category/popis-stanovnistva-1991-i-stariji/page/3/>.



(Map 3.2 Denoting the ethnic diversity in Bosnia and Herzegovina based on the 1991 census)

Finally, in terms of geography, Bosnia and Herzegovina borders the Dalmatian coast and the Dinaric Alps to its west. The river Sava constitutes Bosnia's northern border with Croatia. To the east, the river Drina constitutes Bosnia's border with Serbia. And to the south is Montenegro, with a mountainous terrain dividing the two countries. Because of the mountainous terrain, Bosnia and Herzegovina before the 20th century subscribed to localism.

This localism characterized Bosnia and Herzegovina throughout the Ottoman period. Muslim Turks conquered Bosnia in 1463—a decade after the fall of Constantinople, and nearly one-hundred years after the Serbs were defeated at the Battle of Kosovo in 1389. While the Ottomans privileged Muslim rulers over Christians in Bosnia, those Muslims rulers maintained a significant degree of independence from Istanbul, even rebelling on several occasions against the Sultan. The Islamization of Bosnia, however, was a prolonged process. It was not until the 17th century, almost two hundred years after the Ottoman conquest, that Bosnia became a Muslim-majority entity, which lasted only briefly due to Serb

migrations into the territory in the beginning of the 18th century.²¹⁵ Bosnian Serbs today view this period in the country's history as when their fellow Christians "betrayed" their faith and converted to Islam. However, Ottoman rule provided many benefits certainly to Muslims converts but also to non-Muslims.

In his book on Bosnia's history, John Fine described the socioeconomic benefits of the Ottoman Empire to non-Muslims. He tells the story of the Ottoman Grand Vizier and his contribution to his native town in Bosnia. Made famous by the Nobel Laureate Ivo Andric in his book "The Bridge on Drina," the bridge itself was built in the 16th century by the Ottoman Grand Vizier Mehmet Sokullu (Sokolovic). Born in Visegrad, a town in eastern Bosnia on the Drina river, Mehmet came from an Orthodox Christian family. As a child he was taken away from his parents in the Ottoman child levy program called the *devshirme*.²¹⁶ He was educated in Istanbul, converted to Islam, and received his military training under the Ottomans. Making his way all the way up to the position of Grand Vizier, equivalent to a prime minister, he commissioned a project to build a bridge near his hometown on the Drina river, connecting Serbia and Bosnia. Furthermore, he restored the Serb Orthodox Christian Patriarchate of Pec after the Ottomans moved it to Ohrid (in modern-day Macedonia) in the 15th century under the authority of the Greek Patriarch in Istanbul. The first three patriarchs were drawn from Mehmet's family, his brother Makarije, and then his town nephews, Antonije and Gerasim.²¹⁷

²¹⁵ Fine, 43.

²¹⁶ Ibid, 45.

²¹⁷ Ibid, 47.

By the 19th century, the *devshirme* system was abolished and replaced by a universal military conscription system based on European models. The 19th century in the Ottoman Empire also witnessed the rise of nationalism in the Balkan provinces. Bosnia and Herzegovina became a prized territory upon which Serb and Croat nationalists began to lay their claims. Beginning in the 1840s, Serb and Croat intellectuals and politicians began advocating irredentist views towards the Ottoman provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Ilija Grasanin, one of the most influential Serb politicians in the 19th century, sketched an ambitious program of territorial acquisition for Serbia called *nacertanije*. The Plan, as it was known, “was informed by a historicist approach, recalling the supposed halcyon days and territorial boundaries of Tsar Dusan’s medieval Serbian empire, and by a linguistic-cultural criterion.”²¹⁸ According to Professor Ivo Banac,

Grasanin believed that Serbia’s national mission was to complete the liberating task initiated by the Serbian Revolution [against the Ottomans in 1804 and again in 1815]. The frontiers of new Serbia had to be extended to all areas where the Serbs lived...hence the responsibility of ‘liberation and unification’ of all Serbs into a single Serbian state gradually became the master principle of Serbian policy.²¹⁹

Another irredentist, Ante Starcevic (1823-1896), the primary Croat intellectual of the 19th century, took Grasanin’s ideas even further. He produced a Great Croatia national ideology, which asserted that “Croatia extended from the Alps to the Drina, from Albania to the Danube.”²²⁰ In his view, Slovenes were “Highland Croats,” and the Serbs as an “unclean race” who derive their name from the Latin phrase *servus* (servant). Furthermore, Serbs were also Croats who converted to

²¹⁸ Glenny, 46.

²¹⁹ Banac, 83.

²²⁰ Ibid, 86.

Orthodox Christianity after the expansion of Imperial Russia into the Balkans by Peter the Great. As for Bosnian Muslims, they too were viewed as Croats. In fact, they were viewed as Croatian “flowers” because they were Croatian and Catholic before they became Muslims, and therefore the “purest of all Croats.”²²¹ The foundations for territorial pretention of Serbia and Croatia towards Bosnia and Herzegovina were laid in the 19th century and would continue to be an integral part of their foreign policy objectives in the following century.

The Ottomans ruled Bosnia until 1878, when the Austro-Hungarian Empire took over the administrative work of the region and finally annexed the territory in 1908. By the time the Hapsburgs replaced the Ottomans, Bosnia and Herzegovina had a significant Muslim population. The greatest number of converts, according to Hupchick, came from former adherents to the Roman Catholic faith.²²² He asserts that this was the case due to the large presence of Roman Catholic populations across the Empire’s frontiers in Central Europe. The Ottomans viewed the Catholic population as potential fifth column and exerted the greatest amount of pressure on those populations near the frontiers to convert.²²³

Bosnia’s Muslim population felt pressure from these two competing and irreconcilable ideologies. During the 19th century, religious affiliation became synonymous with ethnic identification. If one was an Orthodox Christian, she was perceived a Serb. If one was a Roman Catholic, she was also a Croat. This left

²²¹ Tomasevich, 466.

²²² Hupchick, Dennis P. *The Balkans: From Constantinople to Communism*. 1st ed. New York: Palgrave, 2002, 155.

²²³ Ibid.

Bosnian Muslims in a peculiar position. Some Bosnian Muslims certainly bought into the Greater Serbian and Great Croatian nationalist ideologies. According to Tomasevich, "From the late nineteenth century up to the Second World War, the Serbs of Bosnia and Herzegovina had a plurality of 43 to 44 percent of the total population, in part because a small percent of Muslims declared themselves as Serbs from the beginning of this century."²²⁴ However, for the vast majority of Bosnia's Muslims, the rivalry between Croatian and Serbian claims was "more irritating than meaningful."²²⁵ They viewed themselves as a people who spoke the same language as Serbs and Croats, who shared the same Slavic roots, but who were a separate people due to their Islamic faith.²²⁶ The prominent 19th Bosniak intellectual, Safet-beg Basagic, addressed the phenomena of Serbianization and Croatization of Bosnia in a 1891 poem:

You know Bosniak, it wasn't too long ago
I swear by this Earth, not even fifteen summers ago
When in our honorable Bosnia
And courageous Herzegovina
From Trebinje to Brods' doors
There were neither Serbs nor Croats
But today, through their pronouncements
Both foreigners are spreading, as if in their own homes,
Both guests have come here
To take away our most cherished wealth
Our honorable and dear name²²⁷

It is important to note here that Basagic was writing after the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Austro-Hungarian empire in accordance with the

²²⁴ Ibid, 467.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Bašagić, Safvet-beg, and Muhsin Rizvić. *Izabrana Djela*. Biblioteka Kulturno Naslijeđe. Sarajevo: "Svjetlost," 1971.

decisions made at the Congress of Berlin in 1878.²²⁸ Bosnia's new administrator, Benjamin von Kallay, viewed the "predatory ideologies of Croat and Serb nationalism" as a threat to Vienna's position in the province.²²⁹ He encouraged the Muslim, Orthodox, and Catholic communities to embrace the Bosniak identity. Kallay's policy of fostering a distinct Bosnian identity was met with hostility from all communities primarily because it was viewed as an Austrian policy. The only significant element at this time to embrace the Bosniak identity were the well established and often conservative landowners and clerics.²³⁰ For Croats and especially Serbs, those Bosnian Muslims who insisted on a separate identity were referred to as Turks—an identity that some Bosnian Muslims certainly embraced. The categorization of Bosnia's Muslims as Turks, however, came to be a derogatory term during the Second World War and even during the conflict in the 1990s, used by Serbs to describe their Bosnian Muslim neighbors.

In the aftermath of WWI, the Yugoslav idea prevailed and a unitary state named Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was realized in 1918 under the rule of Serbian King Alexander II. The following year, Bosnian Muslims established the Yugoslav Muslim Organization—their main political party during the interbellum. According to Fine, "The YMO was led by middle-class, urban

²²⁸ In 1875, an uprising erupted in Herzegovina led by Christian peasants against their Muslim landlords. Soon after, Serbia and Montenegro joined the fighting on the side of the Christian peasants. The Ottoman Empire was able to repulse the Serb and Montenegrin armies, however, in 1877 Russian troops entered the war, and routed the Ottoman forces all the way to Istanbul. They imposed the San Stefano Treaty which created a large Bulgaria loyal to Russia. In response the Great Powers convened a congress in the German city of Berlin in June of 1878. Austria-Hungary was given the authority to administer and occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina.

²²⁹ Glenny, 271.

²³⁰ *Ibid*, 272.

Muslims such as civil servants, merchants, journalists, and other professionals; however, the party was also very effective in promoting the interests of the Muslim landowning class.”²³¹ Bosnian Serbs were split between Serbian Radicals, Democrats, and the Serbian Agrarian Party. Bosnian Croats were most inclined to support the Croatian Peasant Party. Bosnian Muslims enjoyed the least fracturing in terms of politics vis-à-vis Serbs and Croats. However, the question of identity was still a pertinent issue. For example, Mehmed Spaho, the leader of the YMO, refused to declare himself as either a Serb or a Croat. His brother Fehim, however, who was the religious leader of Bosnia’s Muslim community (1938-1942), declared himself a Croat. Spaho’s other brother, Mustafa, declared himself a Serb.²³² With the rise of fascism throughout Europe in the 1930s, Bosnia and Herzegovina was out about to experience one of the bloodiest chapters in its history due to a divisive identity crisis and the competing nationalist claims from its neighbors.

Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Second World War

The Nazi war machine destroyed the royalist Yugoslavia in April of 1941 after two brief weeks of resistance put up by the Yugoslav army. Hitler partitioned Yugoslavia into several entities under Axis supervision. Almost the entirety of Bosnia and Herzegovina was incorporated into the newly created Independent State of Croatia (NDH) under the fascist Ustasha regime. The population of NDH was 6.3 million, of which 2 million were Serbs, 750,000 Bosnian Muslims, and another 30,000 were Jews. Fine writes, “The Ustashe

²³¹ Fine, 125.

²³² Tomasevich, 467.

adopted a tripartite strategy toward the Serbs living under their rule, aiming to eliminate the Serbian nationality through extermination, deportation, and conversion to Catholicism.”²³³ In his own words, the chief ideologue of the Ustasha, Mile Budak, laid out this policy, ““We shall kill one part of the Serbs, we shall transport another, and the rest of them will be forced to embrace the Roman Catholic religion. This last part will be absorbed by the Croatian element.””²³⁴ The Jewish population of NDH was almost entirely destroyed. The Ustashe policy towards Bosnian Muslims, however, was not aimed at conversion or destruction. NDH’s Minister of Education declared that the state was of two religions, Islam and Catholicism.²³⁵ In addition to the genocidal campaign of the Ustasha against Serbs, Jews, and Roma populations, WWII was marked by another intercommunal conflict—that between the communist Partisans and the Royalist Chetniks. These two conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina resulted in the entity claiming a disproportionate number of casualties in the Balkan theatre during WWII.

The intensity of the intercommunal fighting in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the Second World War traumatized an entire generation growing up in socialist Yugoslavia. One of the leading historians on Bosnia and Herzegovina writes,

...given the persecution suffered by the Serbs at the hands of the Ustashes—the Croat and Muslims quislings who ruled Bosnia-

²³³ Fine, 139.

²³⁴ Hoare, Marko Attila. *Genocide and Resistance in Hitler's Bosnia : The Partisans and the Chetniks, 1941-1943*. A British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship Monograph. Oxford ; New York: Published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 2006, 27.

²³⁵ Fine, 142.

Hercegovina on behalf of the Nazis—they [the Serbs] argued that it was unreasonable to expect Serbs to live in an independent Bosnia-Hercegovina in which they would once again be dominated by a Muslim and Croat majority. In this way, a contemporary debate of the national question – multiethnic Bosnia versus Greater Serbia – was related back to World War II.²³⁶

During the 1990s, WWII was still very much part of the preserved collective memories of both those who experienced it and the post-War generation.

According to Susan Kaiser, collective memories pass down to future generations in three different ways; intergenerational dialogue, education, and communication media.²³⁷ Depending on the socioeconomic and political nature of a given society, sometimes all of these three mediums have different conceptions of collective memories and varying understandings of what the truth is. Moreover, in absence of centralized authority, competing collective memories tend to develop. Indeed, WWII is often referred to as the prequel for the sectarian fighting that led up to the break up of Yugoslavia during the 1990s. Nevertheless, despite the genocidal nature of the fighting in Bosnia during WWII, one faction—the Communist Partisans—were able to unite an often xenophobic and conservative peasantry into a genuine multiethnic movement with the goal of liberation.

Bosnian Muslims During WWII

Chapters I and II addressed the atrocities committed by the Ustasha regime against the Serb, Jewish, and Roma populations, and the Chetnik policies towards non-Serbs. Therefore, this section will discuss the relationship between

²³⁶ Hoare, 2.

²³⁷ Kaiser, Susana. *Postmemories of Terror : A New Generation Copes with the Legacy of the "Dirty War"*. Palgrave Studies in Oral History. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, 3.

Bosnian Muslims and the Ustashe, Chetniks, Partisans, and its relevance to the conflict of the 1990s. Bosniak historian Sacir Filandra states that on the eve of WWII, the Bosniak community was politically isolated from its neighbors.²³⁸ He argues that Bosniaks did not fight for their own state, national interests, nor religion, but their “physical preservation.”²³⁹ This took form in four different ways as explained by Filandra. One part of the Bosniak community aligned itself with the NDH’s Ustashe regime to prevent the “Greater Serbian” ambitions. Second orientation of the Bosniak community gravitated towards Serb interests. When the war broke out in 1941, Bosniak intellectuals from Belgrade made contact with Mihailovic’s Chetniks and affirmed their support for Serb-Muslim cooperation. During the joint German-Italian-Chetnik offensive against the Partisans in 1943, 16 Muslim formations fought with the Chetniks against Tito’s Partisans.²⁴⁰ One of the most outspoken Bosniak intellectuals from this period who advocated a joint Serb-Muslim orientation was Mustafa Mulalic. His reasoning was that communism was incompatible with Islam.²⁴¹ The third orientation of Bosniaks was towards the communist Partisans. The final orientation of the Bosniak community during WWII was towards autonomy. Prominent Sarajevo intellectuals appealed to the occupying German administration to establish an autonomous territory within Bosnia and Herzegovina which would be administered by Bosniaks. The position of Bosniaks during WWII was complex, however, the majority of their orientations were

²³⁸ 1941, 42.

²³⁹ Ibid, 43.

²⁴⁰ Ibid, 45.

²⁴¹ Redzic, 186.

interpreted as collaborationist. There were even accusations by members of Bosnia's Communist Party of Bosniak tardiness to the anti-fascist struggle.²⁴²

According to Fine, Muslim collaboration was common amongst the elites where they accepted many local administrative positions.²⁴³ Moreover, Tomasevich argues that the only Muslim who played a part in the proclamation of the NDH was Ismet Muftic.²⁴⁴ After the cabinet was formed, Osman Kulenovic became Vice Premier, with an office in Banja Luka, Bosnia's third largest city. Another Muslim, Mehmed Alajbegovic, served as Minister of Foreign Affairs.²⁴⁵ However, as noted in Chapter I, the Ustashe never managed to gain popular support. In fact, Bosnia's Muslim and Croat populations in some instances forced the Ustashe to abandon certain persecutions of Serbs or to release Serbs from captivity.²⁴⁶ Nevertheless, one of the most politically enduring consequences of WWII that became part of the discourse of the 1990s was the creation of a Muslim-only fighting force—the 13th Muslim *SS Division*.

The 13th Muslim *SS Division*, or Handzar in Bosnian, was created out of a volunteer legion of Muslim forces under the command of Major Muhamed Hadziefendic. The legion, numbering 5,000-6,000 men, was formed in April of 1942 in the vicinity of the city of Tuzla. Hadziefendic organized the militia after the Chetniks terrorized the Muslim population in eastern Bosnia for several

²⁴² During the Second ZAVNOBiH in 1943, Communist Party members expressed concern that large numbers of Croats and Muslims were still not joining the Partisans.

²⁴³ Fine, 142.

²⁴⁴ Tomasevich, 488.

²⁴⁵ Ibid, 489.

²⁴⁶ Hoare, 27.

months.²⁴⁷ Other Muslim militias were formed elsewhere, such as the Herzegovina unit under the command of Salih Catic—former Austrian officer.²⁴⁸ Hadziefendic’s volunteer force, however, was initiated by Heinrich Himmler—the leader of the SS—to be the core of the new Muslim *SS Division*.²⁴⁹ Himmler chose to establish a Muslim *SS* unit in part due to a memorandum sent to Hitler in November of 1942 by a group of prominent Sarajevo Muslims objecting to the rule of the NDH, blaming the Ustasha for the Serb reprisals against Muslim civilians. Part of the memorandum, addressed “To His Excellency Adolf Hitler,”

We are of Gothic origin and that bonds us to the German people. We adhered our old Gothic Aryan religion under the name of Bogomilism [Bosnian Church], which we maintained until the arrival of the Turks in 1463, when we converted to Islam. Islam has much in common with our old Gothic religion, Bogomilism, in their basic principles. In 1463 we welcomed the Turks as saviors because the Serbs, Croats, and Hungarians wanted to destroy us. The Turks gave us autonomy. During the Austro-Hungarian occupation we had full religious and partial political autonomy. In the First World War we were connected to Germany through our blood relation and with Turkey through Islamic religion and history. For our blood brethren, the Germans, we Muslims were to be a ridge from the West to the Islamic East.²⁵⁰

In May of 1943, the Muslim *SS Division* was formed, consisting of a majority of Bosniaks, with a significant number of Germans and some Albanians. The Ustasha feared that a German-backed Muslim force would threaten their position in Bosnia and Herzegovina and thus did everything to subvert the recruitment process. Nevertheless, the *Division* continued terror raids against the Serbian population, which resulted in the gradual loss of popular support amongst

²⁴⁷ Redzic, 91.

²⁴⁸ Ibid, 174.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, 180.

²⁵⁰ Ibid, 178.

Muslims who began to join the Partisans in large numbers after 1943.²⁵¹ One of the supporters, and a member according to some, was the eighteen year-old Alija Izetbegovic, the first President of Bosnia and Herzegovina after it gained independence from Yugoslavia in 1992.²⁵² Whatever his role in the SS, or the degree of his sympathies towards the Nazis during WWII, this legacy was used by Bosnian Serbs and Croats during the 1990s to portray an Islamist takeover of Bosnia.

Partisan-Chetnik Rivalry

After Tito's Partisans were routed from western Serbia at the end of 1941, they established their new base in eastern Bosnia, near the town of Foca. As demonstrated in Chapter II, the royalist Chetniks under Draza Mihailovic established contact with the Germans and began colluding with them against the Partisans. When the brief collaboration between Serb Partisans and Serb Chetniks broke down in the autumn of 1941, the effects were almost immediately felt in Bosnia as well. According to Hoare, Bosnian Chetniks were not independent from Serb Chetniks, rather, they were "linked closely to the expansionist policies, not only of the Chetnik leadership of under Draza Mihailovic, but also of Nedic's Serbian quisling regime, which strove to establish a Great Serbian state under the Nazi umbrella."²⁵³ This expansionist Greater Serbia policy, with its origins in the 19th century, also had genocidal elements, especially towards Bosnian Muslims.

²⁵¹ Ibid, 183.

²⁵² Binder, David. "Alija Izetbegovic, Muslim Who Led Bosnia, Dies at 78." The New York Times. October 19, 2003. Accessed March 29, 2017. <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/20/world/alija-izetbegovic-muslim-who-led-bosnia-dies-at-78.html>.

²⁵³ Hoare, 9.

The Chetniks did not differentiate between Ustashe and “Turks” (Bosniaks). In his diary, Mihailovic wrote in the spring of 1942, “The Muslim population has through its behavior arrived at the same situation where our people no longer wish to have them in our midst. It is necessary already now to prepare their exodus to Turkey or anyone else outside our borders.”²⁵⁴ To further highlight Mihailovic’s genocidal mindset towards Muslims, not only in Bosnia, but also those living in Montenegro and in Serbia’s Sanjak region (See Map 3.3), he appointed Stevan Moljevic to the Central National Committee of the Chetnik movement in August of 1941.²⁵⁵ Moljevic, a Bosnian Serb, who authored a text titled “Homogenous Serbia,” in which he called for the establishment of a “homogenous Serbia that must encompass the entire ethnic territory on which the Serbs live,” and for Croats to be expelled to Croatia and Muslims to Turkey or Albania.²⁵⁶ Nevertheless, the Chetnik movement was neither organized nor disciplined enough to carry out a campaign of terror against Muslims and Croats as the Ustasha were able to do against Serbs.



(Map 3.3 Sanjak)

²⁵⁴ Ibid, 143.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Ibid, 143-145.

The Chetnik atrocities against Muslims during WWII and the collaboration with Germans and Italians became the main topic for Serb historians beginning in the 1980s. One of these historians was Momir Krsmanovic whose works such as “The Drina Runs Red” (1983) and “The Blood-Stained Hands of Islam” (1992) were designed to “promote a Serbian view of the Second World War to an English-speaking audience.”²⁵⁷ The book gave an “insider’s account” of the Chetniks and their narrative of WWII, which argued that they were motivated by “the desire to save the Serbian nation and wage an honorable struggle for justice, truth and the right of that nation to a place under the sun.”²⁵⁸ And those standing in the way of the Serb nation were referred to as the “vengeful and blood-thirsty Turks and Catholics of Croatia and Bosnia.”²⁵⁹ This narrative has since become the main Serb narrative in regards to WWII—in which Chetniks were liberators and defenders. However, these accounts and narratives do not stand up to serious historical inquiry.

Post-socialist Serbian historiography portrays the Chetniks as defenders and liberators. However, Chetnik behavior in eastern Bosnia during WWII shows otherwise. Initially, Chetniks and Partisans administered the region together. After the fallout between Tito and Mihailovic in Serbia in the autumn of 1941, cooperation ceased. Following the split between Mihailovic and Tito, “the largest Chetnik massacres [of Muslims] took place in East Bosnia, which had been relatively untouched by the Ustasha genocide until the spring of 1942.”²⁶⁰

²⁵⁷ MacDonald, 138-139.

²⁵⁸ Ibid, 139.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Hoare, 143.

Therefore, the claims made by Serb historians such as Krsmanovic intentionally hide the genocidal policy of the Chetniks in favor of unsubstantiated claims of Chetniks acting as defenders or liberators.

There are several documented incidents of Chetnik brutality towards Muslim inhabitants of eastern Bosnia. There was the Celebic massacre, a village outside of Visegrad where 54 Muslims were killed by Chetnik forces.²⁶¹ In August of 1941, Chetnik forces occupied the town of Srebrenica and proceeded to massacre around a thousand Muslims. The District Superintendent of Srebrenica described the Chetnik massacres,

On the occasion of the plunder they behaved like beasts to both men and women, beating them on the ribs with rifle butts, stabbing them with knives in various parts of the body, stripping both men and women as naked as the day they were born, thus forcing them to give them money, demanding to know who has money and where they have fled to and taking the lives of many, even though they had given everything they day. There were several rapes of little girls of fourteen years and above. Some people they killed with guns, some with rifle-butts, but most they slaughtered like cattle.²⁶²

The Chetniks were capable of mobilizing the Bosnian Serbs of eastern Bosnia for two reasons. One, the geographical proximity to Serbia allowed for the Chetniks to exert greater influence on an already conservative and xenophobic peasantry. Second, the communist Partisans did not have a well-established network in the region capable of mobilizing a formidable resistance. However, the Partisans did enjoy immense success in other parts of Bosnia, namely the western region bordering Croatia's Dalmatian coast known as the Bosnian Krajina (See Map 3.4).

²⁶¹ Ibid, 146.

²⁶² Ibid, 147.



(Map 3.4 Bosnian Krajina)

Given Bosnia's mountainous terrain, as described earlier in this chapter, the Bosnian Krajina proved especially ideal for guerilla warfare. The predominantly Serb peasantry provided the bulk fighting force of the Partisans. According to official Yugoslav sources, 64% of the Bosnian Partisans were Serbs. Another 23% were Muslims. And 8.8% were Croats.²⁶³ Of the 2.3 million citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, according to the 1931 census, the country produced 140,000 Partisans by end of the war, the majority of whom were Serbs. Many social scientists in former Yugoslavia have pointed out that Tito understood the rebellious traditions of the Serbs—going back to the Battle of Kosovo myth—which has inspired Serb generations ever since. Tito also understood that his main competition, King Peter II, fled to England and there was a leadership vacuum that needed to be filled. The fact that the Chetniks were loyal to an exiled King convinced many Serbs that Tito's struggle is more in accordance to their tradition.

²⁶³ Ibid, 10.

As Hoare points out, it was the Serb-majority Bosnian Partisans who ultimately defeated the Chetniks in Bosnia in 1943.

The leadership of the Partisans, however, was from urban centers where “Serbs, Muslims, and Croats lived intermingled and where sectarian divisions were weakest.”²⁶⁴ While the Partisan forces of eastern Bosnia were much more susceptible to Serb nationalism and oftentimes viewed their struggle as the same as that of the Chetniks for the aforementioned reasons, the Serbs of Bosnian Krajina were less susceptible to Serb nationalism. According to Hoare, there were three reasons for this. First was geography, with western Bosnia not being under direct influence of Mihailovic’s Chetniks from Serbia. Second, there was already a powerful Partisan movement developed in the Dalmatian region of Croatia. And lastly, Germans did not focus their significant resources on Bosnia and Herzegovina early on thus allowing the Partisan movement to grow.²⁶⁵ Some Krajina Serbs, especially from the Drvar region, appeared a bit overzealous in their anti-nationalist stance, and openly said “that the Ustashe’s destruction of Serb Orthodox churches should not be regretted and who could not understand why Communists should oppose this attack on a religious institution.”²⁶⁶ While Bosnian Serbs were split between the Chetniks and Partisans, the reasons for their internal divisions were dependent on geography and present conditions.

One of the main reasons for the success of the Partisans during WWII was due to highly trained and capable cadres. The Yugoslav Communist Party was

²⁶⁴ Ibid, 7.

²⁶⁵ Ibid, 10-15.

²⁶⁶ Ibid, 51.

banned in 1921 and its members began operating underground. They were school teachers, trade union leaders, and so on. When Hitler invaded the Soviet Union in summer of 1941, the communist cells quickly mobilized the population for an uprising. Often times, they were quicker than their nationalist rivals. According to Hoare, “In a tightly knit peasant community, the presence of a single Communist could determine that an entire village would declare for the Partisans.”²⁶⁷ Furthermore, communist imagery and symbolism—synonymous with the Soviet Union—was proliferated and eagerly accepted by the peasantry, partly because it showed them that they were not alone in the struggle against the occupiers.²⁶⁸ Additionally, the success of the Partisans can be attributed to the willingness of Communist leadership to accept certain peasant norms, such as village patriarchy. The leadership was attentive to local concerns whilst maintaining the greater goals of the Partisan movement. And lastly, the Communists emphasized Bosnian patriotism rather than Yugoslavism to mobilize citizens to their cause. In the Provincial Committee’s proclamation in June of 1941, “working people of Bosnia-Herzegovina” were addressed rather than “workers of Yugoslavia.”²⁶⁹ Further, the proclamation assured “brother Muslims, Croats, and Serbs” that the liberation of Bosnia and Herzegovina was in everyone’s best interest. The terms “Bosnia and Herzegovina” appear seventeen times, while Yugoslav or Yugoslavia only twice.²⁷⁰ The orientation towards Bosnian patriotism was consistent with Tito’s model of stressing Croatian themes in

²⁶⁷ Ibid, 63.

²⁶⁸ Ibid, 65.

²⁶⁹ Ibid, 34.

²⁷⁰ Ibid, 37.

Croatia, Serbian themes in Serbia, and so on.²⁷¹ Tito believed that emphasizing the specific character of each region over a general Yugoslav struggle would more likely appeal to the ordinary masses.

Partisans Victorious

During the War, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia held two important gatherings, known as Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ). The first session of the Council was held in the Bosnian northwestern city of Bihac in November of 1942 where the leadership stressed the rights of ethnic minorities and the protection of private property, and urged the formation of regional anti-fascist councils. During the session, Tito stated,

The term “People’s Liberation Struggle” would be simply a phrase, even a lie, if it did not have, apart from its general Yugoslav character, a national character for every nation individually; that is, if it did not mean, in addition to the liberation of Yugoslavia, at the same time the liberation of the Croats, Slovenes, Serbs, Macedonians, Albanians, Muslims, etc.; if the People’s Liberation Struggle was not truly bearing freedom, equality, and brotherhood for all the nations of Yugoslavia. That is the essence of the People’s Liberation Struggle.²⁷²

The following year, in the central Bosnian town of Jajce, the second session of AVNOJ was held. The AVNOJ council proclaimed the founding of Socialist Yugoslavia and negated the authority of the exiled King in London. The borders drawn up during the second session of AVNOJ are the current state borders of post-Yugoslavia states and its federalist structure.

The “success” of the Partisans, however, is not necessarily characterized in terms of large-scale victories against the occupiers and their domestic

²⁷¹ Ibid, 39.

²⁷² Hoare, 322-323.

collaborators. The Partisans did not develop a large enough fighting force until 1944 to take on the German Wehrmacht head-on. By that time, the Germans were already on the defensive due to Allied landings in the West and Soviet victories in the East. Instead, it was the ability of Tito, his staff, and his troops to survive German and Italian offensives. Moreover, the “success” can also be attributed to their ability to maintain a high level of cohesiveness, organization, and morale throughout the war. Out of the seven so-called “enemy offensives,” six of them were in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Three of the most famous were the Battle of Sutjeska (Fall Schwartz) in winter of 1943, Battle of Neretva (Fall Weiss) in spring of 1943, and the Descend on Drvar (Operation Rosselsprung) in the spring of 1944, all aimed at destroying the Central Committee and Tito. These battles were used by the communist authorities to create narratives of a unified struggle against a common enemy in the post-war period. The 19th century French philosopher Ernest Renan wrote, “Where national memories are concerned, griefs are of more value than triumphs, for they impose duties, and require a common effort.” Yugoslavia’s communist authorities were not an exception to this rule. For example, the seven enemy offensives were made into movies to retell the heroic stories of the Partisans. Hollywood actors were brought in to play leading rolls in these films. Richard Burton, for example, played Tito in the Battle of Sutjeska (1973). Battle of Neretva (1969) featured Yul Brynner, Orson Welles, and Franco Nero. Patriotic songs celebrating the Partisan struggle also became part of mainstream culture in the post-war period. One of former Yugoslavia’s most famous singers, Zdravko Colic, recorded a song often referred to as

Yugoslavia's second national anthem, "Comrade Tito, Our Oath To You."

Countless other artists produced similar works. Thousands of monuments and national memorial centers were erected to commemorate the struggle of the Partisans against the occupiers and their domestic collaborators. Post-war generations grew up idealizing the famous Partisan figures. They were urged to "protect Yugoslavia like the pupils of their eyes."

Tito became emblematic of Yugoslav resistance during WWII, and he was perhaps nowhere more revered than in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where he spent the majority of his war years. John Fine and Robert Donia describe Tito's visit to Sarajevo in the 1970s:

On one of Tito's visits to Sarajevo in the 1970s, people began lining the streets hours before his scheduled arrival. By the time his motorcade arrived, the crowd was to to eight people deep along the city streets. Instead of cheers and hurrahs from the crowd, he was greeted by discreet, reverential applause and gasps of admiration more suited to a saint than a national hero. As he arrived, a children's choir sang on the steps of the Hotel Evropa and chanted, 'Mi smo Titovi; Tito je nas' (We are Tito's; Tito is ours) ... The conduct of the crowd, and the general respect Tito commanded, revealed the unparalleled position that he held in Yugoslavia and in Bosnia. He was more than popular; he was a living myth, imbued in the popular mind with mystical attributes that edged uncertainly into the spiritual realm of immortality.²⁷³

After his death in 1980, the future of Yugoslavia was left for—as one observer at the time put it—lesser mortals to manage. As discussed in Chapters I & II, pertaining to Croatia and Serbia respectively, Tito and his legacy as the leader of an antifascist movement was challenged by Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats, and Bosniaks. The leaders of the three national groups appropriated many of the

²⁷³ Fine, 192.

memories of the antifascist struggle for the prevailing nationalist currents of the 1990s. While the Bosnian Serbs and Croats recycled the rhetoric against Tito, Yugoslavia, and communist from their “mother countries,” Bosniak leadership also felt the need to break with the past. The most-often voiced critique levied against Tito and the communists was their inability, and according to some assertions unwillingness, to promote and secure a strong national identity for Bosnia’s Muslims, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

Conclusion

Understanding the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its struggle for identity is crucial in understanding the present political dynamics. Over last several centuries, the country has experienced radical change, from ethnic composition to diversification of religion. For the majority of those centuries, inhabitants of Bosnia and Herzegovina lived under relatively stable conditions building a tradition of coexistence. With the rise of nationalism in the 19th century and further encroachment of European empires into the region, the foundation for conflicts in the 20th century was set. Indeed, the 20th century for Bosnia and Herzegovina was characterized by genocide, ethnic cleansing, and fratricidal wars. The Second World War brought about an unprecedented amount of violence to the country, all but destroying the tradition of coexistence that Bosnians had built. Furthermore, WWII’s legacy continued to plague the region, despite the best efforts of communist authorities during the socialist period to quell nationalist sentiments and pacify the ravaged country.

CHAPTER IV

Bosnia and Herzegovina from the 1990s to the Present

Ivo Andric, the Yugoslav Nobel Laureate, wrote in a letter to a friend in the aftermath of WWI that Bosnia and Herzegovina is a wonderful and fascinating country, rich with mineral resources. But he also wrote that Bosnia is a country of bitter hatred:

For the fatal characteristic of this hatred is that the Bosnian man is unaware of the hatred that lives in him, shrinks from analyzing it and - hates everyone who tries to do so. And yet it's a fact that in Bosnia and Herzegovina there are more people ready in fits of this subconscious hatred to kill and be killed, for different reasons, and under different pretexts, than in other much bigger Slav and non-Slav lands.²⁷⁴

This statement by Andric may seem contradictory to John Fine's claim that Bosnia and Herzegovina has had a long tradition of coexistence and toleration. However, it is Fine's assertion that this tradition was betrayed in the 20th century, beginning with the two World Wars and culminating in the Bosnian civil war in the 1990s. Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not an exception in the context of the 20th century. According to Norman Naimark, "World War I was a crucible for the development of the modern nation-state and its willingness and ability to engage in mass population policies."²⁷⁵ Naimark goes on to argue that WWI "introduced 'industrial killing' into the consciousness and reality of the European state system. Killing was routinizing and perfected..."²⁷⁶ Therefore, Bosnia and Herzegovina

²⁷⁴ Novine, Nezavisne. "Pročitajte Andrićevo Pismo iz 1920.: Bosna je divna, zemlja mržnje i straha." Nezavisne novine. October 09, 2012. Accessed March 29, 2017. <http://www.nezavisne.com/kultura/knjizevnost/Procitajte-Andricevo-Pismo-iz-1920-Bosna-je-divna-zemlja-mrznje-i-straha/162232>.

²⁷⁵ Naimark, Norman M. *Fires of Hatred : Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-century Europe*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001, 9.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

was a microcosm of the general path taken by humanity in the 20th century in which life was of little value and not unique to 20th century Europe in this regard.

Historians who study collective memory characterize it as a social construct that is often ideologically driven, selective, and subjective. American historian David Rieff has warned that there has been a common practice throughout the 20th century by “regimes and political parties of virtually every type” to “mobilize and manipulate collective memory or manufacture it.”²⁷⁷ In societies that have experienced trauma or conflict, victors tend to shape the collective memories of that post-conflict society. Elizabeth Jelin has argued that the political transition of a new state involves “new readings and meanings given to the past.”²⁷⁸ However, in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, there was no clear victor and thus three fundamentally different collective memories emerged. For Bosnian Serbs and Croats, the collective memories are very much in concert with the dominant narratives in Serbia and Croatia respectively.

Furthermore, with the fall of communism throughout Eastern Europe, far-right political parties, some even fascist in ideology, reemerged. According to the Serbian sociologist Todor Kuljic, fascism is more likely to emerge in countries with a fascist past.²⁷⁹ Bosnia and Herzegovina under the NDH rule was subjected to four years of a totalitarian fascist system. Kuljic points out that there are also rising fascist movements in Germany. However, the key difference between Germany and

²⁷⁷ Rieff, David. "The cult of memory: when history does more harm than good | David Rieff." *The Guardian*. March 02, 2016. Accessed March 29, 2017.

²⁷⁸ Jelin, 34.

²⁷⁹ Kuljić, Todor. *Anatomija Desnice : Izbor Iz Publicističkih Radova, 1978-2013*. Beograd: Čigoja štampa, 2013, 57.

former Yugoslavia in this regard is that fascist movements in Germany are bottom-up while in Yugoslavia top-down.²⁸⁰ The 1990 multi-party elections throughout Yugoslavia brought to power far-right chauvinist political parties with opposing national interests in mind. Kuljic writes, “manifestations of chauvinist nationalism, which strikingly similar to those over half a century ago...”²⁸¹ This was most evident in Bosnia and Herzegovina. During the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-1995), “fascism was accelerated” where “genocide was justified in the name of national unity...denunciations or opposition [to such policies] was deemed traitorous...”²⁸² Such views were mainstream throughout the 1990s, however, they first began to reemerge during the period of domestic reforms in the 1980s.

Fascism reemerged as an unintended consequence of internal reforms during the 1980s. Yugoslavia began to liberalize just as the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev instituted similar efforts through Glasnost and Perestroika. The debate over communist centralized rule in Yugoslavia was primarily limited to esoteric ideological differences along Marxist-Leninist-Titoist lines. In the 1980s, however, Bosnia and Herzegovina saw a rise in nationalist, ethno-religious, and even separatist rhetoric. For example, inspired by the 1979 Iranian Revolution, a group of Bosnian Muslims were brought to trial in August of 1983 for “conspiring to transform Bosnia into an *Islamistan* (a purely Islamic polity) and to maintain contacts with hostile exiles abroad.”²⁸³ The trial, called the Sarajevo Process,

²⁸⁰ Ibid, 61.

²⁸¹ Ibid 63.

²⁸² Ibid, 65.

²⁸³ Fine, 200.

resulted in several convictions. One of the individuals who received the longest sentence was Alija Izetbegovic, Bosnia's future president.

The main evidence used against Izetbegovic was a book he published in 1970, "The Islamic Declaration." In it, Izetbegovic espoused Pan-Islamic views stating, "A world of 700 million people with enormous natural resources, occupying a first class geographical position, heir to colossal culture and political traditions and the proponent of living Islamic thought, cannot long remain in a state of vassalage."²⁸⁴ There has been great debate over whether the book called for the toppling of the Communist government and the establishment of an Islamic state in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Historians Ivo Banac and Noel Malcolm have argued that there was no such program in Izetbegovic's book. However, Izetbegovic did state in his book that "There can be neither peace nor coexistence between the Islamic religion and non-Islamic social and political institutions."²⁸⁵ Statements such as this one were used to convict Izetbegovic during the Sarajevo Process to fourteen years in prison, of which he served six years before being released. Nationalist, sectarian, and separatist rhetoric, however, was not limited to Bosnia's Muslim population. A year after the Sarajevo Process, Vojislav Seselj²⁸⁶—a Bosnian Serb from

²⁸⁴ Izetbegović, Alija. *The Islamic Declaration of Alija Izetbegović*. [S.l: S.n., 1991, 4.

²⁸⁵ Ibid, 30.

²⁸⁶ Seselj according to some accounts was the youngest person in socialist Yugoslavia to earn a PhD, at the age of 25. After being released from prison in the late '80s he traveled to the United States and met with the WWII Chetnik leader Vojvoda (Duke) Momcilo Djujic. Djujic bestowed the title of Vojvoda onto Seselj. When he returned to Yugoslavia, he founded the neo-fascist Serbian Radical Party. He also headed a paramilitary force called White Eagles or more commonly referred to as "Seseljevci" (Seselj's men). They operated in eastern Croatia and eastern Bosnia. Several members of the White Eagles were convicted for war crimes at The Hague. Seselj was on trial for over a decade but released last year due to poor health.

Sarajevo—was tried for spreading “hostile propaganda against the constitutional order.”²⁸⁷ In a Communist Party’s journal, Seselj, echoing Greater Serbian ideology, argued that “Bosnia be partitioned between Serbia and Croatia and that Montenegro be merged with Serbia.”²⁸⁸ Indeed, such a plan to partition Bosnia was concocted by Slobodan Milosevic and Franjo Tudjman in the 1991 Karadjordjevo Agreement.²⁸⁹

Stjepan Mesic, former President of Croatia, testified at the Hague during the trial of Slobodan Milosevic in 2002, and asserted that Tudjman did not believe the borders created by AVNOJ took into account “Bosnia-Herzegovina as a historical Croatian province.”²⁹⁰ According to Mesic, in the conversation he had with Tudjman after the meeting, Milosevic agreed and told Tudjman, “Look, Franjo. You take Cazin, Kladusa, and Bihac. I don’t need that. That is what we refer to as Turkish Croatia.”²⁹¹ Additionally, Tudjman was promised other Croat-majority territories in Herzegovina and the Posavina region (See Map 4.1), while the rest of Bosnia and eastern Herzegovina would become part of Greater Serbia. Bosniaks were not privy to these talks nor willing to acquiesce to them once it became apparent that the partition of Bosnia and Herzegovina was the goal of both Serbian and Croatian governments.

²⁸⁷ Fine, 201.

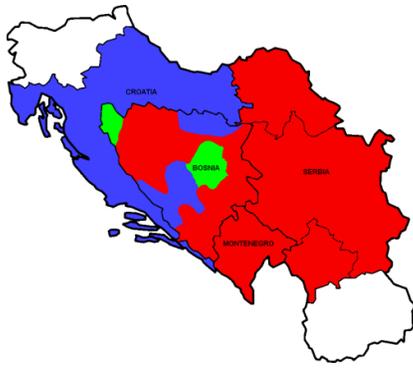
²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ In 1991, Milosevic and Tudjman met in the central Serbian town of Karadjordjevo to discuss the partition of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

²⁹⁰ Milosevic, Slobodan (IT-02-54). International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. 02 Oct. 2002. *Icty.org*. N.p., Oct. 2002. Web. 20 Mar. 2017.

http://www.icty.org/x/cases/slobodan_milosevic/trans/en/021002ED.htm, 10657.

²⁹¹ Ibid, 10657.



(Map 4.1 Partition of Bosnia and Herzegovina according to the 1991

Karadjordjevo Agreement)

The political climate in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the run up to the civil war in the 1990s openly spoke about the possibility of dissolution. Serbs spoke of an impending genocide against them and the need for the Serbs outside of Serbia to be protected. In 1986, the influential Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SANU) published a memorandum stressing this concern,

The history of Serbian lands [understood to mean wherever Serbs live]...is full of instances of genocide against the Serbs and of exoduses to which they were exposed. Processes of annihilation of the Serbs in the most diverse and brutal ways have been continuous. Throughout their history they have faced the fiercest forms of genocide and exodus that have jeopardized their existence, yet they have always been self-defenders of their own existence, spirituality, culture, and democratic convictions.²⁹²

The SANU 1986 memorandum was critical of the decentralizing reforms undertaken in 1965 by the Yugoslavia's Communist Party. The academics stressed the need to go back to a centralized system, one that would ensure the protection of Serbs in Kosovo, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, for Croats and especially Bosniaks, this was viewed as a rise of Serbian nationalism which would have implications for their status within the country.

²⁹² MacDonald, 63.

In establishing an independent Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosniaks also had to solidify their place within a state in which they were outnumbered by Bosnian Croats and Serbs. The latter two groups had developed a strong sense of identity going back to the 19th century. And although there were efforts throughout the 20th century for Bosniaks to distinguish themselves from Serbs and Croats, the conflict of the 1990s precipitated this effort more than anything else prior. During WWII, Bosniaks were split between four sides—Ustashe, Chetniks, Nazis, and Partisans. Furthermore, the conflict of the 1990s resulted in three different interpretations of the causes and the roles played by politicians and militias. The main reason why several different interpretations were and are able to flourish is due to the legal framework established by the Dayton Peace Accords, a U.S.-brokered peace deal in the fall of 1995 (See Map 4.2 & Figure 4.1). According to Sokol, Dayton created a decentralized state “without any power over the memory discourse or nation-building process.”²⁹³ Furthermore, Dayton created two autonomous entities within Bosnia and Herzegovina—the Serb-dominated Republic of Srpska and the Croat-Bosniak Federation. Additionally, Bosnia and Herzegovina is further divided into Swiss-style cantons, with each canton having significant administrative powers over its internal affairs. Consequently, there is no single authority for building monuments or establishing a unitary curriculum in schools. Instead, the country has several Ministers of Education and each municipality has almost complete discretion as to which to whom it wishes to erect monuments. Therefore, the state’s inability to create a single dominant narrative of the conflict of the 1990s or to

²⁹³ Sokol, 108.

preserve a single interpretation of WWII has resulted in continued intercommunal polarization. However, the lack of a single dominant narrative is not only limited to the 1990s; there has been a significant effort to reinterpret the Second World War as well.



(Map 4.2 Dayton Bosnia with two entities, Republic of Srpska and the Federation Unit consisting of predominantly Bosniaks and Croats)

(Figure 4.1 From left to right, Alija Izetbegovic, Franjo Tudjman, Slobodan Milosevic at the Dayton Peace Accords, 1995)

According to a 2008 survey conducted throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, the most difficult subject for a schoolteacher to teach is WWII. Furthermore, the survey finds that 37% of all those teachers interviewed stated that WWII is the most difficult to teach, followed by the conflict of the 1990s at 17.5%, closely behind are the Early Middle Ages and the Ottoman period at 17% and 16% respectively.²⁹⁴ The surveyors do not provide the reasons for these numbers. However, some

²⁹⁴ Karge, Heike, and Katarina Batarilo. "Reform in the Field of History in Education Bosnia and Herzegovina." *Www.gei.de*. Georg Eckart Institute for International Textbook Research, July 2008. Web. 20 Feb. 2017, 24.

inferences can be made based on their study. For one, most school textbooks in Bosnia and Herzegovina do not address the conflict of the 1990s and thus are not part of the curriculum. Secondly, the interpretation of WWII under the communist government in Yugoslavia has been subject to serious revisionism from new nationalist governments and intellectuals which inevitably has made the subject much more difficult to teach. According to the same survey, the war of the 1990s resulted in the replacement of a single educational system with “three parallel educational systems that strictly follow[ed] national lines.”²⁹⁵ Furthermore, over half of the interviewed teachers stated that they work in ethnically mixed classrooms and that their textbooks are not appropriate for such classes.²⁹⁶ The education system is further complicated in that each ethnic group teaches the history of their own ethnic group. For example, in the Republic of Srpska, students are primarily taught Serb history. In Croatian-majority districts, Croatian history is taught. And in Bosniak-majority districts, the history of Bosniaks is primarily taught.²⁹⁷ These rigid standards, according to the majority of the teachers surveyed, make “shared history”—whether during the Ottoman period, or Austro-Hungarian, or during the Yugoslav—extremely difficult to teach.

There are three different understandings of what “national history” means in Bosnia and Herzegovina. For Bosnian Croats, the analyzed textbooks “express a kind of ‘possessive behavior’ towards B&H’s past and present.”²⁹⁸ Possessive pronouns in reference to Bosnia and Herzegovina, such as “our homeland” and “our

²⁹⁵ Ibid, 15.

²⁹⁶ Ibid, 7.

²⁹⁷ Ibid, 6.

²⁹⁸ Ibid, 18.

soil” relate to Croatia.²⁹⁹ Additionally, “the books include an aggressive anti-Serbia undertone.”³⁰⁰ In Serbian textbooks, Bosnia and Herzegovina is understood to be part of Serb national history.³⁰¹ Lastly, textbooks used in Bosniak districts mostly emphasize the national history of Bosnia and Herzegovina, barely concerning themselves with the history of neighboring countries.

This phenomenon of divided national history is not unique to Bosnia and Herzegovina. History textbooks have also been described as sites of memory, or *lieu de memoire*. A typical pattern in history textbooks, as Mariana Achugar described, is the “manipulation of agency” which is intended to hide “the actors responsible for events.”³⁰² In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the most serious manipulation of agency has been in relation to the Second World War. Throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Second World War is taught in the ninth grade. A 2012 textbook from a Bosniak district, for example, devotes only two sentences to the role of Bosniaks in the NDH, including: “One small faction of Bosniak citizens, generally anti-Yugoslav, put itself in the service of the Ustasha regime.”³⁰³ Similarly, in a 2014 Serb textbook, the Chetnik movement of Draza Mihailovic is listed under the “Anti-occupation forces.”³⁰⁴ Further, Mihailovic’s Chetnik movement is deemed anti-fascist and elements of collaboration are attributed to

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Ibid, 19.

³⁰¹ Ibid, 20.

³⁰² Achugar, Mariana. *Discursive Processes of Intergenerational Transmission of Recent History : (re)making Our past*. Basingstoke, Hampshire [England]: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, 132.

³⁰³ Izet Sabotic and Mirza Cehajic, *Historija za deveti razred devetogodisnje osnovne skole*, (Tuzla: NAM Tuzla/Vrijeme Zenica , 2012), 155.

³⁰⁴ Rados Ljusic and Ljubodrag Dimic, *Istorija za osmi razred osnovne skole sa citankom I random sveskom*, (Beograd: Freska, 2014), 181.

“individual commanders.”³⁰⁵ Conversely, Tito’s communist Partisans are described as—even though under the heading of anti-fascist movements—lacking toleration for different views, dogmatic, and anti-traditionalist.³⁰⁶ In Croat textbooks, WWII gets scant attention due to the legacy of the Ustasha and the NDH. However, certain narratives from Yugoslavia’s socialist period pertaining to Croat Partisans have been appropriated into modern textbooks.

Selective appropriation of socialist era interpretations of WWII, however, can be found in use by post-socialist governments. Since the 1990s, post-Yugoslavia states have taken a neoliberal turn in accordance to the stipulated EU accession terms. Therefore, the leaderships in Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia are trying to maintain the appearance of continuity with the anti-fascist struggle of WWII. However, the definition of anti-fascism from the socialist period has since been obscured. For this reason, newly erected monuments commemorating the conflict of the 1990s are being built using the themes and in proximity of those monuments built during the Yugoslav period. Furthermore, this latching onto the anti-fascist struggle from WWII is most evident in contemporary Serb and Bosniak narratives. Croats largely focus on the conflict of 1990s as their “foundational myth” for nation building. As Kuljic puts it, “every war is...a way to whitewashes history, and the national non-liberating conflict of the 1990s was able to make criminals into patriots.”³⁰⁷ It is true, whether justified or not, that the majority of those who came

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid, 182.

³⁰⁷ Kuljic, 81.

to power in former Yugoslavia during 1990s served prison sentences for various crimes, from embezzlement to propagating reactionary ethno-religious separatism.

Bosniaks

In the aftermath of WWII, Bosniaks were recovering from internal divisions they experienced during the War. Bosniak intellectuals urged the communist authorities to recognize a separate ethnic identity for Bosnia's Muslim population. In the 1948 census, Bosniaks were allowed to declare themselves as either Croat-Muslims, Serb-Muslims, or ethnically undeclared Muslims.³⁰⁸ In the 1953 census, for the ethnically undeclared the category of Yugoslav-Muslim was added.³⁰⁹ In the 1960s, Bosnian Muslim communists lobbied for a separate ethnic category for the country's Muslim population. The leader of Bosnia's Communist Party was the Bosniak, Dzemal Bijedic, who later served as Yugoslavia's Prime Minister (1971-1977). Many at the time believed he was to be Tito's successors before dying prematurely after a plane crash accident. In 1971 the term designated for Bosniaks to use to define themselves ethnically was "Muslim." Critics still argued that it deduced the population to a separate religious community, but not an ethnic one. According to one of the most prominent contemporary Bosniak historians, Mustafa Imamovic, "...Bosniak identity cannot be reduced to the experience and practice of Islam as a faith. If such tendencies and interpretations do exist in the Islamic Community, that does amount to narrowing down of the Bosniak identity...As far as I know, the Islamic Community supported the separation of the religious and

³⁰⁸ Banac, 287-88

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

ethnic or national names for Bosniaks.”³¹⁰ Thus, part of the nationalist Bosniak narrative holds the communist authorities partially responsible for the constant oppression faced by the community throughout the 20th century, which culminated in genocide in the 1990s.

The ruling Bosniak party since the 1990s has been Party of Democratic Action (SDA), founded by Alija Izetbegovic. In 1990 he formed the SDA political party after the first multi-party elections were announced and scheduled. Izetbegovic, given his Pan-Islamic past and SS affiliation from WWII, stirred fears amongst many non-Bosniaks. In a 1992 conversation with the U.S. Ambassador Warren Zimmerman, Croatia’s President, Tudjman, warned:

The Muslims want to establish an Islamic fundamentalist state. They plan to do this by blooding Bosnia with 500,000 Turks. Izetbegovic has also launched a demographic threat...Izetbegovic is just a fundamentalist front man for Turkey; together they’re conspiring to create a Greater Bosnia. Catholics and Orthodox alike will be eradicated.³¹¹

Serbs expressed similar conspiratorial sentiments. A member of the Bosnian Serb Parliament stated the following in 1993: “They want for the second time to create a Turkish Bosnia or a Bosnia in Turkey...with the Shariatic law and other life norms unacceptable in the twenty-first century.”³¹² Izetbegovic received criticism even within the Bosniak community. Adil Zulfikarpasic, a Bosniak communist who fought as a Partisan during WWII, was one of Izetbegovic’s main rivals. He criticized Izetbegovic’s SDA of functioning as a “one-party dictatorship” and

³¹⁰ Pecanin, Senad. "The Bosniaks' Identity - Transitions Online." The Bosniaks' Identity - Transitions Online. N.p., 30 Sept. 2004. Web. 30 Mar. 2017.

³¹¹ MacDonald, 239.

³¹² Ibid, 235.

warned that Bosnia was “sinking into fundamentalism.”³¹³ Another Bosniak, Fikret Abdic, accused the SDA of attempting to “justify unprecedented terror and crime by religion.”³¹⁴ In fact, Abdic would go on to form a separate entity in the Bosnian Krajina region and even cooperate with Bosnian Serbs against Izetbegovic’s government during the war. However, according to Xavier Bougarel, the French scholar and one of the leading western observer on the questions of memory in former Yugoslavia, “the Pan-Islamic ideology remains a confidential matter: It is never clearly manifested in public SDA documents and speeches and is not intended for the public at large.”³¹⁵ Therefore, it is difficult to assess how genuine Izetbegovic was in his Pan-Islamic views. Nevertheless, his legacy as a Bosniak leader during the 1990s remains a source of bitter controversy for Bosnian Serbs and Croats.

Bosniak narrative also claims that they are the original inhabitants of Bosnia and Herzegovina and it was their army (Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina-ABiH) that fought for the continuation of a multinational state.³¹⁶ However, this narrative—fighting for a multinational state—does not translate into reality. As Sokol points out, “the religious ceremonies, the exclusion of victims of the other ethnicities and the involvement of the Islamic community in the memorialization process give the image of a separatist, exclusively Islamic/Bosniak discourse.”³¹⁷

One of the primary examples of this contradiction between pluralism and

³¹³ Schindler, 198.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Ibid, 196.

³¹⁶ Sokol, 112.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

exclusionism is during burials and ceremonies dedicated to Bosniak military casualties during the conflict of the 1990s. Both the symbol of Medieval Bosnian kings, *fleur-de-lis*, and the Islamic crescent moon are present. The *fleur-de-lis*—which was also part of the Bosniak flag during the 1990s—is supposed to indicate the continuity of Bosnian statehood.³¹⁸ The Islamic crescent moon is supposed to “indicate the central role of religion for the Bosniak identity.”³¹⁹ Symbolism continues to be an important aspect of Bosniak nation-building, as well as a source of polarization.

Additionally, during the 2013 census—the first postwar census taken in Bosnia and Herzegovina—The Bosniaks leadership mobilized a strong propaganda effort to urge Bosnia’s Muslims to declare themselves as Bosniaks, and thus to formally distinguish themselves from Serbs and Croats. Public and internet campaigns, titled *Bitno je biti Bosnjak* (it is important to be a Bosniak) and *Ja sam Bosnjak, vjera mi je Islam, jezik mi je Bosanski* (I am a Bosniak, my religion is Islam, and my language is Bosnian), urged people to declare themselves Bosniaks. Muhamed Filipovic, one of the most prominent Bosniak intellectuals, asserted that if not for the autochthonous Bosniak people, Bosnia and Herzegovina would not exist.³²⁰

The final aspect of the Bosniak narrative is its attempt to connect its current victim narrative to the antifascist struggle of WWII. For example, during the 1990s conflict, the National and University Library of Bosnia was badly burned with

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Ibid, 111.

millions of books, documents, and periodicals destroyed. On May 9th 2014—Victory Day over fascism in Europe—the Library was reopened with an English inscription that reads: ““On this place Serbian criminals in the night of 25/26 August 1992 set fire to the National and University Library of Bosnia and Herzegovina; over 2 million books, periodicals, and documents vanished in the flames. Do not forget; remember and admonish!””³²¹ This is a clear attempt to connect the Bosniak narrative to the European and the antifascist struggle of WWII. To Croats and especially to Serbs, this narrative is neither in the spirit of a “multiethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina” nor in accordance with their interpretation of WWII. However, there are some elements of the Bosniak community that openly embrace the Ustasha symbolism and Bosniak involvement in the persecution of Serbs during WWII, including several online publishers. In 2012, *Bosnjaci.net* published a story titled “Brotherhood and Unity³²² in Bleiburg,” criticizing those members of the Bosniak community who stood and prayed at the graves of the murdered quislings.³²³ Other sites, such as *handzar.jimdo.com*, celebrate the Ustasha-Bosniak cooperation during WWII by pointing out that the Bleiburg memorials have both a crucifix and an Islamic crescent moon.³²⁴ Although to a lesser degree than Serbs and Croats, rehabilitation of fascism is also present in the Bosniak community.

Bosnian Serbs

³²¹ Ibid, 114.

³²² Bratstvo-Jedinstvo or Brotherhood and Unity was a phrase used by Tito and during WWII and socialist period as the guiding principle of inter-ethnic relations in the country.

³²³ Sardi, Dino. "BRATSTVO-JEDINSTVO NA BLEIBURGU — Bosnjaci.Net." *Bosnjaci.Net - Najcitaniji Web Magazin Bosnjaka u Bosni i Hercegovini i Dijaspori*. N.p., 19 May 2012. Web. 30 Mar. 2017.

³²⁴ "Bleiburg." *Naslovna - HANDŽAR 13 DIVIZIJA HANDSCHAR BILD FOTO DIVISION 13 GORSKA*. N.p., n.d. Web. 30 Mar. 2017.

For Bosnian Serbs, the establishment of the Republic of Srpska as a means to safeguard Serb interests within Bosnia and Herzegovina is the most important outcome of the 1990s. As previously mentioned, Bosnian Serbs view the conflict of the 1990s as a continuation of Serb-led liberation since the 19th century. Radovan Karadzic, Bosnian Serb leader during the 1990s and convicted war criminal, argued that Serbs fought the Nazis during WWII and that Croats and Muslims were collaborators and fascists. This narrative ignores the array of documented evidence against Chetnik collaboration and fascist movements amongst Serbs during the war. For the Bosnian Serb leadership, just as for the leadership of Serbia, this was reconciled by portraying both the Chetniks and the Partisans as anti-fascist movements.

In regards to the Second World War, Serb leadership is quick to point out that the overwhelming majority of Partisans were Serbs. Srpska leadership commissioned the Serb sculptor, Miodrag Zivkovic, famous for his Partisan war monuments built during the socialist period, to design several monuments commemorating the Army of the Republic of Srpska (VRS).³²⁵ The monuments, usually between 13 to 23 feet tall, are erected in public squares and centers.³²⁶ They often depict soldiers on the cross, symbolizing the importance of the Orthodox Church in Serbian memory and identity. As Sokol points out, “Zivkovic’s biography speaks about the changes in memory politics in the area of former Yugoslavia, but also the equalization of the antifascist struggle of the Second World

³²⁵ Sokol, 115.

³²⁶ Ibid, 116.

War and the Defense of the Fatherland War [1990s].”³²⁷ Other examples of Serb attempts to link the coveted title of antifascism of WWII to the conflict of the 1990s is further displayed by the monuments in Kravice, a small Serb village outside of Srebrenica. A monument was erected for Serb victims of the 1990s next to a WWII monument for victims of fascism. The ceremony is held annually on July 12th, the day after Bosniaks hold commemorations to genocide victims in Srebrenica.³²⁸ It’s evident that both Serbs and Bosniaks see the antifascist struggle as pivotal in not only forming narratives to explain the conflict of the 1990s, but as a part of identity building.

As with the rehabilitation of the Chetnik movement in Serbia, Bosnian Serbs have made the same efforts, if not more zealously. In 2012, the town of Bileća in eastern Herzegovina destroyed a Partisan monument to make space for a Chetnik memorial.³²⁹ Several street names in Serb-dominated eastern Sarajevo bear names of Chetnik leaders, including Draza Mihailovic. Driving into Herzegovina’s town of Gacko, one would first see a large mural of Mihailovic painted on a brick wall (See Figure 4.1).³³⁰ The mainstream Bosnian Serb leadership does not openly sanction the rehabilitation of the Chetnik movement, however, as with its neighbors, it does tolerate it.

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ "Bileća: Uklonili spomenik partizanima, podižu četnicima." Naslovna strana. N.p., 5 Dec. 2012. Web. 30 Mar. 2017.

³³⁰ "Draža Mihailović u centru Gacka: Povratnici šokirani i traže uklanjanje grafita." Novinska agencija Patria. N.p., 14 Nov. 2014. Web. 30 Mar. 2017.



(Figure 4.2 Mural of the WWII Chetnik leader Dradoljub

Draza Mihailovic)

The bombastic Bosnian Serb leader, Milorad Dodik, is never shy to fan the flames of nationalism. Over the years he has challenged Bosnia's weak institutions and occasionally brought up the possibility of Republic of Srpska's secession from Bosnia. On several occasions he asserted that Bosnia and Herzegovina is not a state and that Serb interests could only be served within the Serb entity.³³¹ In a 2016 speech, he invoked the memories of WWII and the Jasenovac concentration camp, stating, "We are not those who were taken to Jasenovac with the promise that they'll be better off there. Our battle against Sarajevo's aggression is uncompromising."³³² Dodik, whose government is seated in the northwestern city of Banja Luka, has consistently raged against the Bosniak government of Sarajevo. He has questioned the International Criminal Tribunal's for Yugoslavia ruling that genocide was committed, arguing that what happened in Srebrenica was "20th century's greatest deception."³³³ In recent months, Dodik has threatened to hold a referendum over

³³¹ "Dodik: BiH nije država." Al Jazeera Balkans. N.p., 09 Mar. 2017. Web. 30 Mar. 2017.

³³² Ibid.

³³³ Bart, Katharina, and Maja Zuvella. "Bosnian Serb leader: Srebrenica was 20th century's 'greatest deception'" Reuters. Thomson Reuters, 25 June 2015. Web. 30 Mar. 2017.

Srpska's secession from Bosnia. The EU and the US have even applied sanctions against him for violating the Dayton Agreement.³³⁴

Bosnian Croats

In this last regard, Croats differ from their Serb and Bosniak neighbors. As Sokol points out, due to the Croat view that Yugoslavia represented Serb hegemony and due to Croatia's Ustashe legacy, Partisan monuments have been largely destroyed in Croat-majority areas. According to one investigation, over 3,000 Partisan monuments have been destroyed in Croatia and Croat-majority areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina.³³⁵ As Croatia primarily focuses its narrative on the "Homeland War" of the 1990s and the Bleiburg massacre, rather than finding inspirational myths from WWII, Bosnian Croats "present their struggle...for their rights within the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina" as the "main elements of the Croat narrative."³³⁶ Furthermore, while 84% of Bosnian Croats identify with symbols of their 'outside motherland,' commemorative efforts have been undertaken to celebrate the Croat Republic of Herceg-Bosna (e.1993).³³⁷ There has also been a competition for public space, which largely manifests itself in the city of Mostar. The city is divided between Bosniaks and Croats. The Old Bridge that links the two city has served as the city's symbol since the Ottoman times. In 1993, Croatian shelling destroyed large parts of the 450-year-old bridge. In 2004, the bridge was reconstructed with the help of UNESCO. For Croats, the bridge is not a

³³⁴ Landay, Jonathan. "U.S. imposes sanctions on Bosnian Serb nationalist leader Dodik." Reuters. Thomson Reuters, 17 Jan. 2017. Web. 30 Mar. 2017.

³³⁵ Hina. "Razaranje jugoslavenske kulture: U Hrvatskoj uništeno 3000 spomenika NOB-a." Vijesti - Index.hr. N.p., 30 Mar. 2014. Web. 30 Mar. 2017.

³³⁶ Sokol, 117.

³³⁷ Ibid, 118.

symbol of a multiethnic Mostar, but an exclusive symbol of Bosniaks. In 2004, just as the Old Bridge in Mostar was renovated and the city united, Croats erected a Monument to the Fallen Croat Defenders of the Homeland War.

As is the case with Croatia, there has been a rehabilitation of Ustasha in Croat-dominated parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In recent years, street names in the Croat part of Mostar have been renamed to honor Ustasha leaders, such as Mile Budak—the Minister of Education who proposed the tripartite policy towards Serbs (expel, murder, and convert). Another street name in Mostar bears the name of Jure Francetic, the Ustasha Commissioner for Bosnia and Herzegovina and leader of the infamous Black Legion militia.³³⁸ The leadership of Bosnian Croats, however, does not openly endorse the rehabilitation of the Ustasha. Instead, the main Bosnian Croat party, Croatian Democratic Union-Bosnia and Herzegovina (HDZ-BiH) and its leader Dragan Covic have openly advocated for greater autonomy for Croats. The current Dayton structure has the Croats in a federal union with Bosniaks. Covic has argued that the current system is not functioning well, asserting, “I am convinced that we can have...three units within the Federation...”³³⁹ Since its founding in 1990, HDZ-BiH has argued for autonomy for Bosnian Croats. Its founder, Davor Perinovic, stated in 2012,

It’s better to be a good neighbor and have your own fence, and to know what belongs to whom, rather than be under the same roof which constantly

³³⁸ Kajan, Sanel. "Fašističke ulice Mostara | Politika | DW.COM | 23.01.2009." DW.COM. N.p., 23 Jan. 2009. Web. 30 Mar. 2017.

³³⁹ Jukic, Elvira M. "Bosnian Croat Leader Urges Three-Unit Federation." *Balkan Insight*. N.p., 5 Mar. 2014. Web. 30 Mar. 2017.

leaks. In other words, as long as Croats don't have their own entity, in practice, they'll be a people who are marginalized and unequally treated.³⁴⁰

The Bosnian Croat leadership, just as the Bosniak and Serb, has pursued an exclusivist policy, which has only entrenched the question of the viability of the country.

Conclusion

While all three groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina certainly disagree on the specifics of WWII and the causes of the conflict of the 1990s, all three groups have embraced the victim narrative as part of their national discourse. According to MacDonald, "There can be no doubt that Serbs and Croats had been the aggressors throughout the conflict. Their use of victim centered propaganda proved to be the most effective means of legitimating their conduct, which, while not necessarily genocidal, was extremely brutal."³⁴¹ Bosniak sense of victimhood in relation to the 1990s, can be understood, due to the disproportionate Bosniak victims during the conflict. Serbs view the 1990s as a continuation of Bosniak and Croat aggression against them from the Second World War. Croats, adherents of David Rieff's "too much memory" idea, omit the memories of NDH and mostly focus on the events of the 1990s and Bleiburg. Nevertheless, the events of the Second World War and their reinterpretations played a pivotal role in the mobilization of Bosnia's citizens during the conflict of the 1990s. The ruling elites and loyal intelligentsia, in dealing with WWII, enabled distorted interpretations to flourish which stimulated sectarianism, allowed fascism to reemerge, and sanctioned violence.

³⁴⁰ Perinovic, Davor. "Ravnopravnost Hrvata u BiH kao naroda odavno ne postoji." Dnevnik.ba. November 19, 2012. Accessed March 25, 2017. <http://archive.is/B27mh>.

³⁴¹ MacDonald, 244.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

One of the unstated goals in this thesis was to allude to how fluid the idea of truth can be. Truth is often subjective as it is written by the victors. There is nothing profound about this maxim, however, the study of history and memory can serve as a powerful tool to contextualize the “truth.” Erin Daly rightfully claimed that truths are often multifunctional and subjective and thus two or more “truths” are incompatible.³⁴² She writes, for example, “If one calls it a war of aggression” and “one a just war, it cannot be both.”³⁴³ The history of Yugoslavia, and competing memories that developed throughout the 20th century—especially since the Second World War, is a good examples of Daly’s assessment.

In addition to Daly’s assessment of the incompatibility of multiple truths, the ideologies and worldviews of ruling elites and the historians they employ is also an important aspect of why competing memories exist. Elizabeth Jelin argues that this unity between ruling elites and professional historians produces “antagonistic interpretations and revisions” intended to challenge previous historiography and establish new collective memories.³⁴⁴ This suggests that collective memories are malleable and can change not only due to passage of time but as a result of traumatic events such as war, socioeconomic and political upheavals, and ideological shifts in society or in the milieu. The fact that

³⁴² Daly, Erin., and Sarkin-Hughes, Jeremy. *Reconciliation in Divided Societies : Finding Common Ground*. Pennsylvania Studies in Human Rights. Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007, 26.

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Jelin, 28.

memories are susceptible to manipulation, as Halbwachs suggests, has been duly noted by the ruling elites since Halbwachs published his work in the 1930s.

Yugoslavia was not an exception to this rule, neither in Yugoslavia's communist era, nor in the post-Yugoslavia era.

The history of the Second World War in Yugoslavia, and the resulting conflicting memories, has taken a toll on Serbian, Croatian, and Bosnian societies. Both Greater Serbian and Greater Croatian ambitions clashed during the 1990s and the competing memories of WWII proved instrumental in mobilizing the populations. Both sides found it important to delegitimize Tito, Yugoslavia, and communism. In the context of the collapse of communism throughout Eastern Europe, delegitimizing communism was not difficult. However, the ideological void created by the fall of communism was quickly filled by ethnocentric and exclusionist nationalism. The re-ushering of nationalism in both Serbia and Croatia took different forms in each state. In Croatia, Tudjman's nationalism was coupled with neoliberalism³⁴⁵ and massive privatization. In Serbia, Milosevic was more ideologically enigmatic, still committed to socialism and state-run enterprises while simultaneously tolerating chauvinist nationalism. Therefore, neoliberalism followed quickly after his fall in October of 2000. The experience of Bosniaks was significantly different from their Bosnian Serb and Croat neighbors. The "Greater" Serb and Croat ambitions created an environment where the Bosniak leadership was compelled to build a national identity, forge national

³⁴⁵ Neoliberalism as utilized here is defined as government cutting public sector spending and selling of state assets to private corporations and or individuals.

myths, and develop collective memories that treat history in a uniquely Bosniak way.

The preferred avenue of collective memorialization was through building a narrative of victimhood. New ruling elites—from the church to policy makers—of Serbia and Croatia argued that their people lived under “fifty years of darkness,” that the current phase of socioeconomic instability is only temporary, and that the “bright” future is ahead. The “fifty-years of darkness” cliché was a common reference to the period of Tito’s Yugoslavia. As Tito and Yugoslavia became antithetic to the agendas of those in power, Tito’s enemies were rehabilitated and legitimated. For Croatia under Tudjman, and perhaps more so today, the Ustashe are no longer “domestic collaborators” but instead “victims of communism.” For example, Croatia’s current Minister of Culture, Zlatko Hasanbegovic, has previously called the Ustashe “heroes” and “martyrs.”³⁴⁶ In 2015, the newly elected President of Croatia, Kolinda Grabar, attended the Bleiburg commemoration ceremony, as have several other high-profile Croatian officials and clergy before her. In 2016, however, she declared that she would neither attend a commemorative event for Jasenovac victims nor those killed in Bleiburg. According to Grabar, “I do not want to participate in divisive ideological schisms.”³⁴⁷ She went on to say that her hope is that Croatia can “stop

³⁴⁶ C, I. "Ovako je Hasanbegović pisao u časopisu NDH: "Ustaše su heroji"." *Vijesti - Index.hr*. February 10, 2016. Accessed December 8, 2016. <http://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/ovako-je-hasanbegovic-pisao-u-casopisu-ndh-ustase-su-heroji/874193.aspx>.

³⁴⁷ Lovrić, Jelena. "PREDSJEDNICA ZA JUTARNJI 'Ne idemni u Jasenovac ni u Bleiburg, ne želim sudjelovati u podjelama. Sto dana Vlade? Građani gube strpljenje'" *Jutarnji.hr*. April 29, 2016. Accessed December 9, 2016. <http://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/predsjednica-za-jutarnji-ne-idemni-u-jasenovac-ni-u->

looking to the past” and “look towards the future.”³⁴⁸ While Grabar’s hopes of “burying the past” are in tandem with what Yugoslav communist authorities tried to do in the aftermath of WWII, the implication is that those killed in Jasenovac and Bleiburg were both *innocent* victims. This is a stark contrast to what her predecessor Stipe Mesic said in 2008, “none of those who were killed in Jasenovac were responsible for what happened in Bleiburg, while those killed at Bleiburg may already have committed atrocities.”³⁴⁹ Grabar’s argument was also made by the author and policy analyst, David Rieff, in his book, “In Praise of Forgetting,” suggesting that memories can intensify “existing emotional attachments” which can prove “extremely damaging to the national both morally and politically.”³⁵⁰ However, twenty-five years since the disintegration of Yugoslavia, Croatia is struggling to reconcile an identity crisis that developed over this period—is Croatia a state built on anti-fascism as was the case in Tito’s Yugoslavia—or is Croatia a neo-fascist state that is actively seeking to rehabilitate the NDH and the Ustashe?

Similar questions could be asked of Serbia’s ruling elites. Serbs are much more sensitive to accusations of having fascist collaborators in their ranks because, in their view, putting the Chetniks on the same level as the Ustashe is morally reprehensible. No serious scholars or observers have done this. The critiques against the Chetniks expressed here and by historians writing on the

bleiburg-ne-zelim-sudjelovati-u-podjelama.-sto-dana-vlade-gradani-gube-strpljenje/3740580/.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ Kolsto, 1165.

³⁵⁰ Rieff, David. *In Praise of Forgetting : Historical Memory and Its Ironies*. 2016, 34-35.

subject are not intended to equalize their crimes with the Ustashe, but to acknowledge their collaboration with occupying forces during WWII. Nevertheless, in today's Serbia, Tito and Yugoslavia are a point of contrast—both good and bad—as a result of Chetnik rehabilitation over the last quarter century. The current President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vucic, is religiously pro-EU and has continued his predecessors' policies of massive privatization and of selling off state industries to foreign buyers. However, during the 1990s, he was a “Chetnik” in Vojislav Seselj's Serbian Radical Party—a right-wing Serb nationalist who commanded paramilitary forces during the break up of Yugoslavia. Vucic, in a speech to the Serbian Parliament during the 1990s, he repackaged the WWII Nazi pledge of killing 100 Serbs for every German killed to assert that Serbia ought to kill 100 Muslims for every Serb killed as a result of NATO bombing.³⁵¹ In recent years, Vucic has expressed admiration towards Tito and said that one of his goals is to build twice as many highways as during Tito's time.³⁵² Twenty-five years of ideological schizophrenia has had an effect on Serbian society. On the one hand Tito is a necessary negative contrast of the “darkness” Serbia stepped out of in the 1990s, and on the other, he still remains the most popular leader in Serbia.³⁵³

³⁵¹ Vucic, Aleksandar. "Aleksandar Vucic - Ubijte jednog Srbina, mi cemo stotinu Muslimana." YouTube. December 22, 2010. Accessed December 19, 2016. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UGqv9CJbd3U>.

³⁵² Tanjug. "Vučić: Hoću dvostruko više kilometara autoputeva nego u vreme Tita." Blic.rs. November 06, 2016. Accessed December 19, 2016. <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/vucic-hocu-dvostruko-vise-kilometara-autoputeva-nego-u-vreme-tita/feeffsr>.

³⁵³ Cvetkovic, Ljudmila. "Tito najpopularnija ličnost u Srbiji." Radio Slobodna Evropa. October 2, 2010. Accessed December 19, 2016. http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/srbija_tito/2174121.html.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, due to a lack of a clear victor, resulted in the absence of a single narrative which produced three vastly different collective memories. For Bosnian Serbs, the belief, as echoed by Karadzic, was that the genocidal policies of their neighbors during WWII was going to repeat once again. For Bosnian Croats, they were ridding themselves of Serb hegemony and finally realizing the creation of a united Croatia at the expense of Bosnian territory. For Bosniaks, it was necessary to create a separate identity and separate national myths in order to assert Bosnia's distinct character—independent of Serbia and Croatia. The new Bosniak elites focused on Bosnia's medieval history combined with its unique Islamic character. This was to reinforce of Bosnia and Herzegovina's status as a separate entity, with an independent past, and a distinct historical experience.

If reinterpreting the past is crucial for present concerns then perhaps there is some merit to David Rieff's assessment that collective historical memories have more often led to war rather than peace, and resentment rather than reconciliation.³⁵⁴ Nationalists in former Yugoslavia tend to agree with Elie Wiesel's argument that forgetting would be the enemy's final triumph.³⁵⁵ This is clearly evident in both Serbia and Croatia, as not only Tito's legacy is demonized by Chetniks and Ustashe, but also their grandchildren. Serbia's most notorious ideologue and proponent of "Great Serbia" nationalism, Dobrica Cosic, once remarked that "Titoism has killed our honor and soul."³⁵⁶ These types of

³⁵⁴ Rieff, 39.

³⁵⁵ Ibid, 68.

³⁵⁶ Kuljić. "Sećanje Na Titoizam: Hegemoni Okviri." *Filozofija I Društvo*, no. 2 (2010): 225-50, 231.

statements are easier for Serbs nationalists to accept than to view Tito act as an arbitrator in a federalist structure. Similarly, asserting that Croatia as part of socialist Yugoslavia was a fifty-year long dungeon sentence is easier to accept than that Croatia had more autonomy under Tito's tenure than anytime since its Medieval kingdom. Bosniaks asserting that the socialist period deprived them of a national identity ignores the fact that it was the communists during WWII who drew Bosnia's current borders and recognized the country's Muslim population as distinct from Serbs and Croats. The different symbolism of Tito for people in these countries shows that the past is neither static nor passive. It shows how historical revisionism can change collective memories and, as Tzvetan Todorov said, fire up patriotism or feed pacifism—with both having the capacity to lead to war.

Italian writer and Holocaust survivor, Primo Levi, described violence as a “pendular act” in which revenge lays the foundation for future acts of violence.³⁵⁷ This begs the question of what could have been done after WWII to prevent the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Truth and Reconciliation Committees (TRC) have become a popular method for dealing with trauma in post-conflict societies. Erin Daly stresses that truth in times of transition is not enough because truth is subjective and no one has a monopoly on the truth.³⁵⁸ Furthermore, TRCs are problematic because, as Daly points out, awareness of genocide has never prevented future genocides.³⁵⁹ The second question, then, is

³⁵⁷ Todorov, 178.

³⁵⁸ Daly, 25.

³⁵⁹ Ibid, 29.

whether TRCs can deliver justice. The answer is no, according to Kevin Avruch and Beatriz Vejarano, because TRCs are not premised on vengeance but forgiveness.³⁶⁰ This is often inadequate because to “seek truth without justice is to risk achieving neither.”³⁶¹ Instead, as both Elizabeth Stanley and Kimberly Theidon have both argued, reconciliation must to be reached at the local level, rather than top down.³⁶² Therefore, it is difficult to asses how much more effective would it have been if the communist authorities in post-WWII Yugoslavia would have administered a TRC. During the socialist period, school children were taught about brotherhood and unity amongst the people of Yugoslavia. Intellectuals wrote a relatively unified history, albeit through a Marxist perspective. The country’s top leadership implored to “protect Yugoslavia like the pupils of their eyes.” Without engaging in counterfactuals, it is hard to imagine what else could have been done to prevent the pendulum from swinging back again towards violence.

³⁶⁰ Avruch, Kevin. "Truth and Reconciliation Commissions: Problems in Transitional Justice and the Reconstruction of Identity." *Transcultural Psychiatry* 47, no. 1 (2010): 33-49, 39.

³⁶¹ Stanley, Elizabeth. "Evaluating the Truth and Reconciliation Commission." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 39, no. 3 (2001): 525-46, 533.

³⁶² Theidon, 456
Stanley, 542

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A compilation of essays by social scientists from former Yugoslavia focusing on the memories in the region from 1941. I was specifically interested in the works of Dubravka Stojanovic, who is a distinguished professor of history at the University of Belgrade. Her work focuses on Serbia and the revision of school textbooks since the Milosevic period (1987-2000) to the present.
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An article originally printed in 1996, and reprinted in 2016 by a Croatian newspaper, quoting Croatia's current Minister of Culture where he offered praises for the WWII Ustashe regime. The title of the 2016 article is "We never forget." The Minister stated that the Ustashe were "heroes" and "martyrs."

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