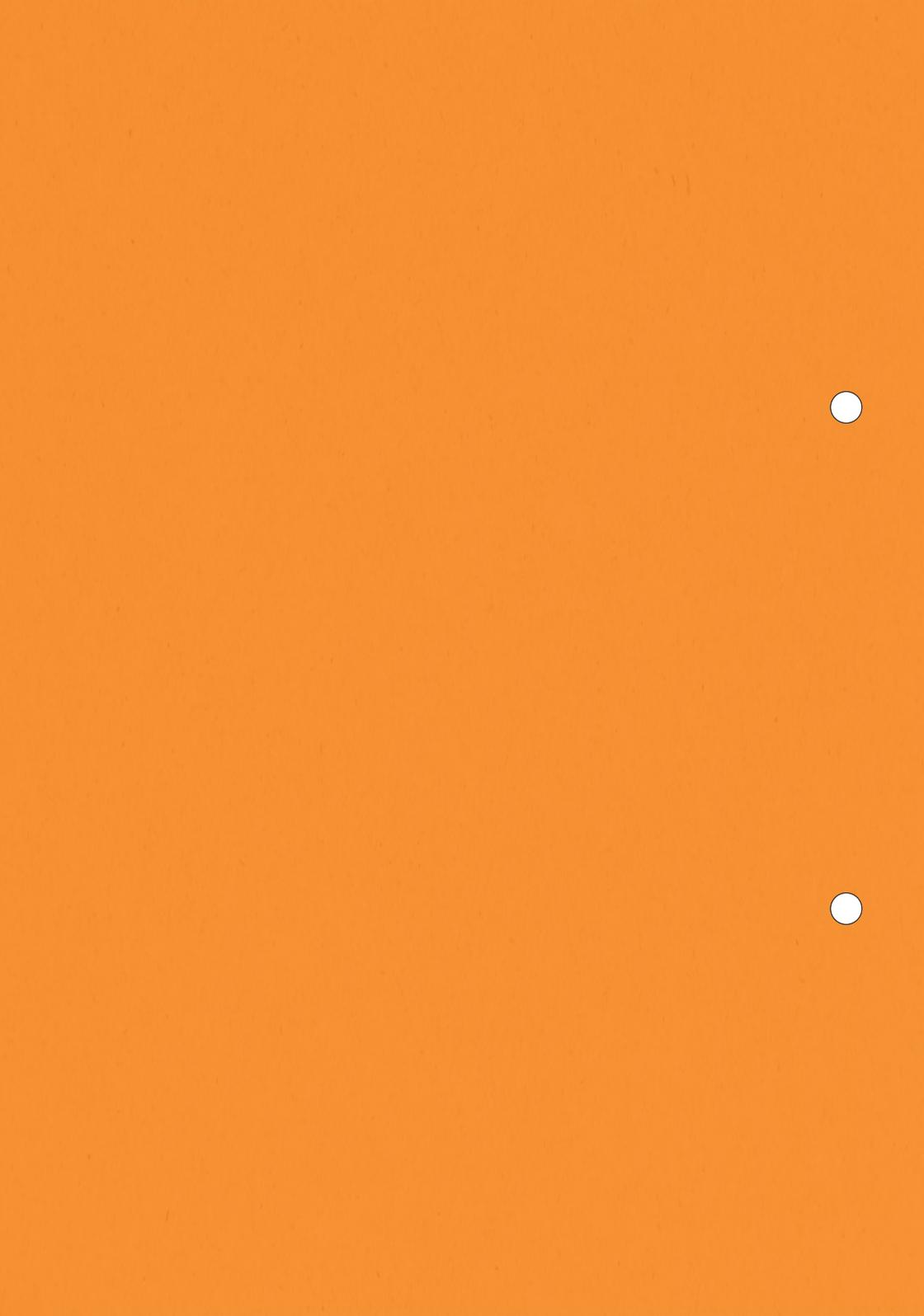


SHARED RECONCILIATION NARRATIVES

*Supporting reconciliation
by bridging the gaps
in divisive narratives*





SHARED NARRATIVES

Supporting reconciliation by bridging the gaps in divisive narratives

This book is published as part of a project that was developed through the fellowship program *Alliance for Historical Dialogue and Accountability* of the Institute for the Study of Human Rights at Columbia University in the City of New York, USA, and is implemented by the Regional Network of Youth Initiative for Human Rights in collaboration with PAX for Peace from The Netherlands and with support provided by the Robert Bosch Foundation from Germany, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation from the USA, the European Commission and the French Embassy in Zagreb, Croatia. The project received the 2019 Prize of the French Republic for Human Rights *Liberté – Egalité – Fraternité*.

AHDA

Alliance for
Historical Dialogue
and Accountability

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*Liberté
Egalité
Fraternité*

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This story was long in the making. By 2012, the Youth Initiative for Human Rights and other organizations working to promote reconciliation in the region had already engaged several thousands of young people in their encounter and exchange programs. These study visits from one country to another have allowed the participants to challenge some of the dominant views of their own national (ethnic) environments by exposing them to those who experienced the recent past differently and to those who on occasions celebrate what one's own community condemns, or commemorate what others celebrate. The idea behind those exchanges was to offer young people an insight into a topic — a historical event — from a perspective different from their own, believing this will instigate an 'internal dialogue' between one's long-held beliefs and insights from this new exposure. And this is the feedback that we've often gotten: participants would say that the study-visits required them to make an uneasy peace between what they were systematically told (by their leaders, educators and families) with what they saw and learned during the visits.



The whole idea of the Shared Narratives project was to take this 'internal dialogue' out into the open.

Most of the concept was developed during my fellowship in Historical Dialogue and Accountability (AHDA) at the Columbia University's Institute for the Study of Human Rights, back in 2012. The Institute director and my mentor, prof. Elazar Barkan and AHDA program director at the time, Ariella Lang, would convene seminars where we discussed and debated what constitutes historical dialogue, can we define it by its results and impact, or rather by its process.

These conversations and counsel from Elazar, Ariella and from

other fellows, in particular Sandra Orlović and Murat Celikkan, as well as other examples I've learned from (some of which seemed like successes, and others that seemed like failures) brought me to the following understanding: historical dialogue is not a concept such as justice that we learned, through time, to operationalize and institutionalize. It also cannot be recognized by its 'results' — we cannot observe a historical narrative in any given society and simply infer that it is a result of a historical dialogue. It might well be, of course, but it might be that it is imposed, that it is maintained through some form of coercion. Or it might be that it's neither, but that it still is not a result of an actual, inclusive, open dialogue. It seems that historical dialogue is more present in societies where there are disagreements and different perspectives on their history. It seems that historical dialogue thrives in societies able to openly, freely and safely navigate different perspectives and views on the past; where one does not have to be brave in order to think and express one's thoughts. Where, above all, a majoritarian perspective does not coerce others into silence, but rather interacts with them for all to hear.

While there are a lot of versions of history in the area of former Yugoslavia and while they do interact regularly, mostly through bilateral political disputes, this interaction didn't seem to me to satisfy the threshold for historical dialogue. Can we engage in a dialogue if both sides prioritize their emotions and mythology over facts? If 'who told us' supersedes the content of what we are told? If we don't actually listen to each other, but instead yell our own without any impact on the perspective of the other?

Elazar would suggest that historical dialogue might be a situation in which we can disagree, but do so rationally, rather than rooting our beliefs in our identities. He would also sometimes ask if historical dialogue ever ends or whether it was an open-ended process. I am still unable, through both research and thought experiments, to find or imagine a non-totalitarian full stop to historical dialogue. One might argue that there are historical events so diligently documented that their understanding is universal and thus no historical dialogue surrounds them. But I would challenge this view. Everyone who wishes to understand the horrors of the Holocaust has a myriad of ways and sources to learn about it. Yet, to this day there are constant and not only marginal voices vehemently denying or challenging it.

It is this understanding of historical dialogue as a process that gave



birth to the idea for this project. Historical dialogue is impeded by nationalist mythology, by suppression of critical thinking and inquiry through reasoning. It is impeded when young people are expected to just consume a narrative without even the slightest exposure to counter-narratives, to stories from those who witnessed it from a perspective different from their own. It is suppressed when it requires civic bravery to even hear, let alone find understanding for 'the other'. Yet, this is largely how history is passed on to new generations in this corner of the world. That seems to be why education is still ethnically segregated throughout much of the region.

○ Every process needs its space. The project 'Past Continues: Shared Narratives' was conceived as a space for historical dialogue; a space where young people willing to engage in questioning the perspectives of others while questioning their own can do so freely and collaboratively. It was conceived as a contribution to building an infrastructure for dialogue.

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This, however, wasn't the initial motivation for this project. The motivation came from a very personal story, my own. In 2008, I was touring the region to learn what the branches of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights were doing in their societies. While I was in Belgrade, Serbia, I sat in an open space office room, and Tanja Mrkalj sat at a table next to mine. We talked and I mentioned I was from Petrinja in Croatia. She asked me "Where from in Petrinja?" Petrinja is a small town many people in Croatia cannot show on the map, so I was surprised to be asked about further details. She saw my surprise and said, "I am also from Petrinja". "You cannot be"—I said, since we were of a relatively similar age and I was sure I'd known her, at least would have seen her around the town if that was true. "We fled in the 'Storm' in 1995", she continued. It was the first time I had a conversation with someone from the 'other side' and yet so close to home. Later I learned that my grandfather was a friend with Tanja's older family members.

○ That conversation changed me. It inspired much of my work since. This project was an attempt to provide other young people in the region with such a valuable, transformative experience.

In 2019, we received news that the project will be awarded the French Republic Human Rights Prize. To receive it, Maja Žilić, one of the project's participants and I travelled to Paris, France. Maja's parents also fled Petrinja in the operation 'Storm', together with Tanja and

many others.

This is why I said the following in my speech there: “Back in the summer of 1995, a year before Maja was born, her parents fled Croatia as they were expelled in the military action that allowed me and my family to go back home after five years as refugees. If there was no war, if none of us were forced to flee or were exposed to violence, Maja and I would have grown up in the same town. Her mom and my mom are the same age. She is the same age as my cousin. Maja’s brother is one year younger than I am. We probably would have played together, gone to school together, hid to drink cheap wine at the Petrinjčica riverbank together... Our stories are different. Our histories might label us enemies. But today, Maja and I, and all our colleagues are standing together, as one, united in a common struggle for a future fairer than our past.”

The only way we can put the logic of war behind us is by coming together in understanding that none of our experiences, none of our histories can tell the full story of what happened. Each of us holds a fragment of truth in our past, each of them is worthy, and each of them should have a place in a society that is open and founded on understanding.

Mario Mažić

INTRODUCTION



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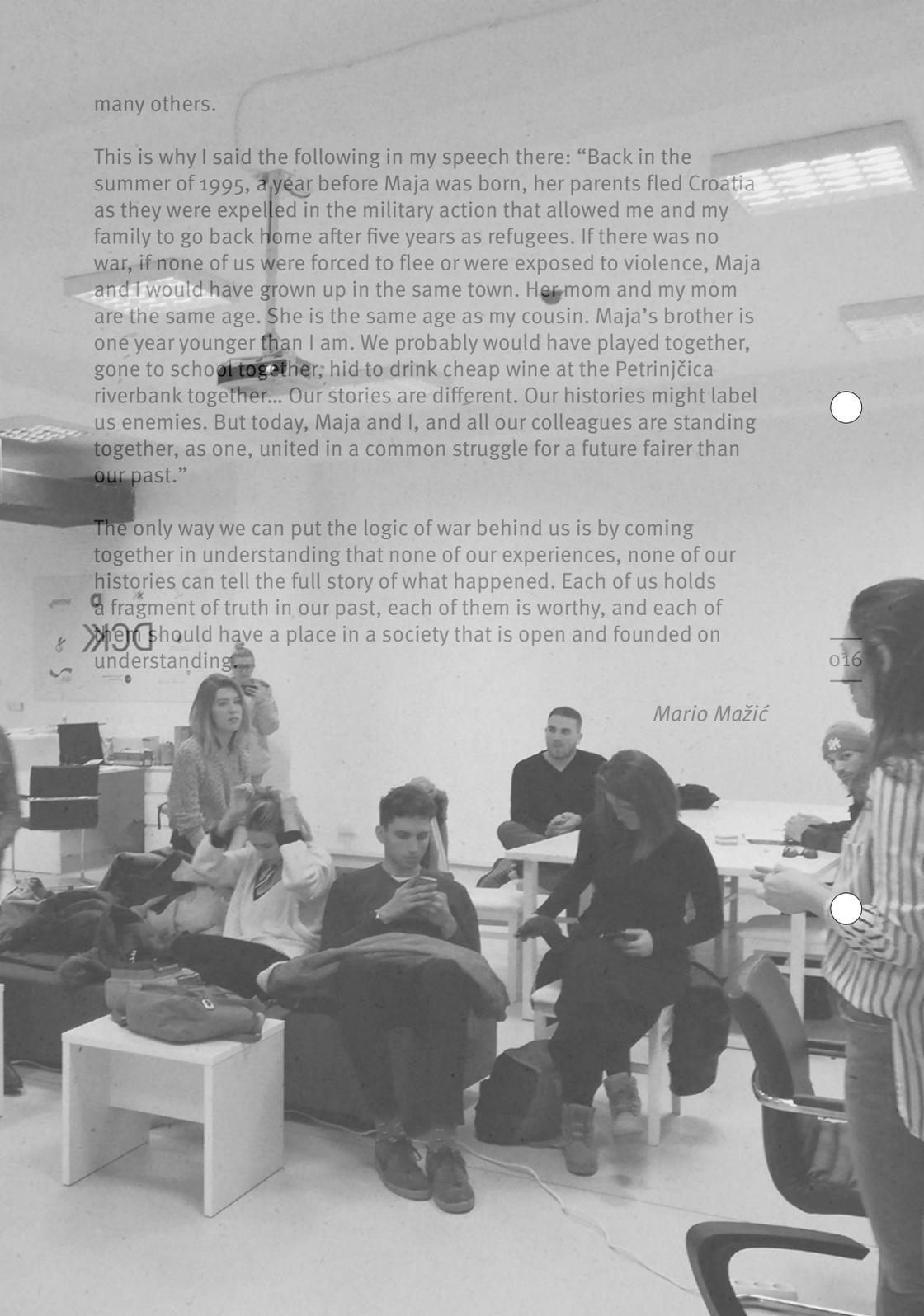


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Mario Mažić



INTRODUCTION

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The main goal of Shared Narratives is to support reconciliation and engage youth in the process of dialogue with a view of preventing recurrence of violence in former Yugoslavia. This was done through a participant-driven approach in which over 150 young people from 5 countries of the region (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia) met and engaged in a dialogue work in bilateral groups.

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The project started in March 2018 with a regional conference titled 'Bring Your Own History'. As the name suggests, this was a space where young people were encouraged to share a perspective on recent history of the region that they 'grew up with', that they were taught in schools. It felt important to acknowledge the fact of deep differences in narratives from the outset, and to create an environment in which the participants felt they can share their views freely, regardless of distance or proximity to narratives and perspectives of others. At the conference, the participants organized themselves into 6 bilateral groups (Bosnia and Herzegovina - Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina - Serbia, Croatia - Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina - Montenegro, Croatia - Montenegro, Kosovo - Serbia). Each of the groups comprised of over 20 young people (10 from each country) who attended two study visits to sites where they learned about a contested topic from recent history. The topics and the locations for visits were selected by the participants who also co-created the agenda for the visits. The topics were initially supposed to refer only to issues contested through denial and relativisation across mostly ethnic and national lines (for e.g. the crimes in Ahmići and Trusina, siege of Sarajevo, genocide in Srebrenica, battle of Vukovar, attack on Dubrovnik, operation 'Storm', war crimes in Kosovo, etc.), but the participants insisted on adding topics with a positive tone – so topics of anti-war protests and

wartime cultural scene across the region were added as well. Before engaging in an attempt to write shared narratives, the participants wrote narratives on the selected topics in a way that they feel best presents the dominant narrative on the issue in their community, their surroundings.

After the visits, the participants worked on research and engaged in dialogue where they were working on shared narratives about the topics. They were asked to try and develop narratives that are fact-based, respectful of humanity of victims, and concise. They were invited to freely write a dissenting narrative, if they felt that the shared one did not reflect their views. A smaller team of participants (those who co-coordinated bilateral groups) met at a writers' retreat to tie together, edit and finalize the narratives.

These narratives are based in a responsible, humanist pursuit of understanding the pain of those we were taught to see as 'other'. Thus, they have the ability to bring us together not only by bringing us all closer to 'the truth', but also by bringing us closer to our common humanity, to what we share despite all the differences we were taught to consider utterly important.

This process, in the end, turned out not to be about contested and differing narratives alone. It is also about advocating against segregated education that we continue to see across the region, justified by the notion of something being innately 'different' between young people because of their different identities. It is against the notion that dialogue is unwanted, or impossible. It is against the notion that history (education) is something that is dictated to students to non-selectively accept. It is against the denial and the refusal to acknowledge the perspective of victims. It is a rejection of manipulation and a rejection of hatred.

Maja Nenadović and Mario Mažić

CULTURAL SCENE IN THE '90s FORMER YUGOSLAVIA



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Maja Nenadović and Mario Mažić

CULTURAL SCENE IN THE '90s FORMER YUGOSLAVIA



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The Cultural Scene: The Battlefield Without Bullets or the Space for Attempt at Freedom in the 1990s?



Although war is commonly perceived, and remembered, as a political issue and therefore conflicts in history are generally analysed for both their political causes and consequences, it is important to understand that such significant and large collective efforts as wars leave deep marks on societies and individuals that wage them. War has always infiltrated the smallest pores of society, changing lives, leading to changes in national identities and thus influencing the cultural expressions and dynamics of the collectives that would participate in it.

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The participants of this project have recognized the importance of speaking out not only about war events but also about the wider social implications of war and analysing the impacts that war events have had on the culture of communities whose lives have been significantly determined by war. This analysis is especially valuable because it shows an attempt by young people to understand how deeply war has defined those areas of human activity that we otherwise neglect when talking about war. It is a product of the belief that cultural production is a specific model of preserving social dynamics and, consequently, contains lessons about how society was determined by war, its causes, protagonists and victims at a time when what we see today as history was a reality. In short, the culture of a war society is a window into its internal processes - ethical, emotional and political.

The cultural scene in all the countries of the region was a space for expressing views both for and against the war. In times of war, culture ceases to be merely a pastime and a noble manifestation of the human mind and it also becomes a powerful weapon of state policy and propaganda. It will be used to express anti-war attitudes, but also to strengthen national awareness, raise morale and encourage action in

line with political ideologies.

Through a series of essays in this chapter, you will gain insight into the cultural developments in each of the countries of the region during the wars of the 1990s. This chapter is specific because it describes the division of narratives within the countries of the region themselves, while other chapters focus on the division of narratives between conflicting countries in the region.

In the chapter on the cultural scene in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the war, you will be able to read about the persistence and courage of artists and musicians who organized and participated in a series of cultural events despite the brutal siege of Sarajevo; in an essay on Croatia, you will read about the repression and censorship of artists and journalists who dared to openly criticize the ruling elite in the 1990s; an essay on the scene in Kosovo reveals a world of hidden cultural activity in cafes and galleries during the 1980s and 1990s, during the repression of the Yugoslav regime from Serbia; an essay on Montenegro maps some of the most vocal musicians and artists who influenced the cultural scene of this country in the 1990s; finally, the essay on Serbia maps both the pro-war and anti-war cultural influences that were in conflict with each other in the 1990s.

You Can Take Everything from Us Except the Spite: The BiH Cultural Scene During the War

“The music scene during the war was a source of fantastic ideas and energy, which kept us, young people at the time, at a relative normal state. Obala and Sloga concerts were a kind of escape from war and horror into some normal world of clubs and nights out.”

Enes Zlatar, the frontman of Sikter band

War as a phenomenon not only involves human sacrifices, but also marks the collapse of the value system, the rise of nationalism, the dismantling of territories, the disappearance of institutions, and the loss of identity. The identity of a nation or state is primarily reflected in the cultural scene of a given space. The state of war destroys normal life cycles, so culture is not immune to that neither. It is difficult to talk about the cultural scene in such circumstances, and we have to be well concentrated to find those lone voices that were ready to counter the dominant nationalist trends, to raise their voice against chauvinism and war hysteria.

What characterizes the state of war anywhere in the world, and to what neither Bosnia and Herzegovina remained immune, is war propaganda. War preparations not only consist in arming the armies of the conflicting parties, but often, before the conflict itself, civilians - future soldiers - need to be mentally prepared for it. The impact of war propaganda has been enormous in this war, however, although it will be mentioned on several occasions, this narrative will focus on the most famous positive examples of cultural events and movements, which, unfortunately, do not receive as much attention as they should, according to the old principle - why focus on the positive, when we can be negative?

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, as in other countries of the former Yugoslavia, culture was the only glimmer of hope for a better future; the straw of salvation, which saved people from the abyss which would drag them into complete madness. Thus, when talking about the

cultural scene of BiH during the war years, it cannot be isolated from Yugoslavia, especially in the musical scene.

Already during the former Yugoslavia, certain standards were set in terms of number of copies as well as the taste of the audience. Despite restrictions on the part of the state, neo-folk singers had multiple larger numbers of copies and the music industry was based on that. Simultaneously, rock and roll was, albeit commercially unprofitable, imposed by the state as urban European music. At the beginning of the war, the state withdrew from the role of dictator of publishing policy, and we can say that rock and roll during the war, almost completely disappears. What attracts the crowds and what is new to the mainstream are songs with national motifs: Kosovo chanting in elements of Serbian folk music, the beginning of the release of albums with ilahi and kasid religious music (former sevdah performers) and similar phenomena. Unlike in FR of Yugoslavia and Croatia, where there is a paradoxical process of external closing and internal opening of the music scene (namely, people do not travel, but Western cultural values come to these countries through dance music in Serbia and techno pop in Croatia), BiH remains immune to Western influence in music. While nationalistic songs were being recorded in BiH and Croatia, Belgrade becomes the centre of the techno scene of Eastern Europe. Western trends influence the folk scene of that time, leading to the creation of a musical form that we recognize as turbo folk. It is simply incredible to see all the music that is put under this heading in that period, from the warrior folk of Gedža, Bajić Brothers and Baja Mali Knindža, through dance bands to techno folk performers like Ivan Gavrilović. What prevents the significant development of the BiH music scene during the war is the lack of a sufficient number of television channels. Sarajevo – the pre-war rock and roll capital of Yugoslavia – resists influences from neighbouring countries and rare musical performances that emerge during this period continue the pre-war trends or are performed in pop mode.

The influence of pre-war trends is also evident in the songs that in those years represented BiH at the biggest music competition – Eurovision. For the first time, BiH performed at Eurovision in 1993 with the song “All the Pain of the World” performed by Fazla, then in 1994 with the song “Stay Near Me” performed by Alma and Dejan and in 1995 with the song “Twenty-First Century” that was performed by Davorin Popović. Of the three songs mentioned, the most significant example of a revolt was the song “All the Pain of the World”, which

referred to all the pain during the war. Fazla's performance in Dublin was only followed by very few citizens of BiH because of the war.

Although BiH has never been a community known for nurturing a culture of classical music, the most positive example of revolt during the war is Vedran Smajlović. In fact, Vedran Smajlović is a musician from Bosnia and Herzegovina, known as the "Cellist of Sarajevo". During the siege of Sarajevo, Smajlović played Albinoni's "Adiagio in G Minor" in destroyed buildings and also played at funerals – often under threat from snipers. This act of humanity in the war has inspired many musicians, and his performance of Albinoni's composition has also been mentioned in "A Story Like the Wind" book.¹

During the war in BiH, theatres did not cease functioning. During the war, many performances were premiered, including "Waiting for Godot" by S. Beckett, Euripides's "Alcestis", "Chained Ibis" by A. Zaria, "Hamletmachine" by H. Müller, "The Fairy-Tale of Sarajevo" by G. Šimić, "Alphabet" F. Duraković and more. In its gallery, the Youth Theater organized an exhibition on April 6, 2004, entitled "Theatre under Siege", which featured photographs of plays produced during the 1992-1995 war in BiH. 13 photographs from the performances of the Sarajevo War Theatre (SARTR), Chamber Theatre 55, Youth Theatre Sarajevo, National Theatre Sarajevo, as well as performances performed at the MESS International Theatre Festival were presented.

One of the most important information related to theatre activity during the war comes from the book "Theatre in War Sarajevo 1992-1995" by Davor Diklić.² Nihad Kreševljaković reports that in Sarajevo, during three war years, there were 3.102 cultural events, 48 concerts of the Sarajevo Philharmonic Orchestra, 263 books published, 177 art exhibitions, 156 documentaries and 182 theatre premieres, over 2.000 performances. Diklić, on the other hand, says that his sister, Jasna Diklić, a BiH heroine of acting, told him that she would rather die than survive the war again – but adds that it was the most beautiful part of her life, precisely because of the huge influence that culture had on people. When everything around you is dark, even a small ray of light shines like the sun.

Filming and projecting, on the other hand, was a different story. The movie titled „Magareće godine“, ("Donkey Years") ended with filming in 1991, but due to the start of the war, editing was completed in Paris, and the film was first released during the siege of Sarajevo in

August 1994. During the war, attendance at film screenings was very low – until October 25, 1995, when the first Sarajevo Film Festival was organised. An incredible 15.000 people came to watch screenings of 37 films from 15 different countries. Since then, the Sarajevo Film Festival has grown in popularity and is now considered one of the most important film festivals in Europe.

When we think of literature, we can say that the most significant “war” book was the „Zlatin dnevnik“, (“Zlata’s Diary”) by Zlata Filipović. During the war, Zlata was a girl who wrote a diary, addressing Mima. Zlata spent the war period in Sarajevo, and wrote this book during the war, from September 1991 to October 1993. Through this book, we can see the innocence of a child, who just wants to survive her childhood – nothing less, no more. The diary itself recounts wartime events through the eyes of a little girl, with simple heart-wrenching descriptions. Among the most famous sentences of the diary were “STOP SHOOTING” and “PEACE, PEACE, PEACE”, written after the death of Zlata’s loved ones. In the foreword of the book, reporter Janine di Giovanni called Zlata, Anna Frank of Sarajevo, which gives additional significance to this story. At the end of the longest siege of a city in the 20th century, in Sarajevo is killed the last child to die in the besieged city, Nirvana Zeljković. Three months before her death she kept a diary, on the basis of which the German journalist Peter Münch wrote the novel “The smell of linden”.

As for other cities, during the war, new publishing houses and war publishing “hyper-production” appeared. Tuzla emerged as the centre of literature of the war of the nineties, during which time a record number of users of library services was reached and also the Bosnian Cultural Centre (BKC) in Tuzla was opened. The entire war period in Banja Luka, Mostar and Tuzla could be called a period of incidental cultural events. Namely, it was not about organized and long-planned activities, but about ad hoc events related to individuals without any support from institutions.

Individuals made steps of one hundred miles, changed the everyday life of ordinary civilians, and left a mark of resistance to future generations. These signs of resistance were often crazy, unexpected, epic films could be made about them. One of the most memorable events of the war happened in 1993 when the Miss besieged Sarajevo competition was organized, in which the title of the most beautiful was won by Inela Nogić. Miss besieged Sarajevo became a symbol of

resistance of the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina. During the Miss competition, the girls told the world “Don’t let them kill us”. This event was the inspiration for Bonno Vox to make the song “Miss Sarajevo”, which he first performed with Luciano Pavarotti. Pavarotti in BiH will remain remembered for a series of humanitarian concerts dedicated to Sarajevo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also for the help in the post-war period. Pavarotti, Brian Eno, U2 members and other artists helped found the Pavarotti Music Center in Mostar. A similar example of assisting the revival of cultural institutions in post-war BiH is the establishment of the Ars Aevi Museum of Contemporary Arts in Sarajevo, which has a collection of over 1.600 pieces, including works by Pablo Picasso, Michelangelo Pistoletta, Jannis Kounellis, Joseph Beuys, Marina Abramović and Joseph Kossuth. The new building of this museum was designed by the famous Italian architect Renzo Piano.

What has marked BiH’s post-war cultural scene is the boom of the film industry, despite the lack of support from the state. The war-themed films were shot after 2000, when the tensions created by the war diminished. It is important to mention the film *No Man’s Land (Ničija zemlja)*, which won an Oscar in the category for Best Foreign Film in 2002, as well as films: *Burning Fire (Gori vatra)*, *Halima’s Path (Halimin put)*, *Summer in the Golden Valley (Ljeto u Zlatnoj dolini)*, *Grbavica*. Local directors approach the topic of war in a new way, primarily through condemnation of war as a phenomenon, and Nedžad Ibrahimović, in his article “Between Nation and Creation: The Bosnian Feature Film 1995-2008” for the Oscar-winning film *No Man’s Land*, says that it is difficult to find a more illustrative condemnation of war in world cinema³. BiH films emotionally, subtly, without being pathetic, but with a dose of satire and irony convey all the horrors and inhumanities of war and its meaninglessness.

Contrary to the first years of peace, BiH is nowadays a desirable destination for local as well as foreign tourists. For most tourists, the first association to BiH is the war exactly, and it is not surprising that individual sites of suffering are some of the most popular tourist destinations (City Hall, Old Bridge, Salvation Tunnel, Potočari Memorial Complex). In January 2017, the War Childhood Museum was opened in Sarajevo, presenting a collection of personal items, stories, audio and video testimonies, photographs, letters, drawings and other documents evoking a unique experience of the war. This museum received the 2018 Council of Europe Museum Award.



Culture at the Service of Croatian Politics

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The war of the 1990s in Croatia left a multifold mark on the cultural scene. The historical meltdown that took place in the early 1990s influenced the social views and perspectives that also led to the reconceptualization of the cultural sphere. Language, literature, music, media have been put to the service of emphasizing the value of the nation-state and the fight for independence. Many cultural practitioners in this historical period have worked hard to promote positive social values, while at the same time there have been cases when by state institutions prevented progressive cultural activities as well as cases of regressive action against Yugoslavia's cultural heritage.

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In addition to the already known destruction of anti-fascist monuments across Croatia⁴, politics has turned to books as well, prompting the removal of inappropriate books from libraries and institutions. As we know from similar cases in history, books that are declared inappropriate are usually not books that are dangerous to the people, but books that are dangerous to the political agenda of those who declare them inappropriate. Thus, in the 1990s, about 2.800 books of Yugoslav, socialist and anti-fascist themes were destroyed under the pretext of writing off old books; books printed in Cyrillic and books by Yugoslav authors such as Vladimir Nazor and Dubravka Ugrešić. Only a small group of media outlets made by: Feral Tribune, Novi List and Tjednik dared to write about the issue at all, while the general public remained silent. Books were removed in various ways; the most famous such case and one of the few to receive any media attention, occurred on island of Korčula in 1997, when about five hundred titles were thrown into the waterfront container. The case was echoed in the media thanks to Milan Kangrga, an intellectual who himself donated many titles to the Korčula Library and then wrote a harsh condemnation

published in the Feral Tribune. As a result, Feral and Kangrga had to go through a libel trial.⁵

One example of the attitude of Croatian culture practitioners towards opposing views is the major media scandal that occurred in the early 1990s, at the time of the World Congress of PEN Centres in Rio de Janeiro, colloquially known as the “Rio Witch Case”. This is a public lynch directed at five Croatian writers of feminist and principally leftist views. Dubravka Ugrešić, Vesna Kesić, Slavenka Drakulić, Jelena Lovrić and Rada Iveković are accused of lobbying against the next PEN congress in Dubrovnik on December 5, 1992. *Vjesnik*, *Slobodna Dalmacija* and *Večernji list* published similar articles in which authors publish the allegations and claims that writers selfishly act against the Croatian state. In *Večernji list*, the text was signed by Branka Kamenski, while the author of the other two texts was the president of the Croatian PEN Centre himself - Slobodan Prosperov Novak. Perhaps the most controversial article in a series of condemning articles against these writers was published on December 11, 1992 under the heading “Croatian Feminists Rape Croatia”. The collectively signed Globus research team in this article accused five writers of covering up the rapes of Muslim and Croat women in Bosnia, as if they were trying to equate them with the aggressor. The scandal takes on international proportions when German, Japanese and US PENs cancel their participation in the congress.

Congress was eventually held, without the presence of our five “witches”, which some delegates resented, and the whole scandal was discussed in the congress, however the issue of media freedom was mentioned only in the context of the scandal and the only conclusion that came from the debate was that Globus’s approach was problematic, but also that one private media outlet is not a mirror of the media freedom of the whole country. Of course, the ‘witches’ have not been forgotten even after the congress, but the discourse accompanying the scandal is no longer so sharp and articles that truly analyse the chauvinistic/patriarchal image of women in our society are also published. Despite the reverberation, our society continues to underestimate women in the cultural sphere, while at the same time forgetting about the existence of writers from neighbouring countries.

On the other hand, outside of academia, the popular music scene during the Patriotic War (*Domovinski rat*) had a key share in uplifting moral and national awareness on both sides of the battleground.

In parallel to rifles and tanks, the war was waged on the other battlefield too; musical or cultural one. What was previously the mean of relaxation and source of pleasure becomes a powerful political weapon. In Croatia in the 1990s, popular musicians created music to help battlefield soldiers and raise the moral of the entire nation, or to call for international help and raise awareness of the international community about the war in Croatia.

At a time of exponential growth of bands such as Nirvana and Cranberries, the music of patriotic themes prevails in Croatia, aimed at raising national awareness and morale. In addition to encouraging fighters and raising the feeling of national unity, music played a role in calling for international assistance too. The song "Stop the war in Croatia", by Tomislav Ivčić, was played on radio stations abroad. The Croatian Diaspora made a huge contribution to all this. Croatian emigrants around the world have tried to draw attention to the horrors that have taken place in their homeland. In Croatia, even rockers have joined the movement to defend the homeland and raise national unity. Croatian rock icon Davor Gobac sang "Croatia Must Win" ("Hrvatska mora pobijediti") with his band Psihomodo Pop. A few years ago, he stated that he was not proud of the song, he was opposed to war and ethnic violence, but as he puts it, such were the times. "My Homeland", a song by the Croatian Band Aid, practically all Croatian authors of that time, is still popular today. A song full of emotion, which promoted peace and a better future, echoed into the hearts of all Croats during those war years. The song "Bang the Heels" ("Lupi petama") from "Prljavo kazalište" ("Dirty Theater") was the closest to reality, as patriotic as it was realistic. This band best described the situation in society in this hit song in 1993 - the nation was fed up with war and death that struck it. The song about the end of the war, about love for family and friends, about the poor, was fully accepted by the audience. Today, this hit remains one of the most beautiful Croatian patriotic songs.⁶

In addition to music that sought to encourage the population or call for international assistance during the war, there were musicians who promoted radical nationalism, hatred, and exclusion in their songs. The most famous representative of this kind of musical expression is Marko Perković Thompson. He is often associated with stubborn nationalism and, in some instances, fascism. Thompson, with his hit "*The Čavoglave Battalion*" ("*Bojna Čavoglave*") aroused the anger and fury of Croatian citizens. The impact of this song on the morale of the

Croatian defenders is undoubted, but unfortunately, many words of this patriotic hit are certainly doubtful. The song, unfortunately, begins with a salute *Za dom spremni* (For Home(land) Ready), a salute that, in addition to representing the soldiers of the Croatian Defence Forces (HOS - Hrvatske obrambene snage) units, has a historical significance. Used by the fascist Independent State of Croatia during World War II, the salute has a negative historical significance, is contrary to the Constitution and Laws of the Republic of Croatia and as such is undoubtedly unfit for public use.

In addition to patriotic reveilles and hits, the nineties brought to Croatia other musical genres. The nineties across Europe were the time of the underground techno scene and at the initiative of a couple of young people in Croatia, this touch of electronic music was brought to Croatia as well. "Under City Rave 93", is an event that changed the club scene in Croatia. During the war, while major military actions were taking place to liberate the occupied territory, in Zagreb was organized one of the largest parties. As many as three thousand people gathered at the Grič Tunnel to show the other face of Croatia. The tunnel that runs from Mesnička to Radićeva Street, that just a year ago, was a place of refuge from airstrikes by the JNA Air Force on the Croatian capital, became a gathering place for young people. Thanks to valuable organizers, including several dozen foreigners, Under City Rave remained remembered as the most legendary party in the history of the Croatian club scene and thanks to MTV, scenes of the same were seen around the world. Although people called the police en masse because of the uncontrolled noise, thanks to the efforts of the organizers, the police did not intervene. This was an ideal opportunity to promote Croatia. Thus, the Croatian youth showed a different face, a desire to continue a normal life despite the horrors of war.

On November 20, 1996, the Telecommunications Council decided to revoke Radio 101's concession. The popular "one-oh-one" was one of the few remaining independent media outlets that were not afraid to voice critical opinions of the then-government, and it was a public secret that most media were broadcasting only chosen news, violating fair-play communications and stifling media and civil liberties. The HDZ, which was in power at the time, led by Franjo Tuđman, could not endure Radio 101, which criticized the government on daily basis, and there were jokes about party rule, witty ads and songs "donated to the ones in power". The Telecommunications Board, according to the guidelines of the government, has passed a decision revoking

the concession of the local radio, which prompted an avalanche of comments as soon as the news aired. Calls and messages of support came from all over Croatia (although Radio 101 itself did not broadcast throughout the entire country or even the whole of Zagreb), faxes and telegrams filled the newsroom. The story also spread to the international scene when the U.S. State Department condemned the decision to revoke the concession. In the afternoon of November 21, Zagreb citizens organized a rally against media censorship and in support of Radio 101. Police allowed protests to be held mainly because no large turnout was expected, but in the end 100.000 citizens gathered for the protest, which is the largest protest since the Croatian independence. There was no lack of reaction from the authorities and the protest was characterized as a protest against the authorities and a desire to return to the "dark age of communism". The broadcast concession was eventually returned to Radio 101 in early 1997 following a government decision that the conditions for a new bid had been met, noting that protests against the authorities were not desirable.

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The truth is that the protest for the One-Oh-One was anything but unwelcomed. The unity of people that has never been seen before or after, has shown that through culture and the media one can reach the authorities, that the voice of the people cannot be silenced. That evening the people made a decision and it was implemented, as it should be in real democracies. The authorities got burned trying to deprive the people of their voice. After the protest, questions were raised about the competence and goals of the then government, which has certainly created a positive situation. From this event we've learned that the people define culture and the attempts of the authorities to encroach on culture and self-determination through culture almost inevitably encounter resistance because culture inherently belongs to the people.



The Hidden Cultural Life of Kosovo During the 1990s: Between Fear and Courage

For an entire decade, from the late 1980s to the late 1990s art and culture almost disappeared completely from Kosovo's public scene. Similar to every other aspect of life in Kosovo, cultural activities and expressions of art in any form were „banned“, by the Serbian regime. The National Gallery of Arts refused all exhibitions from Kosovo Albanian students and every other cultural institution was closed. Rejected by every institution that shaped them artistically through their childhood, teenage and professional years, Kosovo Albanian artists had no platform to express their art. „In the 90s, Serbia revoked the autonomy of Kosovo and closed or controlled educational and cultural institutions. Under these circumstances, the parallel system of education and political activity was created and therefore culture as well contributed to the resistance against oppression and keeping alive feelings of national dignity and creativity. The Pristina Faculty of Arts used to work in private houses, while exhibitions were held in cafes and restaurants”.⁷

Café Galleries became the only space for artists to gather and express their resistance through art. One of the most visited and most famous galleries of that time was Han. „Art was their only tool to resist violence and oppression that had captivated Kosovo for many years“.⁸ Han became a platform for young students to open their first exhibitions, panel discussions, meetings among activists and many other cultural activities. In a few words, café galleries became the alternative space that every artist had to use instead of the public spaces that once upon a time were their artistic home. Anyway, the artistic resistance that Han represented was not welcomed by the Serbian police. The owners and the clients were followed by Serbian police all the time.⁹ It did not last long until the Serbian police burnt down the Café together with around 2000 art pieces.

Many women supported the cause by offering their personal spaces and investing their future in art and development of culture, even though the oppression was growing continuously. As Zake Prelvukaj recalled, in 1997 it was impossible for artists to create „happy art“. Singers could not sing happy songs, painters could not paint „happy paintings“. „I wanted to draw a flower, but instead I drew a dead body, because that’s what was on my mind. People were dying every day. Women and children were maltreated. I could not be indifferent. I could not create, ignoring the conditions around me... The art of the artists was impacted by the current situation and they used this art as an expression of the revolt against this situation. The art of the 90s was the art of resistance”.¹⁰

Furthermore, through artistic performances, exhibitions, books, plays and many other artistic forms, Albanian Kosovar artists started showing the reality that people were facing all around Kosovo due to the Serbian regime. Not only did this activism keep the hopes of people alive but it also served as a source of information for the international community, in order to understand the current situation in Kosovo. What was considered as the most surprising cultural event and also as provocative from the Serbian side, was the exhibition “Përtej” (“Beyond”), held in the Centre for Cultural Decontamination in Belgrade in 1997. The exhibition of Sokol Beqiri, Mehmet Behluli and two other artists, caused extreme reactions from all sides. The controversy event was seen from different lenses from its organizers. „During the period between 1989 and 1991, educational and cultural institutions in Kosovo (galleries, the Academy of Arts, etc.) are “cleansed” of Albanians. Kosovar Art is thrown to the margins and forced to live a parallel life outside of its rightful homes. The art of resistance, though of a fluctuating quality, would give a final blow to academism... The “Përtej” project was initiated with the mission of breaking through borders and taboos that prevent normal artistic and interpersonal communication. This is, above all, an artistic project, but which nevertheless has other implications, one of them being political. Although we don’t see them as unimportant, and we don’t shy away from the provocative aspects of the project, we invite the silencing and ignoring of the objective, and supposed inartistic implications of the project, so that we can establish communication between Kosovo and Belgrade, through the universal language of art and spiritual concerns, that overcome today’s tenuous, poisoned and xenophobic reality of the Balkans. We have named the project “Përtej” which in Albanian means above, beyond, on the other side. This title is not of a programmatic

character. It only marks the border situation of artists who would wish to be beyond the harsh reality”.¹¹

In July of 1990, the only public TV, the Radio Television of Pristina, ceased its broadcasting after Albanian employees were fired from their positions and Serbian employees took the control over the television. This led to almost a total information blackout in the country. Albanians in Kosovo were left with only a few sources of information. One of them was newspaper “Koha”. The newspaper was initially published as a weekly magazine “Koha”, that ran from 1992 to 1994, becoming a leading weekly magazine in Kosovo. The initial team included new generation of opinion-makers such as Ylber Hysa, Baton Haxhiu, Dukagjin Gorani, Eqrem Basha, Shkelzen Maliqi, etc. The newspaper with the same name was published for the first time in 1997.

Another source of information and the so-called “cultural reproduction” were VHS tapes sold in video-clubs as almost the only way of receiving a glimpse of Albanian or western-oriented shows. Few years later, TV satellites became widely used during the ‘90s as an attempt to feel closer to the world. They are still considered as icons of that time when access to news, music, shows was limited. Despite the fact that now they are not used anymore, tourists that visit Pristina still find the large number of remaining TV satellites as an interesting relic of the past.

Tensed political situation was also reflected in music that witnessed a major shift comparing to the “golden years of Yugoslavia”. Rock music represented by famous bands like Gjurmët, Telex or 403 in previous decades changed drastically. New groups emerged, however the topics in the musical compositions were completely different. During the 1990s in Kosovo, there were three main music genres which basically had one thing in common – revolt towards the system portrayed in the lyrics. Patriotic songs were used as a tool to mobilize the citizens and they were turned into anthems of that era. Pop music and hip-hop as new genres were also affected by the political situation. For example, singer Adelina Ismaili released many songs that spoke about children’s rights and the lives of teenagers during the Serbian regime. She was one of the first singers in Kosovo who managed to touch topics that others of her age and even older couldn’t. At a very young age of 11, in 1990 her interviews on the hard life during the Serbian regime got censored. In 1995, her song “I will create my Army

with Ibrahim Rugova” became an absolute hit because of the strong message and the courage Adelina had talking openly about an army, at a time of oppression and tension. The lyric of this song emphasizes the importance of forming an army which will liberate Kosovo. Unikkatil AKA Rebeli was one of the first Albanian rap artists. He started rapping in the early 1990s, mainly against the Serbian government. During these years Albanian artists of Kosovo used media in Albania as a platform where they were represented with their music. Famous artists from Kosovo started to attend for the first time the Festival of Song, organized annually by the public broadcaster of Albania since there was no other platform where they could promote themselves and their music. This was also challenging due to cultural differences and the short amount of time from the closure of five decades long socialist chapter in Albania.

Theatre was also affected by tensed situation. “The National Theatre of Kosovo was founded in 1945 in Prizren, the city in Kosovo most associated with cultural life. After six months it relocated to Pristina. Over the following years, actors performed in both Albanian and Serbian until politics got in the way under Slobodan Milošević.”¹² „The first performances of the theatre were mostly created by amateur artists and talented and enthusiastic idealists who were aided by professional artists from other theatres of ex-Yugoslavia. “Until 1989 there were over 400 premiers with over 10.000 replays showed in the theatre which were followed by over 3.2 million spectators. The repertoire of this theatre was built on texts of many national, global and former Yugoslavian dramatics. These theatre performances, which were presented in different festivals with national and international character in the former Yugoslavia, were praised highly by critics of the time and were honoured with various artistic awards.”¹³

In 1990, the regime of Slobodan Milošević placed the theatre under a violent administration by expelling the Albanian artists from the theatre and putting it under a totalitarian control, just like other sectors in the public domain. With this move, the golden era of the theatre in Kosovo definitely ended. During this period, in a parallel university education system created against the totalitarian regime, many school-homes were created from the artistic ensembles, which were already part of this professional ensemble theatre. In mid-90’s, there were also international NGOs established in Kosovo that offered free courses of ballet and other cultural activities mainly targeting children, as a way to maintain the cultural life alive during rough years of totalitarian

regime and pressure. After the war ended in 1999, the theatre was renamed the National Theatre in order to adapt with the new political circumstances. Since 1999, the Serbian drama, which used to be one of the main institutions of the theatre, is inactive, since Serbian artists left Pristina. Since 2008, Serbian drama played in Mitrovicë/Kosovska Mitrovica, and around Serbian areas in Kosovo. From 2014, Serbian drama of the National Theatre is placed in Gračanica/Gračanica.

Cultural scene in the 1990s in Kosovo was developed and strengthened between fear and courage with the need to utilize art into a tool of mobilizing people politically against the system and to preserve art in every possible form. Artists of that era managed to provide information to people of Kosovo, share hope through art and once again prove that there is nothing in the world that can stop culture from rising. The importance of the artists' community work and contribution is still nowadays known as the art of resistance and valued for the message that has transmitted through the hardest decade of Kosovo. The collective history of Kosovo counts many more events, exhibitions, concerts, poems, books, songs and other products of culture from that period of time that have survived on the undergrounds and through the regime only to spread the message of peace and ending of the war.



The Cultural Scene in Montenegro in the 1990s

As in other countries of the former SFRY, the cultural scene of Montenegro in the 1980s and 1990s left an indelible mark on all the events during the war. The contribution it has made can be viewed in a positive and negative aspect. While one part of the SFRY cultural scene extolled nationalism and war and publicly supported the politicians who led the war, there is also a part that is talked about less both then and now, one that sought to spread messages of peace, reason and unity.

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Many sociologists associate the emergence of turbo folk with the cultural scene and therefore the society becoming primitive. In the late 1980s, both in Serbia and in Montenegro, turbo folk took primacy and conquered the tops of music charts, and thus became an indispensable soundstage in discos and clubs attended by young people. This way of entertainment grows into a trend, a fashion, a “lifestyle” followed by drug use, speeding in expensive cars, disrespecting the law, popularizing crime and the mafia as positive goals to pursue. In such an atmosphere, it is easy to create an uncritical attitude towards war and it is easy to inspire petty passions in the form of extreme nationalism.

The politicians and public officials of the time dominated the show, and their views and opinions influenced the creation of public attitudes. Artists are marginalized, their voices are hard to hear, and many are close to the authorities and used for political purposes. People are constantly bombarded with war propaganda that aims to encourage men, young and old alike, to recruit militarily, and those who have resisted that propaganda have suffered condemnation of society and shame. A single-stringed musical instrument “gusle” was an integral part of military equipment in such a way that they were

used to incite soldiers to fight, defend honour and war traditions of Montenegro.

It is important to mention intellectuals, artists and musical groups who have been persistent in expressing resistance and in calling for peace and common sense. Among them is certainly Antonije Pušić, better known as Rambo Amadeus, who through his satirical texts criticized the common man, his stupidity and the absurdity of his works. He is a great critic of neoliberal capitalism and his work is marked by critiques of nationalism. “Nationalism is a topic for those earning up to 300 euros a month. They are served that story. When the salary exceeds 500 euros, then the conversation about the dressing room and cafes begins. When it exceeds 1,000, then the top topic is healthy food, summer and winter vacations, and when it rises to more than 3,000, then any maunder ceases. People then talk about the weather and love.”¹⁴

He is also known to have interrupted a Bebi Dol concert on one occasion and expressed dissatisfaction with the bombing of Dubrovnik and said he would not entertain the elite. “Good evening, I was forced to interrupt the wonderful Bebi Dol because the television program goes live up to half past ten. I have two minutes to reach out to the nation. As we play, bombs fall on Dubrovnik and Tuzla. We will not entertain the electorate. Mother fu*kers”, Rambo said then, tossing the microphone demonstratively off the stage.¹⁵

Perper is a Montenegrin music band from Cetinje founded in 1991 and is one of the most popular bands in Montenegro. The name Perper is derived from the name of the old Montenegrin currency used during the independence of Montenegro. The band’s first significant performance was on a TV show that introduced the song “Peace as the Fifth Season” (“Mir kao peto godišnje doba”) in 1991, which was an anti-war song. The Montniggers, the Montenegrin hip hoppers, also alongside Perper fought against cultural abyss with their witty creativity. Many intellectuals who managed to enter the public space at the time when it was to the maximum extent poisoned by nationalism, sought to dissuade the people and authorities of Montenegro from shameful attacks and actions during the wars of the 1990s on civilians.



Cultural Scene in Serbia – “Turbo Folk Made Me Do It” ¹⁶

By the end of the 1980s, songs which for the main message had the empowerment of the Yugoslav idea as well as the call for peace and unity appeared on the SFRY music scene, that was a kind of response to what was actually happening. As nationalism grew in the republics along with the desire to break up, the greatest Yugoslav stars sang about the beauty and diversity of Yugoslavia (Lepa Brena – “Yugoslav woman”, 1989), a single country for all of us (EKV – “This is a land for us” (“Ovo je zemlja za nas”) 1987, the magic of Yugoslav rock and roll (Električni orgazam – “Igra rock ’n’ roll”, 1988).

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Although many anticipated and feared the future events, they thought that with their verses they could stop the words of politicians, that they could awaken Yugoslavia on the exhale and call for unity by personal example. Peace concerts were organized around Yugoslavia, such as the famous Yutel Peace Concert on July 28, 1991, in Zetra in Sarajevo. This concert represents one of the last collective efforts to end the war that had already started in Slovenia and Croatia. In addition to peace activists, writers, actors, journalists, Bajaga, Hari Varešanović, Muharem Serbezovski, Davorin Popović, Milan Mladenović and many other Yugoslavs performed in the concert, some of whom later, like Dino Merlin, changed their anti-war attitude. The concert of Yugoslav unity and energy had no major echo, as it was only broadcasted in BiH and Macedonia, while other republics boycotted the broadcasting. The scenario of such treatment of pacifist musicians will be repeated later. Nevertheless, the concert remained a record of the last atoms of the people’s unity and its desire to fight against politics through art.

In parallel to the process of using music for peace purposes, there was a reverse process. Until then omnipresent Yugoslav rock was replaced by quasi-patriotic, folk songs. Performers such as Baja Mali Knindža

(Songs: “Hold on pashas and Ustashe”, “Come back duke”, “When I was a little boy”, “I don’t like you Alija”, “Communists” – “Stan’te paše i Ustaše”, “Vrati se vojvodo”, “Kad sam bio mali”, “Ne volim te Alija”, “Komunjare”) were also listened in Serbia and based on their opus of songs the Serbian citizens made conclusions about the conflict in, for example, Bosnia. Besides him, the most prominent were Lepi Mića (“There better be no Muslims”, “Republic of Srpska” – “Muslimani bolje da vas nema”, “Republika Srpska”), Roki Vulović (“Black bombardier” – “Crni bombarder”) i Miro Semberac (“All mosques are blown up” – “Sve džamije u oblake lete”). Their songs were mainly used as motivation for soldiers and motivation for young men in Serbia to voluntarily engage in wars to defend Serbs and Serbianism. Supported by politicians and/or directly aroused by their actions, these songs aimed at awakening patriotism, but very often chauvinism, extolling history before the creation of Yugoslavia and creating a support base for war. The specificity of Serbia’s position in wars, inflation and sanctions, which prevented almost any breakthrough of Western trends, additionally favoured the use of all forms of art, not just music, for war purposes. In these circumstances, people often resorted to the only available, popular art as a way out of everyday life, so the use of popular culture for propaganda purposes was further justified.

What is true is that during the 1990s, new genres of popular music in Serbia – turbo folk and dance – were developed simultaneous to the return to folk music. Whether the changes in the cultural and music scene were conducted by the authorities or reflected the autochthonous market demand and division into urban and rural in Serbian society, there is no agreement between social theorists who have dealt with this phenomenon.

One of the main pillars of Yugoslav cultural unity – music – collapsed like the state itself. Music hit the borders. Artists who until then have only been viewed through their works are suddenly judged by birthplace, origin and nationality or support for the regime. It is rare that they remain immune to these divisions and remain consistent with the nobility of their art. An example of this is Lepa Brena (Fahreta Jahić-Živojinović), a former symbol of Yugoslav unity, who was banned in 1991 at some radios because she had an ineligible name.¹⁷

An anti-war concert of the band - the “Rimtutituki” movement, composed of members of Partibrejkers, Električni Orgazam (Electric

Orgasm) and EKV (Cane, Anton, Borko, Gile, Čavke, Jovec, Švaba and Milan) was held in Belgrade in the spring of 1992. Without permission to perform publicly and aware that their concert and message would not be broadcasted in the media (with the exception of Radio B92, who supported the initiative and the publication of the song), eight musicians circled Belgrade in an open truck and promoted the song "Listen up!". The main message, "Peace, Brother, Peace" and catchy lyrics such as, "Suviše si mlad da bi popio 'lad" ("You are too young to get cold feet") were directed primarily against the coming war in Bosnia and mobilization for the JNA. The second concert, "Do Not Count on Us", was held at the Republic Square under the slogan of S.O.S Peace or Do Not Count on Us, with the permission of the authorities, and about 50.000 people attended the concert. Rock musicians also participated in a number of other anti-war protests and concerts, including the one dedicated to the shelling of Dubrovnik, "Let's Stop the Hate to End the War" ("Prekinimo mržnju da prestane rat"). At this concert the song, "I Will Not Go Again My Friend" ("Ja neću protiv druga svog") was also sang, originally performed by Rade Šerbedžija and Svetlana Ceca Ražnatović (then Veličković), which is a very interesting case, as this turbo folk singer has significantly changed her initial anti-war musical engagement in the coming years. In 1995, Svetlana Veličković became engaged to Željko Raznatović Arkan, the leader of the paramilitary "Serbian Volunteer Guard" ("Srpska dobrovoljačka garda"), "Arkan's Tigers" ("Arkanovci"), who participated in war crimes on the territory of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. After marrying Arkan, Ceca's career took a dizzying climb, making her one of the biggest stars in Serbia ("Serbian Mother"). An example that shows how big was the entertainment and media influence in that information darkness is the popularity that Arkan's and Ceca's love had. They were proclaimed the greatest "Serbian" couple of the twentieth century, and their shows were recorded, while their wedding was released on videotape produced by PGP RTS (official production company of the public broadcaster). The video of their wedding was the most demanded video of that period.

In the opposite direction went Đorđe Balašević. Balašević, realizing that politics was heading in the direction of the fratricidal war, sang the famous, "Only if there was no war" ("Samo da rata ne bude"). In his own style, in the song "Freedom-no" ("Sloboda-ne") he criticized the system, while in the song "Yugoslav People Army Fuck Off" ("Odjebi JNA") and later "The Recruiting" ("Regrutska") paid tribute to the mobilized young men. What he sang about he showed with his

personal example, criticizing the regime in his broadcasts on Radio-TV Magazine, refusing mobilization and through activism as the Goodwill Ambassador of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. His songs have been banned on state television and radio. Balašević wrote and sang about the destruction of Vukovar in his song “The Man with the Moon in His Eyes” (“Čovek s mesecom u očima”) in 1993 and later dedicated it to the all destroyed cities in the world. Momčilo Bajagić Bajaga and Milan Mladenović were also active in promoting peace and often paid tribute to the victims at their concerts.

There is a common belief that there was great resistance to war propaganda in Serbia, which was reflected in massive anti-war protests, avoidance of recruiting and war desertion. Although there were similar initiatives and musical opposition to the regime in other parts of the former SFRY, the song did not stop the war but promoted it in Serbia as a patriotic act or concealed it from being seen.

With the exception of declared Yugoslav rock musicians, in Serbia there are generally few anti-war songs from popular genres and the promotion of pacifism by musicians. The refusal to broadcast anti-war music content in the state media made room for these musicians to broadcast their messages directly at concerts. Although we cannot say that there was little interest for them, it had limited reach, especially in the years of major warfare. Music in Serbia was quickly occupied by pieces about a better life, money, popularity - the leitmotifs of new genres - which threw new heroes - the mafia - into the scene. In this period there is an expansion of dance, rave and trans music – Đogani Fantastico, Funky G, B3, Doctor Igy, Ivan Gavrilović. Rave parties were mostly held in secret locations, and “diesel” style (Air-max sneakers, sweatshirts tucked in jeans, fluorescent tracksuits, “fast” glasses, and necklaces – just some of the symbols of this style of dressing) are like a category created precisely in this period. They mixed with the wave of patriotic composing, creating a new and twisted value system. DJs become very popular in this period - one of the images that marked the wars in BiH is Ron Haviv’s photo showing Srđan Golubović a.k.a. DJ Max, who was a member of Arkan’s Tigers, kicking dead Tifa Šabanović on the street in Bijeljina.

Initially, the Serbian hip hop scene was mostly based on urban, youth-themed topics, with some excursions into criticism of the regime, mixed with a dose of nationalism and a desire for revolution. Neither punk bands nor new rock bands went beyond that. The fact is that the

music scene in the 1990s in Serbia changed dramatically as a result of the wars in the former Yugoslavia, that is, the great changes that hit the state and society. With the popularizing of nationalism and the changing political ideology in Serbia, there is a complete change in the music scene. Folk music is at the centre of cultural events, though in a slightly modified form than the original. The mainstream becomes what we know today as turbo folk and dance music. The marginalization of rock and roll in Serbia and the paradigm shift in the music scene cannot be overlooked from a broader perspective of what was happening during that period. The Milošević's political regime in the early 1990s had a powerful and oppressive impact on the daily lives of citizens. The lack of freedom of speech as well as the pressure on journalists and the media directly influenced the orchestrated placement of cultural content in media and public discourse.

The entertainment world of public figures gets new players. Tabloid content is given more and more space in the media. The focus of the public is on singers who in their work support and promote nationalism, chauvinism, patriotism and the then leading political party. A new mini universe is being created, reporting more on gossip from the lives of then-pop stars than on music.

During this period, the most prominent figures besides politicians were Serbian criminals, some of them war criminals, who at the time (and now) held the titles of the greatest Serbian heroes. They were popular and present on the show business stage, appeared on TV shows, and films were made about some of them. At that time, Serbia, and especially Belgrade, was a place of inflation, lawlessness and the domination of criminal groups.

We can conclude that the situation in society and political changes have directly influenced the cultural scene in Serbia. Music and entertainment were used to divert the attention of citizens to current problems in order to influence their consciousness and opinion. How powerful that influence was shows the fact that even today, twenty years later, one can still notice the significant presence of entertainers in public and the complete absence of true information about what was actually happening in the territory of the former Yugoslavia.





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The BiH Cultural Scene During the War**

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■ *The Hidden Cultural Life of Kosovo During the 1990s: Between Fear and Courage*

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16 Title of a song by the Serbian rapper Mimi Mercedez

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BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA / CROATIA

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■ *The Hidden Cultural Life of Kosovo During the 1990s: Between Fear and Courage*

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BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA / CROATIA

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Relations between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia during the 1990s, but also in the post-war years, were the subject of research by the Komšije/Susjedi/Neighbours Group. We came up with the name of the group very easily. Namely, the word neighbour is very often used when it comes to these two countries: it is not uncommon for the media to talk about good-neighbourly relations, and these are the countries that have the longest land border of all republics of former Yugoslavia.

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Although often on a daily political basis, the relations between these two countries seem not so good-neighbourly, the constant communication of the people shows that this does not affect the lives of ordinary people. Namely, there is a long list of problems that burden relations between Sarajevo and Zagreb: undefined interstate border, construction of the Pelješac Bridge, exaggerated participation of citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina in foreign wars, different view of the participation of fighters from Arab countries in the war in BiH, trade barriers for agricultural products from Bosnia and Herzegovina and so on. Although Sarajevo is often formally opposed to Zagreb's "interference" in political affairs in BiH, it should be noted that the Republic of Croatia has committed itself to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of BiH by the Dayton Peace Agreement.

However, the fact that those topics are first of all important to politicians and then to the media is proven by the atmosphere in this group during its visits, as well as during the work on writing narratives, starting with the formulation of topics that will be the subject of our research, through mutual communication, to the opportunity for everyone to express their views on issues that can be characterized

as controversial. The territory of former Yugoslavia, as well as the rest of the European continent, is not immune to history being written and read differently. Heroes or victims, these are black and white images that nations have about themselves, and although every nation hides corpses in its foundation, they prefer to peek into someone else's foundation. Therefore, history has brought different nations to the same places, but the memories – what happened in those places – often do not have much in common. However, it is important to accept that there are different interpretations of common history.

Since in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a country of three constitutional nations (Bosniaks, Serbs, Croats), there are several contradictory narratives on these topics, the current narratives presented in this chapter will mainly relate to conflicting interpretations of particular events within the Croat-Bosniak conflict in the BiH war. By isolating this conflict from the entire course of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we remain deprived of the dominant Serbian narrative on relations between the Republic of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina during the course of the 1990s. Thus, in the chapters related to the narratives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, you will have the opportunity to read an overview of certain events from the Bosniak perspective.

It also remains somewhat unclear whether or not we are talking about the dominant pan-Croatian narrative? Or are there any differences about the events in BiH during the war of the nineties in the positions of the official Zagreb and the general public of the Republic of Croatia in comparison to the views of the Croatian community within Bosnia and Herzegovina?

By selecting the places of visit (Mostar, Sarajevo), the entire study of the relations between the two countries was transferred east of the Una river and was primarily concerned with the Bosniak-Croatian conflict. We believe it would have been interesting to visit some places that were not the scene of the conflict and hear the views of people who were not directly involved in the conflict itself. Nonetheless, during our visits we had the opportunity to visit sites where significant events took place during the 1990s, to hear the opinion of the local population about what happened there and also to hear a little more about how these events are interpreted today, 25 years after the end of the conflict.

What has left a strong impression on us as a group is the outlook of the

local population forward or to the future, emphasizing the importance of talking about the past. It was also very interesting to work on writing the narratives themselves. Namely, what gave our understanding of certain information a different point of observation was not the country we came from. It was first and foremost the profession we have. It is the diversity of our academic backgrounds that has shown how complex the issue of narrative research is for an interdisciplinary approach to writing these chapters.





The Founding of the HZHB and the Military Organization of Croats in BiH: A Croatian Narrative

Fighting for Survival

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The Croatian-Serbian armed conflict, from the early 1990s, soon extended to the territory of the then Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereinafter SR BiH, since April 1992 the Republic of BiH). Megalomaniac Serbian policies directed by Slobodan Milošević and Bosnian Serb representatives also implied aggression and occupation of the territory of the SR BiH, which, until 1992, managed to avoid the participation in armed conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. As early as 1991, the Serb population in BiH organized itself into an association of municipalities, and at the end of that year the Serbian Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (later Republika Srpska) was proclaimed. In response to such Bosnian Serb policies, Croats in BiH also came together in an association of municipalities called the Croatian Community of Herceg-Bosnia (Hrvatska zajednica Herceg-Bosna – hereinafter referred to as HZHB), which was established on November 18, 1991¹⁸ in Grude, the original capital (later the capital transfers to Mostar).

The original goal of establishing such a community was to defend the Croatian people in BiH, as well as to defend the Bosnian-Herzegovinian territory and its integrity against the inevitable aggression of the Yugoslav People's Army and Serb paramilitary units in BiH. Mate Boban (1991-1994), was a Croatian politician and member of the HDZ BiH, who was also one of the founders of the Croatian Defence Council in April 1992 (Hrvatsko vijeće obrane - hereinafter HVO), because along the political, defines against Serbian aggression should also be organized on military grounds.¹⁹ Bosniaks were fighting with Croats as part of Croatian military units at the beginning of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, while the military organizing of the Bosniaks in Bosnia and Herzegovina happened only on April 15, 1992 and was named the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Armija BiH), and in reality came to

life much later.

In addition to the HVO, as a legitimate HZHB army, as early as 1991, the Croatian Defence Forces (HOS) were established as a party (para) military force of the Croatian Party of Rights of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Hrvatska stranka prava Bosne i Hercegovine - HSP BiH), which, apart from BiH, fought on the battlefields in Croatia. The HOS coat of arms consisted of a Croatian checkerboard on a black background with the inscription "For home(land) – ready!", and also the name IX. Battalion "Rafael vitez Boban" (according to the General of the Independent State of Croatia - NDH, which was created in 1941) is reminiscent of the signs and symbolism of the Ustasha movement from the World War II.

The founding of the HZHB and (para)military units on the territory of BiH certainly could not have gone without the concerns of Muslim-Bosniaks, who, in addition to the idea of Greater Serbia, now feared renewed aspirations of Greater Croatia (remember that the territory of BiH was included during World War II in NDH). We do not see the bases of such aspirations, because from the very beginning, the Croatian people have made enormous efforts to defend against the Serbian aggressor – by fighting together in the Assembly of the SR BiH and by voting in a referendum in March 1992.

The Croats had a well-founded fear that they would be transformed into a national minority in shrunken Yugoslavia and a very obvious step was to start making moves in organizational and military terms. The armed conflict between the Croats and Bosniaks finally erupted in the summer of 1992, marked by bloody clashes and grave crimes on both sides, with civilian casualties and marked by the destruction of cultural assets such as the Old Bridge in Mostar, which was destroyed in November 1993.

As a result of the Bosniak-Croatian conflict and mutual distrust, the establishment of the Croatian Republic of Herceg-Bosnia emerged as a continuity of the existence of the HZHB and for the purpose of better organizing of Croats in BiH. Although a ceasefire between the Croats and Bosniaks was agreed in 1994 when the Federation of BiH was created, the Croat Republic of Herceg-Bosnia remained formally in existence until 1996.

Numerous controversies are still today related to the Croatian Republic of Herceg-Bosnia and the Croatian Armed Forces, mainly because

of the mentioned indoctrination of the Ustashe movement and the separatist connotations²⁰ that the establishment of such organizations in the territory of BiH is related to. However, such controversies are today primarily used for political purposes and for political brawling, because a clear narrative is still not established, as can be seen by the omission of these topics from (Croatian) history textbooks, which only mention the existence of the Bosniak-Croatian conflict of the 1990s.





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The Founding of the HZHB and the Military Organization of Croats in BiH: Bosnia and Herzegovina's Narrative

(Non)Divisible BiH

The course of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina was largely determined by the Bosniak-Croat relations within this war. The 1990 parliamentary elections for the Assembly of the SR BiH are won by ethnic parties and they overthrow the communists. With the start of the war in Slovenia and Croatia, Bosniaks were in danger of remaining part of a state where the doctrines of Greater Serbian politics would be implemented and themselves reduced to the level of a national minority.

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The Chetnik aggressors used the territory of BiH as a springboard for military operations and aiding Serbs in Croatia, and announced and began forced mobilization. The Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in response to the sequence of events, adopted on October 15, 1991, an Act on reaffirming the sovereignty of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. With that act, it was decided to withdraw all BiH representatives from the federal bodies until an agreement was reached between the republics that made up Yugoslavia. Defending the long-standing Bosnian statehood, the citizens of BiH opted for independence in a referendum on February 29 and March 1, despite opposition from Greater Serbian nationalists.

The fear of Greater Serbian aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina, finds Bosniaks and Croats as partners in the fight against such struggles. Although apparently in the same line with Bosniaks in their desire for independence, the HDZ BiH proclaimed HZ Posavina in Bosanski Brod on November 12, 1991 and HZHB was proclaimed in Grude on November 18, 1991.²¹

The creation of the Association began in May 1991, when at the meeting in Busovača, the Croatian population of Central Bosnia,

as well as the Herzegovina municipalities, were advised to join the Croatian Regional Association of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The establishment of Croatian communities, reminiscent of Serb autonomous regions, was a great surprise to Bosniaks, who saw the Croats as partners against Greater Serbian aggression. Since the constitutional rights of Serbs and Croats in BiH were not compromised and their participation in state bodies was proportional, the creation of national communities was an unconstitutional attempt to divide the state and annex territories to neighbouring states according to plans and maps of political leadership of Serbia and Croatia.

The response to the unconstitutional establishment of new territorially political units in the Republic of BiH was an attempt by state authorities to preserve peace at all costs. Alongside the loyal citizens, there were movements that worked intensively to break up the country. While part of the HDZ BiH worked in stabilizing the country, the other part made moves that contributed to the destabilization of the state.²²

The establishment of Croatian parastatal bodies was accompanied by similar moves on the military plan, which largely determined the course of the Bosnian war, especially the Bosniak-Croatian relations during but also after the war. The causes of such attitude of Croats in BiH should also be sought in the attitude of official Zagreb and Tuđman towards BiH, which in its meetings with Croat representatives undermined BiH's statehood and called for the borders of the Croatian Banovina.²³

After the defeat of Chetnik forces during Operation June Dawn (Lipanjaska zora)²⁴ Mate Boban introduced the Croatian local government system, the Croatian school system, and "Croatian" became the "official language". The HDZ transformed the HZHB into a one-party, ethnic entity of the Croatian people, which it defined in its name.

It should be noted that there were significant differences in the aspirations of the HVO and the HOS in the war in BiH. The HOS of Herzegovina was headed by Blaž Kraljević, an unquestionable patriot who advocated the indivisibility of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and as such is presumably liquidated by the Croatian state leadership because he prevented intentions to create an independent Croatian community in BiH that would subsequently be

annexed by the Republic of Croatia.²⁵

During its operations, the HVO frequently cooperated with the Chetnik occupier and worked to weaken Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was especially emphasized in the territory of besieged Sarajevo. Although formed as a paramilitary force, it has been accorded equal status in the desire to defend and stand for the independence of BiH.

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What especially hurts is that the victims are still today so many years after, unequal. Croatian casualties and fighters are many times more “worthy” and are wholeheartedly supported with the money of the Republic of Croatia, which is another indicator that Croatia was a participant in the aggression against BiH and that HVO members did not work on its defence, but on the fragmentation of BiH. Namely, in addition to funding from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina through the pension and disability protection system, the soldiers respectively families of the dead at the same time receive monthly fees from the budget of the Republic of Croatia.



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The Founding of the HZHB and the Military Organization of Croats in BiH: A Shared Narrative

From Allies to Foes to Allies Again



Following the creation of the HDZ BiH political party and four months before the declaration of independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina, by decision of November 18, 1991, the HDZ BiH establishes the HZHB as a political, cultural, economic and territorial entity in the territory of western and central Bosnia and Herzegovina with its seat in Mostar. This community will later be joined by parts of Bosnian Posavina with a majority Croat population while the Constitutional Court of BiH will challenge the existence of this community by a decision of September 14, 1992. In 1993, HZHB changed its name to Croatian Republic of Herceg-Bosnia (HR HB). ICTY Trial Chambers in the Blaškić (IT-95-14), Kordić and Čerkez (IT-95-14/2) and Naletilić and Martinović (IT-98-34) cases found that the political leaderships of HZ HB (HR HB) and the Republic of Croatia had the political aim of separating this territory from Bosnia and Herzegovina and annexing it to the Republic of Croatia in order to achieve the unification of the Croatian people in a single state that strives for the borders of the 1939 Croatian Banovina.

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The HVO was established in 1992 as the supreme defence body and later as the administrative and executive body of the HZHB. With the Friendship and Co-operation Agreement between BiH and the Republic of Croatia signed between Presidents Franjo Tuđman and Alija Izetbegović the same year, the HVO became part of the BiH Army.^{26 27}

The international community sought simultaneous political solutions to the conflicts that had erupted in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Negotiations between representatives of the three nations in Bosnia and Herzegovina with international mediators resulted in the Vance-Owen Peace Plan (January 2, 1993) under which BiH should be a unified decentralized state with 10 provinces, each having a local government headed by the representative of the majority group. With

this plan, the Bosnian Croats were assigned provinces 3, 8 and 10 and their representatives fully accepted the settlement proposed by the plan, while the Bosniak and Serb sides did not accept it. This peace plan accelerated the process of disagreement between Croatia and BiH, which escalated in the 1993 conflict. In several sentences²⁸, the ICTY Trial Chambers have found that, despite opposition from Bosnian Muslims, the political leadership of the Republic of Croatia and the HZHB sought to implement the plan by force. According to the Vance-Owen plan, all units of the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the provinces declared Croatian had to submit to the HVO based on the decision of the Bosnian Croat leadership. The refusal of this plan by the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina was followed by a large number of conflicts and war crimes and mass violations of human rights in the territory of Central Bosnia and West Herzegovina committed by members of the HVO and the Army of BiH. The conflict was officially ended by the Washington Agreement²⁹, signed on March 18, 1994 by Prime Minister of BiH Haris Silajdžić, Croatian Foreign Minister Mate Granić and President of Herceg-Bosnia Krešimir Zubak.

Sufferings During the Bosniak-Croatian Conflict in the BiH War: A Croatian Narrative

Who Ordered the Killings of Croats?

Croats and Bosniaks fought as allies against the JNA and Serb forces until the autumn of 1992 when the Bosniak-Croat conflict begins, resulting in a large number of casualties. More than 1.600 Croats lost their lives as a result of war crimes (the way the international community defines war crimes), and among those who lost their lives in mass crimes there were 1.088 civilians.³⁰

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The conflict reached its peak on April 16, 1993. The culminating event is known as the Ahmići massacre and was declared a war crime – a crime against humanity. The attack was aimed at Muslim possessions. Houses and barns were set on fire and many people were killed in the process. According to data collected and verified by the courts, 116 Bosniaks were killed, including at least 41 unarmed civilians.

Although this date is well known among those who are more informed about the war, both from the Balkans and around the world, this was not the only culminating event. Specifically, on the same day a battle was fought in Trusina (a village in Konjic municipality in Herzegovina) between the Army of BiH (a unit known as “Zulfikar”) and the HVO. The ARBiH members went from house to house and used civilians as a human shield and headed for Brdo Križ (Cross Hill), where by threatening to kill civilians, forced HVO members (6 of them)³¹ to surrender and then shot them. After they broke the resistance down, army soldiers entered the village and brutally killed 18 Croat civilians, including women, children and the elderly and injured 4 civilians. In addition to the inhumane terrorizing of civilians, soldiers also robbed houses and other possessions that belonged to Croats.

What is considered and pointed out by a part of Croatian society as a terrible injustice is the fact that the core of both crimes is the same,

since the targets were members of only one group, but again the crime in Ahmići was discovered by UNPROFOR, well covered by foreign and domestic media and the perpetrators were put on trial before the ICTY. On the other hand, the media did not give so much attention or importance to the crime in Trusina, and the perpetrators were put on trial before the court of BiH, and it seems that the crime against Croats has been forgotten and made less important by media and politics.

The crime in Trusina is not an isolated case of Croats suffering in this conflict. War crimes were committed against Croats throughout BiH, primarily in the territory of Herzegovina and central Bosnia. Among the many casualties and crimes, two stand out. On July 28, 1993, in the village of Doljani near Jablanica 37 people - 8 civilians and 29 conscripts, were rounded up and killed during the raid of ARBiH members, most of whom at the moment of the raid were found unarmed working the fields.³²

In Grabovica, near Mostar on September 9, 1993, 32 Croat civilians were killed, mostly elderly, women and children, who remained in the village after the ARBiH, took control of the village. The wider area of the village of Grabovica has been under the control of members of the Army of the RBiH since May 10, 1993 and at the time of the massacre it was away from all lines of contact or conflicts for more than 35 km. 16 bodies haven't been found yet. They are presumed to have been dumped in the Neretva River or into the reservoir of the Salakovac Hydro Power Plant. Some of those killed were monstrously tortured before the execution.³³

Frequently, the executions of civilians, HVO members and prisoners of war were carried out by Arab volunteers, members of the El-Mujahid movement, who are remembered for their monstrous executions and the celebration of crimes.³⁴

Neither the Prime Minister of the RBiH, the de facto Bosniak war entity, nor the Ministers of Defence or the Interior, was held responsible for the command responsibility for crimes against Croats. Of the two Chiefs of General Staff of the Army of the RBiH, General Sefer Halilović was not found guilty in The Hague tribunal, while General Rasim Delić was sentenced to 2 years in prison.³⁵



Sufferings During the Bosniak-Croatian Conflict in the BiH War: Bosnian Narrative

(Foes)Friends

The Bosniak-Croatian conflict in the war in BiH is often referred to as war inside the war. Bosniaks viewed Croats as partners against Chetnik aggressors and Greater Serbian ideas. By August 1992, the Army of the RBiH had fully mobilized and had 168,500 troops, without the HVO and the MIA of BiH, and in the territory controlled by the Army of the RBiH, HVO units were accepted as part of the BiH Armed Forces. However, according to an officer of the RBiH Army, the HVO has been stopping convoys with weapons and logistics since the beginning of the war, suggesting that the Croatian side was not acting as a partner.

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A series of sporadic conflicts, in which Bosniaks and Croats mutually suffered at the end of April 1993, escalated into a total war of international character. The events that preceded the general conflict were called “preventive actions”, and took place in different parts of Herzegovina and Central Bosnia. Preventive actions start in central Bosnia, most notably the genocide in Ahmići village, which was surrounded by villages with a Croat population, where in few hours 116 civilians were killed, including women, children and the elderly. A wave of forced evictions, murders and rapes followed. Bosniaks fled from Vitez to Travnik or Zenica, claiming that Croatian soldiers gave them three hours to leave the city or be killed.

Within a few weeks in April and May of 1993, the fall of Srebrenica, the Serbian rejection of the Vance-Owen Plan, the inability of the international community to implement the peace plan and finally the outbreak of a total Croat-Bosniak war happened. All this forced the Bosnian government and the Army to face the new state of affairs. A major political and military turnaround followed: the RBiH army began to strike back. After horrific reports on VRS camps, terrifying reports of harassment and torture of Bosniaks in Croatian camps

began to arrive in the summer. On September 15, 1993, the UN Security Council issued a statement urging the Croats to disband the camps, recalling the feeling of “revulsion and condemnation” expressed by the international community a year earlier when discovering the Serb camps³⁶.

On the night of October 23, 1993, after a continuous all-day bombardment of the village of Stupni Dol, members of Croatian units raided the village and afterwards massacred the population. The crimes against civilians and property lasted for days, until late at night on November 3, 1993, when the Croatian mayor using a megaphone ordered the Bosniak population to get ready for evacuation and gather on city streets by dawn.

As the war raged on, the US government began to exert pressure on Zagreb and on February 3, 1994, the UN Security Council set a two-week deadline for Croatia to pull troops of its regular army out of BiH or face the consequences. The pressure has borne fruit. Over the next few days, the Bosnian and Croatian delegations were brought to Washington. The agreement on the Bosniak-Croat federation was signed and Croatia was promised military and economic assistance in return.



Sufferings During the Bosniak-Croatian Conflict in the BiH War: A Shared Narrative

Which Victims Are Worth More?

In seeking a reason for the conflict between Croats and Bosniaks, each side has its own criteria and its culprits and as a rule sees them only in the other side, while at the same time hiding or downplaying their own side's crimes. This is where the incomprehensible turns happen, in which the source of all the war evils, the Serbian aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina, is forgotten. Thus, some Bosniak politicians accuse the Croats of aggression and genocide³⁷, forgetting the atrocities of the Serbian aggressor, without mentioning the evils they inflicted on the Croats; for example, in central Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As far as media attention is concerned, the Croatian crimes in Ahmići and Stupni Dol are presented to the world public, while the crimes of Bosniaks in Borovica near Vareš, Kiseljak near Žepče, Trusina, Uzdol, Doljani, Grabovica near Jablanica, Konjic and Mostar are less covered. The same tendency, covering up Bosniak crimes against Croats and seeing Bosniaks solely in the role of victim, is seen in the world of politics as well as in memorizing the victims. Representatives of Croats in BiH, as well as officials of the Republic of Croatia have been repeatedly invited to visit the places where crimes against Bosniaks have been committed, to apologize to the victims and to take the blame by accepting the responsibility of the Republic of Croatia³⁸. Simultaneously, the sites where Croats suffered in BiH were neglected³⁹ and on the anniversaries of the sufferings there is still no political representatives of the Bosniak nation, thus continuing the "vow of silence" on these events. Finally, let us mention the court trials. The crimes were prosecuted, but before the courts of "varying level"⁴⁰. For example, the crimes in Ahmići were tried before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (under command responsibility), while the crimes in Trusina were tried before the Court of BiH (direct executors, not commanders). This can be

presented as an issue from the same point of view of the “victim’s role”, but nevertheless the crimes were recognized, and someone was held responsible for them.

As a result of the Croat-Bosniak conflict, a tragic exodus of the Croat people happened in the areas that were or came under the control of the BiH Army, but also vice versa.

The number of killed and fallen during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the subject of dispute between the warring parties, that is, different institutions involved in the investigation of war events in BiH. The number most researchers would agree with is around 100.000. Unfortunately, often different historians, private researchers, but also the media mention figures that go well beyond this number⁴¹. There has never been reached a consensus on the number of expelled and displaced persons neither.

The consequences of the conflict between Croats and Bosniaks in Bosnia and Herzegovina are multiple and tragic for the fate of the country and for all three nations in it. Although the process of reconciliation among the population has advanced, places of suffering are often used to achieve political goals and to maintain an artificial state of conflict in peace times. For example, there is never a reference to positive events, such as the case in Vitez where Bosnian Franciscans defended Bosniaks against furious extremists from their nation or that in Vareš where local Bosniaks helped their Croat neighbours, not to mention joint fighting throughout the war in the Bihač area and Bosnian Posavina against a common enemy.



Demolition of the Old Bridge in Mostar: Croatian Narrative

Who Destroyed the Bridge?

In the midst of Greater Serbian aggression against Croatia and BiH, 1992 saw an open armed conflict between the Croatian and Bosniak forces, former allies in the defensive war. This is due to the increase in mistrust between the two sides, as well as the fears of the Muslim-Bosniak side that the HZHB was created with the aim of secession of the territory under the control of the Croatian people in BiH. Also, the persistence of the Croatian side to organize itself and act independently did not contribute to the building of relations, despite the fact that the leaders of the HZHB repeatedly guaranteed the territorial integrity of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. One of the main areas of conflict was Mostar, a city located in the Neretva River Valley, with mixed Muslim-Bosniak and Croat populations. Among the other, at one moment it was made the capital city of the earlier established Croatian Republic of Herceg-Bosnia.

The newly created situation divided the population on a religious-national basis into the eastern (Bosniak) and western (Croatian) banks of Neretva, which at one point remained connected only by the Old Bridge, while all other Mostar bridges across Neretva were destroyed or significantly damaged.

Although the Croatian side is hold responsible for the uricide in the territory of the city of Mostar, the destruction of the city on Neretva was carried out much earlier. During the summer of 1992, Serb forces under the orders of JNA Commander Momčilo Perišić terrorized the city, destroying cultural and historical monuments, economic and military complexes. The Old Bridge was hit by Serb forces on two occasions in June and October 1992, after which HVO forces undertook actions to repair and secure the bridge⁴². After the expulsion of Serb forces during the Lipanjska zora campaign (June Dawn), the Old Bridge remains the

only bridge on the Neretva River until November 9, 1993, when it was destroyed after several days of shelling (after 427 years of existence). The destruction of the Old Bridge was filmed with three cameras and one of them 'captured' a tank from which the aforementioned shells were fired, which allegedly destroyed the bridge.

The Croatian side, or units of Croatian General Praljak, who was tried by the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) for the act, was blamed for destroying the bridge. During the conflict, the Old Bridge was under the control of the BiH Army and was used to transport weapons, which undoubtedly gives legitimacy to the possible destruction of the bridge by the HVO.

What suggests that the bridge has not been destroyed by the Croatian side is: the lack of an order to destroy the bridge, acquittal of General Praljak on that indictment (29.11.2017) and the form of destruction of the bridge, which seemed to have been demolished with set explosives (which was later proven by various experiments and expert analyses).⁴³

In any case, the destruction of the Old Bridge has had far greater consequences on the feelings and 'psyche' of Mostar people who were outraged and angry over the destruction of their city's symbol than on the further course of the conflict between the Croat and Muslim-Bosniak sides. At the end of the war, the reconstruction of the bridge started and completed in 2004 with the wholehearted support of the Republic of Croatia. Thus, the Old Bridge still today remains the symbol of the city, connecting the two banks of Neretva.

Demolition of the Old Bridge in Mostar: Bosnian Narrative

It Is Known.

Question: We face the question of who destroyed the Old Bridge every November 19 when we recall one of the most heinous crimes in the past war - the urbicide, which aimed to change the course of history, forever exterminate the existence of Bosniaks in Herzegovina, and kill the spirit and faith in a multinational society and coexistence in these areas.

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The bridge was partially damaged by the so-called Army of Republika Srpska (VRS) and the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) and on November 9, 1993 the HVO destroyed the Old Bridge as part of a campaign to shelter and terrorize Mostar. A day earlier, the HVO began a campaign to destroy the bridge by firing dozens of projectiles into arches and towers, which ended with its final destruction the next day. This was the culmination of months of terrorizing the citizens of Mostar. At the beginning of August 1993, 25,000 people were under siege on the east side of Mostar, with very little food and no drinking water.

According to a professional study based on the video recordings, the explosion may have been caused by the detonation of fuses in the water, although it is confirmed that during the morning (9:57) and afternoon (15:52), on November 8, 1993, the Old Bridge was exposed to attacks by different missiles and probably tanks. European historians Holm Sundhaussen⁴⁴ and Marie-Janine Čalić⁴⁵ claim that the bridge was destroyed as a result of shelling by the HVO or Croatian Army (HV) and a similar view of the responsibility of Croatian troops was expressed by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in the case Prlić et al. (IT-04-74).⁴⁶

Following the publication of 36 Tuđman's transcripts⁴⁷ and seven judgments⁴⁸ before the ICTY it can be concluded that the destruction of

the bridge was part of a deliberate campaign of aggression by Croatia, which was reflected, among other things, in uricide. Tudman's conversation with Janko Bobetko and Ante Roso on November 6, 1993, just 4 days before the destruction of the Old Bridge, testifies on the methods of uricide and Croatia's aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina. At one point, Tudman asks Roso to apply "some elements of intimidation" against the Bosniaks and to choose to use everything possible without the use of poison gas. Just four days later, the Old Bridge was destroyed.

On the other hand, Franjo Tudman's transcripts are unequivocally the most direct evidence of Croatia's aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina and are held by the Hague tribunal as evidence. War criminal Slobodan Praljak has repeatedly tried to shift the responsibility for the destruction to the Bosniak side through his hyper-production of quasi-historical books, but in 2004 for the newspaper Slobodna Dalmacija he stated: "The Old Bridge was a military facility, and a military facility at war, regardless of its historical and cultural value, can be destroyed."⁴⁹

Demolition of the Old Bridge in Mostar: A Shared Narrative

The Bridge That Separates

The construction of the Old Bridge in Mostar was completed in 1566 and was built by Master Mimar Hajrudin at the request of the then Turkish Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent.⁵⁰ Some believe that the city of Mostar was named after the bridge, whether by its name (old bridge = mostar) or by the people who guarded the bridge - mostari. In any case, more than useful or (in war) military one, the bridge had symbolic value.

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Although the safety and existence of the bridge has already been compromised before, during the World War II, when it was loaded several times with explosives in order to demolish it if there would be a need for that and thus prevent its use by the enemy, nevertheless the evil fate of the Old Bridge was met during the Croatian-Bosnian Herzegovinian conflict. Therefore, in the indictment against Bosnian Croat war leaders (The Six), the destruction of the Old Bridge was described as “the destruction of institutions intended for education and religion”, and the Trial Chamber concluded by majority that on November 8, 1993 the HVO tank during the offensive all day opened fire on the Old Bridge, causing it to finally collapse the next morning.⁵¹ The Appeals Chamber in the Prlić et al. case concludes that while the people of Mostar and Croats and Bosniaks find the reason for the destruction of the bridge disputable, the destruction caused disproportionate damage to the civilian Muslim population of Eastern Mostar, but since it was used by the BiH Army, the bridge presented for the HVO a legitimate military objective.⁵²

After the end of hostilities, a temporary suspension bridge was built in the same place, similar to the old one from the time before Mimar Hajrudin. A decade later, in 2004, from the remaining ruins and pieces of the same stone from Herzegovina, a new Old Bridge was built, which

in 2005 was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Mostar's life circle has closed again.

The demolition of the bridge, the siege of the city and the terrorizing of the population remained fresh topics in the years after the war and Mostar is often referred to as the "city case". The reason for this attitude is the very poor legal and political status of city on Neretva, which is not satisfying for any of the sides. Mostar has been politically divided into two parts since the war in BiH, Bosniak – eastern part and Croat – western one. A statute imposed by former High Representative in BiH Paddy Ashdown in 2004 abolished six municipalities and introduced a single City Administration.

The local elections in Mostar were last held in 2008. Currently, there is no City Council, and all powers are in the hands of "lifelong" Mayor Ljubo Bešlić. Highly intense political relations also shifted to relations among the people on both sides of the city. Communication is almost non-existent even 25 years after the bridge was destroyed.



■ *The Founding of the HZHB and the Military Organization of Croats in BiH*

18 On the same day that the HZHB was founded in Grude, Vukovar fell on the Croatian battlefield, where the JNA and Serb paramilitaries subsequently committed many murders and war crimes.

19 Namely, at that time, while the Serbian-Montenegrin aggressor was destroying the Croatian town of Ravno near Trebinje in eastern Herzegovina, messages were coming from Sarajevo “this is not our war” (A. Izetbegović), and it was clear that it was necessary to take care of the defense of the Croatian communities in BiH (this organization was the basis for efforts to maintain itself as a constituent and sovereign people in Bosnia and Herzegovina).

20 The Republic of Croatia is often accused of separatist connotations, although it is one of the first countries to recognize BiH.

21 Decision on the establishment of the Croatian Community of Herceg-Bosna, 18. 11. 1991. Faktor.ba. *Obilježena godišnjica tzv. HR Herceg-Bosne*. Sarajevo.

• <https://web.archive.org/web/20200208114131/https://faktor.ba/vijest/obiljezena-godisnjica-tzv-hr-hercegbosne/718>
(Archived on 08.02.2020.)

22 Index. *ICTY: Milošević dokazivao da je i Kljujić bio za podjelu BiH*. Zagreb.

• <https://web.archive.org/web/20200208114726/https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/icty-milosevic-dokazivao-da-je-ikljujic-bio-za-podjelu-bih/148665.aspx>
(Archived on 08.02.2020.)

23 “The Banovina of Croatia is the result of an attempt to resolve the Croatian question and create opportunities for the survival of the Yugoslav state in the circumstances of the aggravated European political situation on the eve of World War II. It legally began to exist with the adoption of the Decree on the Banovina of Croatia on August 26, 1939. It is known as Maček’s solution to the Croatian question”, according to Banovina Hrvatska, *Hrvatska enciklopedija.hr*. 1999-2009. Ur. Brozović, Dalibor; Kovačec, August; Ravlić, Slaven. Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža, Zagreb.

• <https://web.archive.org/web/20200208115127/https://www.enciklopedija.hr/natuknica.aspx?ID=5743>
(Archived on 08.02.2020.)

24 Operation June Dawn (Lipanjke zore) is a joint operation of the HVO, HV and HOS in June 1992. The action lasted from June 7 to June 26, 1992. This is the first victory over the Greater Serbian aggressor in the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The June Dawn operation liberated the Neretva river valley, and in some places joint Croatian forces broke out on today's demarcation line between the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska.

25 Index. *Tko je ubio Blaža Kraljevića?* Zagreb.

• <https://web.archive.org/web/20200208114912/https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/tko-je-ubio-blazakraljevica/987482.aspx>
(Archived on 08.02.2020.)

26 "For the purposes of this Law, a Defender is a member of the Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Croatian Defense Council and the police of the competent internal affairs body (hereinafter: the Armed Forces) who participated in the defense of Bosnia and Herzegovina (the beginning of the aggression against Ravno municipality) from September 18, 1991 to December 23, 1996, that is, until the cessation of the immediate danger of war and who has been demobilized by a decision of the competent military authority, as well as a person who participated in the preparation for the defense and in the defense of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the period before September 18, 1991 and who was engaged by the competent authorities." Law on the Rights of Veterans and Members of Their Families FBiH, 2004, Art.2, para.1.

27 In addition to organizing in HVO units, some BiH Croats were organized within the HOS, and as such should be seen as paramilitaries.

28 The role of the HVO and HZ (R) HB in the war in BiH is being redefined by the ICTY Judgment in the Prlić et al. Case, rendered on 29 November 2017. During the sentencing of the six indicted political and military leaders of Herceg Bosna, one of the convicts, Slobodan Praljak, committed suicide. This event and the verdict that sentenced them to long prison sentences and found them guilty of committing a large number of crimes, as well as a joint criminal enterprise led by the leaders of the Republic of Croatia and Herceg Bosna, further confirms the aggressive actions of the HV and HVO towards Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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29 More about the agreement itself can be found on the website of the United States Institute for Peace.

• https://web.archive.org/web/20200208115449/https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/file/resources/collections/p_eace_agreements/washagree_03011994.pdf
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30 Narod.hr. *Bošnjački ratni zločini nad Hrvatima – zašto pravosuđe BiH o njima šuti?*. Zagreb.

• <https://web.archive.org/web/20200208120052/https://narod.hr/hrvatska/bosnjacki-ratni-zlocini-nad-hrvatima-zastopravosuđe-bih-njima-suti>
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31 N1 BiH. *Edin Džeko osuđen na 13 godina zatvora za ratne zločine*. Sarajevo.

• <https://web.archive.org/web/20200208120247/http://ba.n1info.com/Vijesti/a29538/Edin-Dzeko-osudjen-na-13-godina-zatvora-za-ratne-zlocine.html> (Archived on 08.02.2020.)

32 Index. *21. godišnjica zločina nad 39 hrvatskih branitelja i civila u Doljanima kod Jablanice*. Zagreb.

• <https://web.archive.org/web/20200208121038/https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/21-godisnjica-zlocina-nad-39-hrvatskih-branitelja-i-civila-u-Doljanima-kod-Jablanice/762523.aspx>
(Archived on 08.02.2020.)

33 Bursać, Dragan. *Mrtva Mladenka iznad Neretve*. Sarajevo.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20200208120925/http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/mrtva-mladenka-iznad-neretve>
(Archived on 08.02.2020.)

34 Duhaček, Gordan. *Zločini Armije BiH nad Hrvatima*. Zagreb.

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35 Jabuka TV. *Haaške presude: Hrvatima 273, Bošnjacima 8,5 godina zatvora*. Zagreb.

• <https://web.archive.org/web/20200208121300/https://www.jabuka.tv/haaske-presude-hrvatima-273-bosnjacima-85-godina-zatvora/>
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36 Veterani.ba. *Vijeće sigurnosti UN-a od Hrvata zatražilo raspuštanje logora*. Visoko.

• <https://web.archive.org/web/20200208121422/http://veterani.ba/naslovna/2019/09/15-09-1993-vijece-sigurnostiun-a-od-hrvata-zatrazilo-raspustanje-logora/>
(Archived on 08.02.2020.)

37 Genocide not established by ICTY for any of the above crimes committed during the Bosniak-Croat conflict

38 Ivo Josipović (President of Croatia from 2010 to 2015) paid tribute to the victims with words of hope that similar crimes would not happen again. His visit was supported by Cardinal Puljić and Prime Minister Zoran Milanović. His successor, Kolinda Grabar Kitarović, also visited Ahmići.

39 The state of BiH does not have uniform standards for the memorialization of the places of suffering, and so far it has erected and financially supported only memorials dedicated to the places where Bosniaks appear as victims. For example, in the case of the suffering of Croats in the village of Trusina, the victims were honored by building a monument, financed by the population, where the anniversary is marked every year by family, friends, political representatives of Croats and religious leaders, and veterans' associations.

40 These are courts that have a different weight, primarily in layperson's interpretation. Namely, judgments of international courts are often taken as a basis for daily political debates, writing new histories of these areas, and are taken with a greater dose of confidence, while local courts are perceived as less important.

41 Slobodna Dalmacija. *Haaški popis Knjiga smrti u BiH: u ratu 104.732 poginulih*. Split.

• <https://web.archive.org/web/20200208121541/https://slobodnadalmacija.hr/vijesti/>

regija/haaski-popis-knjiga-smrtiu-bih-u-ratu-104-732-poginulih-96534
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42 Perić, Ratko. 2003. *Na Neretvi ćuprija* Crkva na kamenu. 11. 161. str.

43 Polšak Palatinuš, Vlatka. *Presuda šestorci podgrijava vruće pitanje: Kako i zašto je srušen Stari most?.* Zagreb.

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45 Čalić, Marie-Janine. 1996. *Krieg und Frieden in Bosnien Herzegowina.* Suhrkamp Verlag. Frankfurt an Main.

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48 Bralo, Blaškić, Prlić, Naletilić, Kordić, Aleksovski, Rajić

49 Behram, Alija. *Svjedoci vremena: 25 godina od rušenja Starog mosta u Mostaru.* Mostar.

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50 Gudelj, Jurica. *Najpoznatiji most u BiH.* Banja Luka.

• <https://web.archive.org/web/20200208122147/https://www.nezavisne.com/zivot-stil/nekretnine-vrt/Najpoznatijimost-u-BiH/9058>
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51 International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. 2017. *Prlić et al. judgment summary.* The Hague.

52 International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. 2017. *Prlić et al. judgment summary.* The Hague.

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/ MONTENEGRO**

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In this narrative, we have tried to get a closer look at the issue of the conflicts of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro in the wars of the 1990s. Often, Montenegro's participation in the wars of the 1990s is forgotten because the responsibility is transferred to Serbia and Belgrade, which was the centre of leadership of the "shrunken SFRY". Before traveling and the exchange in Sarajevo and Bukovica, we were not aware of Montenegro's involvement and the crimes that had been committed. It should be noted that Montenegro was a state and that its political leadership had an influence on decision-making in the "shrunken SFRY". It is also important to note that people from Montenegro were part of the JNA army, according to some figures nearly 20.000 of them, but also later a large number of volunteers went to battlefields as part of paramilitary formations in BiH.

The issue of Montenegro's participation is very complex, because even today the responsibility of the Montenegrin leadership in the wars of the 1990s has not been clarified. It is important to note that Montenegro was and still is a multi-ethnic state where fortunately there was no major bloodshed.

We learned about the expulsion of BiH citizens from Montenegro, who were later killed, but also about Bukovica, for which we have only a common narrative because it is about the suffering of Montenegrin citizens of Bosniak background, who escaped in part for BiH, but this event is related to the events in Čajniče. More precisely, back then majority of Montenegro was considered Serbian and any suffering of the Serbian people in BiH was perceived very subjectively.

Expulsions in Bukovica were a special topic that we covered as part of our study visits. Bukovica is a vast, mountainous area in the northern

part of Montenegro, in the immediate vicinity of Pljevlja, bordering Bosnia and Herzegovina, where one of the crimes in the turbulent history of the former Yugoslavia took place.

The media coverage of the events related to the crimes in Bukovica is not complete and therefore the information on the event was lacking among the youngsters. Earlier editions of history textbooks for the 4th grade of secondary schools mentioned the event as part of the topic of the breakup of the SFRY, while today the crime in Bukovica is omitted.

In the period up to the early 1990s, about one hundred families, predominantly Muslim, lived in the village of Bukovica. Although administratively it belongs to Montenegro and the municipality of Pljevlja, the population was in constant contact with Bosnia and Herzegovina, that is, the municipalities of Foča, Goražde and Čajniče, where Bukovica residents were educated, worked and therefore had relatives.

With the outbreak of armed conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Yugoslav army mobilizes Montenegrins and Serbs in Bukovica, as well as throughout Montenegro. For the first time, the Yugoslav Army opens a command centre in Bukovica, in the village of Kovačevići. Members of the Bosnian Serb armed formations are free to move from Bosnia and Herzegovina to the territory of Montenegro. That army and members of the Yugoslav Army treat Bukovica Muslims as a hostile side in the war. In the early 1990s, a large number of Yugoslav Army reservists, members of the paramilitary formations and the police of Montenegro that were placed in the territory of Bukovica, on the pretext of looking for illegal weapons searched Muslim houses, tortured the inhabitants, stole their belongings, harassed and abused the Bosniaks of Bukovica. Searches of Muslim homes on the pretext of looking for illegal weapons, stealing of money and valuables, beatings of men, threats to kill them if they don't evict and the occasional killings made Muslims flee Bukovica. Members of the Bosnian Serb army took Bukovica civilians hostage to exchange for Serb prisoners and to obtain information on Muslim involvement in the war. The news of the abduction of Bukovica Muslims was published by Montenegrin weekly "Monitor" several days later, pointing to the incorporation of the event into Belgrade's plan to create an ethnically clean area in Montenegro along the border with BiH.

According to the 1992 census, there were 118 houses and about 1.500

inhabitants in Bukovica. According to a report by the Expelled Bukovica Residents Association, six people were killed and two committed suicide following the torture. Eleven people were kidnapped and more than 70 people were physically abused in the period 1992-1995.³ Based on the data collected, more than 800 Bukovica Muslims have been forced to flee their homes and villages due to the violent behavior of members of the Yugoslav army and violence carried out by the Bosnian Serb army in the border area of Montenegro with Bosnia and Herzegovina. This way of confronting the military with the population at the very beginning violates the rules of war prescribed by the Geneva Convention.

Momir Bulatović, Montenegrin president at the time, said: “I am sorry for the terrorist attack. Only idiots are prepared for such a thing”. Bulatović drew attention especially to the danger of speculations that had increased greatly since the event. Regarding the opposition’s allegations of sympathy for spreading Šešelj’s rhetoric and inciting people in Montenegro, Bulatović denied rumours that Šešelj was threatening with “terrible retaliation” against the perpetrators.

Only one murder was prosecuted by the judicial authorities while the others weren’t even mentioned in the High Court in Bijelo Polje.

Bijelo Polje High Court ruled that no one is guilty of the Bukovica crime. That is the second acquittal that the court gave in the case against seven former members of the Pljevlja police and the Yugoslav army, who were charged by the Montenegrin prosecution with the crime in Bukovica. The court decides the acquittal in the case of the seven with justification of – lack of evidence. Why there is lack of evidence, no one explained.

We also learned that Montenegro, as in all crimes, paid damages and admitted the crime, but that those responsible were not proceeded and that the leadership was never tried because today the same people are in high positions. Few people know about these crimes except the professionals and socially active part of the public as well as the families of the victims themselves, the Bukovica locals and the Pljevlja locals. Authorities in Montenegro deny command responsibility for these crimes. Certainly, there are testimonies and documentaries as well as proceedings that have not been adequately processed before the local courts, which is very important for a quality confrontation with the past.



Deportations from Montenegro: Bosnian Narrative

Hunting for Refugees

In May 1992, Montenegrin police illegally arrested at least 66 Muslim and Serb civilians from BiH and according to some sources as many as 160 and handed them over to Republika Srpska forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These BiH citizens fled to Montenegro to seek protection from war events in their country. Contrary to the Montenegrin Constitution and international conventions, refugees were arrested, detained and handed over to Republika Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The hunt for refugees went on for months. Unfortunate people were arrested along the Montenegrin coast from Ulcinj/Ulqin to Herceg Novi, as well as inland. Most were killed immediately on May 27, others were tortured and killed in camps, with only a small number surviving. The bodies of some have not been found yet, nor is it known exactly where they were killed. Two three-member refugee families, Klapuh and Avdagić, from Foča, were also killed in Montenegrin territory⁵³.

Controversial in the process until the verdict are the political levels of perpetrators involved from the political leadership of the state of Montenegro. Those who ordered and committed these crimes were still not individually held responsible for their crimes. The reason for this is probably that to the state leadership of Montenegro the time seems to have stopped in the 1990s and the same people are still in the same positions. The then Prime Minister, Milo Đukanović, is the President of Montenegro today.

On several occasions, at the request of the victims' families, the Prosecution Office of Montenegro launched an investigation against police officers of that time, on suspicion of committing "war crimes against civilians" by participating in the deportation of Bosniak refugees. The Higher Court in Podgorica acquitted all the accused on

March 29, 2011, because of “lack of evidence”.⁵⁴

At the time of writing this narrative, the European Court of Human Rights awaited Montenegro’s response to a lawsuit alleging the deportation of Bosniak refugees who were later killed.⁵⁵

“Today’s reformed Montenegro is proud of its democratic reforms and its president has publicly apologized to Croatia for the crimes committed in 1991 and 1992 in Dubrovnik and its hinterland. At the same time, Đukanovic would not even think of apologizing to Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially to the families of those Bosniaks who were deported by his police from Montenegro and handed over to Radovan Karadzic. These people have since disappeared without any trace. Politicians and police officers who know the truth are silent”.⁵⁶



Deportations from Montenegro: The Montenegrin Narrative

The Corrected Mistake of the Security Forces

During May and June 1992, members of the Montenegrin police participated in the arrests, detention and surrender of refugee from Bosnia and Herzegovina in the territory of Montenegro to the forces of Republika Srpska.

Tens of BiH citizens, mostly Bosniaks, sought rescue in Montenegro from the horrors of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina but its institutions deported them and they tragically ended up in a camp in Foča, Bosnia and Herzegovina. These incidents were a mistake on the part of the security forces and despite all efforts those responsible for the mistake have not been brought to justice so far.

In order to show a good will and compassion for victims, the Government of Montenegro paid the compensation to the victims' families in 2008 in the amount of 5 million Euros.⁵⁷

Largest part of the public was not aware of this crime, only later the issue and responsibility of the police and authorities in Montenegro was raised.

Despite these incidents during the war, Montenegro, according to the words of its President Đukanović, was, nevertheless, "a good and more than a warm shelter for all people who had to leave their homes because of the war and hardship. It showed that it is large and warm enough for the Serbs who had to leave their homes in Krajina and in Bosnia and for the Muslims who had to leave their homes in Bosnia for the same reasons" - said Milo Đukanović, President of Montenegro.⁵⁸



Deportations from Montenegro: A Shared Narrative

Crime Swept under the Carpet

In May and June 1992, on charges of war crimes, police of Montenegro unlawfully arrested dozens of Bosniak refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina, who were then handed over to members of the Republika Srpska army. Most of the refugees arrested were brought to the Herceg-Novi Security Centre, from where on May 25 and 27 they were transported by buses to KPD Foča concentration camp under the control of Serb forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina. All Bosniaks deported on May 27, 1992 were killed probably on the same day and their bodies were dumped in the Drina River. Alongside Bosniaks, Serb refugees were also arrested and were returned to the territory controlled by the RS Army under the pretext of military conscription.

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According to official data, a total of 83 BiH refugees in the territory of Montenegro were arrested and deported. The exact number of casualties is unknown. Šeki Radončić, a Montenegrin journalist and publicist, states that, based on years of research, he has come to the conclusion that there are 105 Bosniaks, 33 Serbs and 5 Croats. In addition, two three-member refugee families from Foča were killed in the territory of Montenegro. The remains of all the victims have not been found yet. Seven of them survived the torture of the Foča camp in BiH.⁵⁹

In the Krnojelac case before the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, it was founded that people were brought to the camp in Foča, Bosnia and Herzegovina, from the Herceg Novi police station in Montenegro, illegally, without any legal basis.⁶⁰

Although authorities say that the arrest and deportation action lasted for only one day, the data tells a different story. The action was ended only after 21 days, on June 6, 1992, after the intervention of

the International Committee of the Red Cross. Hunting for refugees took place in almost the entire territory of Montenegro. The raids were carried out in the streets and squares, houses, cafes and hotel rooms.⁶¹

The High Court Council in Podgorica overturned the indictment of the Special War Crimes Prosecutor's Office and in 2011 acquitted all those accused of war crimes – the deportation of Bosnian refugees from Montenegro to Republika Srpska in 1992. Nine former high-ranking police officials and former Montenegrin head of police Boško Bojović were charged with deportation.

At the end of 2004, the families of the Bosniak victims sued the state of Montenegro and in an out-of-court settlement in 2008, Montenegro pledged to pay compensation in the amount of 5 million Euros⁶², thereby acknowledging Montenegro's responsibility for these crimes.

The NGO sector and civic activists in Montenegro are currently supporting the initiative to erect a memorial to victims in front of the police station in Herceg Novi, where a deportation collection centre for refugees was located and are seeking a reopening of the case, but the prosecution is not responding. During this time, the Montenegrin authorities do not want to highlight these events in public and believe that the process has ended with the payment of compensation.

Interestingly, this crime is less known also in Bosnia and Herzegovina itself. History textbooks for primary and secondary schools in BiH do not contain any information about this crime. The fact that the BiH authorities pay very little attention to this crime does not contribute to the completion of the court process. It remains just another of the many war crimes that, even today, 23 years after the end of the war, cannot be resolved as it comes second to much larger ones.

The Montenegrin public is less aware of these unlawful deportations during the war and the activities of non-governmental organizations and the film "Karneval" ("Carnival") by journalist Šeki Radončić, which for the first time shows the testimonies of victims' families and the participants in the arrests, have raised public awareness.





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**BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA
/ SERBIA**

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“If we ask ourselves whether humanity should be viewed as a good or a bad kind, I have to admit: we have nothing to brag about.”

Immanuel Kant

No matter how much one knows about the war that took place in the former Yugoslavia, one question will never be answered – how is it that so much chaos and shift came out of one state, where people lost all reason and humanity and killed their neighbours. This is one of the few questions that neither side has an answer to. However, no matter how uncontrollable and inexplicable chaos of the war may have been, it should not stop young people’s desire to learn more about it and agree on one thing - that it should never happen again. This was one thing that was often repeated in the Drina group conversations.

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We, as participants of the Drina Group, focused on the war conflicts between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. Symbolically, we named the group Drina by the river that brings us together, or in this case, separates us. At the first joint meeting of the group, we decided on the topics we wanted to talk about and places we wanted to visit. Most participants immediately thought of the siege of Sarajevo, a topic that is still discussed today and Prijedor, a topic that is not mentioned even today. For this reason, two of the four destinations were Prijedor and Sarajevo.

Our first visit was to Prijedor, alongside Banja Luka. Prijedor is a place we knew little about before the visit - there is very little mentioning about it in BiH and almost none in Serbia. Visiting Prijedor was one of our most rewarding visits. There we visited the places of suffering of Omarska, Trnopolje and Keraterm, which are still disputed today, whether to call them concentration camps or collection centres. Although we did not agree on everything during the discussion, we agreed on the fact that there is a need to talk more about Prijedor. It is unfortunate that there is almost no mention of such inhumane

events. We left Prijedor with very strong emotions, but it was a visit that awakened our desire and motivation to fight nationalism.

Our second visit was to Sarajevo, where we strictly talked about the siege of Sarajevo. Although this topic was better known than Prijedor, it still made a huge impression on us. Visiting the Museum of War Childhood and watching the Sarajevo Roses film were experiences that brought us closer to what it was like to live in Sarajevo during the siege and they touched us emotionally, as the focus was on children who survived but also died during the siege. The siege of Sarajevo is a highly controversial topic between BiH and Serbia because both countries view it in their own way. While BiH focuses on the complete siege, with a focus on Markale, Serbia focuses on the expulsion of Serbs from Sarajevo. Therefore, our narratives related to this topic are written as they are, because each state uses its arguments to describe what happened and, in some cases, justify what was done during the siege.

The final visit and the one that influenced us the most, was in Trebinje. We went to Trebinje for one single reason – to find out as much as possible about the case of Srđan Aleksić. Srđan Aleksić was a young guy who was killed because he saved the life of his Muslim friend, Alen Glavović. Because of this, Srđan was beaten by the police and died six days later in hospital. What we, the participants agreed on, in the case of Srđan Aleksić, was the fact that his act was one of heroism. But not everyone agrees with this – while most people call him a hero, some also call him a traitor to his people, trying to argue while claiming that Srđan was a criminal. That is why the case of Srđan Aleksić did not have its narratives - it is one narrative, except that people look at it from different perspectives. However, because of the importance of his case and the agreement among us that he was a hero, we decided to mention Srđan here. Srđan was one of the few examples of humanity in war and no matter how disparaged his act of heroism may be his spark of light will always shine.

It is important to note that the Bosniak narrative was strictly included in writing the narrative of Bosnia and Herzegovina, while the narrative of the Republic of Serbia strictly included the narrative of Serbs from the Republic of Serbia. In doing so, we did not want to jeopardize other groups in those countries, but we wrote in this way because we focused on the events that mostly involved the conflicts of these two groups of people. For this reason, the BiH narrative is written in

the Bosnian language, the narrative of the Republic of Serbia in the Serbian language, while the common narrative is, symbolically, written in both languages.

The whole experience of all the visits and all the information received has changed our lives and made us aware of the extent to which nationalism goes. What was most important to us, however, was that discussions on these topics did not stop when the visits ended. The visits awakened the desire in us to talk about these matters and to inform other young people about topics that we did not even know that we needed to be informed about before. This is precisely why the Drina Group will continue to live after this whole project is over and we will continue to fight the infamous beast called Nationalism.



The Siege of Sarajevo: The Bosnian Narrative

The Years During which Natural Death Was a Luxury

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Suada Dilberović was the first victim of the siege of Sarajevo and is considered the first victim of aggression in BiH. In March 1992, a clash broke out between members of the Serbian Democratic Party and police officers under the control of the BiH government. On April 5, 1992, a peace protest was held where Sarajevo citizens demanded the removal of the barricade and the withdrawal of aggression forces. SDS members fired against the protesters from the roof of the Holliday Inn. After the protests held at Marijin Dvor, the gathered protesters headed for the then Vrbanja Bridge. The snipers who were positioned at the facility opposite the gas station opened fire on the people and killed Suada Dilberović on the bridge. Olga Sučić was killed in the same place as Suada and because of that, there is a monument on the bridge to the two first victims of aggression in Sarajevo. The citizens of Sarajevo were soon left without electricity and after that without water, heating – everything that was needed for a normal life. Schools rarely worked and then were closed.⁶³

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The siege of Sarajevo by the aggressors began with the capturing of the international airport by the JNA on the night of April 4 to 5, 1992 and ended on February 29, 1996. It was a nearly four-year blockade of the capital, called the 1425-day Sarajevo Siege, one of the longest in modern warfare history. After the “Berlin Air Bridge”, this was the “longest” air bridge in the history of world aviation. During the siege, an average of 329 shells fell daily in Sarajevo and this city has a specific record. A record of 3.777 grenades fired in Sarajevo in one day, namely on July 22, 1993. Grenades did enormous damage while the civilians and cultural and religious sites suffered the most damage. People were killed and civilian, cultural and religious sites destroyed, even hospitals. During the siege of Sarajevo, 12.000 people, including 1.500 children were killed and 50.000 more were seriously injured.⁶⁴

In the hills around Sarajevo, 120 mortars and 250 JNA tanks were stationed, which later fell into the hands of the RS Army. The goals of the siege were to torture through hunger and demoralize the population in the cruellest of ways.⁶⁵ Given the extensiveness of the topic taken, we decided to present the prevailing narrative of two specific cases that occurred during the siege of Sarajevo. These are two massacres at the Markale Market in downtown Sarajevo and the killing of Serb civilians in Kazani. The Markale Massacre is the consequence of two shelling that took place at the Markale Market in downtown Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The first shelling occurred on February 5, 1994, between 12:10 and 12:15, and the second on August 28, 1995 at 11:00.⁶⁶ On February 5, 1994, a powerful explosion erupted in Sarajevo. Sirens were heard, calls for help, crying, moaning...A 120mm mortar projectile fired from a position of the RS Army fell into a crowded market square. In a few minutes, a shell killed 68 fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, and children and wounded 142 others.⁶⁷

“Markale 2”, the second shelling, happened, as already stated, on August 28, 1995, at about 11 am. Five shells were fired which killed 37 people and wounded 90 more. Shortly afterwards, it was confirmed that all five shells were fired from the position of the Republika Srpska Army, after which Operation Deliberate Force (NATO air campaign aimed at disabling the military arsenal of Bosnian Serbs in the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina) actually began.⁶⁸

The Sarajevo Children’s Square today testifies to all this, as well as the parents who lost their children in the whirlwind of war. So far, Stanislav Galić and Dragomir Milošević have been convicted for the siege of Sarajevo. While according to the first instance verdicts for the shelling of the city of Sarajevo, the highest political and military leaders of the Republika Srpska of that time Radovan Karadžić was sentenced to 40 years and Ratko Mladić to life in prison.⁶⁹

The war events at the Kazani cave are still the subject of various discussions and all the facts about what happened in this part of the area of responsibility of the 10th Mountain Brigade of the Army of the Republic of BiH have not yet been determined. The official death toll has never been officially determined and so far the remains of thirty people have been found in the Kazani cave. The Kazani is located on Trebević near Sarajevo.



October 26, 1993 marks the key date when it comes to the attitude of the public towards the issue of crimes committed against non-Bosniaks in the besieged and blocked Sarajevo. Namely, on that day the Presidency, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Army of the RBiH organized the so-called Trebević action. Bakir Izetbegović, son of then-BiH Presidency Chairman Alija Izetbegović, says that his father “stopped what some people were doing in Sarajevo’s rebelled brigades”. “We were the only party that did this. If we hadn’t, this would have happened all over the RBiH. These people were being prosecuted in the war, some proceedings have not been completed yet”, Bakir Izetbegović said.⁷⁰

The memorial is a moral duty and an obligation to show that we treat all innocent victims during the siege and killing of Sarajevo the same. This, the city administration claimed, would relieve the conscience of the citizens of Sarajevo, who even in the most difficult days for this city followed the highest moral standards of life in diversity and tolerance and condemned every crime, including the one that happened in Kazani.⁷¹ However, the memorial was never erected. The Bosniak political leadership led by then BiH presidency member Bakir Izetbegović laid flowers and paid tribute to the killed Serb civilians in Kazani. On that occasion he said, “I had a feeling of debt when it comes to Kazani, I owed to express my piety and condolences to the families whose members ended here in a terrible way.”⁷²



The Siege of Sarajevo: A Serbian Narrative

In Sarajevo, There Are No More Serbs

The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina began with the murder of a Serb wedding guest in Sarajevo (Nikola Gardović, in front of the Old Church in Baščaršija). The incident occurred on March 1, 1992, during a Serbian wedding outside the Old Church in Baščaršija in Sarajevo, SFRY, when a member of the Green Berets, Ramiz Delalić, known as Čelo, shot and killed groom's father Nikola Gardović and wounded a priest of the Serbian Orthodox Church Radenko Miković. This day became a symbol of the tragedy for the Sarajevo Serbs, all living in Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁷³

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This inter-ethnic killing took place in a climate of high tension amid a referendum on Bosnia and Herzegovina's independence. The Serbian media state this as one of the reasons for the beginning of the war, i.e. the Serbian siege of Sarajevo. Nobody has ever been held responsible for the murder of Nikola Gardović and police of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina have stated that the killing was a result of a clash among criminals in Sarajevo.

It is also important to note that according to the 1991 census, Serbs made 30% of the population in Sarajevo. At the beginning of the war, some Serbs remained in Sarajevo, while some moved to surrounding settlements controlled by the Republika Srpska Army. During the war, a number of Sarajevo Serbs fought as part of BiH Army, such as General Jovan Divjak. A large number of Sarajevo Serbs emigrated during the siege of Sarajevo in 1992-96, but the largest part left after the signing of the Dayton Agreement, at the end of 1995, when the Sarajevo settlements inhabited by Serbs (Grbavica, Nedžarići, Ilidža, part of Dobrinja, Rajlovac, Vogošća, Nahorevo...) became part of the Federation of BiH. Radovan Karadžić and Momčilo Krajišnik instructed the Sarajevo Serbs not to remain in "Alija's state", instructing them to: "Leave and move to RS". Some of the Serbs from Sarajevo found refuge

in Serbia mainly in collective centers where they lived from the aid of the Red Cross. The expulsion of Serbs from Sarajevo is considered one of the largest ethnic cleansings since World War II.

During the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the crimes were exploited and some of them were committed by the BiH Army itself to provoke reaction from the international community. One such example is Markale. The Markale and the Tuzlanska kapija (Tuzla Gate) were set up to create certain military actions, primarily the intervention of foreigners⁷⁴. Former Alija Izetbegović's security officer said the attack on the Markale market was organized by Izetbegović and Islamic religious leader Mustafa Cerić. Protected witness GRM-116 at the trial of General Ratko Mladić said that the attack on Sarajevo's Markale market in the winter of 1994 was organized by Alija Izetbegović and Islamic religious leader Mustafa Cerić, implemented by the generals of the so-called Army of BiH and that they did everything they could to provoke Serbs in Srebrenica and provoke international intervention against them.⁷⁵

The Hague Prosecution Office also acknowledged, during the second day of the public hearing on the appeal of the conviction of the first Republika Srpska president, Radovan Karadžić, that Muslims targeted themselves during the Sarajevo conflict.⁷⁶ During his trial, Radovan Karadžić explicitly stated that if 30.000 to 40.000 shells were fired from only one position, as the prosecution claimed, everything would be flattened. Therefore, the Serbian army did not fire a grenade at Markale. How is it possible that there were 500 people in the empty market without goods and that no vendors but only buyers were killed? The Serbs in Sarajevo were only defending themselves by holding 80.000 Muslim soldiers from attacking Serb settlements and the BiH Army exposed its people to great suffering just to initiate foreign intervention.

One of the crimes committed against Serbs in besieged Sarajevo and little talked about, is the crime in Kazani. The exact number of casualties at this site on the slopes of Trebević above Sarajevo has never been determined. So far, the remains of 23 victims have been exhumed and 15 have been identified. Most of the casualties were Sarajevo Serbs.

Kazani is the name of a cave on Trebević mountain, which was under the control of the 10th Mountain Brigade of the Army of Bosnia and



Herzegovina at the time of the siege of Sarajevo, i.e. the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and was used by Mušan Topalović Caco and his unit as a killing site and as a mass grave for their victims. Caco was the commander of the 10th Mountain Brigade of the First Corps of the Army of the RBiH, which controlled one part of the Stari Grad (Old Town) around the settlement of Bistrik. On October 26, 1993, the Trebević action was organized when the Bosnian authorities attempted to deal with the criminals in their ranks. One of them was Caco, who once enjoyed good relations with Alija Izetbegović, whose arrest was particularly dramatic: nine police officers and Caco dead, being officially “killed on the run”. Fourteen members of the 10th Mountain Brigade were tried before the Military Court in Sarajevo a year later, primarily for the murder of Serb civilians in Kazani and sentenced from ten months to six years in prison.⁷⁷

The return of Serbs to Sarajevo was an unsuccessful attempt, if it was ever attempted. In Sarajevo, as a Serb, you can only survive if you remain silent and endure or if you accept the collective Muslim image of Serbs as a criminal nation and merhametli Muslims as the only victim. In that case, you renounce your Serbian identity and become a Bosnian, thus fulfilling the dream of your political and war enemy. However, the undeniable fact, which will forever be reminiscent of what was done to the Serbs of Sarajevo, is that there are no more Serbs in Sarajevo.



The Siege of Sarajevo: A Shared Narrative

Lost Humanity

Although Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (and within Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska and the Federation) cannot agree on Markale, the start of the war and other crimes against civilians, what is unquestionable when it comes to the siege of Sarajevo is that snipers and shells did not pick their victims. The siege lasted 1.425 days and is one of the longest sieges of a city in modern history. During the siege, which lasted three times longer than the siege of Stalingrad, 14.011 people were killed, out of this number 7.808 died in the first war year and 3.392 in the following one⁷⁸. There were 1.601 children among the victims. About 50.000 people were wounded lightly or heavily. Around 64.470 shells were thrown on Sarajevo, an average of 329 shells per day⁷⁹.

Sarajevo was shelled by members of the Republika Srpska army, but in those difficult times there were people who did not want to participate in the campaign to kill their fellow citizens. One such man is General Jovan Divjak. He was born in Belgrade, but since his father was originally from Bosnian Krajina (Bosanska Krupa) where he worked as a teacher, Divjak identified nationally as Bosnian, which he has emphasized repeatedly in interviews with local and foreign media. He graduated from the 12th class of the Belgrade Military Academy, from a course for Battalion Commander, Command-Staff Academy and War School. He later graduated from the French Army Staff College. He taught at the Military School in Sarajevo. The war found him on duty as an officer at the BiH Territorial Defence headquarters. He became Brigadier General of the Army of the RBiH and Assistant Chief of the General Staff of the Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. He is the first holder from Bosnia and Herzegovina of the highest French order, the Legion of Honour. Seeing that the JNA was arming Serbian paramilitary formations and civilians, he decided to hand over

the weapons from Kiseljak to the BiH Territorial Defence so that the JNA would not misuse it. His stance on nationalism was well known:

“There is no difference between nationalists - a nationalist is a nationalist. To me, a nationalist is a positive person if he is in favour of protecting the rights of his people, but not at the expense of another people. These are national chauvinists who started and waged war to endanger other nations. Alija Izetbegovic didn't do that.”

- May 2005 for the Radio Free Europe answering the questions of one listener: Who was the worst of the three nationalists: Alija, Tuđman or Karadžić?

Many years after the end of the war, very little is known in Serbia about the siege of Sarajevo. Attempts to build broken links between Sarajevo and Belgrade are largely initiated by human rights organizations and a small number of individuals. For example, we had “Sarajevo Days” in Belgrade, a multi-day cultural event that has been held in Belgrade since 2007, organized by the Youth Initiative for Human Rights. The event was launched as a reminder of the siege of Sarajevo, the longest siege of a city in modern war history. The festival was a place for the new generations of young people who would build new relationships between Belgrade and Sarajevo, based on understanding and rethinking of the past. Over the years, the event has hosted hundreds of artists from the Sarajevo cultural scene. We should also mention the “Na pola puta” (“Halfway”), an international literary festival that brings together writers from the former Yugoslavia. It has been held since 2006 in Užice High School. The high school students are in charge of the preparation of the festival organized in mid-April every year. The festival was named “Halfway” because Užice is located halfway between Belgrade and Sarajevo.

One of the stories that do not carry much controversy is the story of the murder of Sarajevo’s “Romeo and Juliet”. On May 18, 1993, these 25-year-olds, in an attempt to escape the madness that engulfed their country, were killed on the Vrbanja Bridge and their bodies rested on the bridge for seven days. Young and in love, although of different nationalities at a time when that was almost impossible, they were preparing a wedding and escape from unbearable reality. On that fateful day in the afternoon, hoping to escape, one Serb and one Bosniak from Sarajevo became Romeo and Juliet. Boško fell first and Admira crawled up to him and hugged him. They met at the Sarajevo

Olympics and their friendship soon grew into love, which continued even when the Bosnian capital was blown up by shells.⁸⁰

A year after the beginning of the war in BiH, they decided to leave the city and seek a better life somewhere where their love would not be condemned and where they would not have to walk their heads down because of their names. Boško had no one in Sarajevo except his high school sweetheart Admira. As he stayed for her in Sarajevo, so she wanted to go to Serbia with him. Through a mutual friend, they agreed to leave besieged Sarajevo and on May 18, 1993, they set off for freedom. Believing that an armistice was in effect, they did not wait for the night but set off at 5pm but only went as far as Vrbanja Bridge where the first bullet from a sniper hit Boško and then Admira. Mortally wounded, she crawled to dead Boško, hugged him and exhaled. Their bodies had been lying in the same place for seven days because they were on “no man’s land” and were eventually pulled out by members of the Republika Srpska Army and buried in the cemetery in Lukavica.

Many have written songs, articles, and stories about them... One of the most famous articles was that of Kurt Shork, published by Reuters on May 23, 1993, that went around the whole world. Sarajevo rock band Zabranjeno pušenje made a song called “Boško and Admira” as well as Bill Madden also named “Boško and Admira”. A documentary directed by John Zaricki was also made about Boško and Admira. Sarajevo’s Romeo and Juliet will remain forever the memory of Sarajevo, Serbs, Croats, Bosnians and Herzegovinians, as well as of all the people around the world who have heard their story. Their killers have not been identified to date.⁸¹

Anti-war protests in Sarajevo in 1992 took place during March and April against the war that was about to erupt in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The protests began as a reaction to the political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has been steadily escalating and threatening to turn into an open armed conflict at any moment. The immediate cause of the protest was the blockade of Sarajevo. Protesters were shot by members of Serbian paramilitary units from the Holiday Inn, where the seat of the Serbian Democratic Party was. 5 people were killed and 30 injured. Among those killed were students Suada Dilberović and Olga Sučić, who are considered the first Sarajevo’s victims of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Bridge of Suada and Olga in Sarajevo was named after them.

In 2017, a protocol on a grant for the construction of a memorial to student Suada Dilberović was signed. What about Olga Sučić? It is assumed that one of the reasons for such a decision was the fact that Olga Sučić was not of the same nationality as the dean and mayor of Municipality Centre and the ones who appoint deans, directors, managers, administrators of public institutions and companies in this city.⁸²

Prijedor: Bosnian Narrative

Concentration Camps

“Serb citizens, join your army and police in the pursuit of these extremists. Other citizens, Muslims and Croats, must put white flags on their houses and wear white ribbons on their hands. Otherwise, there will be serious consequences”.⁸³

This is how the call on May 31, 1992, ran on Radio Prijedor – the beginning of an unprecedented massacre that resulted in the killing of 3.173 innocent civilians and the imprisonment of 31.000 people in camps⁸⁴.

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Prijedor is one of the cities in BiH that has undergone major changes in terms of ethnic structure before and after the war. The total population, which according to the 1991 census was 112.543, has been reduced by 23.146. The largest changes are in the number of Bosniaks – from pre-war 49.351 to the current 29.034.⁸⁵

Following the declaration of independence of Slovenia and Croatia in June 1991, the situation in the Municipality of Prijedor had deteriorated greatly. Muslims and Croats left the municipality because they felt fear and insecurity. Pro-Serbian propaganda becomes very visible. The “Kozarski Vjesnik” municipal newspaper starts publishing accusations against non-Serbs⁸⁶. The media, which carried the Serbian propaganda, did that with the aim of pointing out that the Serbs must arm and defend themselves in order to avoid the situation that occurred during the World War II.

Terms such as “Ustasha”, “Mujahedeen” and “Green Berets” were used to refer to the non-Serb population. In media reports serving the Serb Democratic Party, Bosniaks and Croats became enemies and monsters to be exterminated. After Serbs took over, in April 1992, a

campaign to expel Bosniaks from Prijedor began.

On May 31, 1992, Bosnian Serb authorities in Prijedor issued an order through a local radio ordering the non-Serb population to mark their houses with white flags or sheets, and to put white ribbons around their sleeves when leaving their homes. That was the beginning of the extermination campaign that produced mass executions, rapes, concentration camps and other crimes and resulted in the expulsion of 94% of Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks) and Bosnian Catholics (Croats) from the Prijedor municipality. This was the first time since 1939 that members of an ethnic or religious group had been marked for extermination in this way⁸⁷.

Members of the European Observation Mission testified that, even in August 1992, during their visit to villages around Prijedor where both Serbs and Muslims lived, they saw white flags on Muslim houses separating them from the Serb one. The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia compared the results of the subsequent persecution campaign of the non-Serb population to genocide. Thousands have been killed, imprisoned, tortured, deported or raped and Prijedor as a community has changed forever. The events in Prijedor during the war can be compared to genocide, since everything done to Bosniaks in Prijedor since 1992 clearly indicates the intent to exterminate them⁸⁸.

The Omarska camp has been in operation from May 1992 to August 1992 and the administrative building was where mainly the women were. On the ground floor there was the “Mujina soba” (Mujo’s Room) – an interrogation room where prisoners were beaten. On Saint Peters Day, a large campfire was set and the prisoners were forced to dance around it and then pushed into the fire. On July 17, 1992, 200 people were taken to a “white house” from where gun fires were heard. Later the corpses were loaded into a truck and driven away. At least 120 people were taken to Kozara in August 1992, where they were killed. 10-15 people were killed per day and 3.334 people passed through the camp⁸⁹.

The Trnopolje camp was a deportation camp where 5.000-7.000 people went through. On one occasion, 11 men were taken to a cornfield where they were killed. In August 1992, some of the prisoners were boarded on buses which took them to Kozara. Around 200 men were taken to the Koričanske stijene and killed there.⁹⁰

Keraterm camp was in operation from April to August 1992. This camp is known for sexual abuse of men. On July 24, 1992, the soldiers took the prisoners to room “Number 3” and released an unknown gas from which the prisoners became hysterical and panicked. In front of the door was a machine gun and when they broke through the door they were killed individually. Over 100 people were killed in this camp.⁹¹

According to the Association “Izvor”, 3.176 Prijedor citizens, mostly civilians, were killed and went missing during the war, most of them Bosniaks but also Croats, Roma, Albanians and Serbs. Among the victims were 258 women and 102 children. The ethnic cleansing of Prijedor was virtually accepted by the Dayton Agreement after the war, according to which the city belonged to Republika Srpska. To this day, the Prijedor municipal authorities have not paid any respect in any form whatsoever to the victims of this genocidal campaign.



Prijedor: Serbian Narrative

Collection Centers

During the first years of the last decade of the 20th century, wartime events in the territory of the former Yugoslavia and especially Bosnia and Herzegovina did not bypass the then municipality and today the town of Prijedor. Located in the heart of Krajina, this city had a very turbulent and tragic history during the two world wars as well as a very diverse ethnic structure of the population. Thus, according to the last pre-war census, there were 112.470 inhabitants in Prijedor, out of this number 49.454 were Muslims, 47.745 were Serbs and 6.300 were Croats⁹². At the first and, as it turns out, the only multiparty elections organized in the second Yugoslavia in 1990 in Prijedor, the Muslim Stranka demokratske akcije (Democratic Action Party) came to power, appointing the mayor and the heads of the Prijedor Public Security Board.⁹³

There are several indicators that the pre-war atmosphere in Prijedor was felt already in 1991. Namely, the Prijedor Muslims were already refusing military calls from JNA and a significant number instead of joining JNA went to Croatia for training after which they returned home. It must be kept in mind that this happened during the (pre)war events in Croatia. Moreover, Muslims ridiculed and insulted members of the legal JNA army, walking horses down the streets with a hanging sign that read "I'm smarter than a general".⁹⁴ In the summer of 1991, the president of the SDA Prijedor Municipal Committee tried to prevent a JNA tank column from going to separate the conflicting parties at Banija in Croatia and shortly thereafter they started digging pits around Prijedor in Muslim villages and acquiring weapons, culminating in October with the formation of the Prijedor Crisis Centre, composed exclusively of Muslim residents.⁹⁵ Based on the events of 1991, the attitude of Prijedor Muslims and their political leadership to the events of that time is clear.

In April 1992, Prijedor was heavy hit by war. At that time about 7.000 Serb refugees from Croatia came to Prijedor and in order to be ready for the, by then clearly evident conflict, Serbs of Prijedor, in April, half a year after the Muslims that hold the power and were the majority, began to organize themselves in the premises of the Čirkin Polje Community Centre.⁹⁶ Two days before the end of April, the Muslim so-called TD BiH headquarters issued an order to all the lower TD staffs to implement the so-called BiH Presidency four point orders to attack JNA units that have not yet withdrawn.⁹⁷ Instead of ordering the expulsion of the Croatian regular military forces and the Croat-Muslim paramilitary formations that crossed over, the so-called Presidency decides to deal with members of the JNA who were perceived by the Serbian people as the only form of their own security. This is how the takeover of the power, which was carried out by 400 police officers of the Serbian ethnicity on 30 April, takes place. It is important to emphasize that the action was carried out without any casualties and that members of the SJB of other ethnicities were given the opportunity to show loyalty.⁹⁸

The first casualty of the war in Prijedor was recorded on May, 1, when unknown persons killed Radenko Đapa, a member of the Prijedor SJB at about 9:30 pm⁹⁹. The relatives of the murdered man took revenge by killing four innocent Muslim citizens and these events are used by HINA (Croatian Reporting News Agency) and HTV (Croatian Television) for propaganda purposes – something that will continuously follow the war in Prijedor, claiming that 70 people were killed in Prijedor at the time¹⁰⁰. A Muslim war headquarters was established in Hambarine, a village near Prijedor, on May 3 and records show that every Muslim settlement had formed platoons and troops and a large number of these paramilitary formations were armed.¹⁰¹ In Kozarac alone, there were 3.599 armed members.¹⁰²

The official start of the Prijedor war dates back to May 22, when a JNA vehicle was stopped at the checkpoint in the village of Hambarine where three reservists were killed and two wounded. Republika Srpska's Army demanded the next day for the attackers to be handed over, the Muslims ignored that demand and a conflict between the army and the rebels erupted.¹⁰³ Authorities in Prijedor issued a call demanding that all illegal weapons be handed over to "Žarko Zgonjanin" barracks and as a sign of recognition it was said that those arriving to hand over their arms would display white flags.¹⁰⁴ Later

events will show that many residents did not hand over their weapons as they will reveal another Muslim propaganda story known as the “white strips”, commemorated every year on May 31, the day the Republika Srpska Army defeated the rebels in Prijedor.¹⁰⁵ On Sunday, May 24, a clash broke out on the Prijedor-Banja road in village of Kozarac, where after the Republika Srpska Army tank was hit, fighting between the army and the rebels broke out and Kozarac was taken over by the Serbian army.¹⁰⁶ At the same time, Muslim forces attacked the barracks in Prijedor from the direction of the Muslim majority settlement of Puharska, which speaks in favour of the synchronized Muslim attacks¹⁰⁷.

The key event of the war in Prijedor occurred on May 28 when the city of Prijedor was attacked by five combat groups around four in the morning. As the formations entered the city, fighting with the regular army and police began, there were 38 dead and 20 wounded.¹⁰⁸ The attitude of the predominantly Muslim rebels is sufficiently clear by the fact that the group that occupied the so-called “large underpass” fired at the ambulance and wounded the driver with as many as 32 bullets, as well as by the treatment of prisoners held at the high school centre without any medical assistance for the wounded.¹⁰⁹ The Serbian army and police, however, managed to repel all attacks and defend the city while paramilitary groups withdrew and were stationed in the villages of Prijedor around Kurevo Mountain from where they operated until November 4, 1993.¹¹⁰ One can learn more about their “actions” by looking at the horrific crimes they committed in Rizvanovići, Kurevo, Raljaš, Končari, Zecovi, Lamovita, Kozaruša, Podgrađe, and Donja Ljubija.¹¹¹

Three collection centers Keraterm, Trnopolje and Omarska were established in the area of Prijedor. Thousands of people passed through these places, mostly Muslims and Croats, many of whom participated in the war or were involved in conflicts as well as those who found refuge from general mobilization, especially the Muslim population. The Keraterm and Omarska collection centers were disbanded on August 21 and Trnopolje in November 1992. From these collection centers civilians were transported to Skender Vakuf, Bugojno, Karlovci and Gradiška. Muslim and certain international media have declared these collection centers detention camps and, moreover, claimed that there has been a genocide committed there. Not only the Hague verdict denying them but also the statement of the former High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, who did not favour Serbs

much, as he admitted himself, show that the genocide claims are unreasonable. “They came there because they had to go somewhere. Their houses were burned, and their lives were in danger. Muslim extremists are pushing men to join the guerrilla, so they must take refuge here for safety”.¹¹²



Prijedor: A Shared Narrative

Places of Suffering

The Republic of BiH was mostly made up of Serbs, Croats and Muslims who, despite their many differences, managed to live in peace most of the time. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, three ethnic-based parties were formed: HDZ (Croats), SDA (Muslims) and SDS (Serbs). On the 1990 elections, those three parties received the majority of votes. On January 9, 1992, the Republic of the Serbian People of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with its seat in Banja Luka, was proclaimed.

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With increasing political tensions, the economic situation in Prijedor also worsened. One of the results was also the lack of food, medicine and gas. On January 17, 1992, the Assembly of the Serb People of Prijedor Municipality unanimously voted in favour of joining the ARK, approving the “accession of the Serbian territories of Prijedor Municipality to the Autonomous Region of Bosnian Krajina”. In April 1992, after the elections in Prijedor, most of the representatives in the municipality were Serbs. By the end of April 1992, more secret Serbian police stations had been created in the municipality and more than 1.500 armed men were ready to participate in the takeover of Prijedor. The takeover statement, prepared by the SDS, was read on Radio Prijedor a day after the takeover and was repeated throughout the day.

On the night of April 29 and 30, 1992, the seizure of power occurred “without a bullet fired”.¹¹³ The Public Security staff and reserve police gathered in Čirkin Polje. Only Serbs were present and some of them wore military uniforms.¹¹⁴ Those who refused to participate had to hand in their IDs and weapons and leave.¹¹⁵ Those people were given the task to seize power in the municipality and were divided into five groups.¹¹⁶ Finally, early in the morning of April 30, 1992, the SDS seized power in Prijedor.¹¹⁷ Central authorities have been replaced by SDS or staff loyal to SDS. Prijedor residents noticed a strong military presence in the city

and checkpoints were set throughout the city overnight. Serbian flags were displayed around the city and on the institutions' buildings.¹¹⁸

In the period after the takeover of Prijedor, many non-Serbs were fired from their jobs. On May 31, 1992, Bosnian Serb authorities in Prijedor issued an order through a local radio asking non-Serbs to mark their houses with white flags or sheets and to put white strips around their sleeves as they left the houses. The “marking” order and the propaganda campaign at the beginning of war in Prijedor contributed to the polarization of the population of this municipality on ethnic basis, created an atmosphere of fear, but also created the foundation for concrete crimes and inhumane acts.¹¹⁹

There are two perspectives regarding the sites of suffering in Prijedor. From the Bosnian narrative, the sites of suffering were referred to as the concentration camps - specifically the Omarska, Trnopolje and Keraterm camps while the Serbian narratives referred to these sites as “collection centers”. However, the fact is that whatever they are called in narratives, people were killed in these places.

On August 6, 1992, British media reporters from ITN and the Guardian revealed to the public the existence of camps for non-Serb civilians in the Prijedor area of north-western Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹²⁰ Images of exhausted detainees have toured the world in just a few days. These images were also one of the main causes for the establishment of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. According to the Bosnian Book of the Dead, 4.868 people from Prijedor were killed during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, among whom there have been 3.819 civilians. The victims include 3.515 Bosniaks, 186 Croats, 78 Serbs and 40 civilians of other nationalities.¹²¹

Today, Prijedor is still a controversial topic. On one hand, the fight for the recognition of camps and the marking of sites of suffering continues, mainly through civil society organizations (such as the Kwart), while on the other, the RS's resistance to recognize the camps is stronger than ever. The majority of the population in Prijedor is Serbian. Erecting a memorial to commemorate Prijedor's victims is not allowed in the city and access to crime scenes is denied by many, including Acelor-Mittal, the company that now owns the site of the infamous Omarska camp. Also, the proposals to erect a memorial to the killed children from Prijedor during the war, as well as a memorial to commemorate the Trnopolje camp and the victims of this camp,

have been rejected several times. However, various associations are very active in discussing the past in Prijedor. There are prisoners' associations, survivors' associations, returnees' associations and civic activists' associations, who, together, under their different names, fight for universal justice. There is a clear intention of one part of the citizens in Prijedor to cooperate with one another and to solve problems in a way that is most constructive for the community.¹²²







■ *The Siege of Sarajevo*

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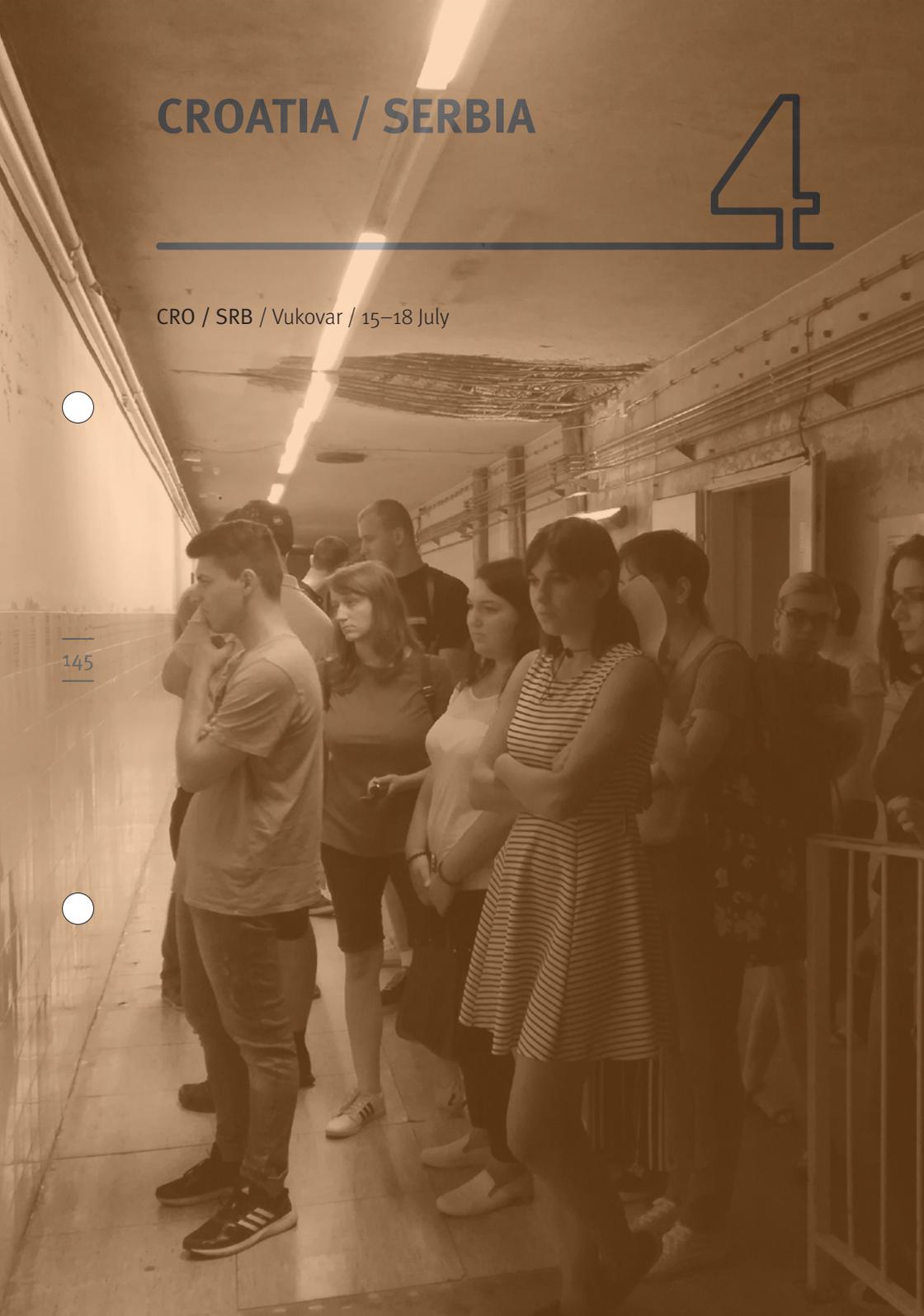
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CROATIA / SERBIA

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CROATIA / SERBIA



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4

Our group, created at the first conference in Belgrade in late March 2018, was named Tesla.¹²³ We chose this name because it serves as a kind of symbol of disagreement between Croatia and Serbia, while in some better world it could be something that connects us.

Nikola Tesla is certainly not the only point of disagreement between our countries. Therefore, in our work we have dealt precisely with the disagreements regarding the crucial events in the war of the 1990s. The two events we focused on were the Battle for Vukovar and Operation Oluja (Storm). The fact is that both states have their narratives about those events and promote them so that they benefit the ones holding the power and deepen the division between the peoples. We chose Vukovar because it marked the beginning of the war in Croatia and because it suffered the most damage. Operation Oluja was a logical choice given that it marked the end of the war and is the topic of controversy, especially in the context of the decisions of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

In exploring these events, we visited Vukovar (July 2018) and Knin (August 2018). During the process of creating these narratives, we realized that these themes are not only the past but also the present. Therefore we planned a trip to Knin at the time when we could avoid the celebration of Oluja and any possible inconvenience. For this reason exactly, we want our narratives to contribute to the dialogue between Croatia and Serbia and provide motivation for resolving pressing issues in relation to our common history and future.

Note: We want to emphasize that when we speak of a “Serbian” or “Croatian” narrative, it is a narrative that is predominantly present within countries and the media; we do not want to neglect the

perception of minorities in both countries.



Vukovar: Croatian Narrative

The Hero Town

The battle for Vukovar was fought over a period of 87 days, between August and November 1991. It was the first major conflict between the Serb and Croat sides since Croatia's declaration of independence in July 1991. The conflicting sides were the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) and the Serbian paramilitary units on one side and the Croatian National Guard (Zbor narodne garde) and the Croatian Army, on the other. During the 87-day period, the city of Vukovar was almost completely destroyed and suffered extensive material damage. The Vukovar Hospital, which is still today one of the symbols of the Croatian War of Independence, was the site where the inhabitants suffered the most. In November 1991, just before the end of the battle, about 400 Croatian civilians were taken away from the hospital. 260 of them were taken to Ovčara farm near Vukovar, where they were brutally killed by Serbian paramilitary units. That's how the battle for Vukovar ended.

Analysing different Croatian textbooks for the 8th grade of elementary school, one can see mostly the same pattern – it begins with a description of the events of May 2, 1991 in Borovo selo, the murder of 12 police officers and of Josip Jović and then refers to the Serbian aggression in the summer of 1991 and ends with the fall of Vukovar and a description of the events at Ovčara. For the authors of the textbook, Vukovar is a symbol of resistance to Greater Serbian aggression, each containing almost identical photographs of a devastated city or of the water tower, images of Croatian refugees fleeing the city and they mention, almost in identical form, brave Croatian defenders who resisted the JNA attacks for a long time and fell defending the Croatian state.¹²⁴ The textbooks for the 4th grade of high school have almost identical story. The 2004 textbook from publisher Meridian is the only one that has an entire subsection dedicated to Vukovar, where the

course of the Vukovar battle is described in more details, but Vukovar always remains a victim of Greater Serbian aggression".¹²⁵

The most important figure of Croatian independence and the most famous Croatian politician of the 1990s was Franjo Tuđman. From a series of his political speeches on Vukovar, one should single out a speech from Split from August 26, 1995. At one point, Tuđman asks the gathered crowd, "What else do I need to promise you?" Everyone starts chanting: "Vukovar, Vukovar, Vukovar!", to that Tuđman adds: "It is understood, above all, Vukovar, that symbol of Croatian resistance in defence of the established independent Croatian state, Vukovar and the rich eastern Slavonia and Baranja, because Croatia was and will remain a country on Danube".¹²⁶ Citizens are convinced that Vukovar has always been a Croatian city and that it was occupied and that Tuđman and the Croatian political leadership would return it to its people. In a second speech which Tuđman made in Vukovar itself in 1997, the rhetoric was softened: "Our arrival in Vukovar, in this symbol of Croatian suffering, Croatian resistance, Croatian aspirations for freedom, Croatian desire to return to its eastern borders, on the Danube that the Croatian anthem sings about, that is our symbol, our determination, that we really want peace, reconciliation, that we want to create the trust for a lasting life, to never let again happen in the future what happened to us".¹²⁷ Vukovar still remains a Croatian city, which had been occupied for four years and now finally belongs to the Croatian people who only want peace.

During the battle and after the fall, the Croatian media is full of headlines on Vukovar, the hero, victim and wounded town. Through the headlines such as "the Wounded Vukovar" the media has to a large degree created and confirmed the Croatian right to Vukovar.¹²⁸ At the same time, some Croats blame the Croatian authorities for the fall of Vukovar and criticize them for willing to sacrifice the city for Croatian independence.¹²⁹

The declaration on the Croatian War of Independence was adopted in 2000 by the Croatian National Assembly. The following part is interesting: "The Republic of Croatia led a just and legitimate defensive and liberation war, not an aggressive and conquering war against anyone, in which it defended its territory against Greater Serbian aggression within internationally recognized borders".¹³⁰ Thus, the Republic of Croatia confirmed in an official document the Greater Serbian aggression as well as the fact that Croatia was only leading a defensive war.

Vukovar: Serbian Narrative

Croatian Stalingrad

The battle for Vukovar and the war actions that took place there were used to achieve the political goals of the authorities of that time. Media reports in 1991 portrayed that the creation of an independent Croatian state means the re-creation of the Ustashe state that intends and is preparing a new genocide against the Serbs.

In the analysis of Vukovar, it was noted that the textbook “History” published by Fresco, mentions that there was fierce fighting for Vukovar, while Ovčara was not mentioned at all.¹³¹ The “History” textbook published by the Institute for Textbooks and Teaching Aids (Zavod za udžbenika i nastavna sredstva), emphasizes that “Croatia’s aspiration for independence and its own state extended beyond its borders”, while the battle for Vukovar, Ovčara and Škabrnja are only listed on the margins of the textbook page listing the events of 1991, without further explanation and context.¹³² The conclusion is that in Serbian history textbooks there is insufficient information about Vukovar and the content is manipulated.

The statements of politicians followed this discourse, with certain individuals, such as Dr. Vojislav Šešelj, being more explicit in presenting their views. In September 1991, he said, “Croats can go, but they can’t take any Serb territory with them”.¹³³

During the Battle for Vukovar, the Serbian media, both television and print, published various news stories showing the Croats’ intentions to exterminate Serbs from the area. On November 20, 1991, the Journal (Dnevnik) on the Radio and Television of Serbia, shared the news about 40 slaughtered Serbian children in the basement of a kindergarten in the Vukovar suburb of Borovo selo. This news shook and upset both the local and international public and after it was confirmed by

experts, 24 hours later, the news was dismissed.¹³⁴ The most widely read print media, such as *Večernje Novosti* and *Politika*, throughout the Battle for Vukovar, by reporting on the events of the war aimed to raise awareness of Serbian citizens about the suffering of the JNA soldiers and the crimes against the Serb population. Some of the titles are, “Vukovar liberated”, “Army and the Territorial Defence clean up last Ustashe strongholds in the city centre”, “Government of Croatia threatens to massacre tens of thousands of people”, “Ustashe act ill”, “Crimes before the eyes of the world”, “Croatian Stalingrad fell yesterday”, and so on.¹³⁵

In addition to the Croatian victims in Vukovar, who are hardly mentioned in Serbia, it is known that in the summer of 1991 there were crimes committed against the Serb population, before the conflict itself began. It involves murders, torturing and destruction of property of dozens of Serbs from Vukovar. No one was held responsible for these crimes and several criminal charges were filed against Vojislav Merčep, the commander of the Croatian National Guard in Vukovar. However, there has been no indictment against him and there is no justice for the victims so far.¹³⁶

Within the Serbian public discourse, the battle for Vukovar is not so present. Vukovar is mentioned as an example of the Serbian suffering, both in the 1990s and today. Even today, Serbs are treated as second-class citizens, to the extent that they have been denied the legal right to sings in their own Cyrillic script.

Vukovar: A Shared Narrative

Synonymous of Division

Creating the basis for building a common narrative about the war in Vukovar is a significant act as it clearly defines the real significance of historical facts and their role in further building the national identity, respectively it enables the establishment of more stable national foundations for future. The culture of memorising that has the purpose of building and preserving national identity in the countries of the region of the former Yugoslavia is in an unenviable position, resulting in an arbitrary attitude to historical facts and the instrumentalising of historical data for the sake of current political goals and interests. Such an atmosphere makes it difficult to come up with a narrative that would not be separate and the purpose of which would be to have a responsible understanding of the past and to work together on relationships that offer greater opportunities for collaboration.

A common narrative about the war events in Vukovar requires a precise determination of the time frame of the events in order to differentiate the past from the present and establish a more correct relation to the national past that would allow the existence of morally more appropriate values for national as well as personal development. Such a narrative about Vukovar starts from the fact that the battle for Vukovar represents one of the greatest conflicts and suffering of the two opposing parties during the breakup of Yugoslavia. The conflicting sides were the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) and the Serbian paramilitary units, on the one hand, and the Croatian National Guard and the Croatian Army, on the other. The conflict lasted from August 24 to November 20, 1991, and both sides find its causes in threats and tensions by the growing nationalist aspirations and interests of the adversaries. Both sides see themselves as victims of nationally motivated opponents' goals that pose an absolute threat to their own people. The victimizing mantle functions on both sides as a mean of

justifying one's own responsibilities and shifting the blame and under this pressure it comes to a complete distortion of the truth and a re-provoking of tensions at the national level, that further complicates the consequences of the war, as well as the current circumstances in both countries.

The Serbian narrative defines the Yugoslav People's Army attack on Vukovar as a legitimate act, referring to the fact that the Yugoslav People's Army was the only legal military formation in the service of protecting Yugoslavia, which had a moral obligation to protect its own citizens. The Croatian narrative considers the siege by the Yugoslav People's Army completely illegitimate in accordance with the declaration of independence of the Republic of Croatia in 1991. The treatment of the proclamation of independence of the Republic of Croatia as a legitimate act is present in the Croatian narrative, while the Serbian narrative takes a completely different stance on the same issue. In this way, both sides treat opponents' moves as illegitimate and nationally threatening. However, there are no convictions for Croatian crimes against Serbs in Vukovar, and on the other hand, the Croatian side sees the verdicts for the war and crimes committed in Vukovar as insufficient, considering that the Serb side has not sufficiently accepted its own guilt.



Polarized interpretations of events lead to a complete mutual misunderstanding and neglect the social devastation as a consequence of war. The fact is that Vukovar was devastated and the inter-ethnic relations of fellow citizens of different ethnic backgrounds in it completely disrupted, leaving war traumas alive through the memory of the suffering and the dead and without great and systematic support in taking a more useful attitude towards the past. The common narrative, accordingly, calls for the responsibility to be taken and for the crimes to be treated in the same way without exception.



Vukovar today is a proof that there is no common narrative as there is no interest in creating one. The radically different understanding of the events in Vukovar during the war is reflected mainly in education, which is segregated on ethnic grounds. Croatian schools teach and promote the Croatian narrative of the hero town on one hand, while Serbian schools teach the Serbian narrative of the lost city on the other, deepening the existing conflict. By the example of Norway's initiative to create an interethnic school, for which Norway donated 1.3 million Euro, which was boycotted by the Vukovar authorities on both

sides¹³⁷, we conclude that neither side is willing to go beyond their beliefs about this event, even though the innocent ones suffer in the process – in this case, children. We can draw the same conclusion from any integration attempt in the area so far, such as the introduction of bilingual Latin and Cyrillic signs on Vukovar institutions¹³⁸, which has resulted in the outrage of Croatian war veterans and the absence of political leadership reaction. To understand why is this so, we must understand that the greatest interest that the ones ruling have in Vukovar is the ideological power, that is, the ability to point the finger at the culprits on both sides of this conflict.

○ The group of young people working on this narrative believes that Vukovar remains a political instrument, for the Croatian side it is an evidence of the heroism and inviolability of the Croatian victim, for the Serb side it is an evidence of Croatian nationalism and Ustashe ideology, and that the two narratives do nothing else but strengthen nationalism on both sides. The real common truth is that the victims of the 1990s are the same as the victims of today and they are the citizens of Vukovar themselves, regardless of their nationality.





Oluja: ***Croatian Narrative***

Celebration of Victory and Homeland Thanksgiving

Very few in Croatia are indifferent to the term Operation “Oluja” (“Storm”). Above all, it is a symbol of victory, pride and the successful end of the Croatian War of Independence. With the military-police operations “Bljesak” and “Oluja” (“Flash” and “Storm”) the Croatian Army liberated a significant part of the Croatian territory, which was until then occupied by the parastate of the Republic of Serbian Krajina (RSK).

The RSK was created as a result of the rebellion of a large portion of the Serb population in Croatia. They have joined the policies of Serbian President Slobodan Milošević, who has been trying to assert Serbia’s dominance over other Yugoslav republics since the 1990s. In 1990, the first multi-party elections in Croatia were won by the Croatian Democratic Union (Hrvatska demokratska zajednica – HDZ), led by Franjo Tuđman, the Serbian leadership decided that Serbs in Croatia must take control of parts of Croatian territory. Thus, in 1990, the Serbian Autonomous Region (SAO) of Krajina was established, with its seat in Knin. Since 1991, the Yugoslav People’s Army (JNA) has openly stood by Serbian rebels, helping them conquer Croatian territory. At the end of 1991, the Republika Srpska Krajina was established in the areas controlled by the JNA and Serb rebels with its seat in Knin. During the proclamation, its territory was largely “ethnically cleansed” of Croats. Serbian rebels will continue to expel the remaining population later. Robbery and persecution were the foundations of the RSK. The leader of the Serb Volunteer Guard, Željko Ražnatović-Arkan, said on one occasion: “Understand that we will go even to Berlin if there is a need to. Therefore, their every single city including Zagreb, will burn”¹³⁹, thus confirming the intentions of Serbian aggression. Croatia, meanwhile, declared independence and gained international recognition. The RSK area was placed under the control of the United Nations Protection

Forces (UNPROFOR). They needed to establish a ceasefire and enable a peaceful solution to the conflict between Croatia and the Serbian rebels, something they weren't successful at after many years. The RSK existed until 1995 and in that sense that year certainly represents a turning point in the defence of Croatia's sovereignty. Operation "Bljesak" liberated western Slavonia and operation "Oluja" northern Dalmatia with Knin, Lika, Kordun and Banovina. Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and western Srijem remained outside Croatia's control and they returned through the peaceful reintegration process in 1998. The importance of "Oluja" is, of course, reflected in the fact that it enabled the end of the four-year war.

Operation "Oluja" also caused a lot of controversy. Today, the opinion in Croatia is that the Serb population has voluntarily left the occupied territories, that is, the territory of the RSK, although Serbia believes that Croatia carried out an "ethnic cleansing" campaign during "Oluja". Some Croatian authors equate the Serbian occupation of Srebrenica with "Oluja", claiming: "Mladić in Srebrenica, 'knights of Oluja' in Krajina: what's the difference? There is no difference in the type of action, while when it comes to numbers, people will argue until the doomsday".¹⁴⁰

At the same time, some support the idea that Serb rebels are not responsible at all for the war in Croatia and that they did not want to become part a new Serbian state. The main responsible ones are the Serbian President Milošević and Croatian President Tuđman, who waged an "agreed war". In support of this idea is the statement of Vojislav Šešelj, who once said: "One more thing...If we lose this war, we will remain in Belgrade after all. They won't take over Belgrade from us but what will you do then? What will you do then? Captain Dragan went to his Australia with his plane. What about you? What will you do?"¹⁴¹ Explaining that the rebelled Serbs are victims of nationalist leaders.

Such claims completely ignore the fact that rebelled Serbs were not ready to accept coexistence with Croats in Croatia, which can be concluded from statements such as: "Because I said it earlier and now I will say it again...if this Krajina is within Croatia, then I will move to Serbia, down there..."¹⁴². When considering the issue of Serbs leaving the RSK during "Oluja", it should be recalled that, at the end of 1995, after the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement, nearly 100.000 Bosnian Serbs left parts of Sarajevo that were under their control until

then.¹⁴³ The area became part of the Federation of BiH and the Serbs then left, although they were not directly affected by any military action. In the same way as it was unacceptable for RSK Serbs to recognize Croatian rule, so it was unacceptable for Sarajevo Serbs not to live in Republika Srpska.

Did Croatia commit “ethnic cleansing” of the Serb population in actions “Bljesak” and “Oluja”? It is evident that the rebelled Serbs in general did not want to remain under Croatian rule. It is also evident that before the “Bljesak”, RSK authorities planned to evacuate the population. This worked in favour of the then Croatian leadership that favoured this solution for the issue of Serbs being a factor that threatened the Croatian state. The Croatian people believe that there was no “ethnic cleansing” during “Oluja”. The Croatian public generally does not dispute the fact that crimes were committed during “Oluja”, but they are interpreted as isolated incidents by senior political representatives. For example, the Croatian Parliament adopted a Declaration that states: “unanimous in condemning each and single and all crimes that really occurred during and after Operations “Bljesak” and “Oluja”, whose victims are, unfortunately, as it is always during the wars – innocent and powerless civilians”.¹⁴⁴

Likewise, such acts can be regarded as the result of aggression against Croatia, which has deteriorated Croatian-Serbian relations and subsequently of the desire for revenge.



Oluja: ***Serbian Narrative***

Oluja – a Crime That Continues

Operation “Oluja” is a joint army and police action of the Republic of Croatia with the aim of expelling the Serb population from the territory of the Republika Srpska Krajina, which was created in 1991 and included almost 20% of the territory, where Serbs for centuries made up the majority. “Oluja” to the Serbian people represents “the greatest ethnic cleansing since World War II”, and as such is referred to as the pogrom of Serbs. This is how it is described in the textbooks used in schools, in the rhetoric used by politicians in their speeches and the media reporting during and after Operation “Oluja”.

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For example, the textbook of the Institute for Textbooks and Teaching Aids states that the war in Croatia ended with the actions “Bljesak” and “Oluja”, supported by the USA. It also talks about 300.000 expelled Serbs from the territory of the RSK. There is also a photo of a refugee column heading towards Serbia.¹⁴⁵ In the textbook published by Fresco, the war in Croatia begins with Serbs being excluded from the new Croatian Constitution in December 1990 and states that this is crucial for the beginning of the armed conflict in Croatia. The reason for this is the fear the Serb population had because of World War II and the Ustashe movement. It is further stated that at the end of 1990, the Serb people in Croatia “declared independence of the territories in which they had lived for centuries” and decided to remain within Yugoslavia. The Z4 Plan is mentioned in one sentence and at the end it mentions failed negotiations in Geneva and “Oluja” which resulted in a planned ethnic cleansing of Serbs, giving the number of over 200.000 people expelled.¹⁴⁶

The politician who has certainly been most fierce in his statements about operation Oluja and the War in Croatia is Vojislav Šešelj, the head of the Serbian Radical Party, who has a “dream of a Greater

Serbia” in his political program, which encompasses, among others, the territory of the RSK and who throughout the war in Croatia was present on the FRY political scene. His statements at the expense of the Republic of Croatia and the Croats (example 1, example 2), as well as the burning of the national flag of the Republic of Croatia at the rallies of his party, earned him a reputation as well as an indictment in The Hague. He was released later.

Even 24 years later, politicians in Serbia, most notably President Aleksandar Vučić, a former close associate of Vojislav Šešelj, use Operation “Oluja” in their speeches, alluding to the fact that Serbia will never again allow a new “Oluja”, referring to the current situation in Kosovo.¹⁴⁷

The media, the greatest weapon for every politician, especially during the war era, has played a huge role in the rise of chauvinism and hatred of neighbours. The FRY of the time is no exception and the main propaganda tool in the hands of Slobodan Milošević was the Radio Television of Serbia (RTS), with the addition of print media such as Večernje Novosti and Politika. However, the interesting fact is that Operation “Oluja” was not attractive enough for the media in Serbia and it seemed as if everyone was surprised when the columns of Krajina Serbs arrived in Belgrade. TANJUG did not even report the news of the fall of Knin and RTS mentioned this news only in the twentieth minute of its Journal.¹⁴⁸ “Oluja” is today more present in the media than it was in the 90ies. Headlines in dailies such as Informer, especially around 4th of August, every year keep alive the idea of the Serbian suffering: “CROATIAN ORGIES IN THE MIDDLE OF DUBLIN! Croats celebrate “Oluja” in Ireland, shouting KILL THE SERBS, POLICE LOOKED AWAY!”, “USTASHE CELEBRATE THE CRIME: The state leadership led by Kolinda celebrates Serbian pogrom!”, and the like.¹⁴⁹



Oluja: ***A Shared Narrative***

August 5: Day of Parallel Universes

Operation Oluja was carried out by the Croatian army and police from August 4 to 7, 1995 with the aim of reintegrating the territory of the Republika Srpska Krajina into the borders of the Republic of Croatia. This event also marks the end of the war in Croatia that started in 1991.

The joint army and police forces of the Republic of Croatia on August 4, at 5 am, start the shelling of all important points of defence of the Serb forces, especially the town of Knin. Over the next four days, it is estimated that 200.000, or at least 180.000 Serbs, fled from Croatia to Republika Srpska, FRY and other countries.

Generals Ante Gotovina and Mladen Markač, who were tried before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, were in command of the Croatian army. However, this decision is one of the most controversial ones. Both generals were sentenced to 24 years' imprisonment at first instance decision, to be acquitted on appeal by a narrow majority of judges (3:2). There are 5 key points that the prosecution and defence have argued over: 1) The objective of operation "Oluja", 2) Purpose of shelling, 3) Killing of Serb civilians, 4) Robbery and destruction of property, 5) Prevention of return.¹⁵⁰

We will focus on the first point of the indictment, on the objective of the operation "Oluja", which is certainly the most important point as through it the dominant narratives on both the Croatian and Serbian side can be looked at. In the course of the proceedings, the Prosecution did not question in any way the legitimacy and right of the Republic of Croatia to recover part of the territory within its internationally recognized borders by armed action, however, it considered that this objective was achieved through a joint criminal enterprise.¹⁵¹ One part of this conclusion of the Prosecution is disputed

by the public in Serbia, who creates a dominant narrative about operation “Oluja”: that the Republic of Croatia had the right to reclaim part of its territory, because the dominant narrative is precisely the one that the territory of the Republika Srpska Krajina has been for centuries inhabited by Serbs and that the RSK simply belongs to them. The Croatian public, on the other hand, would not agree that the Serb population was expelled but that they willingly left and also insists on the inalienable right of the Republic of Croatia to regain control of its territory. The final verdict in the Gotovina et al. case, confirmed many crimes committed against civilians and prisoners of war. Unfortunately, before the Croatian courts there is only one verdict so far for the crimes during the operation “Oluja”, although there are hundreds of victims.¹⁵²

The post-appeal verdict, which concluded that there was no joint criminal enterprise and Generals Gotovina and Markač were acquitted, only further strengthened the narratives on both sides. In Serbia the narrative that “no one will ever be held responsible for crimes committed against Serbs” and the one that “the whole world is against Serbia”, while in Croatia the one that “the military-police operation “Oluja” is Croatia’s great victory against the Serbian aggressor”, regardless of the killings, robbery and destruction of property where the numbers of the crimes are reduced to the full minimum. Nevertheless, the Croatian media accepts the verdict and adhere to the narrative that the victims did exist, but that the generals were not responsible.¹⁵³

The drastic differences in the perception of Oluja can best be seen in the commemoration of the day itself, August 5, and in the rhetoric propagated by politicians of both countries and the front pages of daily newspapers on this date. Oluja is a phenomenon that represents two complete opposites – for Croatia, August 5, is celebrated under the auspices of the national leadership as a Victory and Homeland Thanksgiving Day, accompanied by a concert by Marko Perković Thompson. On the other hand, Serbia commemorates August 5, as a day of mourning and remembrance for the victims of Oluja.

This interpretation of events in two completely different ways, as well as neglecting of the other side, only harms the two nations, boosts nationalism, chauvinism and intolerance, which does not help the returnees in particular who have to suffer daily from warlike statements from both sides. Misunderstanding and rejection of facts – the one from the Serb side that during its four-year existence, the Republika

Srpska Krajina committed crimes, as well as from Croatian side, that several hundred civilians were killed, several thousand houses were burned during and after “Oluja” and that the return was made almost impossible by various administrative and bureaucratic measures – is harmful and dangerous for any democratic society that should strive to deal with the past and reconciliation.







■ Vukovar

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(Accessed on 08.02.2020.)

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■ Oluja

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CROATIA / MONTENEGRO

5

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When we started researching bilateral relations between Croatia and Montenegro, we did not know how complex this relationship was and what was behind it. We decided to write about the most controversial and most painful topics dealing with the bombing of Dubrovnik, Prevlaka and the camp in Morinj, as they are the dominant and current topics of our recent common past, and despite their status, have remained marginalized in public discussions. Each of us has brought to this document her/his own opinion that have been influenced by family, social environment, education system, media and public. While cooperating in writing those narratives, our opinions diverged, but we did not neglect this diversity and conflicting views, we listened and thought critically. We allowed ourselves to be vulnerable, to examine ourselves and to realize that things may not be as they seem, as we were taught and thought we knew. We were born during or shortly after the war, we never went through it, but there are traces of it in us. Study trips made us aware of the reality of the events we read and wrote about. Then we could see and feel the damage from shells, the remains of the camps and talk to people who had gone through something that no human being should go through. No, it didn't happen in another parallel reality or in a far-off unknown country, it happened here. We, the young generations, carry the burdens of society and prejudice, often without even being aware of them. We don't want to carry them and we don't want our children to carry them someday. From narratives that deal with the destructive past, we have created something and we have transformed our differences and shaped new understandings of the past and reality, new communication among young generations and new friendships that have changed our thinking and us. We didn't always know where to look for sources about something that had never been talked about in the family and public, but we didn't give up. We were looking for the truth, not one, but different truths.

It was not easy for us, but we did our best to read as much as possible and highlight those sources that were important to us, be it newspaper articles, scientific papers, court documents or video clips. We hope we have succeeded in that because our narratives are written but not finished. This project has sparked in us some changes in awareness that will continue to take shape day by day. We want to continue thinking about things that are not discussed in the societies of the entire region. Writing narratives has changed us, so this project is already successful as far as we are concerned. However, we did not write papers for our own sake. If our narratives will have an impact on social environment, by fostering dialogue, understanding and acceptance, encourage at least one more person to think and break down the constraints set, our mission is successful.



Morinj Camp: Croatian Narrative

People from Dubrovnik Picking Grapes in Montenegro

Morinj is located in the area between Kotor and Herceg Novi, deep into the sea bay at the foot of a high mountain range. It is the largest settlement on the western coast of the Bay of Kotor-Risan and a well-known tourist resort from which a large number of sailors and captains originate.¹⁵⁴ Morinj is a very beautiful and idyllic Mediterranean port of Bay of Kotor, but some people get shivers down their spine at the mentioning of this place. Namely, during the not such a distant war in our region, Morinj served as a collection centre. Between October 1991 and August 1992 it was used as a Reception Centre for prisoners of war from the Dubrovnik-Neretva County.¹⁵⁵ Morinj is still a very painful topic in the Dubrovnik area, while it is not exposed enough through media to the general public.

The number of prisoners in Morinj reached over 160 people and it is very difficult to find an exact number and list of inmates. Placed in small barracks and inhumane conditions the prisoners were exposed to inappropriate treatment that included continuous physical and psychological abuse. This is best illustrated in the book *Memories of the Dubrovnik Prisoners 1991-1992*, published by the Croatian Society of Prisoners of Serbian Concentration Camps.¹⁵⁶ The prisoners' records and testimonies speak of all the horrors that happened there. Many prisoners stated that psychological torture was way much more intense than the physical one. When they brutalized the prisoners, the soldiers and the police, forced them to pick *empty* grapes¹⁵⁷, to eat the grass, beat each other while the others served as a live ring, lead them to false executions and make them sing anti-Croatian songs.¹⁵⁸ Marko Margaretić, a former prisoner in Morinj, says that even today, the song he had to sing every time his interrogator Boro Gligić was on shift echoes in his head: "Let it be Ustashe, a wide pit is awaiting you. It is a meter wide and kilometre deep (Ustaše neka, neka, široka vas

jama čeka, široka je jedan metar, a duboka kilometar)"¹⁵⁹. That same investigator, Gligić, was later convicted of participating in the abuse of prisoners. According to some camp detainees, he led the prisoners to the premises where they were tortured and showed them what the typical Ustashas looked like.¹⁶⁰ Three people died at this camp: Miho Brailo, Antun Čagalj and Nikola Zlovečar. In addition to those who lost their lives from the tortures, some other detainees were also killed shortly after being released from the camp; Nikola Lučić, Pero Đurišić, Krešimir Bošković, Božo Ban, Ivan Ban, Božo Čagalj, Jako Obrad, Jelo Obrad, Miho Kralj and Vlaho Brailo.¹⁶¹

The Republic of Croatia, as well as Montenegro, is lagging behind when it comes to publicly facing the role of the concentration camp in Morinj. First of all, the majority of the Croatian population does not even know that there was ever a collection centre for civilians from the Dubrovnik-Neretva County, especially not that it was located in the territory of Montenegro. By initiating discussions about the topic of Morinj with our closest friends and family, as well as colleagues from the faculty, we found out that there is a lack of information on the subject. The educational and cultural institutions have also strongly failed in promoting the issue of crimes against civilians from Dubrovnik. In the entire educational system, the Croatian War of Independence is sporadically covered in the upper grades of elementary and secondary education, but there is no mentioning of the Morinj camp or the testimonies of prisoners and there is no reference literature to offer such information to interested young people.¹⁶² Morinj remains just a side note in the manuals for teachers and professors, but not textbooks, without any additional information, such as in the manual on the Croatian War of Independence for teachers published by Školska knjiga.¹⁶³ Furthermore, with the exception of the book already mentioned at the beginning of the text, *Memories of the Prisoners of Dubrovnik*, there is no literature that covers this topic. The media often broadcasts the commemorations of the police and military operations, accompanied by images of wreath lying at the sites of great suffering and politicians call for the victims and the missing to be remembered, but Morinj is not mentioned. The Croatian public is not sufficiently informed about Morinj and the authorities are not making sufficient efforts to acknowledge and commemorate the suffering of prisoners in a dignified way. Only in few internet portals one can find articles about the compensations paid by the Montenegrin authorities to the victims and brief occasional testimonies by the inmates. Most of these articles go unnoticed in the Croatian public and these topics aren't represented

sufficiently in other media.

In a sea of crimes and pain deriving from the Croatian War of Independence, we want to forgive, but we do not know to whom. It is our obligation to pay tribute to the civilian victims of individual and mass crimes, the many missing persons and the soldiers killed on duty. However, it is our moral responsibility to honour all the victims, regardless of their ethnic identity and number, military or civilian status. Every life lost in war deserves its own memorial. We believe that the suffering does not have any status, age, gender, nationality, borders, occupation or religion. Also, we believe that it hurts to talk about what happened. But we still believe it will hurt more if we keep silent about it, if we forget who the victims are. Silence about conflicts, establishing individual guilt, covering up and forgetting the victims lead to new conflicts and consequently new suffering. We need to know what happened so that something like this never happens again. Have we learned anything from these events and doesn't *Historia est Magistra Vitae* mean anything at all?



Morinj Camp: Montenegrin Narrative

Resort Morinj

The well-known and attractive tourist town of Morinj, located in the Bay of Kotor, which houses elite tourist facilities near the coast, hides a complex of military facilities that became a prison in the 1990s - a collection centre for prisoners of war. During the war, the camp was seen as something quite normal, a prison for fascist traitors who opposed the authority of the SFRY leadership and the JNA army. The camp - collection centre was justified by the need for intelligence gathering by potential members of the paramilitary formations of the Croatian National Guard (ZNG) and members of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ). Media censorship and reporting aimed at misleading the public almost succeeded in justifying the camp and presenting it as necessary for the defence of Montenegro and the then SFRY. According to the reporters of the propaganda service of the then leadership, who even at some moments inspected the prisoners of the camps using interrogation methods, Morinj is presented as a legitimate prison or collection centre, where the prisoners, as they were forced to say, were treated humanely and correctly.

The largest part of the public did not pay attention to the camp and therefore did not react. The population around the camp also did not react, and the reason for that is that they were families of military personnel, but also because of fear, as at that time no action by the military and police was allowed to be questioned. One part of the public today still regards the camp and its events as justified at the time and still believes that there was a threat from paramilitary fascist forces from Croatia. Some believe that the operation should have been carried out more consistently and that if the aim was to defend and preserve the SFRY, the military's actions were justified, but that it should have been done in a more disciplined and humane manner. Of course, there is a part that believes that all this is justified and that it

was necessary to participate in the war even more intensely as Croats or generally “Ustashe” are therefore still enemies. Of course, people shape opinions and attitudes under the influence of propaganda and manipulation on events that have taken place. However, today little is known about the camp in Morinj, if we exclude NGO activists and the professionals.

To date, Montenegro has not adequately implemented the process of dealing with the past. Therefore, the issue of the Morinj detention camp and the prosecution of former JNA members for the crimes in this camp should be considered in this context. The Montenegrin prosecution should have started the trials much earlier and dealt with it more professionally. The overall prosecution for the crimes in Morinj should be viewed more as a result of pressure from the European Union and the countries of the region, rather than as the actual will of the current authorities to prosecute crimes for this camp. Similar to these are the outcomes of the processes for the crimes in camps on Croatian territory. The question is whether such punishments reflect the gravity of the (inhumane) action, crimes and torture committed against the inmates.

Changing political programs, national and foreign policy priorities, as well as various pressures from international institutions, are key factors influencing Montenegrin politicians to make contradictory statements in the short period of time. Despite Montenegrin state officials publicly accepting responsibility for the damage from war operations, and some like the current President Milo Đukanović also formally apologized to Croatia for the “suffering and material losses” caused by Montenegrin citizens within the JNA, there is still no detailed investigation into command and individual accountability and adequate verdicts for war crimes. There is no justification for the crimes and all responsible state officials should be aware of this. One of the biggest problems of our society, as well as the entire region, is the denial of the suffering of other nations and emphasizing exclusively the victims from our own nation.¹⁶⁴

History textbooks for elementary and secondary schools have basic information about the breakup of the SFRY and the wars during the 1990s in the former Yugoslavia. It is true that these lessons are addressed at the end of 9th grade of elementary and 4th grade of secondary school so it is questionable whether they are processed at all and how well. The fact is that earlier history textbooks had no room

for war crimes in the Morinj camp and we do not have information on recent textbooks.¹⁶⁵ It should be noted that in 2009 a textbook for 4th year of secondary school was published, the authors were Professor Šerbo Rastoder, Professor Dragutin Papović and Sait Šabotić. In this textbook, the issues of the breakup of the SFRY and the events of the war have been dealt with on a larger scale and in a different way by then. The textbook is even today forbidden by the current authorities in Montenegro on the pretext that certain associations of war veterans demand that and that Montenegro was not an independent state at the time and could not decide whether or not to go to war. The bottom line is, however, that the textbook is banned because for the first time addresses the issue of responsibility of some of the then, but also today, senior state officials for the war in Dubrovnik, but also for the first time publicly raises in the history textbook the issue of responsibility for other war crimes.¹⁶⁶

Many people did not want to comment on the camp in Morinj because of ignorance or fear of the consequences they would suffer. We have to bear in mind that Montenegro faced the crimes only as a state that acknowledged the crimes and paid the compensations, but only few direct perpetrators were punished, and that those responsible in high positions still avoid responsibility. However, the majority of the Montenegrin public condemns the attack on Dubrovnik and the events of the 1990s and tries to shift the blame to someone else, to the leadership of the SFRY, but forgets the fact that the then Prime Minister of Montenegro, Milo Đukanović, had a stake in the same leadership, and today he is the President of Montenegro. The Morinj camp remains the dark side of contemporary Montenegrin history, but we must be persistent in seeking accountability from those most responsible for heinous crimes and the overall situation and today they still hold high official positions.



Morinj Camp: A Shared Narrative

Where Those Responsible Go on Vacation?

Morinj, a fairy-tale tourist resort in one of the most beautiful parts of Montenegro, is located in the Bay of Kotor. Today, no one would ever think that just over twenty years ago there was the first war camp in the former SFRY during the 1990s. This small town hides the secret of a series of crimes committed by JNA members against arrested men, civilians and prisoners of war, from the Dubrovnik area. The collection centre was located just a few hundred meters from the then residential buildings and today luxury resorts. It is absurd that there are no signs at the site that mention the crimes that took place there and that in the same place the most visible is the sign for the project of building tourist complexes as if nothing had ever happened.

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Morinj is (un)known today because it served as a detention camp for prisoners of war from the Dubrovnik-Neretva County from October 1991 until August 1992.¹⁶⁷ The camp was established on October 3, 1991 with the aim of interrogating the so-called “Ustashe” and ZNG members.¹⁶⁸ Although the official data show that the largest number of Croat prisoners were civilians, they were treated by JNA members as the greatest threat to the territoriality and integrity of Montenegro and the SFRY.

The responsible for the area were the regular soldiers of the JNA of the 9th Military-Naval Sector, and Vice Admiral Miodrag Jokić, who until then served as Serbian Minister of Defence and Milan Zec was the Chief of the same staff.¹⁶⁹ Although there are records of the hierarchical organization of the military-naval sector, which included Morinj and its camp, the most responsible ones in that system today are not held responsible for the horrific treatment of prisoners of war. Operational proceeding with prisoners at the Morinj camp was the responsibility of the Security Administration of the Federal Secretariat for National

Defence (SSNO). During the time when Morinj existed, Aleksandar Vasiljević was one of the heads of the Security Administration. One of the chief officers of the Morinj interrogation group, Mirsad Krluš, told the court that General Vasiljević had instructed them how and what to ask the prisoners.¹⁷⁰ The above mentioned statements and official documentation confirm the existence of a clear hierarchy, but in 2007 the navy denied that evidence and stated that the Morinj camp was under the jurisdiction of the Belgrade military headquarters. Also, in that testimony, Morinj was not defined as a “camp”, but as a “Centre for the Admission/Examination of Prisoners”, as stated by one of the accused interrogators Zlatko Tarle, who was subsequently acquitted of all charges by the High Court in Podgorica in 2012.¹⁷¹

The story of the detainee Marko Lučić is one of many stories that points out that behind the figures and facts are individual stories, human destinies. Lučić, who ended up there with his father Nikola, went through a special torture because of his last name. Specifically, one of the military police officers inside the camp, Špiro Lučić, would beat them until they lose conscious because he thought they had embarrassed his *clan*.¹⁷² Marko’s father died a year after he was released from the camp. The autopsy proved that Mr. Nikola died as a result of violent beatings in the camp, psychological torture and inhumane living conditions.¹⁷³

The above mentioned police officer was sentenced to 3 years and 6 months imprisonment in a first instance verdict on May 15, 2010, with a period of detention calculated into his sentence and the final sentence was 3 years of imprisonment.¹⁷⁴

Three people died during the camp. Miho Brailo from Konavle who was only 26 at the time, he hung himself in solitary confinement using his own shirt. Antun Čagalj from Zvekovica, he was 78 years old and only half a year before being captured had a surgery because of liver cancer. He died in the camp during severe beating. And in the third case, Nikola Zlovečar, a man of over 80 who, due to everything he went through in this old age, suffered 3 heart attacks and died.¹⁷⁵ And those who survived the horrors of the camp still have consequences today as the result of the physical, but no less terrible, psychological torture they experienced.

What is perhaps worse than the crime itself is the passivity and indolence of the local people in Morinj. Rare residents of Morinj from

this period want to speak publicly about the camp. Obrad Pavlović from Kostanjica, a village near Morinj, decided to share his experience with the Montenegrin media; “What should have made it clear to the people living there that there is a camp is the fact that, especially in the evenings, there were screams and calls to sing some songs and then screams again”.¹⁷⁶ Local people heard, knew and did not respond. Other locals met by the TV crew claim that it was not a detention camp but an investigative prison. They supposedly heard the noise but thought they were reservists because to their knowledge there was no regular army there.¹⁷⁷ However, it must be understood that many remained indifferent for fear that they might end up in the same way. The information transmitted by the media was indeed misinformation and propaganda and in that way they supported and justified what was happening in Morinj and conveyed statements that inmates were forced to make and who positively portrayed the situation in the complex. Today in Montenegro there is still a shared opinion which is sporadically manifested in some media which promotes false propaganda created in the 1990s.

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The indictment against some of the perpetrators of crimes in Morinj was filed by the Supreme State Prosecutor’s Office of Montenegro - Department for Suppression of Organized Crime, Corruption, Terrorism and War Crimes at the High Court in Podgorica on August 15, 2008. The indictment seeks the arrest and punishment for Mladen Govedarica, Zlatko Tarle, Ivo Gojnić, Špiro Lučić, Ivo Menzalin and Bora Gligić for cruel and inhuman treatment of prisoners of war against the Geneva Convention on the Protection of Civilians. The High Court in Podgorica issued the first-instance verdict in 2010, followed by years of proceedings. The proceedings finally conclude with the ruling of the Court of Appeal of Montenegro on February 27, 2014, and at that session the decisions of the 2013 session that rejected the appeals of Gojnić, Lučić, Menzalin and Gligić were upheld. Ivo Gojanović was sentenced to 2 years in prison, Boro Gligić and Špiro Lučić to 3 years and Ivo Menzalin, names the Cook, was sentenced to 4 years of imprisonment.¹⁷⁸ In total 12 years of imprisonment (that includes the time spent in the custody).

“The State Prosecution Office failed to treat the crimes in the Morinj detention camp as an organized system of mistreatment of prisoners and to held responsible for such acts the persons who were the superiors of the direct perpetrators, although there were sufficient indications for that”.¹⁷⁹ Many NGOs raise the issue of lack of objective/

command responsibility. How is it possible that all the abusers and their superiors have not been indicted yet? There are people who believe that the Court of Appeal of Montenegro did not take a serious approach to resolving this problem because the final judgment is too short in content and mostly refers to the 2013 verdict. Although, it should be emphasized that Montenegro has shown a good will to resolve this issue and compensate the material and non-material damages to the victims. There are still no responsible people, neither in the chain of command nor based on political responsibility.¹⁸⁰



The Bombing and the Occupation of Dubrovnik and the Dubrovnik area: Croatian Narrative

Umbrellas for Bullets, Boards for Grenades

The implementation of the plan for the creation of Milošević's Greater Serbia after the Republic of Croatia left the SFRY could only be implemented through war and aggression.¹⁸¹ The Memorandum and maximalist borders of the new shrunken Yugoslavia or Serboslavia followed the Virovitica – Karlovac – Gospić – Karlobag line, and unsuccessful wars or unfulfilled targets changed the Serbian military strategy into annexing the conquered territories.¹⁸² The implementation of the aforementioned military strategy involved directing the pressure of Greater Serbian politics and aggression on the two ends of the Republic of Croatia – Vukovar and Dubrovnik.

In addition to the military-strategic importance of Dubrovnik in order to pursue Greater Serbian politics and give a push for further warfare, there is also a strategic need to conquer Dubrovnik as a suitable port, whose conquest is also proved by the historical right acquired by the indoctrination of the Serbian public about the heritage of Dubrovnik culture being part of the Serbian cultural scope. According to politicians' statements at big rallies such as Radovan Karadžić and Novak Kilibarda, the people of Dubrovnik were in fact only converted Catholic Serbs, thus claiming the natural right of the area to belong to Serbia.¹⁸³ Serbian-Montenegrin propaganda justifies the attack on Dubrovnik with the argument that the Serb minority is threatened in the Dubrovnik area, but this claim was not sustainable in any case.

The Serbian-Montenegrin aggression was completed with pillage, burning down and destructions of the entire Dubrovnik area where Slano, Čilipi and Zvekovica where particularly affected. The idea about the situation in Dubrovnik, pillage and crime, reached all spheres of the Montenegrin public. Thus the Montenegrin television would broadcast the request for certain items to be stolen. The massacres

of civilians and soldiers as well as the persecution by the Serbian and Montenegrin units where not only the consequences of war but the essential part of the conquest of the new living space for the Serbs with the goal of creation of Srpska Krajina and shaping of Greater Serbia. Ethnic cleansing, bombing of civilians and terror were used to completely destroy the unified territory of the Republic of Croatia and, therefore, isolate vulnerable parts of the area that would be brought into military, economic and political chaos and thus more easily fall under the raid of the aggressor. The attack on Dubrovnik cannot be justified and is a case that portrays the essence of the brutality and senselessness of the Serbian-Montenegrin aggression.

Poljanić, the mayor of Dubrovnik in 1991, says: “The attack on Dubrovnik occurred solely with the aim of forming the borders of Greater Serbia”. Also in relation to Prevlaka, Poljanić give the statement: “They accused us of shooting at the army in Prevlaka. We neither shot nor had anyone to shoot because we had no troops there, but they intentionally did that only to be able to accuse us of doing so and to have more reasons to go ahead and on October 1, they went ahead”.¹⁸⁴ Đukanović, Montenegrin Prime Minister, said that he did not know that Dubrovnik was defended by such a small number of people: “No one in the Montenegrin state leadership could have known that. I think that the military leadership in Belgrade had more objective information than us”.¹⁸⁵ Đuro Kolić, Dubrovnik city councillor, said that Dubrovnik itself was demilitarized in 1971 and since then no military forces have been present in the area.¹⁸⁶ All these statements indicate that Dubrovnik was not militarily relevant, therefore not a justified military target.

The Croatian National Distance Learning Portal “Nikola Tesla” contains digital educational content on various subjects for elementary school students. These subjects include content for history and geography, but in the materials for students of the 8th grade there is no information about the Croatian War of Independence or the wars in the Balkans in the 1990s. The contents that accompany the material of the 20th century end with the chapter on the Economic Crisis as the causes of the spread of totalitarianism.¹⁸⁷ In the textbook for 8th grade of the elementary school history class, the occupation of the area around Dubrovnik is mentioned. In a few sentences the time of the siege and the operations that unblocked the area are stated. The siege was also alleged to have been carried out by JNA forces and members of territorial defence from Montenegro and eastern Herzegovina.¹⁸⁸ The

same information exactly is given in the textbook for 4th grade of high school history class, with the addition that the UNESCO-protected city centre of Dubrovnik was almost completely destroyed.¹⁸⁹

The attack and bombing of Dubrovnik during the Croatian War of Independence was carried out even though Dubrovnik did not represent a legitimate military target according to the modern warfare strategy. Therefore, this act of the Serbian and Montenegrin army is justifiably considered an aggression by the Croatian public. Not only are the soldiers of the troops who carried out the aggression responsible, but also their commanders, who, in the spirit of nationalist politics, resorted to repressive means of pursuing a policy of terror in order to conquer and achieve illegitimate national interests. Dubrovnik has been successfully defended thanks to Croatian and Dubrovnik defenders. Images of the destruction of Vukovar and Dubrovnik have toured the world and it has become clear who the aggressor is in this war. The brutality of aggression itself hastened the decision to recognize Croatia internationally. Despite the unsystematic education of young generations about the conflicts during the Croatian War of Independence and the role of the attack on Dubrovnik in this context, the Croatian public is still today unanimous in condemning the crime in Dubrovnik and its surroundings as it was in 1991.



The Bombing and the Occupation of Dubrovnik and the Dubrovnik area: Montenegrin Narrative

Older and Nicer Dubrovnik

In 1989, the so-called AB Revolution (Anti-Bureaucratic Revolution) happens in Montenegro and the communist leadership was replaced. Under very strange circumstances there were mass protests by workers and almost all the factories went on strike to overthrow the regime. According to the workers who protested and recalled those days, they say that there was a sudden and instructed initiative of the workers. In fact, in every factory there were people who were supposed to lead the workers to rebellion – “lamb eaters” (the management of that time organized a meeting and lunch in Žabljak at the state expenses) with slogans “I will not work for you for 1000 marks” (which was then the average salary for the factory workers) took to the streets, led by former communist youth leader – Milo Đukanović and other young hopes of the state (Momir Bulatović, Aco Đukanović, Ivan Brajović and others) who still today hold high positions in Montenegro.¹⁹⁰ After that the first parliamentary elections followed and the establishment of a government that had long been a faithful follower of Slobodan Milošević’s policies.

Initially, they played on the card of anti-fascism and there the newly emerged regimes in Croatia, Slovenia and BiH that wanted to rule independent states were considered fascists. All media power in the then SFRY was directed at demonizing opposing parties. There were no longer Yugoslavs and brothers, all of the sudden after 55 years “Ustashe”, “Chetniks” and “Balijs” reappear. Thanks to the obedient media the misinformation and panic spread at lightning speed on all sides. The war incitement rhetoric from the highest levels of the countries of that time begins. Unfortunately, many messages of peace and reason could not break the media blockade.

To further illustrate the rhetoric of the time, it is worth mentioning few

quotes of Montenegro's political leadership:

*"Milošević is the best thing that could have happened to Yugoslavia at this time, when the invading fascist forces in Croatia are trying to destroy everything created from 1945 until now. I am proud that in these years I can be side by side with him in defending the revolution".*¹⁹¹

Milo Đukanović, Pobjeda, 1991.

*"We will win this imposed war. Just as we have beaten similar opponents throughout our history. Only this time we will beat them for good and finish living with them, I hope, once and for all! In doing so, Boka will remain where it belongs, within the Republic of Montenegro and I hope that in this division and the formation of a new state union in which we will live, the border with Croatia will be drawn much more naturally and logically to the one the trained Bolshevik cartographers created whose only aim seemed to have been to leave Croatian custody over Montenegro in the area of Boka Kotorska".*¹⁹²

Milo Đukanović, Pobjeda, 1991.

*"One cannot wave the olive branches while the Serbian people are slaughtered, massacred, raped, their homes burned and their property destroyed only because they are Serbs. War is not won by desertion but by mobilization".*¹⁹³

Milo Đukanović, Pobjeda, 1991.

*"The Croatian authorities wanted the war at all costs and they have one. I started hated chess because of the Croatian chessboard".*¹⁹⁴

Milo Đukanović, Pobjeda, 1991.

Those are just the few in the ocean of statements from the top leaders of Montenegro in 1991. The media spread panic and misinformation that there are several thousand "Zengas" (ZNG) and other paramilitary formations of the Republic of Croatia above Boka Kotorska and in the vicinity of Dubrovnik and that they are preparing to attack Boka at any moment, and according to the statements by Montenegrin politicians at the time, Croatian authorities aimed to occupy it. Many reservists remember the days of mobilization when only those who wanted to go

were given the option to do so, however, when authorities saw that the response was more than satisfactory and that media propaganda was fruitful, *Pobjeda* and many other media outlets made headlines about desertions and condemned those who did not voluntarily agree to go to the battlefield. Following these condemnations and pressures that were a major blow to the honour of many Montenegrins boasting of the Montenegrin military tradition, the mobilization almost doubled. Many reservists really believed that they were going to defend their homeland Yugoslavia and free Croatia from fascists, though there were those who were endowed with Greater Serbian nationalism and hatred of the “Ustasha”, which even then began to spread slowly to the media.

The Montenegrin army being part of the JNA was well armed because almost all the weapons were withdrawn from Slovenia and Croatia. Although it made rapid progress with little resistance, many reservists realized by then that the stories were inflated. The orders were often confusing, going back and forth as if there was no will to move forward and to achieve at least that declarative goal of preserving Yugoslavia. According to many opinions, the JNA could have easily and quickly reached Zagreb itself, but there was neither the will nor was that the goal. As reservists progressed, the media spread misinformation in Montenegro and even the news arrived with a week of delay, for example, if a village was conquered today, the media would report that it had been conquered a week later and thus try to show that there was great resistance in the way. There were few cases of resistance that were even more problematic to the soldiers, as few armed men in one village could cause more problems for reservists than the *force to force* fight, and many villages were also excessively shelled and destroyed. Many claim that the soldiers were often killed by friendly fire and that this was all set up to raise morale and present them as victims of the Croatian formations. Also, remembering those days, many reservists said they felt they were being deliberately starved to be forced to pillage the abandoned homes. In this way, for many, a needless war turned into a robbery.

The act of bombing of Dubrovnik is now a great nonsense and embarrassment to most but back then only a minority understood what it was about. The Montenegrin opposition at the time, more specifically the Liberal Alliance of Montenegro (Liberalni savez Crne Gore - LSCG) and its leader Slavko Perović, still today consider that attack on Dubrovnik the biggest embarrassment of Montenegro in history.

If you were to ask the citizens today what they thought of these unfortunate events, the part of those who support the government and who supported it back then would distance themselves from that and blame the government in Serbia. There are also some who continue to be indoctrinated by nationalism and who would justify the act, while the civil public and the non-governmental sector blames the then Government of Montenegro (VRCG) as well as the people who are still in high positions. One of them is certainly Milo Đukanović, the current president of Montenegro, who has repeatedly changed his rhetoric and detached himself from these actions as if he were not the same man. Even today, the ones responsible for these events have not been brought to justice.



The Bombing and the Occupation of Dubrovnik and the Dubrovnik area: A Shared Narrative

Lovćen Fairy Calls, Dubrovnik Forgive Us

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Croatian independence escalated by war that spread like flames through the eastern borders of the Republic of Croatia. Conflicts most often affected those territories of Croatia inhabited by Serbs and areas where military installations were located. However, there were no significant military facilities or organized army in the Dubrovnik area. More than 13.000 JNA members, along with reservists from Montenegro, attacked the southern part of Croatia from Prevlaka to the Neretva valley, from land, sea and from the air, at 6 o'clock on the morning of October 1, 1991.¹⁹⁵ Few Croatian and Dubrovnik units resisted. As Montenegrin units went into Konavle, at the same time, units of the Territorial Defence (TO) from Herzegovina reached the shores in several places in the western part of the Dubrovnik Riviera. The city was completely surrounded, and unoccupied was only the area 7 to 8 kilometres around Dubrovnik.¹⁹⁶ The JNA occupies all strategic positions around Dubrovnik except Srđ and fully controlled the sea around Dubrovnik. The people of Dubrovnik at the time of the siege survived without water or electricity.¹⁹⁷ The old town was bombarded with hundreds of shells, most of the houses inside the old town were damaged and the hotels in the surrounding areas completely devastated. The last, and most violent, attack on Dubrovnik was carried on December 6, when 22 people were killed.¹⁹⁸ According to some media, 92 civilians, 417 fighters, 11 members of the National Defence and three fire-fighters were killed in the Serbian-Montenegrin aggression and the attack was carried out by JNA and TO troops of the Montenegrin army, assisted by Montenegrin MUP Special Forces and volunteers from Serbian areas in eastern Herzegovina.¹⁹⁹

How is it possible that Dubrovnik became a military target even though Serbs and Montenegrins did not have administrative and historical bases and the right to the Dubrovnik area? How is it possible that

Dubrovnik was attacked without a specific cause and justified political-military reason? Why did the Montenegrin people agree to this war? The attack on Dubrovnik was carried out because of Serbia's geopolitical and strategic goals to break the Croatian resistance, but also the goals of Montenegro, which, according to the political orders of the SFRY leadership, did not approve the newly formed Republic of Croatia and also sought its disintegration. The deconstruction of Croatian territorial unity also resulted in Montenegrin political movements advocating for the reestablishment of the Dubrovnik Republic with the intention of gradually seizing territories and those plans were severely opposed by Tuđman.²⁰⁰ According to Admiral Miodrag Jokić, the purpose of the military operation was to block Dubrovnik and was part of a broader military strategy which final product was to discredit the new Croatian government.²⁰¹ In the case that the Republic of Croatia would be created within the boundaries of 1945, the Prevlaka area would remain out of Montenegrin reach and Prevlaka is an extremely important area managing the entrance to the Boka of Kotor. Such a strategic solution did not work for Montenegro as it threatened several aspects of its national security and was certainly one of the crucial triggers for Montenegro's participation in the War.²⁰² The reason for moving the Montenegrin troops in was not needed, since the military actions had already been decided in Belgrade, but they needed to create a cause and also the atmosphere in which the people would support the highly questionable decisions of the political leadership. Stjepan Mesić, President of the Republic of Croatia on the Montenegrin participation in the attack on Dubrovnik, said: "Many people in the world, whether living in small or large countries, always want their borders extended. But in this euphoric situation, it is certain that the Montenegrins ended up victims and believed Milosević. Some were simply, I would say, present, watching what was going on, but some were also active participants. Some even participated in the crimes".²⁰³ Milosević's defence at The Hague was based on one of the theses that Serbia had nothing to do with the attack on Dubrovnik, which was not even close to the reality.²⁰⁴

When discussing the War, many circumstances are easily ignored, such as the availability of information at the time. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) was a state whose political leadership had successfully managed the media for decades, controlling all public opinion and severely punished opponents, whose legacy was evident in the 1990s. The war propaganda campaigns were formed using the same fear of the people that was installed by Yugoslav

propaganda – fascism. In addition to fascism, propaganda created an atmosphere of insecurity, an atmosphere of fear and threat that encouraged the masses to desire to protect and defend the status quo that represented their family and community. Media campaigns were accompanied by incredible data that certainly could not match the actual state of military preparedness and organization of the HV and the dehumanization of their members and they had a successful effect in deepening fear and animosity.²⁰⁵ For those who did not indulge in cheap propaganda, it was argued that Montenegro had been attacked, the war imposed and the state had no other way out.²⁰⁶ Panoramas, memos and glorification of military successes were aimed at recruiting new soldiers.²⁰⁷ The propaganda did not stop after the conflict started, but continued intensely by maintaining a distorted image from the battlefield, based on covering-up military failures, friendly fires, war devastation and violence, sharing positive experiences of superiors, soldiers and civilians in Dubrovnik in order to create the idea of a legitimate and just war, a clear cut between the ones they hold positive and negative, playing at the same time with Montenegrin emotions of historical and heroic pride of war.²⁰⁸

It should be clarified that when referring to the political leadership responsible for war, not all political leadership should be equated with it. The stenographer notes of the 8th session of the Parliament of the Republic of Montenegro held on September 20, 1991 very conveniently depict the real situation and conflict of dominant pro-Serb and pro-war oriented politicians, as well as their opposition, which does not use the usual phrases and justifications of the pro-Serb leadership and it opposed the imposed idea of war and the war actions themselves.²⁰⁹ The Montenegrin authorities at the session justified the attack on the Dubrovnik area by direct threats of the national security of Montenegro from Croatia.²¹⁰ Politicians did not agree among themselves about the causes that really triggered the War, but most installed politicians were in favour of it.²¹¹ The bombing of Dubrovnik is cited by the Montenegrin authorities as a legitimate military target because of the alleged military activity of the HV in the city centre.²¹² The deception of the public took incredible proportions when JNA officials assured the public that the Croatian side was deliberately burning tires to portray the non-existent destruction of Dubrovnik, as “not a single particle of Serbian dust had fallen on Dubrovnik”.²¹³ A UNESCO study found that 68.33% of buildings inside the old town were hit by missiles during the bombing of Dubrovnik.²¹⁴

A number of intellectuals, such as the historian Radovan Samardžić who labelled Dubrovnik a “prostituted city” or Božidar Vučurević who makes a famous statement, “we will build an even older and prettier Dubrovnik”, agree with the dominant Serbian-Montenegrin coalition advocating aggression against the Republic of Croatia.²¹⁵ However, part of the Montenegrin intelligentsia and artists passionately fighting against the War and the aggression on Dubrovnik and their actions are not exposed in the same proportions. The face of the anti-war aspiration is certainly the writer Jevrem Brković, who publicly opposed the attack on Dubrovnik at the end of September 1991, which is why the authorities issued an arrest warrant for him.²¹⁶ The pro-Serbian newspaper “Pobjeda”, in addition to conducting propaganda campaigns, is also used to deal with political opponents and it was certainly among the main newspapers that became the tool of political aggressors and agitators such as Vučurević.²¹⁷ Newspapers like “Pobjeda” were opposed by liberal papers that questioned the justification of the imposed War, among them “Monitor” shall be emphasized. The opinions of many public and cultural activists who opposed the War have been systematically suppressed and their pacifist activities underestimate and some particularly prominent activists, such as Brković and the Editor of the “Monitor”, have been targets of assassination attempts.²¹⁸ Civic activity, protests and initiatives among which the student actions and the “Civic Committee for Peace” (Građanski odbor za mir) have been marginalized and ridiculed by the media, despite the overwhelming response and support of Montenegrin citizens.²¹⁹

Most responsible politicians and military officials were not hold responsible for aggression on Dubrovnik territory and bombing of Dubrovnik. Shortly after the War, the conflict itself was justified as necessary, as Admiral Miodrag Jokić insisted on the correctness of the 1991 events.²²⁰ But when the aggressive character of Montenegrin actions became evident, political demagogues found a way in deterring the public from finding responsible political and military leaders still in a position of authority. Jokić is one of the first high-ranking military officials to acknowledge the responsibility before the Hague tribunal for the crimes he was sentenced to seven years in prison.²²¹ It also initiated a process of de-collectivization of war responsibility that was never truly completed.²²²

Political ideologues, agitators and media campaigners were not hold responsible, but remained active in politics and society and the

chances that they would be ever hold responsible are almost non-existent.²²³

In addition to these allegations, the common conclusion of this narrative is that we must insist on demanding the accountability of the then political leadership of Montenegro and war agitators, who are still in power today and who hypocritically cover up the past and renounce responsibility for their wrongdoing supported by the silence of official Croatian politics.





Demarcation on Prevlaka: Croatian Narrative

Where is Prevlaka?

The Prevlaka peninsula, also called the cape of Prevlaka, is the southernmost point of the Republic of Croatia. It is located in the south-western part of the entrance to the Bay of Kotor on the border with Montenegro. The issue of Prevlaka is one of the border disputes the Republic of Croatia has with almost all neighbouring countries. During history, Prevlaka has been since the 15th century connected to Dubrovnik, that is, the Republic of Dubrovnik, which purchased the area in 1419.²²⁴ This establishes the eastern border of the Republic of Dubrovnik, which forms the basis for later definition of borders in the area. It is from this time that toponym Konfin (Italian and Latin for border) is in use, which marked a significant point in the future border settlement of Croatia and Montenegro. During all subsequent changes of powers – French, Austrian, First Yugoslavia, NDH and Second Yugoslavia, Prevlaka was administratively tied to Dubrovnik, which is the main argument of the Republic of Croatia in today's dispute. The historical affiliation of Prevlaka and the failure to question Croatia's sovereignty over it until after the Croatian War of Independence led to the generally accepted opinion in Croatia that Prevlaka is entirely Croatian territory.

One of the reasons for this is the marginalization of the topic in Croatian society. Unlike the border dispute with the Republic of Slovenia, which led to the blockade of Croatia's accession to the European Union, a limited part of the public is aware of the issue of Prevlaka. From 30 people (of different ages and educational backgrounds) interviewed for the purpose of writing the narrative, only eight heard of the dispute and an even smaller number could

confidently state the facts about it. The school textbooks on the Croatian War of Independence dedicate only the final chapters, which briefly present the course of the war years, without much detail and explanation of even far more important topics than the demarcation of Prevlaka. Mentioning of and sharing information about Prevlaka in the Croatian media is also not a common thing. During the research, numerous newspaper articles and reportages were found, mostly on peaceful topics, where Croatian and Montenegrin politicians called for a peaceful resolution of the problem, praising good relations between the two countries. The meeting of former prime ministers Milanović and Đukanović in 2014 resulted in a newspaper article that suggested that the border dispute would not be resolved so quickly, but that it would not affect the explorations in the Adriatic Sea nor Montenegro's accession to NATO and the European Union.²²⁵ Shortly afterwards, in 2016, the President of the Republic of Croatia, Grabar-Kitarović, called for an attempt to reach an agreement before going to the International Court of Justice.²²⁶ According to some of the media reports, it is safe to conclude that Montenegro fears the "Croatian-Slovenian scenario", in which Croatia would try to profit on the issue of Prevlaka by blocking Montenegro's entry into the European Union.²²⁷

The Interim Protocol between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Federal Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on a provisional regime along the southern border between the two countries, signed on December 10, 2002, is currently in effect, resulting in the withdrawal of UN forces stationed in Prevlaka since 1992. The protocol on land favours the Croatian side and classifies the entire territory as its own. At the border at sea, the case is different, it deviates significantly from the equidistance – the point of demarcation of equal distance to the coasts of both countries.²²⁹ Therefore, in the area of territorial waters alone, Croatia until further leaves to Montenegro 52.3 km² of sea in relation to the delimitation by rule of equidistance. The Protocol itself is contrary to the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia as it places part of the territory under dual authority by introducing mixed border controls.²³⁰ An interesting fact is that during the research we were unable to find the published text of the *Protocol* on internet from either side and were forced to submit a request to the Croatian Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs.

The first cases of violation of the Protocol occurred in 2011 when the Government of Montenegro adopted the Decision on the determination of hydrocarbon exploration and production blocks, which ignores the

temporary borders agreed in the Protocol and, instead of azimuth 206⁰²³¹, draws the border on azimuth 231⁰, thereby interfering with Croatian waters inside and outside the territorial sea for as much as 2020 km², which is larger than the area of Dubrovnik-Neretva County.²³² It should be emphasized that even then it does not become an important topic in the media and public life of Croatia. In 2014, the Government of Montenegro amended the 2011 Decision²³³, but only in territorial waters, while outside the waters the azimuth 231⁰ still forms the border. On the other hand, in 2014, the Government of the Republic of Croatia announces the First Public Bid for Licenses for the Research and Exploitation of Hydrocarbons in the Adriatic, taking the azimuth 206⁰ as the border. Montenegro considers this an unilateral act that is in contrary to the Protocol and sends a protest note to the UN Secretary-General.²³⁴

The issue of demarcation in Prevlaka is not well known to the Croatian public and most people do not have the opportunity to hear more about it in the media and their social environment. Reduced awareness of the public can easily lead to wrong steps by politicians, bearing in mind that the people will not react no matter what steps they take. We believe that mutual dialogue and agreement and good neighbourly relations are the best way to reach a solution to this issue. In the absence of agreement, the issue remains to be resolved at the international courts. Regardless of how the issue of Prevlaka is resolved, we think that the Republic of Croatia is a friend and ally to Montenegro and that it can help it in its European path.



Demarcation on Prevlaka: Montenegrin Narrative

Kobila-Collateral Dispute

The issue of Prevlaka - the territory southwest of Cape Kobila and the surrounding sea emerges after the end of the conflicts in Dubrovnik in October 1992. At that time, the Republic of Croatia had already been recognized by much of the international community and became a member of the United Nations whose forces arrived to the Prevlaka area to monitor and control the situation until the two sides reach an agreement. It has taken ten years to reach the Provisional Protocol, which has been in force for sixteen years now and the settlement of the issue is still pending.

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Because of its geographical position, called the “Boka Gate”, Prevlaka represents a significant point for Montenegro in the war of the 1990s. Since the outbreak of the war, Montenegrin political authorities have considered Prevlaka their territory and that the presence of Croatian military forces in an important strategic location should not be allowed.²³⁵ The main argument was the military presence on the Prevlaka peninsula since Austro-Hungary and that “no citizen could have had any access to Prevlaka” either then or during the old and new Yugoslavia.²³⁶ The jurisdiction of the Yugoslav People’s Army questions the principles of the Badinter Commission, which says that inter-republic borders become state borders. Some politicians went further, calling for the establishment of new borders. “Montenegro has advocated that the existing borders between the Yugoslav republics remain unchanged(...). If Yugoslavia disintegrates and it is already disintegrating, two republics have left already, the border adjustment will be necessary and inevitable”. – stated Nikola Samardžić at the 9th session of the Parliament of Montenegro held on October 7, 1991.²³⁷ Milo Đukanović’s statement from 1991 calling for new and more logical borders with Croatia, which will be much further northwest of Prevlaka, is also well known.²³⁸ As an argument, it also refers to the fact that the

property records and cadastral data were issued in Herceg Novi and Kotor.²³⁹

The last JNA soldiers left the barracks in Prevlaka on October 20, 1992, following the Ćosić-Tuđman agreement and handed over the facilities to the United Nations mission.²⁴⁰ At the beginning of 1996, a special mission was formed under the name UNMOP - United Nations Mission of Observers in Prevlaka²⁴¹, which remained in the area of Prevlaka until 2002. In Belgrade, meanwhile, an Agreement on Normalization of Relations between the Republic of Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was signed on August 23, 1996, which stipulates that border issues be resolved peacefully, by agreement and without threats and use of force.²⁴² Despite that fact the UN forces refused to withdraw until the two sides reached a mutual agreement. At the time the Yugoslav side insisted on United Nations force to stay until an agreement is reached to avoid tensions and endanger peace, while the Croatian side called to end the Mission as soon as possible. The agreement is reached ten years after the start of the United Nations mission and establishment of peace in Prevlaka, when envoys from the FR Yugoslavia and the Republic of Croatia sign the Protocol between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Federal Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on a provisional regime along the southern border between the two countries. The Protocol was signed in 2002, leading to the withdrawal of United Nations forces. The agreement deals with the jurisdiction over the disputed territory of Prevlaka and the issue of the interim regime. The protocol is still in force.



“There is nothing new in the process of negotiating the border on Prevlaka. Both sides remain committed to the agreement to resolve the issue before the International Tribunal in The Hague, without haste, but without slowing the process down neither” – said Milan Ročen, the then Montenegrin foreign minister.²⁴³ In practical terms, unfinished demarcation is a major problem, like in 2014 when Montenegro and Croatia launched bids for exploration of energy source in their offshore area near this peninsula. Professor of International Public Law in Montenegro, Ivana Jelić, who is also a member of the Demarcation Commission, believes that Croatia has appropriated an area of 1.800 square kilometres by this call, which, in her opinion, is unlawful because it affects a disputed area.²⁴⁴ Although the governments of the two countries point out that this issue does not burden their relations, analysts say that starting proceedings before the International Court of



Justice, based in Hamburg, is the most certain option.²⁴⁵

The dispute between Montenegro and Croatia over Prevlaka represented a positive turning point in the bilateral relations between the two countries, which, shortly after the war, began peaceful and serious negotiations. Both countries have been able to agree on basic principles to address important issues concerning the Interim Protocol. However, it is devastating that 16 years after the signing of the Protocol, no permanent and final solution has been found. We do not agree with the view that there is no need to rush to resolve this issue, because Prevlaka is of great importance for Montenegro and therefore as it controls the entry into the Bay of Boka Kotorska any prolongation is only negative for us. It is very important for Montenegro, as a candidate country for EU membership, that this issue is finally closed and completed so we don't face any issues from Croatia as a member state blocking our membership. Although we have heard assurances from both parties that this will not happen, resolving this dispute as soon as possible would be of great mutual benefit so that similar situations are not repeated, as we have provided an example of bids for offshore energy exploration. This goes against the interests of both sides, because in addition to causing disagreements between states, it also repels serious investors. We share the opinion that both countries need to make serious efforts and show goodwill to finally find a solution for this matter.



Prevlaka: A Shared Narrative

(Un)resolved Issue

The Prevlaka peninsula is located in the south-western part of the entrance to the Bay of Boka Kotorska and is the border area of Croatia and Montenegro. After the end of the war in the southern part of Croatia in 1992, the sea and land area of Prevlaka became a border issue between the Republic of Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which Montenegro inherits after its independence in 2006.

The main argument of the Croatian side in the dispute is the attachment of the Prevlaka peninsula to the city of Dubrovnik respectively to the Republic of Dubrovnik since 1419 when it was purchased by Dubrovnik.²⁴⁶ Prevlaka then becomes the southern border of the Republic of Dubrovnik, which was preserved until the collapse of the Republic and the arrival of the French and later Austrian powers. To this day, the toponym Konfin remains in use, which in Latin and Italian means “the border”.²⁴⁷ In the twentieth century, the area of Dubrovnik changed administrative units and authorities, but Prevlaka was always associated with Dubrovnik and in the SFRY it belonged to the Socialist Republic of Croatia.²⁴⁸ On the other hand, there are two arguments that the Montenegrin side in the dispute highlights. Due to its strategic geographical location, the Prevlaka peninsula was used for military purposes already during the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It was used for this purpose during the World War II as well and even during the PFRY (People’s Federative Republic of Yugoslavia) respectively SFRY. The direct jurisdiction of the military, respectively Yugoslav People’s Army, however, prevents the full application of the principles of the Badinter Commission, which states that inter-republic borders become state borders. Also, although the ownership and cadastral data on the Croatian side are disputed, the Montenegrin argument is that they were issued in Herceg Novi and Kotor.²⁴⁹

The first conflicts in southern Croatia began on October 1, 1991, when the Yugoslav People's Army launches an attack in the area from the Neretva Valley to Prevlaka. The conflict between the two sides lasted for a year and in October of 1992 the area was liberated by Croatian military forces. Although Yugoslav People's Army forces leave the barracks and the wider area of Prevlaka, the Croatian military forces do not move in, but the United Nations mission does.²⁵⁰ The resolution from the beginning of 1996 established a special mission called UNMOP - United Nations Mission of Observers in Prevlaka²⁵¹, which remained in Prevlaka until 2002. In the meantime, the Yugoslav side insists on keeping the United Nations force until an agreement is reached between the two sides as there is threat to peace, while Croatian side puts pressure to end the Prevlaka Mission.²⁵² Both sides reached an agreement in late 2002 and envoys of the FR Yugoslavia and the Republic of Croatia sign a Protocol between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Federal Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on a provisional regime along the southern border between the two countries. The agreement was signed in Konfin on December 10, 2002, resulting in the withdrawal of UN forces. Although nominally provisional, the Protocol is in force to this day.

The Protocol regulates the temporary jurisdiction over the mainland of the Prevlaka area and the surrounding sea. The toponym Konfin is taken as the demarcation point, in the area to the north of it the jurisdiction will be exercised by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and in the area to the southwest by the Republic of Croatia. The border at sea also begins from Cape Konfin from where a line is drawn towards a point located 3 cable lengths (around 550 meters) away from Cape Oštro along the line Cape Oštro – Cape Veslo. From that point the border goes to the open sea and follows the azimuth 206°. ²⁵³ The maritime border therefore does not follow the point of demarcation of equal distance to the shores of both countries – equidistance. As a consequence, while the Protocol is in effect, Croatia gives 52.3 km² of sea to Montenegro.²⁵⁴ The unusual elements of the protocol are the establishment of a mixed police patrols on a police vessel, which leads to a dual authority contrary to the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia.²⁵⁵

With the independence in 2006, Montenegro inherits the rules of the Protocol from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. On the Montenegrin side, there are fears of Montenegro's accession to the European Union being stopped by the Republic of Croatia as a member state,

conditioning it with Prevlaka, although politicians on both sides assure that such a scenario will not happen. The first cases of violation of the provisions of the Protocol occur in 2011 when the Government of Montenegro decides to start exploration and production of offshore hydrocarbons, a decision which does not follow the border at azimuth 206°, damaging the Republic of Croatia for as much as 2020 km² of territory. In 2014, the Montenegrin Government partially reversed the decision,²⁵⁶ but only in the territorial waters, while outside of this area it continued to act to the detriment of the Republic of Croatia. On the other hand, the Government of the Republic of Croatia also made a call for bids for the exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbons in the Adriatic, taking the azimuth 206° as the border line. The member of the Demarcation Commission, the professor of international law, Ivana Jelić, believes that the Republic of Croatia has unlawfully appropriated as much as 1.800 square kilometres of the sea since it is a disputed area.

The Interim Protocol is for sixteen years in force, despite the claims of the politicians from both sides that they are working in settling the issue. On the Croatian side, a large part of the population is not informed on the details, but also of the mere existence of the Prevlaka issue, which can put Croatian interests at risk. The Montenegrin public is quite divided on this issue even if we neglect the lack of interests in political issues same as in Croatia. We believe that the issue of Prevlaka should be resolved as soon as possible, but primarily driven by the desire to reach an agreement, while the international courts would only be the final step. Nevertheless, Croatia and Montenegro are friendly countries with the same goals, and for the population of both countries, cooperation can only lead to positive results.





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KOSOVO / SERBIA



KS / SRB / Pristina / 4-7 October

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KS \ SRB \ Pristina \ 4 \ October

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While entering the main hall during the first part of the Past Continues project both sides of our team had high expectations and not all were optimistic, to say the least. Many of us had never met a person of the opposite nationality. We were all shaped and taught about each other in the most negative manner – therefore we were basically expecting to meet our “biggest enemies”.

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The tensions between our countries are still high and the consequences of the war can still be felt. The media and our politicians constantly use these ethnic tensions to gain publicity and scare the people for the sake of their own goals, especially affecting the youth in that process. One of the goals of the project was to assemble teams of two groups coming from two countries affected by the wars in the 90s and during those first four days, the fear in our group had been replaced by friendship.

The name we chose for our group is Boro & Ramiz – the two men who represent the symbol of Serbian-Albanian friendship and Yugoslav unity. They were soldiers who fought together against the fascist occupation of Yugoslavia. In 1943, they were captured by the enemies and killed. They died in each other’s hug, refusing to be separated until the very end. Some stories say that the two had a romantic relationship.

Our team went on two study trips – for most of us, it was the first time visiting Belgrade or Pristina. The first visit was held in Belgrade in June 2018 during the “Mirëdita, Dobar dan!” a festival about modern cultural scene in Kosovo. The artists from Kosovo had the chance to show to Serbian public modern Kosovo art. Every year the right-wing activists organize protests because they think the festival promotes

independence of Kosovo. We visited the Youth Initiative for Human Rights offices, listened to debates about international recognition of Kosovo and its importance in the scope of Serbia's EU accession, enjoyed the festival and met new people along the way.

The second visit occurred in Pristina. On the Serbian side, there were mixed expectations – feelings of excitement, fear and constant phone calls by our worried families. But the visit itself proved to be one of the most significant experiences on the Past Continues project – the experiences were all but negative. We gained lots of valuable information for the narratives – we visited museums, informational centers, spoke with the former president Atifete Jahjaga, brought boxes with the names of disappeared people from Kosovo to the president and prime minister, visited Gračanica/Gračanica and, most of all, broke all of our stereotypes and proved that Serbian-Albanian friendships indeed are possible.

In this chapter, while talking about Kosovo narratives, we are referring to the dominant discourse and perspectives of Kosovo Albanians. When talking about Serbian narratives, we are referring to the dominant media discourse and political leadership rhetoric in the country of Serbia. The Serbian population in Kosovo represents an important figure and therefore they are included as part of the Republic of Serbia because our goal was to represent the conflicts between the two ethnic groups.



NATO Campaign – Operation Allied Force: Kosovo Narrative

Liberation

After almost an entire decade of oppression by the Serbian regime led by Slobodan Milošević and the bloody war that took the lives of thousands of people, while also displacing more than half a million of Albanians from Kosovo, on March 24 1999, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) commenced air strikes on Serbian army bases and positions in the Yugoslav province of Kosovo. However, the roots of the problem that brought to NATO's intervention date way earlier.

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In 1974, during the leadership of Josip Broz Tito, as the part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Kosovo was given a greater autonomy and acted more or less as an independent state. However, during the late 1980s, when Slobodan Milošević was the president of the League of Communists of Serbia, he promised to restore Serbian rule to Kosovo. The autonomy of Kosovo, granted by the 1974's Constitution was revoked and Albanians were forced to leave the public sphere in early 1990's by being expelled from their work places. This led to rising tensions that proved the idea that Albanians can't live under the Yugoslav political system anymore. The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) was formed and began attacking Serbian police in Kosovo. Serbian troops launched an offensive in 1997, killing dozens of civilians which prompted an offensive by the KLA to seize control over half of the region. Serbian troops drove thousands of Albanians away from their homes.

The Reçak massacre on January 15 1999, where 45 Albanian civilians were killed²⁵⁷, alarmed the international community which then reacted with attempts to gather both sides at one table in Rambouillet talks. After NATO had threatened Milošević with launching airstrikes, and after the Rambouillet talks between Serbs and Albanians in 1999 ended in failure, NATO started deploying troops and commenced

with the airstrikes as the final act that stopped ethnic cleansing by Milošević's regime and an act of liberation. The campaign lasted much longer than expected due to resistance of Milošević's regime to withdraw. During this period, Serbian military and paramilitary actions toward the Albanian population intensified, resulting in a number of terrible massacres and massive deportation of the population in the directions of Albania and Macedonia. The NATO bombing campaign ended on June 10, 1999, when the Serbian forces withdrew from Kosovo territory and international administration took place for a transitory phase. NATO troops were treated as heroes by the remaining civilian population and others that returned during the new chapter of liberated Kosovo after the intervention.

However, Albanian perspective on NATO bombings tends to neglect one important aspect; the fact that during the operation, "NATO attacks killed a total of 754 people: 454 civilians and 300 members of the armed forces. 207 civilians were of Serbian and Montenegrin ethnicity, 219 were Albanian, 14 civilians were Roma, and 14 were of other nationalities. Among members of armed forces, a total of 274 members of the VJ/MUP of Serbia and 26 members of the KLA were killed"²⁵⁸. The victims are rarely talked about in public as well as many publications, since they are considered a "collateral damage" that is eclipsed by the greater result of the withdrawal of Serbian forces.

In Kosovo, two decades later, NATO bombing is still considered as an important event that stopped genocide and terror towards ethnic Albanians by the Serbian regime. This discourse can be found almost everywhere, from textbooks to public statements of politicians. The anniversary of NATO bombing is still annually commemorated in Kosovo. Politicians, on the anniversary of NATO bombing refer to the intervention as "humanitarian and act of solidarity", while not forgetting to express their gratitude for the states that made this happen.²⁵⁹ On the question whether a humanitarian intervention or country sovereignty weighs more, there are no doubts on the Albanian side. As Leon Malazogu indicates in "Understanding the War in Kosovo", the "meaningful humanitarian intervention does not threaten the world order. Rather, it vindicates the fundamental principles for which the United Nations was created".²⁶⁰ Albanians in Kosovo continue to have a positive approach towards NATO, having hopes and aspirations that Kosovo will soon become a part of the North-Atlantic alliance as an equal member of the big family. Only 3% of Kosovo citizens see NATO as a threat, while an overwhelmingly 90 percent of



the population consider it as a protection, as the Gallup poll in 2016 showed.²⁶¹





NATO Campaign – Operation Allied Force: Serbian Narrative

Illegal Operation

One of the most controversial issues of the recent history of Serbia is certainly the NATO bombing of the territory of former Yugoslavia. It lasted from March 24 to June 10 1999. There are still many open questions in Serbian public today about this event – why we were bombed, what had happened before, the number of victims, whether it was a humanitarian intervention or a criminal action, etc.

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Although there is a lot of controversy about all aspects of the bombing, there are dominant narratives with which, we believe, majority of Serbian population agrees with. This perspective is presented in history textbooks for primary and secondary schools, but also in textbooks from, for example, sociology at the Law School where it says: “A typical example of forced migrations was the exodus of Serbs from Croatia in 1995 after the Croatian army attacked the Republic of Srpska Krajina and mass persecution of Serbs from Kosovo and Metohija in 1999 after the NATO aggression against Serbia”.²⁶² The word “aggression” here is the key word for understanding the Serbian narrative about NATO intervention. Most people in Serbia, from the uneducated to the most educated, believe that NATO intervention was an aggression and a criminal enterprise aimed at expelling Serbs from the region of Kosovo and creating an independent state of Kosovo. In this regard, the space for manipulating with information about the NATO campaign is enormous. Year in year out, at each anniversary of the bombing, the numbers of victims are manipulated with, all in order to present the NATO campaign as the worst crime in Serbian history. Examples that accompany this are the speeches of Serbian politicians at annual commemorations for victims:

„NATO aggression against Serbia is a terrible crime, a crime for which no one has been punished, a crime against a free, sovereign nation, a people who with their history and life did not deserve such a terrible

crime. We cannot forget we cannot even forgive. I do not know if anyone who participated in the NATO aggression against the Serbian people was punished for what they did – I’m almost sure not. As long as no one is punished, as long as one man does not repent for the death of these people in the hospital, while someone at least manages to repent for all these thousands of deaths during the NATO aggression in Serbia, we will not be able to say that everything is behind us. We cannot forget we cannot even forgive. Nineteen years later we are still recovering from the consequences of NATO aggression, we are still rebuilding what has been destroyed, we are still trying to heal the wounds, we are still trying to forget, but we cannot forget and we cannot forgive”.²⁶³

Of course, the role of the media in the whole narrative is overwhelming. The attitude towards the NATO bombing in Serbian media varies a lot. The pro-government, pro-Russian, anti-Western media nurture this anti-NATO rhetoric. One of the most prominent pro-government media outlets in Serbia, and a pro-Russian daily newspaper “Informer”, at the anniversary of the bombing in 2018, published an article with the title: “NATO IS THE LARGEST EVIL!” Ratko Bulatović, a victim of the bombing interviewed in this article, stated: “They deliberately killed civilians in Serbia in 1999”.²⁶⁴

The Russian media outlet Sputnik greatly contributes to the perception of Serbian victimhood of the criminal NATO bombing. This news agency is known for spreading sensational news and spreading great pro-Russian influence in the public, so this year marks on the anniversary of the NATO campaign, the article titled: “The Creepy Balance: Serbia was killed with 170 atomic Hiroshima bombs”.²⁶⁵ One of the most important cases of Serbian victims of the bombing is the death of a two-year-old girl, Milica Rakić.²⁶⁶ She was killed in her house while sitting on her potty by shelling from a bomb that fell nearby. She was later canonized as a saint by the Serbian Orthodox Church and is a symbol of the damage done by the aggression.

By conducting a little research, we asked people from Serbia, with all of them being of different age, social status and level of education, on their attitude towards the NATO bombing. When they were asked about why NATO intervened in Serbia in 1999, we received mostly the same answers: “In order to expel Serbs from Kosovo; to poison us with depleted uranium; so that we all get sick from cancer”, etc. This dominant narrative which exists in Serbia emphasizes the view on the

existence of a global hate towards Serbia and Serbs as a nation as well as the main reason behind the bombing being the general hostility of the West when it comes to Serbia and Serbian nation. However, to the same question few people answered that the NATO intervention was preceded by a multitude of horrific crimes against Kosovo Albanians in the period between 1998 and 1999 in Kosovo.

This mini research clearly reflects the citizens' views on Serbia's NATO accession, where the statistics show that around "84% are against membership, 11% would support membership, and 5% are undecided".²⁶⁷





NATO Campaign – Operation Allied Force: Shared Narrative

A Righteous Beginning of a New Millennium

The NATO bombing in 1999 is one of the main examples of different viewpoints between people in Serbia and people in Kosovo. Despite the fact that two decades had passed from that event, the emotions on both sides are still raw. In Kosovo, the NATO bombing represents an act of liberation that gave an end to the cruelties committed by the Serbian regime. NATO's version of the story carefully makes the distinction between "Yugoslavia" and "Yugoslavian leadership". Javier Solana, former NATO Secretary General, stated that "the clear responsibility for the air strikes lies within President Milošević who has refused to stop his violent action in Kosovo and has refused to negotiate in good faith".²⁶⁸ The airstrikes were portrayed as "actions directed against Milošević's policies". In Serbia, there is no doubt that the NATO bombings were the act of aggression by the Western forces. This narrative was spread by three key factors: the way history after the bombing was written and taught, the pattern of media reports during the bombing as well as in the present day and the political discourse and politicians' rhetoric.

When it comes to the way textbooks in Kosovo and Serbia portray NATO's intervention in 1999, difference of perspectives is evident. As the "History of Kosovo in the history textbooks of Kosovo, Albania, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia" publication indicates, difference remains to be significant. Speeches by politicians from both sides are mostly in line with textbooks, while high notes of populism are evident. Media has also played an important role in carving the public opinion by returning to the story time and time again when it suited certain political interests. However, there are some points where both sides agree. One of them is the fact that NATO bombing gave an ending to a specific chapter of history and opened another one. It brought the Kosovo conflict to an end while installing an international

administration to maintain the “fragile peace”.

Serbia and Kosovo should not remain “hostages” of the past. Public sentiment should not be manipulated using the NATO story anymore. Instead of talking about the event, 20 years later, let the focus be on the causes of those conflicts as well as on the ways of preventing new ones.

As the writers of this shared narrative, we strongly support regional cooperation. Only in the scope of cooperation we can talk about the past. We recommend joint investigation about the NATO bombing. In Serbia, there are manipulations when it comes to the number of victims of the bombing – on each anniversary of the beginning of the airstrikes, politicians mention different numbers of victims. For example, there is a commission formed by Serbian government – the commission working on determining the number of victims and the ecological damage. On the other hand, Kosovo Albanian victims of NATO air strikes are not even mentioned when Kosovo marks the anniversary of liberation. The main problem is that there is absolutely no cooperation between Serbian and Kosovo’s governments, which would be crucial in exposing the facts about these events.

Pattern of Crimes Against Kosovo Albanians: Kosovo Narrative

We Are the Victims!

Although defined as an autonomous province of Serbia and not as a republic, in 1974, together with Vojvodina, Kosovo became a constitutional part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. After Josip Broz Tito's death, Kosovo had its representatives in the rotating collective Presidency that took over. Kosovo was also granted its Central bank, police, an educational and justice system, a provincial assembly and its own branch of the League of Communist party. During the 1980s, after Tito's death, Serbian nationalism started to rise, promoted by Slobodan Milošević, which ultimately led to the diminishing of the autonomy given to the Albanians during the 1970s.

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During the first half of the 1990s, Kosovo became a police state under the authority of Belgrade. After the Belgrade authorities took over provincial institutions, thousands of Kosovo Albanians were fired from public institutions and social enterprises. Serbian security forces have repeatedly violated human rights. Police violence, arbitrary arrests and torture were a common phenomenon. After taking over the provincial institutions, Serbian authorities shut down most of the Albanian speaking schools and ceased paying salaries to Albanian high school teachers. Kosovo Albanians have begun a non-violent creation of their own parallel institutions, such as education, health and the tax system. A parallel system of private schools was organized on the basis of donations and taxes. Albanian students attended classes in private homes, empty companies and abandoned school buildings. Milošević's government did not allow the development of parallel institutions in Kosovo and the Serbian police continued to break into the educational and other institutions of Kosovo Albanians. Members of the security forces routinely harassed, detained and beat up teachers, students and administrators of Albanian schools. This period is considered by the Albanians as a period of "wild, totalitarian,

military-police regime”, under which the Albanian population suffered severely.²⁶⁹

Kosovo’s cultural isolation within Yugoslavia and its endemic poverty resulted in the province having the highest rate of both students and illiterates in Yugoslavia. A university education was no guarantee of a successful future; instead of training students for technical careers, the university specialized in liberal arts, in particular in Albanology, which could hardly secure work except in bureaucracy or local cultural institutions, especially outside of Kosovo.²⁷⁰ This led to massive riots where 14 students were killed and 4,200 others imprisoned, as New York Times reported in 1981. During this decade, after Tito’s died, there were many cases when Albanians from Kosovo who had to do the mandatory army service died in suspicious circumstances which were never clarified. Albanian activists working in diaspora like Jusuf Gërvalla were assassinated, allegedly by Yugoslav secret service. Together with constant media reports portraying Kosovo Albanians as “terrorists” a climate of uncertainty and fear dominated that decade in Yugoslavia.

During the late 1990s, clashes between KLA and Serbian armed forces became bloody and resulted in mass murders and disappearances of both civilians and members of the KLA. During the war, 10,812 ethnic Albanians lost their lives – 1,392 of the victims were children while 296 of them were under 15 years old.

Some of the most significant examples of crimes against humanity were the Berisha family massacre in Suhareka, the attack on Prekaz, the Reçak massacre, the poisoning of almost 7,000 pupils, etc.²⁷¹

The attack on Prekaz, also known as the Prekaz massacre, was an operation led by the Special anti-terrorist units of Serbia on March 5, 1998, with the goal of capturing members of the KLA, which were considered terrorists by the Serbs. During the attack, KLA leader Adem Jashari and his brother Hamëz were killed, alongside 60 of their family members.²⁷² The attack was criticized by the Amnesty International, claiming the goal was to eliminate family members of the KLA, where on the other hand, Serbia claimed that it was a consequence of the attacks by KLA on police outposts.

A major turning point took place on January 15, 1999, when 45 ethnic Albanians were killed in the village of Reçak. Although the attack

was possibly provoked by a KLA ambush that killed three Serbian policemen a few days before, government forces responded by shooting at civilians, torturing detainees and committing group executions. The massacre in Reçak was well documented by the OSCE mission and immediately condemned by the mission head, the U.S. diplomat William Walker. The Yugoslav government said that the Albanians were KLA fighters killed in combat and threatened to expel Walker from the country, labelling him as representative and a patron of separatism and terrorism. On January 18, Chief Prosecutor Louise Arbour of the ICTY was denied entry into Kosovo, where she planned to investigate the Reçak incident. NATO increased its threats of military action if attacks on civilians did not stop". Among 45 victims, there were three women and a 12-year-old child.

Another terrible crime during the Kosovo war committed by Serbian forces is the massacre in Suhareka. 48 residents of the Kosovo town of Suhareka were killed in March 1999 by Serbian police forces. "46 of them were members of the Berisha family; 14 of them under 15 years old, including two babies, as well as a pregnant woman and an elderly woman. Two women and a child survived the massacre. Some of the men were shot dead while the survivors were forced into a pizzeria, locked in and hand-grenades were thrown at them. Those showing signs of life were shot in the head and transported to a mass grave in Kosovo, where they were initially dumped. The bodies were later reburied in the police training centre in Batajnica after being transported from Kosovo in an attempt by Serb forces to cover up the killings".²⁷³

"In Kosovo, during a few days in March of 1990 more than 4.000 patients, above all school children, got ill with symptoms, indicating they could have been poisoned. The mysterious disease, as it was called, continued to strike the population for the rest of the year, and probably more than 8.000 Kosovars were stricken with the illness".²⁷⁴ The Serbian side considered it nothing more than a mass hysteria.



Pattern of Crimes Against Kosovo Albanians: Serbian Narrative

Our Generals Are Our Heroes

In every war there is a rule of negation or minimization of committed crimes. There is no difference between the victim and the war criminal. Criminals are proclaimed national heroes, and victims are discriminated by minimizing or denying their suffering. According to the Humanitarian Law Centre, “13.535 people lost their lives in the war in Kosovo. According to the HLC report the victims are: 10.812 Albanians, 2.197 Serbs, and 526 Roma, Bosniaks, Montenegrins and other non-Albanians victims”.²⁷⁵

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Serbian public opinion does not know or does not want to know about these crimes. If anyone mentions them, they mention them through two aspects – the only victims in the war in Kosovo were Serbs who were killed and expelled from the centuries-old Serbian lands. Or – yes, there were crimes against Albanians in Kosovo, but these are individual crimes and cannot be compared with crimes against Serbs. This dominant view is supported by history textbooks and media and academia in Serbia, where there is not one sentence on crimes committed against Kosovo Albanians in the Kosovo war from 1998 to 1999. The only ones that are mentioned are the crimes committed against Serbs and the expulsion of Serbs from Kosovo. This perspective begins to be built since elementary school, through secondary school and finally at university where young educated people leave the university with a one-sided view and without knowing what really happened in Kosovo during the war.

Serbian politicians, especially in government, but also from the opposition parties, remain silent about this because they want to keep their voters. It is easier for them not to mention these topics, because they know they will lose the part of their voting body that is right-wing and nationally oriented. In addition, much more worrying is

the support for convicted war criminals by the government politicians in Serbia. For example, the convicted war criminal General Vladimir Lazarević, who served a sentence for participation in a joint criminal enterprise with other Serb generals in order to expel Kosovo Albanians – received the highest state honours and welcome by the Serbian leadership once he arrived to the airport in Belgrade after serving his sentence.

Lazarević, in addition to being honoured in Serbia with the highest state honours, held a lecture at the Military Academy on October 26, 2017. He then declared: “I agreed to this lecture at the Military Academy and for me it is a great honour. I have never been in hiding, not during the NATO aggression, not even now. And when I see where the critiques are coming from for engaging the former generals of the VJ, everything is clear to me. Dogs bark, the winds blows it...”²⁷⁶

Former Minister of Defence, Bratislav Gašić and the former Minister of Justice Nikola Selaković proudly invited war criminal Vladimir Lazarević to give a lecture. After this scandal, many EU officials, as well as the US Ambassador to Serbia, Kyle Scott, criticized this event. To this, Serbian Prime Minister Ana Brnabić responded: “General Lazarević is not a lecturer at the Military Academy, he was invited to hold a lecture. I recall that Lazarević voluntarily went to The Hague, received the verdict, served the sentence, and now is a free man”.²⁷⁷

In addition to state officials of Serbia, who unconditionally support war criminals and treat them as heroes, the media play the dominant role in maintaining the perspective that only Serbs were the victims and that there were no other crimes, but the ones committed against them. Most of the media in Serbia, with individual exceptions, create the image of Serbs as victims, and Albanians as aggressors. The best example of this is the crime committed in Reçak. All the media in Serbia present the crime in Reçak as the killing of the KLA members, denying that the crime was committed against Albanian civilians, and that there are articles such as: “Walker fabricates a crime in Reçak”, “NATO Clark: He acknowledged that they were bombed for the fictional crime in Reçak”.²⁷⁸

So, the dominant narrative of the crimes committed against Albanians in Kosovo during the 1998-1999 war is that of absolute denial. The general public does not know about these crimes. Most people only know that the Serbs were massively expelled from Kosovo and that

crimes were committed against them. War criminals who participated in the expulsion and command responsibility for the crimes, in Serbia are treated as national heroes, deliver lectures, they are active in the political parties etc.





Pattern of Crimes Against Kosovo Albanians: Shared Narrative

Glorification of True Heroes, Exposure of True Numbers

There is an enormous gap between Kosovo's and Serbia's perspective of what truly happened in the last war in Kosovo. The Serbian side of the narrative simply denies that crimes happened. People in Serbia think that crimes against Serbs were committed and maybe there were a few cases of crimes against Albanians committed by Serbian paramilitary formations. In Kosovo, there is similar situation – there were only Albanian victims.

There are two verdicts regarding the crimes against Albanians in Kosovo. In front of the ICTY the first judgment for Vlastimir Đorđević and the second for Milan Milutinović and others.

When it comes to Vlastimir Đorđević this case relates to events which took place in Kosovo between January 1 and June 20, 1999. Throughout that period, Mr. Đorđević was the Assistant Minister to the Serbian Minister of the Internal Affairs (MUP) and Chief of the Public Security Department of the MUP (RJB). The Trial Chamber issued its Judgement on February 23, 2011. It convicted Mr. Đorđević under five points for the crimes of deportation, other inhumane acts (forcible transfer), and persecutions on racial grounds as crimes against humanity, as well as murder as a crime against humanity and as a violation of the laws or customs of war. The Trial Chamber found that Mr. Đorđević participated in a joint criminal enterprise with the purpose of modifying the ethnic balance in Kosovo to ensure Serbian control over the province. This purpose was achieved through the commitment of these crimes. The Trial Chamber also found that Mr. Đorđević aided and abetted the same crimes. The Trial Chamber sentenced Mr. Đorđević to 27 years of imprisonment.²⁷⁹

Regarding the judgment of Milan Milutinović and others, the Judgement is a lengthy document, reflecting the size and complexity of

this case. The trial proceedings began on July 10, 2006, and concluded on August 27, 2008. During their course the Chamber heard oral testimony from a total of 235 witnesses, and admitted over 4.300 exhibits. At the time of the alleged crimes, Milan Milutinović was the President of the Republic of Serbia; Nikola Šainović was a Deputy Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, or FRY; Dragoljub Ojdanić was the Chief of the General Staff of the Yugoslav Army; Nebojša Pavković was the Commander of the VJ 3rd Army; Vladimir Lazarević was the Commander of the VJ Pristina Corps; and Sreten Lukić was the Head of the Serbian Ministry of Interior Staff for Kosovo, referred to as the MUP Staff. The Indictment alleges that each of the Accused participated in the joint criminal enterprise, and that in these roles they exercised command authority and/or effective control over VJ and MUP forces involved in committing the alleged crimes.

They are also charged to have planned, instigated, ordered, or otherwise to have aided and abetted these crimes. The length of the trial and volume of evidence, as well as the size of the Verdict, are in large part a consequence of the number and nature of the charges in the Indictment. The Accused are charged under every form of responsibility set out in Articles 7 (1) and 7 (3) of the Statute of the Tribunal for their alleged role in crimes said to have been committed between January 1 and June 20, 1999 in Kosovo by forces of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia, referred to as the forces of the FRY and Serbia. Specifically, the Accused are alleged to be responsible for deportation, a crime against humanity (count 1); forcible transfer as “other inhumane acts”, a crime against humanity (count 2); murder, a crime against humanity and a violation of the laws or customs of war (counts 3 and 4); and persecution, a crime against humanity (count 5). According to the Indictment, the Accused participated, along with others, in a joint criminal enterprise to modify the ethnic balance in Kosovo in order to ensure continued control by the FRY and Serbian authorities over the province. The Prosecution further alleges that the purpose of the joint criminal enterprise was to be achieved through a widespread or systematic campaign of terror or violence against the Kosovo Albanian population, including the various crimes specified in each of the counts of the Indictment.²⁸⁰

These judgments constitute important documents regarding crimes against Albanians. Unfortunately, all of these former officials are welcomed in Serbia like heroes after leaving prison. We, as writers of this narrative, condemn these acts and we believe that based on

them, Serbia needs to face the truth and once and for all stop with the glorification of its war criminals.





Crimes Against Serbs in Kosovo: Kosovo Narrative

The Sound of Silence

The Humanitarian Law Centre based in Serbia and Kosovo published the “Kosovo Memory Book”²⁸¹ – the list of war victims between January 1998 and December 31, 2000. Based on this published list 10.812 Albanians, 2.197 Serbs and 526 persons of other nationalities were killed or went missing.

Based on these statistics, during the war the majority of Serbian victims were registered as fighters. But, after the official end of the war, the number of Serbian civilian victims had risen considerably. The patterns of these crimes are related to NATO’s failure to disarm the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) after the war ended which led into a wave of violence against civilians. Even though, 45.000 NATO troops were in Kosovo after the war ended officially, troops were unable to protect ethnic Serb civilians as well as KLA’s Albanian political rivals.

The KLA is mentioned in several reports related with war crimes during and especially after the war officially ended in Kosovo. Despite reports, President Hashim Thaçi insists that the KLA had never imprisoned or murdered Albanian rivals, massacred Serbian civilians or committed other war crimes.

Reports from various organizations such as Human Rights Watch, Humanitarian Law Centre and Council of Europe associate KLA with massacres of civilians, organ trafficking and destruction of Serbian Orthodox churches and monuments. According to the report prepared by Dick Marty for the Council of Europe, KLA was responsible for enforced disappearances of Serbs and Albanians after illegal detention, where some of them were subjected to torture as well as to illegal human organ harvesting.²⁸² Kosovo Albanian officials denied these allegations. Other reports of crimes against Serbian civilians by

KLA forces include several massacres such as Lake Radoniq Massacre, Gjilan Massacre, Kleçka Massacre and prison camp in Llapushnik. Based on these reports, on March 2005, a UN tribunal brought to trial in The Hague, Kosovo's Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj and two other former KLA members Idriz Balaj and Lah Brahimaj, charged with crimes against humanity. Haradinaj and Balaj were declared innocent while Brahimaj was found guilty. Former KLA Members returned in Kosovo welcomed as heroes.

Aside from the International Tribunals, in December 2010 based on the Dick Marty's report for the Council of Europe, "Inhuman treatment of people and illicit trafficking in human organs in Kosovo".²⁸³ EULEX decided to establish a Special Force (SIFT) to investigate and examine cases involving crimes and other abuses committed in 1999-2000 by members of the KLA. The agreement for the establishment of the Special Court was approved by the Assembly of Kosovo in 2015. President Thaçi dismissed the Marty report as disinformation, however first KLA members have been summoned by the court in 2019.

Since Serbian armed forces withdrew, a large number of ethnic Serbians decided to leave the territory of Kosovo. Around 160.000 Kosovo Serbs left Kosovo after the NATO bombing. According to official demographic data, the population of Serbian citizens dropped from 194.190 (in 1991)²⁸⁴ to 25.532 (in 2011). After the war ended, Kosovo split from Serbia and has been governed as a United Nations protectorate until February 2008 when Kosovo declared its independence. Kosovo's most powerful political figures were former KLA leaders – the president, prime minister and speaker of Parliament. They are considered war heroes. Besides the trials in the Hague Tribunal, where former KLA members pleaded not guilty, Special Court was approved by the Kosovo Assembly to investigate KLA figures behind crimes against other ethnic groups and political opponents during and after the 1998-1999 war. Crimes against Serbs and other non-Albanian ethnic groups are denied in Kosovo. The general perception of KLA's mission was to liberate Kosovo from the Serbian paramilitary and military forces. Kosovar society is aware that some individuals in the KLA are accused of taking the law into their own hands, but they expect that the crimes will be evaluated individually on both sides.

Crimes Against Serbs in Kosovo: Serbian Narrative

We Are the Victims!

In Serbia, all parts of society, including media and politicians believe that all crimes that happened in Kosovo were committed by Albanians from Kosovo. They think that Serbian police and military operations existed solely for the purpose of defending the Serbs and protection of Serbian sovereignty.

One of the most controversial cases of the war in Kosovo is “The Yellow House”. It was the most horrific crime that had happened to Serbs during the wars. “The Yellow House” was the name of the illegal detention centre in northern Albania where Kosovo Albanians brought kidnapped Serbs to extract their organs for trafficking. The first claims about organ trafficking were published by a former prosecutor of the Hague Tribunal, Carla Del Ponte, in her book “The Hunt: Me and the War Criminals”. According to her, there were 300 Serbian victims whose organs were sent to Italy and across Europe. The organizers of this crime are Hashim Thaçi and the Drenica group. This crime was supported by the international community, for example French politician Bernard Kouchner, from the UN mission for Kosovo, who denied the existence of “The Yellow House”.²⁸⁵

Many other crimes are mentioned in the general public in Serbia. They are commemorated on every anniversary of those crimes. For example, the crime that is used very frequently by the Serbian media and politicians is the crime in Graçkë e Vjetër/Staro Gracko. On July 23, 1999, members of KLA committed one of the most terrible crimes. They killed 14 Serbian farmers on the meadow. For this crime no one was accused or tried. Also, one of the biggest crimes happened in Kleçka/Klečka, where 22 civilians were kidnapped, shot and burned by the members of KLA. Between 1997 and 1998 they committed a lot of kidnappings of civilians. During the attack on Rahovec/Orahovac, they

kidnapped and captivated 43 civilians. They were tortured and then shot in front of a shooting squad or individually. Later, their bodies were burned in lime kiln in order to hide crimes.

Twenty years have passed since the war in Kosovo. There are still problems in Gjakovë/Đakovica, Serbian returnees have a lot of problems there. They are not allowed to come back to Kosovo and visit the graves of their families. They are often attacked when they come to Gjakovë/Đakovica. The dominant view in Serbia remains the same, thanks to the media and every government since then. From the Serbian perspective – majority of crimes were committed by the KLA, and no one got convicted. But maybe, there were some crimes against Albanians, but they were committed by paramilitary formations for e.g. Šakali. When it comes to the verdicts condemning the commanders of Serbian police and army – Serbia denies their legitimacy and validity.



Crimes Against Serbs in Kosovo: Shared Narrative

No Transitional Justice Possible Without Cooperation

Crimes against Serbs in Kosovo are a topic with very different perspectives on what actually happened. In Serbia, there is a very popular narrative that all crimes that happened in Kosovo are crimes against Serbs. Minority of people want to talk about the other side of the story – crimes against Albanians. On the other side, in Kosovo, the emphasis is on Albanian victims. In that situation, it's very difficult to talk about what had actually happened and create space for cooperation.

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The most controversial case is “The Yellow House“ case. There is the Hague Tribunal Investigation. On January 13, 2005, the Hague Tribunal initiated an investigation into trade in organs, based on objects found in the yellow house. The investigation was called “Don Quixote”. The Hague Tribunal investigators found a variety of objects in the yellow house, for which there was reasonable suspicion that they were used to extract organs of kidnapped Serbs and non-Albanians. Among the objects found, there were plastic containers, empty bottles with the names of medicines used in surgical interventions (tranxene, chlooraphemical, cinarizine, biscopean), and metal debris that reminded of surgical instruments.²⁸⁶

According to the investigation conducted by the Serbian War Crimes Prosecutor's Office, surgical interventions on organ trafficking victims were carried out in health centers or hospitals used during the war for the treatment of KLA soldiers. For this purpose, a part of the hospital in the “Bajram Curri” barracks, a health centre in the “Coca-Cola” factory in Tirana, a neuropsychiatric hospital in prison number 320 in Burel and a private house near Tropoja, the so-called yellow house were used. In addition to these locations, the Serbian Prosecutor's Office had obtained data that there was an illegal prison in the Deva mine

located in the border area between Kosovo and Albania, one end of the tunnel being in Kosovo and the other in Albania.²⁸⁷

On December 12, 2010, Dick Marty submitted a report to the Council of Europe where Thaçi had been named leader of the Mafia Group responsible for the arms, drugs and human organs trade. In response, the EU and EULEX stated that they consider the report to be very serious and required further evidence. Thaçi denied all charges and filed a lawsuit against Dick Marty. On January 11, 2011, Dr. Jusuf Sonmez, “chief surgeon” in Kosovo’s organ removal operations, was arrested in Istanbul.

On March 4, 2011, EULEX made a decision to institute criminal proceedings against indictments for trafficking in human organs in Kosovo. The indictments are filed against Lufti Dervishi, Driton Jilta, Sokol Hajdini and Ilir Reçaj in connection with their activities at the Pristina Clinic “Medikus”. Among the suspects are also the former health secretary Reçaj who unlawfully issued a license to the Pristina Clinic “Medikus” for transplantation of human organs. One of the suspects is Jusuf Sonmez.

Although there are many controversial questions about “The Yellow House”, as the writers of this narrative we think that a crucial piece of the Serbian-Albanian puzzle is to have a better cooperation. It means that if we want to live in a better society we need to talk more about the past. In this case (“The Yellow House”), we believe that the only way to solve the conflict is to have a joint investigation. For example, one commission formed by both Serbian and Kosovo governments and civil society can thoroughly investigate all controversial facts about “The Yellow House” case. As a result of that joint work, the commission would publish a report. In the report, there would be facts proven by the commission. Based on these facts, domestic and international courts could initiate proceedings.



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ANTI-WAR PROTESTS



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ANTI-WAR PROTESTS



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It is only fitting that this book contains a chapter which covers the topic of anti-war protests that took place throughout the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. While our original expectation was that the topics chosen for exploring shared narratives would be the most controversial and contentious episodes of the conflicts between different countries or groups, it was the participants' choice to include the topic of anti-war protests that had gotten drowned in the dominant national narratives of 1990s conflicts. The participants chose this topic to "counterbalance all the negativity and pain" loaded in the dominant narratives.

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We, the authors and coordinators of the project initially failed to anticipate this need felt by the participants. However, their suggestion was not only convincing, it was profoundly moving. It is a clear attempt to find those moments, those pieces of the ugly story that is our common recent history that deserve appreciation from all well-meaning people, regardless of the "side" they come from. And not only that – it is those pieces of our (hi)story that can serve as a foundation for a future free from hate, free from violence and free from destruction and despair.



The simple fact that these young people chose to deal with these topics is an act of protest. It is an act of protest against the dominant perspective on our recent history; a perspective where standing against violence is not seen as courage, but as cowardice.

Why are the anti-war protests a repressed dimension of the breakup of Yugoslavia? In short: because they threaten the dominant national narratives of uniform desire for conflict (in most cases interpreted as a legitimate self-defence or liberation wars). As Barkan explains, "Because group identity is shaped by historical perspectives, historical

narratives have an explicit and direct impact on national identities”.²⁸⁸ The very existence of anti-war activists, events and movements is in direct opposition of the processes of formation of national identities of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia that were being forged in the wars of the 1990s. They showcase that our societies were never so firmly unified behind all acts undertaken by our former leaders. They showcase that there was always, even in such dark times, a sparkle of dissent, a potential for democracy, a trace of conviction that every person matters.

In the Bosnia-Herzegovina essay you will read about the sad irony of the conflict starting during the anti-war demonstration with first shots fired killing protesters Olga and Suada; the Croatian essay maps out the different initiatives and movements that formed Croatia’s anti-war campaign; the Kosovo essay differs from its counterparts insofar the non-violent resistance movement led by Ibrahim Rugova was connected to the strife for liberation and independence from Serbia’s dominance; the Montenegro essay writes about some of the main instances of anti-war activism and peace protests that included a plea for forgiveness from the Croatian city of Dubrovnik; finally, the Serbian essay extensively covers the myriad of anti-war initiatives, ranging from desertion from the army to women-led peace actions.

The stories presented here are not exhaustive. History will never document every act of dissent or every word that disrupted the perceived unison of a war chant. But the future will honour all of them if it succeeds in learning the lessons they provide. This is such an attempt.



Anti-war Protests in Bosnia and Herzegovina

"We Want Love, Not War"

The issue of anti-war engagements in (former) Yugoslavia has been unjustifiably neglected in the course of the events of the 1990s. From today's perspective, researches point to some of the major factors that shaped it, starting with the indispensable role of mothers, through feminist anti-militarism, foreign activists, all the way to the important role of music.²⁸⁹ Generally speaking, textbooks for elementary, secondary schools or colleges do not cover the topic. Some more information can be learned from the participants' statements or from the photos of the meetings themselves. Due to the poor media coverage of these events, we have a lack of sources that today speak about the protests in most cities of Bosnia and Herzegovina and therefore the focus is in the capital Sarajevo.

When it comes to anti-war protests in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the most visible example are the protests in Sarajevo, which were the only visible act of resistance to the war and the insanity it carries. This is probably not a coincidence, especially considering that Sarajevo, in the former Yugoslavia, was synonymous with multiculturalism and coexistence. The Forgotten Peace Movement in Yugoslavia may have perhaps culminated with the rock concert in Sarajevo's Zetra Olympic Hall on July 28, 1991. Due to bad weather, the concert was moved to Zetra at the last minute. Sarajevo taxi companies transported thousands of people free of charge from its original outdoor location. There was an unprecedented crowd of 30.000 in Zetra, while around it there were 50,000 people that came to hear the show from the outside. The concert was organized and broadcasted by Yugoslav TV station Yutel and the concert was named "Yutel za Mir"²⁹⁰ ("Yutel for Peace"). "Yutel for Peace" was the culmination of earlier peace protests in Yugoslavia that united anti-war activists from across the country with the most popular Yugoslav rock bands in a collective effort to save

Yugoslavia from war and breakdown.

At the time of the Zetra concert, the 10-day war in Slovenia had just ended and the first casualties had fallen in the conflict in Croatia. Nine months later, the war hits Bosnia and the Zetra Sports Hall was set on fire by shells from military positions that laid siege to Sarajevo. In the context of these catastrophic events, the crowd singing for peace in Yugoslavia at the 1991 Zetra concert may seem naive and irrelevant. However, the number of people at the anti-war concert and the presence of prominent Yugoslav intellectuals and rock stars indicate that “Yutel for Peace” was anything but marginal. In the summer of 2016, a ZETRA project was launched that collected the memories of participants in this civic action and expression of will for peace as was seen by the protagonists of different generations of the wars in the 1990s, now scattered around the world. The Zetra Project aimed to record this event and to inform people at home and abroad about its importance.

Jadranka Pejaković Hlede, who as a 13-year-old girl in 1991 collected 11,586 peace signatures with her friends from Tuzla, also shared her memories: “My 11,586 peace signatures were an utopia and it’s really funny when I remember with what faith did I collect them, that was my job, for days from morning till night, a mission. I remember exactly how the story started, what was I thinking, even where was I sitting when I decided to initiate the action. The story soon became bigger than I expected. But if nothing else, those 11,586 people left me with faith in the human race.²⁹¹ Nenad Pejić, the director of TV Sarajevo at that time, describes in his column “How I Failed to Stop the War in Bosnia” how he and his colleagues used the last attempt to prevent the conflict.

In April 1992, just days before the siege and conflict began, TV Sarajevo decided to broadcast a March of Peace that was a result of a revolt of 40 students against the war and turned into a mass demonstration of thousands. Pejić stresses that following the decision of TV Sarajevo to broadcast the protests, he received a call directly from Radovan Karadžić: “You, Mr. Pejić, are preparing a coup!” He shouted on the phone. “You want Bosnia to leave Yugoslavia! The Serbs will never allow it. You are encouraging people against Yugoslavia and you have to stop the program!” The previous quote describes Karadžić’s reaction to the attempts to stop the war. On April 5, the number of protesters rose to 100,000, slogans with messages of peace were brought and the resignation of all ruling parties in the then parliament was called



for. After the protests grew, Izetbegović's call followed: "Mr Pejić, what you and the television are trying to do will not happen. You want to keep BiH in Yugoslavia. You encourage people to take to the streets. You are trying to overthrow a legally elected government!"²⁹² Looking at the reactions of both Radovan Karadžić and Alija Izetbegović, the inevitable conclusion is that peace was not a priority for either.

SDS-ordered JNA members fired from the roof of the Holliday Inn at protesters. After the protests at Marijin Dvor, the gathered protesters headed for the Vrbanja Bridge. Positioned snipers opened fire and killed medical students Suada Dilberović and Olga Sučić on the bridge. Talking to a witness in the 1992 protests, we found out the following: "We went to protests and we were convinced that it resolves everything, that there would be no war, why would there be one? When Olga and Suada fell, I thought it was just an incident. I never saw my parents more confused, for a long time afterwards we could not understand what was happening and why it was happening". The cruel paradox and perhaps the logical sequence of political events in Bosnia and Herzegovina, led to the first victims of the conflict, they fell at an anti-war protest where citizens prayed for peace and sought love instead of war. They didn't get love. What they got were sniper shots that killed Olga and Suada. The snipers were in many ways a synonymous with the atmosphere in Sarajevo over the next 4 years.

Photographs of the protests in Sarajevo are part of Milomir Kovacević Strašni's exhibition that followed the protests in 1992. The photo exhibition was shown in 2012 at the Art Gallery of BiH. When asked how he experienced the anti-war protests, he replies: "As if tormented by some bad feeling, everyone acted and wanted to live together, not knowing exactly what would happen to their country and their city. A little naive, young and old, workers and intellectuals, women and men gathered, encouraging and comforting each other that nothing terrible could happen and that their voices would be heard...I tried, through my lens, to capture this unique atmosphere of pervasive anxiety, but also the sincere and deep hopes of citizens of all faiths united in their desire to live in peace in the last attempt to be heard".²⁹³

Except for the case of TV Sarajevo, which wasn't available to all BiH citizens, the protests went unnoticed that year. Given the nature of the rally, being spontaneous and unplanned, most BiH citizens did not have information about the event. The same pattern also follows the protests in other cities of the country of that time, there most of those

surveyed today do not know that there were protests organized in Belgrade, Podgorica, Zagreb, Cetinje, etc.

As much as through history, education or the story of a war the terms “winner” and “loser” are mentioned, when looking beyond strategic perception, in every war, everyone is actually a loser. Every war is related to huge numbers of lost people, soldiers and civilians and lost families. The consequences are felt for many years to come, across the various spheres of society. Let’s look and think about a world without wars, let us put the focus on negotiating and diplomacy. We build and value peace. We learn from these people who desired to prevent war. We think the way they do.



*Anti-war Efforts in Croatia*²⁹⁴

Vis-à-vis the War

If we mention the period of the breakup of Yugoslavia, the most common associations are wars and battles, soldiers from different sides, the issue of guilt and responsibility, crimes and their perpetrators. Occasionally, citizens are also mentioned, but they remain trapped in the victim's vision – as powerless or passive, as those who were carried away by the whirlwind of war or who were lucky and who escaped the war. In order to get out of such a frame, we need to shift our research focus precisely to areas beyond war and suffering, to the daily life of citizens in war, as well as the individual dimensions of that everyday life. By addressing such topics, we can shed light on the various ways in which people have tried to contribute to creating conditions for a normal life and for a better tomorrow. One such topic is the birth of civil society and activism in the 1990s, and one of the most interesting activist movements in these circumstances were certainly the anti-war and peace movements and initiatives. Of course, these movements are not the innovations of the 20th century, much less its end and the breakup of Yugoslavia. The idea of promoting peace can be found in many religions and philosophies and the first informal movements can be found as early as the early 19th century. However, the increasing impact of wars on civilians and unprecedented human rights violations in the 20th century developed anti-war movements in the second half of that century in a form that is familiar to us today. Thus, Croatia was also aware of civilian initiatives during Yugoslavia, but in a more modern sense they occur only during the liberalization of the 1980s. These were primarily informal groups gathered around issues of ecology, feminism, and pacifism. It is no wonder, then, that when nationalisms and the first conflicts were intensified in the early 1990s, existing initiatives launched the Anti-War Campaign.

Before we go on into the initiative itself, we should also give some

space to the circumstances that prompted the activists to start or join the movement. Given the short period of time (for historians), activists' testimonies about this period are not difficult to reach. So when activists describe the atmosphere in 1991, they cite widespread national homogenization and militarization, lawlessness, political murders, pardons and mobilization of criminals, evictions, demolition of anti-fascist monuments, media control, historical revisionism, hate public speech, whispering of neighbours about snipers lurking from the skyscrapers, civilians publicly wearing weapons and numerous other scenes, which were becoming more common day by day.

We must add that the experiences of those who joined the Anti-War Campaign are different. It is by no mean a unique and homogeneous group, on contrary – precisely the Anti-War Campaign has become a gathering space for a whole range of people who have decided to oppose the war, that is, - the different ones, “the others”. But everyone shared the belief that war should be stopped and that it was not a mean by which we could achieve peace. At this point, it is also important to note the difference between anti-war and peace activists, a distinction noted by Bojan Bilić in his text, “Walking on the Edge: Articulating Anti-War Engagement in Croatia in the Early 1990s”.²⁹⁵ Anti-war activists oppose unjust or unnecessary war, i.e. war in certain circumstances. For peace activists or pacifists, on the other hand, war is not acceptable regardless of the situation, because violence is unacceptable in any form. For example, anti-war activists could support rapid and sharp foreign military intervention that would end a long lasting war, while peace activists could not support such action, regardless of the circumstances.

In these circumstances, a small group of anti-war and peace activists from the Zelena akcija Zagreb (Green Action Zagreb)²⁹⁶ on July 4, 1991, launched an Anti-War Campaign and on that occasion sent a “Call to the Concerned and All People of Goodwill: Let’s Stop the War!” They warned of the threat of “general slaughter” in our area and indicate the parents’ natural sense of fear for their children’s lives. They say that people in this region need life and that it must be more valuable than any ideology and political goal on behalf of which young men are sent to death. The founding meeting was attended by Dražen Nikolić, Vesna Teršelić, Zoran Oštrić and Vladimir Lay. The following day, Zoran Oštrić already wrote the ARK Charter, signed by 900 persons from 21 countries and over 90 organizations from 20 countries. The number of signatory organizations of the Charter also reflects the later character



of the Anti-War Campaign as a network of civil organizations, many of which have survived to date or been the basis for the growth of other civil sector organizations.

If we look at the contents of the charter, it states that conflicts will have to be resolved once and that the nations of these areas will have to learn to live together. This position comes from a cosmopolitan level, opposed to the spread of ethnic divisions in all pores of society. It also articulates the vision of a society that we should strive for – a society of peace, democracy, economic, social and environmental well-being. Considering that such a society is not created by war and violence, the signatories of the Charter reject these methods and are committed to working together and cooperating to resolve problems, regardless of differences in political opinions.

However, even though activists knew they needed to act, as well as being sure of what values they wanted to base their actions on, it remained an important question on how to act and organize specific actions in circumstances of war, especially in an attacked country, with people that want to defend their homes. The problem was further raised in the fall of 1991, when Dubrovnik and Vukovar were attacked. For this reason, actions had to be more careful in order to have some broader social impact.

The first more extensive activity plans were drawn up in August 1991 and a record of the meeting can be found in the anti-war campaign newsletter - ARKzin. It is interesting to note that ARKzin itself, where we found the information, is one of the platforms for action and one of the most successful long-term projects of the Anti-War Campaign. In edition 0 of ARKzin, which was published on September 25, 1991, we can find a report from the initial meeting of the “Committee on Anti-War Campaign”. Some of the actions planned there are: gathering messages of peace from local and foreign prominent figures and citizens that would be exhibited at the Old City Gate, for these purposes called the Peace Gate, in Zagreb; an anti-war telephone that provided a machine with general information on options for involvement in peacekeeping activities and a live telephone operated by a group of volunteers to provide human assistance to people affected by conflict; mediating negotiation groups envisaged co-operation with international organizations and the Women’s Negotiations planned the co-operation of feminists from Croatia and Serbia; the peace fanzine, later called the ARKzin, grew out of the idea

of opposing the media boycotting or manipulating information about peace activists; and this idea is related with the last then designed action of analysis of war propaganda, which was planned as a joint Croatian and Serbian action to demonstrate manipulation with people. In the same edition of ARKzin, an important text was published, “If you saw a war crime...” trying to clearly define a war crime and also provide a form for collecting data on war crimes, which shows that even then the situation could be predicted on all areas affected by war. Over the time, the activities were adapted to the needs and therefore we should mention the sitting protests during evictions, legal assistance to conscientious objectors (which eventually led to a separate organization called Union 47)²⁹⁷, the ZaMir Internet network and numerous other projects and actions.

In order to not only give a broad (and abstract) overview of the activities of the Croatian Anti-War Campaign, let us dwell for a moment on one of its most successful projects - the Pakrac Volunteer Project. Already by looking at the carrier and the name of the project, we can assume a lot – and we will not be wrong to conclude that this is a peace project involving a large number of volunteers in Pakrac. If we also know the context of Pakrac in the 1990s, we will realize that it is a project that has a lot of potential²⁹⁸.

However, we may still lack some important information such as the following: The Pakrac Volunteer project was a partnership project of the Anti-War Campaign of Croatia and the UN Office in Vienna; it lasted from July 1993 until 1997, when the project grew into a separate civil society organization – the Centre for Peace Studies; In 1994, additional partners joined the initial one – the Most Anti-War Action Centre group from Belgrade, which extended the project to the other side of the then divided city.

All this information should show why this project is often taken as a good example of possible peace activism. It was a unique attempt to build peace in the dire circumstances of the war-torn Pakrac and surrounding area. The partners divided its goals into short-term ones – such as securing conditions for the return of displaced persons and restoring social and economic activities in the region, as well as long-term ones – such as creating conditions for peace, reducing social tensions and establishing normal relations between Croatian and Serbian (local) communities.



They planned to achieve these goals by setting up a volunteer camp for international volunteers who came to Pakrac for a minimum of three weeks, many came for much longer. Just before arriving to the camp, they would go through a short two-day course in Zagreb. In Pakrac they would volunteer doing physical work such as building renovation, clearing rubbles, repairing floors and windows at schools and churches, picking corn, collecting firewood, decorating playgrounds, etc. They would also volunteer in social activities such as English courses, playrooms for children, puppetry workshops, drama workshops, juggling, radio programs, sports meetings, kindergarten assistance and entertaining social evenings at the Papiga Club. These series of activities demonstrate the complexity of the project as well as its in-depth work on community regeneration, on both material and social dimensions. Within the first six months, 79 international volunteers from 14 countries volunteered in Pakrac and this number rose to over 400 volunteers from over 30 different countries by the end of the project.

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According to Mirjana Bilopavlović, an activist from Pakrac, the Pakrac Volunteer Project was the first peace attempt in the area of the former SFRY, an attempt to put theory into practice in a war-affected area. She also testified that when the volunteers arrived, the locals resisted them, believing that they, as foreigners, had no right to interfere in local problems. This was accompanied by distrust of volunteer's motives, which were often perceived as foreign adventurers who came for an extra line on their CV. However, time has shown that this project has enabled the construction of social networks, the reunion of families locked on opposite sides of the border, assistance to those in need, education for children and subsequently the wider population. Peace builders have been discussing peace-building issues with the locals, the need for nonviolent action and communication, and the transformation of conflict. They empowered women and with them in the long term the civil sector in Pakrac. Perhaps it is also worth mentioning that she herself became a part of the civil sector and dedicated her work to an organization dedicated to promoting and protecting human rights, promoting the values of nonviolence, social justice, equality, accepting differences and diversity. That is, the values promoted by the Pakrac Volunteer Project.

It should be mentioned that this is not the only major project of the Croatian Anti-War Campaign – and each of them deserves a separate text.

This kind of review can only open up new questions, but that is partially its purpose. Perhaps at this point it is enough to realize that there were activists who wanted to contribute not using weapons, who devoted much of their lives to peace building, but also to the civil sector in Croatia, who were thinking what would happen after the war was over. Their actions were not popular, and most often not desirable. They encountered misunderstanding from politics, the media and the general public. Therefore, to study this topic is also to study the possibility of organizing and fighting for change – from below, in a restrictive system that did not want questioning, deviation and change. And although the Anti-War Campaign activists are just one form of organized civil action in war, their actions are a cry from the sidelines that provides unique insights into the 1990s, often overlooked and forgotten, and therefore necessary in order to understand the complexity of this period.

Nikica Torbica

Anti-war Protests in Kosovo in the 90s

Peaceful Struggles During the War

As one political event brought another one, the 90s turned out to be a decade of oppression for Kosovo, and consequently a decade of Kosovar Albanians demonstrating in the streets requiring their basic rights. The systematic police oppression, violation of human rights and the tense political situation that signalled the beginning of a war, led groups of activists to initiate and organize anti-war protests. There are historic dates that grave the struggles of Kosovar Albanians for freedom and independence. Different groups were finding different ways to show their refusal toward the politics of Yugoslavia. Events as student's protests in the 80s, miners' strikes in the late 80s, as well as other groups were a clear signal that Kosovar Albanians were openly requiring better working conditions, better education, better health care and a decent life. These events would later on lead to years of high level of unemployment (around 80% of workers) due to the politics of Serbia that would close companies or replace Albanian workers with Serbian ones. This resulted with a parallel system of education, health care and everything else that is necessary for people to live and prosper.

“Non-violent resistance and the organization of the parallel society” and “parallel institutions” as an answer to repression and as way of solving the inter-ethnic conflict, presented a very specific experience, contrasting with those that brought conflict and wars in other parts of Yugoslavia. In a certain period, 1990-1997, the Albanian grassroots movement, was considered by many as a one that is unique and that can serve as a model for the pacification of conflict situations. Indeed, despite predictions that war is unavoidable and expectations that it will happen before those in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo's grassroots movement contributed enormously in delaying the war for a certain period”.²⁹⁹ The peaceful resistance led by Ibrahim Rugova

resulted to be successful and to maintain the status quo of Kosovo, between war and peace. The Dayton Agreement shook the beliefs of Kosovar Albanians regarding the peaceful resistance because it brought many questions about the case of Kosovo. In the meantime, standing between the advices of Rugova and the need to break the silence, many groups organized against the Serbian regime.

Among groups of people who would peacefully refuse Serbian regime in the 90s and require their rights as people and freedom and independence as a nation, were students and women. The latter are nowadays less known and acknowledged for their contribution before, during and after the war in Kosovo. The collective memory of Kosovo contains little to nothing about women involvement in politics, their initiative to document crimes, to establish peace among Albanians themselves, their constant cooperation with peaceful movements in Serbia such as “Women in Black” and their daily contribution to maintain the parallel system in all its aspects.

Following the student’s protests of 1981 and 1986 that marked the fight of students against the unjust Yugoslavian/Serbian politics and violence in Kosovo, October 1, 1997 also carries historical importance with it. As considered by students, the so called “passive resistance” politics led by LDK (Democratic League of Kosovo), the biggest party in Kosovo by that time, was not effective, especially taking into consideration the fact that specific agreements between Milošević and Rugova to allow Albanian students use University building and facilities were failing to be implemented, students had to find alternative ways to let the international community know about the happenings in Kosovo and take back their rights. They represent the first acts of active nonviolent resistance since the early 1990s and, in the words of the late and renowned scholar and activist Howard Clark, were “a model of non-violent confrontation”.³⁰⁰

On the other hand, not only the student movement broke the oppression and isolation and achieved international recognition. The biggest initiators of anti-war protests were the women of Kosovo. Challenged by double standards, patriarchal society and general oppression from the regime, women were highly involved within students’ movements and later in independent groups comprised of women only. The internal organization among women had started years before the 90s, also as a result of Albanian women portrayed in Yugoslavian media. “They created a new stereotype of Albanian



woman”, says Sevdije Ahmeti. “Not only a Muslim, covered woman, but a woman stereotype, as a machine that makes children and does nothing but being an uneducated slave of her family”.³⁰¹

In reaction to that, well educated Kosovar Albanian women started gathering in the late 80s. The initial idea of women was to be cohesive and leave behind their political affiliation in order to tackle women issues, hand to hand with national issues. This didn't happen to be the final plan anyway. After agreeing to stay out of the political party and act as an independent organization, many women activists decided to join LDK, more precisely the LDK Women's Association, which later evolved to LDK Women's Forum. As an Association with a large number of members (counting around 80.000 women at the time) the first event calling for peace and independence took place on 8th of March 1990.

“On March 8, 1990, a few hundred women, including members of the Women's Association of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) – the political party that led the nonviolent resistance to Serbian oppression during the '90s – gathered at the Boro and Ramiz Youth Centre in Pristina. At a time which would later come to be known as just the beginnings of a decade of oppression under the Milošević regime, the LDK Women's Association publicly announced their separation from the Yugoslav Socialist Women's League”.³⁰² Later on, from a coherent group involved politically, apart from their vision of freedom and independence, women started to open new non-governmental organizations and non-formal groups and the sector became pretty much plural. Through different forms of organizations, women were all aiming the independence of Kosovo from the Serbian oppression. Organizations such as: Qiriazis Sisters, League of Albanian Woman, Centre for Protection of Women and Children, Legjenda etc., were actively organizing language classes for women and other groups, documenting crimes and violence against Kosovar Albanians, especially against women and children, supporting women, providing health services, getting involved in politics (a considerable number of them in executive positions), sharing their expertise as most of the activists had an intellectual background, etc.

The shutting down of the schools, alleged poisoning of 7.600 Albanian Kosovars pupils and other violations of human rights from the Serbian regime pushed series of demonstrations: the demonstrations of 1992 against closing of schools and, years after, a demonstration

organized by Women Forum of LDK for the unjust killing of the unarmed student Armend Daci. “Prudence” and “patience” were the most used words by Rugova, leader of LDK. Against his will and against the will of LDK, who kept repeating that big gatherings will be seen as provocation from Serbia and will be used to start violence, women kept organizing demonstrations. “By March 1998, the Non-formal Network of Women had organized 8 out of 13 peaceful demonstrations in total, as a reaction against the violence used in Drenica. Through these demonstrations they were calling Europe and USA to intervene and end these crimes against humanity”.³⁰³ Another symbolic event that marks the contribution of women and their constant call for peace was the gathering in front of the Information Centre of US (USIS) of more than 2.000 women. Their motto “It’s 12 o’clock for Kosovo” meant that the war had already started in Drenica and there was no time to think, it was the last minute to act. Around a hundred women gathered the next morning in front of ICRC, asking them to go to Drenica with humanitarian aid, medical care and other supplies for people stuck there. “Later that day, 300.000 people from Pristina, Vushtria and Podujeva, went out in the streets with slogans for peace, against the war and in solidarity with Drenica. Youth, political parties and unions marched in Pristina asking for the end of the ‘Serbian terror’”.³⁰⁴



Women activists got organized in all the ways possible, information was sent out in all forms: media, internal channels, telephones etc. The situation was escalating quickly, and armed conflict was going on in many regions of Kosovo. On the evening of March 5, women gathered again in front of USIS with candles in sign of respect for the Jashari family, who were killed in Prekaz. On the March 8, 1998, after a massive organizing, 15.000 up to 20.000 women gathered in front of USIS, with white blank papers in their hand and stood there silently for 15 minutes. At the same time, in other cities or villages, people stood with white sheets in front of their houses, to symbolically support women in Pristina. The white sheets meant that there was nothing else left to say. A few days after, the delegation comprised of 5 women sent a petition to UN to intervene in Kosovo and also sent there the “Declaration of the Silent Protest”.



The protest was followed with another one, on March 10, a relatively small one, followed by a big protest on March 16, exactly 16 days after the attacks in Drenica and 16 days since Drenica was completely isolated by the Serbian forces. That day, approximately 12.000 women started their march toward Drenica. They were all holding bread in their

hands, to show the world that people in Drenica were suffering for food, were being killed, massacred and were fleeing their homes. A few hours later, they were stopped by Serbian troops and were forced to go back home. The protest leaders spoke both in English and Serbian so everyone would understand what was happening in Kosovo. It was largely believed that even though they did not make it to Drenica, their message went much further.

The struggles of the decade to challenge war with peace were shattered down and the war broke, but yet the willingness and the hopes of students, women and many other people to see Kosovo free and independent did not die. Nowadays we cannot say that the activism of women and their sacrifices for the national cause are well known and acknowledged, but we can surely say that their acts carry a great importance for Kosovo and at the time were a crucial tool for Kosovo war to get international attention. The aftermath of the war period also recognizes many independent movements of women who provided support for victims of sexual violence, families who were returning to find burnt houses, refugees and other groups in need. Women were, again, in the background, building Kosovo from zero!



Anti-war Protests in Montenegro

"Today's Heroism Is Not to Go to War"

The anti-war movement in Montenegro is closely linked to the anti-war protests in the territory of Serbia, which are more thoroughly described in other chapters of this publication, given that during this period these two republics constituted the "shrunken" Yugoslavia. The driver for Montenegrin citizens to take to the streets and squares was the warlike politics and the sending of their citizens to the "war for peace"³⁰⁵ by then President Momir Bulatović and Prime Minister Milo Đukanović, together with a war ally, the President of the Republic of Serbia (later the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), Slobodan Milošević.

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The protests in Montenegro were in fact mostly organized as a resistance to Slobodan Milošević's influence on the Montenegrin authorities at the time. But before Bulatović and Đukanović came to power, the first protests that took place actually contributed to the fall of Montenegro under the full influence of Milošević's regime. These protests are known as the "Anti-Bureaucratic Revolution", which fundamentally changed the former understanding of communism in Yugoslavia – the working class being replaced by the nation as the primary focus of politics. The first rally of this kind was held in Titograd on August 20, 1988 in support of Serbia and against the "oppression of the Serbian people by the Kosovo Albanians". The biggest protest took place on January 10, 1989 in Titograd, by the workers of the Radoje Dakić factory, led by Pavle Milić, as well as the president of the students of the University, Veljko Vlahović, where about 10.000 people gathered. One of the successful goals of these protests, fuelled by the Milošević's controlled media (such as the Pobjeda newspaper), was the resignation of the then Montenegrin leadership and the arrival of new people in power, who were closely linked to the Milosević government and the League of Communists of Montenegro was transformed by gaining full control of the Socialist Republic of

Montenegro.

While Momir and Milo and their war ally, Slobodan Milošević, were sending their citizens to the “war for peace”, anti-war protests were organized, but also an offensive against deserters. On July 17, 1991, the Civic Committee for Peace (Građanski odbor za mir) organized “Stop the fascism” protest on the central city square in Titograd. The proclamation read: “Don’t go into that bloody fratricidal conflict and do everything so that the others do not do it. For Montenegro and Yugoslavia today there is no higher and more important goal than peace and decent life for people. Today’s heroism is not to go to war”.³⁰⁶

The real resistance to Slobodan Milosevic’s influence at the time began with the protests in Cetinje on February 1, 1992, organized by the united Montenegrin opposition for the sovereign Montenegro. The aim was to demand from the governing structures the independence for Montenegro and independence from Milošević’s Serbia and the attempt to secede Republika Srpska. Milošević’s vassals in Montenegro were in the ruling set of the Democratic Party of Socialists (Demokratska partija socijalista DPS), whose main representatives at the time were largely Momir Bulatović, Branko Kostić (member of the shrunken presidency of former SFRY) and Milo Đukanović and Svetozar Marović. The protesters opposed the mobilization of Montenegrin soldiers for the sake of achieving Serbia’s military objectives, the consequences of which led to casualties and deportation of Bosniaks from the country. Slavko Perović, president of LSCG, concluded the rally with the words: “We must say today, strongly, so strongly that the whole world hears us – Slobodan Milošević, Montenegro is not your playground, nor can it be a patch on the dirty dress of your politics. Montenegro’s fate will not be resolved in the smoky atmosphere of poker political parties”. During the protests cries such as “Fairy calls from Lovćen, forgive us Dubrovnik”, as a response to the 1991 siege of Dubrovnik were heard.

There followed a period of no major civil protests or gatherings in the territory of Montenegro until January 14, 1998, when supporters of then leaving President Momir Bulatović tried, through street rallies, to replace the new president, Milo Đukanović, who, along with Bulatović, came to power through exact same protests. Stones and Molotov cocktails were thrown and a hand grenade exploded, which organizers claimed to have been accidentally dropped by a police officer.

Podgorica was in tear gas clouds and during the night the arrests of Momir Bulatović's activists followed.³⁰⁷

Despite the organized anti-war protests, the public in Montenegro was divided. Most of the citizens considered the organizers of the protests as national traitors, which was a mirror of the patriarchal society of Montenegro at the time, where desertion was considered cowardice. Despite these unsuccessful protests and later regime change in these countries, citizens remained hungry for information on what really happened in the 1990s. Young people from the region are learning different histories about the genocidal nation on the other side and victims on their part, unaware that it is exactly this youth that are the biggest victims of these wars. We are limited and separated by a wall of prejudice and left to build a better future ourselves.

“We are left to imagine what it would look like if people could then see that the other side was against the wars, that they were all just pawns to the powerful. Maybe a brother would never go against a brother”.³⁰⁸

Vuk Vujisić



Anti-war Protests in Serbia

Don't Count on Us

As the war and militant climate in Yugoslavia became more and more widespread in the 1990s, anti-war and peace movements emerged spontaneously, as a necessity – formed by the war itself. They were preceded by civic initiatives based precisely on the politics of peace and they formed the basis from which different branches of peace protests emerged during the war, with different groups and organizations. Some of the examples are student protests, deserting from the battlefield itself were a protest, desertion of men and increasing resistance to violent mobilization, refusal of commanders to participate in civil wars, protests by civil society organizations, women's protests and mass protests by all groups of citizenship. Based on the above, all these movements can roughly be divided into three phases: pre-war or preparatory war, war, and post-war.³⁰⁹

The pre-war phase (late 1980s and early 1990s) was characterized by the first signs of war in the late 1980s and during this period various civic initiatives, groups and organizations that sought to neutralize nationalist-chauvinist and populist movements, which later proved to be much more powerful, emerged. They undertook independent initiatives to prevent war and to calm already strained relations between the former SFRY countries. An example of one such initiative is the 1989 action, in which over 3.000 people pledged in writing, by a contract, that they would under no circumstances apply violence to any Yugoslav group, nation or individual. In March 1991, the Autonomous Women's Groups from Belgrade and Ljubljana appealed through "Women for Peace" against the war policy in Yugoslavia and also held press conferences in over ten cities of the former SFRY under the slogan "Stop Fascism - passage to citizens". The resistance to the war came also from the independent media. Journalists of regime-controlled media like Radio-Television of Serbia have struggled to keep journalism

professional. Those who were able to do so turned their newspapers into independent newspapers, such as “Borba” and “Svetlost”. There were also those who succeeded in establishing new independent media, such as “Radio B-92”, “Vreme”, “Republika”... It is precisely those media models that advocated for democracy, peace, dialogue, respect for human rights, as well as for ethical and independent media reporting. The outbreak of the first minor armed conflicts has shown that such a system of anti-war action was not effective enough and that all these independent movements must be directed towards greater action, but nevertheless these groups were the basis for the creation of initiatives and movements that spread peace in the territory of Serbia in the 1990s.

The war phase (the 1990s) was characterized by the beginning of the war and the end of the mobilization period from the summer of 1991 to the autumn of 1992. It is characterized by several types of peace activities of different character and intensity:

1. Foundation of peace groups and organizations
2. Protests against mobilization, the JNA army, the absence of a war objective and desertion revolt
3. Civil anti-war actions
4. Women’s anti-war initiatives

Foundation of peace groups and organizations - The first anti-war protests were organized by civic groups and associations in Belgrade, out of which the Centre for the Anti-War Actions (Centar za antiratne akcije) was established on July 15, 1991. It emerged as a movement of resistance to war by its rapid expansion. The Centre for Anti-War Activities had its short-term and long term goals. They short-term goals aimed spreading anti-war propaganda and immediate prevention of war, while the long-term ones aimed at establishing a civil society and respect for human and minority rights and, in general, establishing a demilitarized area in the Balkan Peninsula and the peaceful coexistence of all its citizens.

In addition to these types of movements, protests are joined by citizens of other political affiliations and understandings – nationalists, for example, who did not oppose the war for moral reasons or love for compatriots but for hatred of the Slobodan Milošević’s regime, on the pretext that this war makes him and his communist generals rich. The Serbian Renewal Movement (Srpska

poker oboe) of Vuk Drašković stands out. It is unclear whether this movement was formed because of moral and ethical reasons, or out of hatred for the Milošević's regime. Vuk Drašković supported desertion from the Yugoslav People's Army, but at the same time sent people to the frontline by forming his own units (the Serbian Guard - Srpska garda). Regardless of the motivation of these groups, peace initiatives only gained their impact with the appearance of "Vuk's peace-making protesters" and the protest against mobilization, thereby gaining numbers and significant influence on figures of military-political power.

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Protests against mobilization, the JNA army, the lack of a war objective and desertion revolts were a massive phenomenon. "According to one source, mobilization succeeded, on average, in only 47% of cases. There have been almost daily revolts of conscripts and their parents across Serbia as a result of resistance to mobilization and the spontaneous abandonment of the frontline".³¹⁰ In fact, we can freely call this period between 1991 and 1992³¹¹ the beginning of the peace movement, that is, the anti-war movement. The positions of people who were part of the movement were not homogeneous – some protested against the war and some opposed "such way of fighting". Serbia and Yugoslavia were mobilizing forces although no state of war was officially declared and the objectives of the war were not clearly defined. Therefore the mood was shifted against the JNA, against the rulers at that time, while the opposition only at the end had truly pacifist calls. That is why these spontaneous revolts and movements quickly ended because they did not have one agreed objective and only in several cities of Vojvodina were peace groups and organizations really formed.

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Since the summer of 1991, parents of soldiers and reservists have been protesting in large numbers, demanding a ceasefire, the return of their sons from the frontline; in front of the Serbian Parliament, in front of the JNA General Staff, in the House of Guards, in front of the Government of Serbia. In December 1991, parents of reservists from Obrenovac, from Grocka, protested, demanding the return of their sons from the battlefield in Croatia. In December 1991, a large protest was held in Valjevo by reservists who refused to mobilize. The parents also protested in Kragujevac in November 1991, demanding that their sons return from Croatia. In September 1991, Valjevo reservist Vladimir Živković boarded an armoured personnel carrier and brought it in front of the SFRY Assembly.

December 21, 1991 – Lists of deserters and reservists refusing mobilization have been published as part of a permanent militaristic campaign by military and civilian authorities in Serbia against rebels in Kragujevac opposing the war. This was interpreted as a call for lynch. The largest riots of reservists and deserters were in Kragujevac (7.000, 2.000 and 200 reservists at a time) and Knjaževac (5.000), while revolts also broke out in Niš (400 or 450 people each time), Aranđelovac (67), Topola (200), Valjevo (600), Čačak, Gornji Milanovac (700), Smederevo (700). In Vojvodina, there were riots in Stara Moravica (83), Trešnjevac. In 1991 and 1992, 140.000 people were forcibly mobilized, 82.000 in Vojvodina. 25.000 people from Vojvodina, mostly Hungarians, fled to Hungary. About 100.000 young men fled from the authorities forcing them to war and criminal proceedings have been instituted against 10.000 of them.

Civic anti-war actions, in addition to actions organized by organizations, movements and political parties, were initiated spontaneously by the citizens themselves, fuelled by anger, desire for peace, sadness for the victims and lack of meaning and purpose of war. Naturally, these movements grew and became more massive, and some lasted for many years.

From October 8, 1991 to February 8, 1992, there was a daily lighting of candles action in Belgrade in front of the Presidency building. Candles were lit from 8.30 pm to 9 pm. The action lasted five months with the slogans “Solidarity with all rebels against the war” and “For all those killed in the war”. 72.650 candles were lit. The action was initiated by Nataša Kandić and Biljana Jovanović and was joined by many citizens. The Belgrade anti-war movement, in memory of Miroslav Milenković’s courageous act, published a book of epitaphs “The Tomb for Miroslav Milenković”.³¹² A book of mourning was opened in which all those who stood before the candlelight at Pioneer Park could write their epitaph.

The anti-war action of lighting candles in Pančevo took place every Saturday from November 12, 1991 to November 1995, when the Dayton Agreement was signed. This action has grown into a symbol of the Pančevo peace movement. Every Saturday there was a demilitarized zone where the newspapers “Vreme” and “Pančevac” were given out.

An anti-war rock concert was organized in Belgrade’s Republic Square on April 22, 1992 under the slogan “Don’t count on us”, attended by more than 55.000 people. The band Rimtutituki, composed of members

of Partibrejkers, Električni Orgazam and EKV, performed. They launched their anti-war campaign by recording the single "Listen here", and also performed this and other tracks on a truck traveling through Belgrade.

On May 30, 1992, several hundred theatre artists protested against the war and expressed solidarity with the victims with a one hour silence in front of the Yugoslav Drama Theatre. On August 13, of the same year, the Concert of "Artists for Peace" was organized in Šumarice in Kragujevac, where the artists like Rade Šerbedžija, Gorica Popović, band Smak, Atomsko Sklonište, Bora Dugić and others sang, recited and delivered speeches. In June 1992, members of the Croat ethnic community were expelled and their homes burned and demolished in Hrtkovci in Srem. Civil society organizations such as Women in Black, the Belgrade Circle and the Civil Resistance Movement (Žene u crnom, Beogradski krug and Civilni pokret otpora), as well as brave journalists, worked round the clock to get justice and, with their perseverance, criminals were apprehended.

Women's anti-war actions were the actions of feminist groups that both independently and jointly opposed war policy. We also include those mothers who did not allow the state to abuse their pain and suffering. Over the past 15 years, these movements have proven to be among the most significant in the anti-war context.

The counter-rally organized on February 5, 1991, is interesting, a group of women made their way to the stage where the Movement of Mothers of the Former Yugoslavia was being held. The so-called "fur-coat women", essentially wives of the then generals and other elite of the war even managed to "install" banners. Also significant is the incursion of soldiers' mothers into the Serbian Parliament during its session, on July 2, 1991, where they adjourned the session demanding that all soldiers be released from the armies and stop armed conflicts and that soldiers be called to war only within the borders of their country and sent outside only if the territorial integrity of the country is threatened. On October 9, 1991, "Women in Black" began protests against the war, which continued throughout the following years, every Wednesday, until the Dayton Agreement was signed. Women wearing black and being silent, taking on traditional patriarchal forms and filling them with feminist-anti-militaristic content, commemorated all victims of the war, showed solidarity with everyone rebelling against the war, protesting against the militarism through arms and words.

The period between the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and the war in

Kosovo in 1996 and 1997, is characterized by a new wave of mass protests – against the government of Slobodan Milošević. Both student and civic protests took place. They began in Niš after the electoral theft and spread vigorously to Belgrade and other cities. Although in some cases the numbers reached around 500.000 people, Slobodan Milošević was thrown from power only in 2000.

The post-war phase is characterized by the consolidation and expansion of peace groups and organizations. As the war was officially over, the goal of these movements was redirected to maintaining peace and democracy, strengthening human and minority rights and reducing inter-ethnic tensions. An example of one of the civil society organizations is the Youth Initiative for Human Rights, which works to establish communication between young people from the former Yugoslavia, researching and publishing information on war crimes and transitional justice, as well as preventing glorifying war criminals and politics fuelling wars³¹³, all with the aim of preventing the wars repeating.

Filip Vulović



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311 From October 1991 to the spring of 1992 - There were about fifty reservist riots in Serbia, with about 55,000 participants.

August 1991 - 700 reservists from Smederevo refused to be transferred from Bosnia to Croatia. The biggest revolt of reservists broke out in Kragujevac, 7,000 locked themselves in the barracks, refusing to leave it.

September 1991 - The Kragujevac People's Army (2,000 members) returned home from Šid, refusing to go to Slavonia. 600 reservists from Valjevo returned from Herzegovina.

October 1991 - Fleeing the violent mobilization, 500 Hungarians fled Subotica to Hungary. 200 reservists returned to Topola and said they did not want to go to war because Serbia was not attacked. The revolt of the Kragujevac detachment on Pasuljanske livade - reservists from Smederevo, Velika Plana, Topola, Svilajnac joined the revolt. Reservists from Čačak blocked the Ibar highway. In Dalj, 150 out of 200 soldiers left the front. In Niš, 13 reserve officers with another 450 soldiers refused to go to the front.

November 10, 1991 - The largest reservist uprising since the beginning of the war in Knjaževac, in which about 5,000 reservists took part.

December 12, 1991 - Several reservists protested against the violent mobilization in Kragujevac. A group of 200 reservists from Kragujevac returned from the front in Vukovar.

December 18, 1991 - 700 reservists refused to fight in Markušica in Slavonija.

January 1992 - 700 reservists in Gornji Milanovac refused to go to Eastern Slavonija.

312 Mobilized reservist Miroslav Milenković, born in 1951. The father of two children, a worker from Gornji Milanovac, committed suicide under pressure from the JNA general to decide whether he would be a “real Serb” or a deserter and a traitor. He shot himself in the head.

313 In January 2017, eight activists of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights protested against convicted war criminal Veselin Šljivančanin at the promotion of his book, blowing whistles and holding a banner that read “War criminals to shut up to talk about victims”. At that protest, they were beaten by the visitors, and in the end they had to pay a fine of around 450 euros for violating public order and peace.

IMPRESSIONS BY THE PARTICIPANTS



312 Mobilized reservist Miroslav Milenković, born in 1951. The father of two children, a worker from Gornji Milanovac, committed suicide under pressure from the JNA general to decide whether he would be a “real Serb” or a deserter and a traitor. He shot himself in the head.

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IMPRESSIONS BY THE PARTICIPANTS



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We Can Do It Differently, Together

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Despite the involvement of family members in the war, the spirit and burden of hatred was never transferred to me. When growing up this allowed me not to look at anyone's nationality or religion and even if I would want to, I wouldn't know the difference. The question is what kind of person I would have been today if I had not been involved in youth activism in the region.

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One of the factors that significantly have an impact on the image you get when growing up in the Balkans is also the place where you spent your childhood days. It's amazing how a few dozen miles can make the difference between a warm home and an exile, life or death. My story begins on the Croatian coast at a time when the sound of rifles and cannons went silent. The year is 1996, it's been a while since the Oluja and the Bljesak, Dayton is signed and the war is moving to some other areas of the former state.

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I was fortunate to grow up far from the horrors of war. A fortune my few years older friends, not even peers or younger ones, who found themselves under some "new" shells in Pristina or Belgrade did not have. Despite the involvement of family members in the war, the spirit and burden of hatred was never transferred to me. This allowed me not to look at anyone's nationality or religion while growing up, and even if I wanted to, I wouldn't know the difference.

Of course, not everyone was that lucky. Growing up in territories devastated by the war, leaving behind ruins and death, many of my peers, even after the horrors of war, lived through the divisions it had left behind. They, school-age children, neither knew nor understood what separates them – they only knew there were the others.

And I, already in Zagreb, surrounded by other children of the same religion and nationality, could not even understand such divisions. Yet it is impossible to grow up and remain isolated from this in a society with so much unresolved issues from the past. Soon enough, all of that will engulf me too, absorbing it from the society and social environment, long before it comes to the fore in the history book. I had heard all kinds of things that I thought I understood but in fact I didn't.

The question is what kind of person would I be today that April of 2013 and my first visit to Belgrade had not happened? The High School Entrepreneurship Competition in Belgrade brought together about 100 young people from all parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Croatia. I cannot say I didn't have at least a bit of fear and anxiety about how would they receive me there, but those feelings disappeared the moment we arrived in Belgrade.

For the first time I had the opportunity to hear stories from the other side, but still from the perspective of individuals. Anyhow, knowing about the other side of the story, about some other events that I had never heard of, prompted me to re-examine my beliefs and to come to my own conclusions. From that moment, things change.

Every friend I made in those few days brought Sarajevo or Podgorica at least a little closer to Zagreb. Unfortunately, many young people will not reach that point of rethinking and looking from a different perspective and will continue to feel the fear I felt when I first visited Belgrade. This fear is a stumbling block to all parties involved in the events of the 1990s and the best way to overcome it is by confronting it.

I was saying – pack up and go, make sure it's really the way they say it is. In order to spread this thought in our surroundings, at the initiative of our colleague from Belgrade, in early 2015 we launched the project "Isn't It Better Like This". It is a short and completely amateur documentary film, which presents our differences and problems as links between young people in this region.

Teams in Zagreb, Sarajevo and Belgrade gather with about forty members, and they soon grow into the Youth Association Balkanian (Udruga mladih Balkanac) with teams in all three cities. Unlike other organizations in the area, our ways of doing things were a little different. We left the causes and the past aside and focused on simply



connecting and getting to know each other. The past is something everyone likes to talk about, but few like to go deeper into the subject and really learn something, so many young people run away from activities that involve such topics. These young people were our target group.

The idea of the film was to follow the journey of a group of young people of different nationalities, religions and life stories across different environments in the Balkans. From that moment, sheer curiosity flows into a serious project with an ambitious goal. Since the first day we have encountered many issues and one of the bigger ones was that almost all of us are amateurs in everything the organization should deal with.

But step by step, we were getting closer and closer to the goal. Meeting after meeting, city after city, we also broke some of our prejudices. It's been many years since then, but I still consider all these cities my second home. Our idea almost everywhere was perceived positively. The doors have been opened to us by individuals, but also by the media, helping us to bring our voice to the wider public.

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I will never forget my first television appearance and my first interview. In Serbia and BiH, media of all forms have written about us, from the smallest regional and city portals to big names such as Belgrade's Politika, RTS's morning program twice, the BHRT from Bosnia and Herzegovina, N1 and more.

The situation was different in Croatia. The big media did not have interest in our project, but we were interesting to numerous portals, newspapers and televisions for young people. The newspaper Global wrote about us, we stood in front of the Student Television cameras, were hosted on Yammatt FM, and there are also portals like Studentski.hr, srednja.hr, x-ica, etc. that wrote about us. Our activities were supported by a regional Peace Network of which we were a member.

We started shooting in the summer of 2016. Our story begins in Sarajevo, the city I first visited because of the friends from Balkanac. At the time of filming, this city is already mine, my people are around me and the camera here and there made no difference. Few days in one city and then we went to the next one, that was our life for the next ten days.

In that little red van from where we listened to bands Zabranjeno pušenje, Prljavci and Bajaga I have created some of my best memories of that period. From Sarajevo to Tuzla and beyond to Zagreb, Trogir, Split, Mostar and through Sarajevo, where we started, to Belgrade and the finals in Jagodina – we were a caravan pushing our noses and lenses everywhere, chasing famous and unknown people on the streets. We put professors, artists, waiters in front of the lens, but also explored each city in our own way so that the viewer could feel the pulse of the city.

The first screening in Belgrade brought over six hundred people in the hall of the Youth Centre. Zagreb, Sarajevo, Jajce, Umag, Tuzla and Prijedor followed. In each of these cities we watched again the movie we already knew by heart, but we were not bored. Looking at all these people taking turns in front of the camera and at the situations we went through we would be reminded how much this project has enriched our lives. The effort we put into this project was paid off for us through experience, new acquaintances and memories – at the same time we did something for ourselves and for the society.

We may not have succeeded in influencing the masses of people, but at the beginning we were targeting individuals and we are happy to know that we were someone's first step in expanding their vision. After filming and screening, we parted as a group and everyone went their own way, but some of them are still among my closest friends.

I continued my activism after Balkanac in the Youth Initiative for Human Rights. Unlike the Balkanac, the causes are not skipped, but through conversation and work on painful topics, one tries to influence the awareness of individuals and the community. Visiting key places from war times, talking to people who have felt the horrors of war on their skin, participating in commemorations together, with the most important thought in mind – every crime is a crime, regardless of the nationality of the victim and the perpetrator.

We often hear that we need to move on from years 1945 and 1991 and how we deal with topics that are painful to all Balkan nations. Divisions on the left and right entered all pores of Croatian society.

Carrying that burden will leave us in a circle, doing more harm to ourselves than to anyone else. But is the solution to leave it all behind as it is today and move on? Letting our children being taught many



parallel and completely opposite histories? Those things cannot be pushed under the carpet forever and then anger and fury can be expected to escalate in a nation to which others are to blame for all its misfortune.

The best example of this are the war events of the 1990s that were practically built on World War II, bringing back names, flags, songs, but also traumas that were suppressed under a one-sided history of socialism. Ignoring history to seemingly build peace in society has led us today to have masses that ignore the simplest and most basic of historical facts. The impact of the social environment and personal experiences often enveloped by disasters and fears are, however, more powerful than historical facts.

But how is it possible that our histories are so different? How is it possible to manipulate with victims not thousands but hundreds of thousands of human lives? It is simple the politicians who live by it, the historians at the service of the authorities and the tormented people make it possible. Victims' games have been running since the end of World War II and the competition on who has been the biggest victim among the Balkan nations since the Ottoman times. The commemorations of crimes are converted to figures that must be as high as possible.

At the same time, we have an incredible complex of our innocence and every time crimes from our side are mentioned they are justified by one argument – but what have the others done to us? How can Vukovar be a revenge for Jasenovac, crimes in Oluja for Vukovar? Who is next to take revenge? The unresolved history maintains the issue of revenge that our peoples have felt many times before and do we really want to leave that issue to future generations?

Joint commissions, ethical and impartial research work and less of “bar histories” are the main ways leading to long-term peace in this region. The Youth Initiative for Human Rights is working on several projects with this goal. The Coalition for RECOM has been established with partners and since 2006 has been committed to establishing an independent and extra-judicial international coalition with the task of investigating the facts of war crimes and all other human rights abuses throughout the former Yugoslavia from 1991 to 2001.

There is also the Past Continues project (Prošlost se nastavlja),

launched in 2018, which has brought together over 100 young people from all post-Yugoslav countries. They are divided into groups of two countries and have chosen themselves the issues to deal with. As an example, we've got a group of young people from Croatia and Serbia who will write about Vukovar and Oluja, creating a final, fact-based narrative.

The project will result in the publication that brings together the narratives of all groups and demonstrates that collaboration on issues of the past is difficult, but still possible.

The younger generations inherit the burdens of previous generations even though they were born after the wars themselves. This will happen until we realize for ourselves that the problem is not only in the others. As soon as we realize that the crime has no nationality and belief, that the criminals should be punished regardless of the symbols they used when they made the killings, the youth will finally be able to grow up without that burden. Each of our states is tasked with punishing criminals and working for justice for the victims.

The solution is not in hiding, but neither is this form of arguing that prevails today between the sides. Only a quality, fact-based conversation leads to understanding, solving questions, and ultimately to peace. The role of activists is crucial in this process. Dealing with topics such as war horrors and human rights carries the burden of condemnation from the community. It is not easy to deal with it, but the idea that you are helping, at least one individual, will push you forward.

My gained experiences have changed me to such an extent that I cannot imagine life today without the knowledge, memories and people I have met through these years of activism. Even though I study a completely different field and invest in activism a lot less time and efforts than some of my colleagues and friends, I find that every effort counts. If every individual would be thinking of helping their community in some way, whatever that area is, we would leave the next generations a much nicer world.

Ante Perez

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We Don't Want to Live Your War!

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Personally, I have been very fortunate to be involved in many projects addressing peace activism, war and post-war topics. These projects and these people, of whom you will never hear about in the media, stimulate young heads to think independently and critically about what happened. We just want to live a normal life, not looking at someone else's nationality, religion, gender... We just want to live in peace. And peace needs efforts. I think we no longer have the choice to act or not to act. Previous generations have had it and their (in)action is what we live today. There are no more options, there are only responsibilities.

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As a post-war generation, I grew up with stories of heroism, but also of a serious disaster that hit the areas of the former Yugoslavia. From a young age, I had the opportunity to listen to various stories from my parents about what happened in this area in the 1990s.

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Practically, as I experience it today, I grew up with war topics because my parents were always very happy to answer any questions or speak on their own about various events, crimes and/or operations. Moreover, the topic was not exclusively narrowed down to the territory of the Republic of Croatia, but they gladly talked about the war in BiH, the war in Kosovo... ending each story with the same phrase: "It is important that you know what happened!"

I was lucky because my parents, unlike the education system and toxic media, always tried to portray a fair image, regardless of how painful and shameful it used to be. Also, it has always been stressed to me that I will never be able to understand the suffering and hatred of certain people and that trying too hard it is not worth the effort.

And indeed, after a long period of dealing with war topics, as much as

I tried to understand and bring this feeling closer to myself, I cannot know what people went through. It's simple, if you didn't go through it, you can't understand. Still, I can at least try to understand someone's suffering.

My approach to learning about the war and the information about it has changed dramatically over the last couple of years, upgraded and taken various forms. That change has partially to do with the study I enrolled in (political sciences) and partially with self-initiated research.

I started looking solely for projects that deal with war issues because I was interested in seeing how my peers from other countries experience the wars of the 90s and how they view the situation in their country. About a year and a half ago, I saw an invitation for all young people interested in war-related issues and facing the past to apply for the "Shared Narratives - Past Continues" project, sent by the Youth Initiative for Human Rights. The project is regional (Croatia, Serbia, BiH, Montenegro and Kosovo) and aims to write common narratives on war topics. I immediately opened the link and applied!

A thousand different emotions came through my head, but most of all, a sense of excitement and satisfaction, because after all someone asks us, the young people, about the war. We can finally talk about how we experience it and learn what we don't know yet. I remember that one of the tasks when applying for a project was to send a picture/photo that personally associates us with war and we had to write why we chose it and how it related to the war.

I immediately knew what picture I needed to send – a water tower from Vukovar. At that moment it was quite logical: "That's what I grew up with and what we all need to be proud of". Although I was aware of the crimes and suffering of Serb civilians during the liberation of Vukovar, it was somehow my first association with the war. I was born in Zagreb and grew up there, which is why I was never directly exposed to the remnants of the war.

My everyday life in Zagreb is not filled with city or café stories about collapsed buildings, fallen shells and ruined children's lives. There's no such thing here, at least people don't talk about it. What I was told about mostly and more often was Vukovar, primarily through the media. Of course, not all year long, but only when necessary for political points.



Fortunately for me, I was admitted to the project. The first conference was held in early 2018 in Belgrade. More than 150 young people came from all over the region of the former Yugoslavia. Everyone with the different historical backgrounds and narratives we grew up with. A wonderful, positive atmosphere for young people who came to learn from each other and work for something better for our future was felt.

Some things have startled me greatly. At one workshop, we were divided by country and on the floor in front of us there were pictures that we all sent along with the application forms. At that moment I was left confused. All other groups had a couple of repeating pictures, but generally the content was diverse. Over 70 percent of my group had images of water tower from Vukovar. We all looked at each other with approval and understanding: "Yes, that's our history!" Moments later, a completely cohesive and proud group is shattered by a question from a group of young people from Serbia: "How do you justify Vukovar?"

A complete silence has been created. For some normal reasoning, I believed that we should stand up and apologize for what had happened or mention all the victims that suffered and point out that we in Croatia have a major problem of not dealing with the past and denying the crimes. I expressed my opinion within the group. A colleague and I presented similar views, but did not find approval. A general panic was coming along, nationalism started to wake up, the guilty and incomplete narratives we grew up with just floated to the surface.

A colleague from the group asked for the microphone and read the decision of the Battle of Vukovar on the phone. As he read the text on Vukovar defence, he burst with pride. The situation seemed a bit unreal, young people, untouched by war and yet so proud and lacking understanding for all the victims of the suffering.

But the panic only intensified; another colleague wanted to answer and took the microphone: "You must understand that what happened there is numerically and in degree of disaster incomprehensible with what you did to us..." With a spasm in my stomach, I took the microphone and tried to silence the calvarias that had arisen: "We young generations don't need to justify ourselves". Fortunately, the workshop was over at that moment.

Even today, I often remember this event and cannot explain what happened to the young people who are intact with the war (by that I mean those who have not really lived until/through the war and the horrors it carries) that speak with so much hatred and intolerance in the voice.

Because of such and similar people, today we have what we have - a beaten up group of tourists from Serbia on Brač, beating of local Serbs in a cafe near Knin... We live guilty, incomplete past that bring hate today. We live it because we are not talking about what happened, where and how it happened. We're not talking about the offenders and we're not talking about the victims. We're just not talking - we're avoiding. The elders claim it is easier so.

At that same conference in Belgrade, a lecture by Žarko Puhovski was engraved in my mind. He said that throughout the history it has been repeatedly confirmed that the recovery of collapsed and divided ethnic communities is possible, only a specific scheme that exists needs to be followed. First of all, there should be dialogue within the communities about the problems and give the opportunity to talk about them constantly. The discussion is followed by a confrontation of opinions and discussions. Then the apology, forgiveness and potential well-being of the communities come along.

As an individual, it is essential to forgive. And forgiveness is indeed possible, whatever the background of the crime. However, Professor Puhovski well emphasized the problem to which we still testify today: "Who shall victims forgive? Who, when we still do not know or do not want to know who the perpetrators of these crimes are. So the trace of the victims is lost as well." And it really is like that. Who can we forgive when we deny crimes and victims? Who to forgive when we don't want to talk about it?

Shortly after that conference, on the occasion of the second part of the project, which took place in Sarajevo, we visited Ahmići one afternoon. Quite confused, but very curious, I set out on the journey with the other participants. Until then, I had never faced what happened there.

We arrive at the mosque where we are greeted by a welcoming and smiling imam (unfortunately I do not remember the name anymore, but I will remember his face and words forever). He introduced us to a small room that is a kind of museum designed to commemorate what

happened in Ahmići in April 1993.

Our host took us through that room with the story of Operation 48 HOURS OF ASH AND BLOOD. I grew angrier with every sentence of his. All this heinousness of the crime is even worse when people don't know it happened.

When he finished speaking, I immediately asked him, with such eagerness believing that the answer was yes: "Did any of the Croats living in Ahmići or the surrounding area ever come here to see this room, to hear this same lecture and to apologize for everything?" Imam just looked at me blankly, a little confused by my hasty question, but at the same time, with a great pain, and he let out a sad – "no". I just stared blankly at him and kept quiet.

Long after that, I was haunted by the same feeling that came over me during the imam's lecture - a complete sense of powerlessness. It's like thousands of "forgive me" standing in your throat and you can't breathe from them, and you just want to scream and fix whatever happened. Fix it because you see that people are still suffering because the time itself will not resolve these problems. No one resolves them. Ahmići is still not talked about and we still have not publicly apologized for Ahmići.

And every day I look at young people fascinated by war and some formidable heroism, the calls "For home ready", sadistic nationalism... All this comes from young people who are not even aware how lucky they are because the war has not touched them. And every day, I am shocked by human stupidity and inertia of fundamental state institutions. Is it so difficult to publicly say the things that are established in the courts (even international ones) and apologize for it?

Is it nicer to live in a bubble where children are taught falsehoods and incomplete and/or false truths without any remorse? It seems that those who should be the first to resolve this problem rather have the younger generations perish indoctrinated with nationalism and pretentious pride in their country's achievements, than being taught the truth and building the peace for which these areas and people crave. If not those who have to, we the young people will repair the great deal of issues that need to be repaired. That's because we are talking about this, because we are not avoiding war topics and we are

not afraid to build something new and better together.

I think we no longer have the choice to decide to act or not to. Previous generations have had it, and their (in)action is what we live today. There are no more options, there are only responsibilities. And I don't know if apologizing individually to someone for crimes is the right way or not. I do not know who needs to know or not to know, but I know that we must not remain silent about this so that we can live in peace. If not our generation, the peace will benefit the future ones. It is evident that the war did no good to anyone. It's time to give war up and move on to peace.

The situation today seems better. Namely, a few days ago at a conference called *Untold stories in Vukovar: young people and facing the past*, I saw how much this peace is really needed for young people. When presenting personal views and impressions about the war events and the narratives they grew up with, the Vukovar high school students became aware of why this should be discussed.

These children are the meaning of everything that is done in the area of dealing with the past. These young, wonderful people talked about things that are quite natural for their age; a way of doing extracurricular activities, excursions and trips, splitting up during sports competitions... Completely natural things, but impossible, because they are constantly divided by nationality. One boy, Uroš Antić (17), spoke of one part of his family being from Croatia, while the other one from Serbia. He spoke of how his family today, who had been largely expelled from Dalmatia, looked at everything that had happened during the war and that those who remained today live in Vukovar. Then he spoke of something so banal but in fact so essential to the affirmation of a high school child - a prom/excursion:

“And because of the fact that we are divided into two shifts, I have to go on an excursion to Subotica and Novi Sad, while my friends from the Croatian shift can go to Poland and Hungary. I don't want to live in someone's war, I just want to hang out normally with my friends and that I could go on the excursion with the second shift.”

It was then completely clear to me that all of us who were confronted with war topics and resolved the same were in fact Uroš; we do not want to live a war. We just want to live a normal life in peace, not looking at someone else's nationality, religion, gender...We just want

to live peace. And that peace is possible if we work for it.

Personally, I have been very fortunate to be involved in many projects addressing peace activism, war and post-war topics. These projects and these people, the ones you will never hear about in the media, drive young heads to think independently and critically about what happened. These same people have enabled me, but I believe many other young people, to try to work for changes in society.

You will never read or listen about these when the most important political events in society are broadcasted, and you should. You will not because they do not do these things for the sake of publicity and political points, but because they believe that young people deserve peace. They believe that we all deserve truth and peace.

Viktorija Stanković



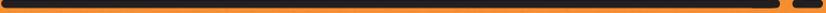
CONCLUSION



VICTIMS
INDICTMENTS
FACTS
DEFENCE
TRUTH
LAW
RESPONSIBILITY
GUILT
CRIMINAL

PROSECUTION
VICTIMS
INDICTMENTS
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JURY

CONCLUSION







This book of shared narratives written by young people from throughout former Yugoslavia was not born in order to languish on shelves of various non-governmental organizations. Its creation process was described in the introductory chapter – a birth of a methodology of mapping out conflicting narratives of most controversial episodes of different conflicts, deconstructing them through study trips, interviews and researches, and then slowly arriving at a shared narrative. With each of the steps of the process, there was a clear sense that we were on to something bigger – that the process itself was creating an offshoot of ripple effects to a point where it became hard to keep track of them all. It was a transformative experience at a personal level – for the organizers as well as some of the participants; it was a transformative experience at our collective, group level as well – as we embarked on an uncertain journey with a clear goal but no clear map or manual on how to get there. As organizers, it meant engaging in a participant-observation of sorts of our own selves throughout this process and mapping out the methodology of arriving to shared narratives while working with youth in post-conflict environments. Now, looking back, several realizations are sinking in.

The Shared Narratives book is a **reconciliation advocacy tool**. It is created by youth from the post-war generation, and theirs is the present that is currently being hijacked by political elites that continue to focus on the past and on deepening mistrust and 1990s-based adversarial disputes between our neighbouring countries, and between the communities within them. The Shared Narratives book stands as a testament to the fact that (young) people, when given the opportunity to meet and talk about the controversial issues of the past, are able to do so without threats or violence. It also stands as a testament to the ability of youth to lead the reconciliation advocacy effort, as

the authors of the book exhibited a maturity that escapes many of the current political leaders of our respective nations. Germany's student movement in 1968 was known for breaking with the Nazi past, breaking the pact of silence and rejecting the crimes of their fathers and grandfathers – are the countries of Western Balkans ready for a German 1968-style youth movement that broke with the Nazi past and the crimes of their parents and grandparents? This type of new generation-led exploration of the past that takes and internalizes history's lessons in order to improve the present and pave the way for a better future is something that has been lacking in all the countries of former Yugoslavia. Young people are leaving the countries of the Western Balkans, with emigration becoming one of the key issues that challenges the future of the region. Some studies exploring the reasons behind people leaving have found explicit mentions of too much of past poisoning the present political and public discourse. This would indicate that the time may be ripe for the birth of a youth movement that seeks to lay the past to rest.

Considering the vital role of education in perpetuating or disarming the charge of various historical narratives, we need to consider the ***potential uses of the Shared Narratives book within the educational context***. Seeing that the book applies multiperspectivity in exploring the differing narratives on same sets of events, it is a useful comparative and illustrative guide on how history is constructed, instrumentalized and taught. The countries of former Yugoslavia have difficulties in coming to terms with the recent past, starting with World War II and onwards. Today, the public polemics about Ustashe and Partisans are as frequent as discussions about different 1990s episodes, so it should not come as a surprise to learn that most history textbooks in elementary and high schools barely touch upon the World War II, Yugoslavia under Tito, or its dissolution in the 1990s. History teachers are not given the resources necessary to teach about the recent history, and seeing how inflammatory it continues to be – most are happy to avoid the subject altogether. The Shared Narratives book could be a useful teaching tool in two ways: (1) as a comparative, illustrative guide on historical narratives, their formation and the process of (historical) research – especially when it relates to topics that are in the living memory of many of our compatriots (veterans, family members, neighbours); or (2) as a methodology that can be replicated in class project or homework on mapping out different narratives of (local) events from recent history. Teaching history in a participatory way, with youth taking the role of researchers



and investigators, is an example of emancipatory pedagogy that is underutilized in schools. The Shared Narratives methodology could provide a way for youth to get interested in (recent) history, in researching its various aspects, and in teacher-facilitated authoring of historical accounts.

Another way to use the Shared Narratives methodology is to **replicate it elsewhere**. The world, sadly, is filled with countries with protracted conflict, polarization and differing versions of history. For example, during the implementation of the Shared Narratives project, we received inquiries of interest from Colombia to explore the potential of the Shared Narratives methodology in their country. We can foresee the applicability and transferability of this method to contexts of protracted conflict, high degrees of polarization over (recent) historical events and their interpretation, or political instrumentalisation of history. While Shared Narratives has taken into account the socio-cultural sensitivities of the Western Balkans/former Yugoslavia region, the transferability of the method naturally depends on the facilitators of the process to do the same in other cultural contexts. That said, one has to find a way to (culturally) navigate the discomfort zone in order to maximize the benefits of the collaborative exploration, investigation, confrontation and dialogue processes. After all, this process was inspired by examples from all over the world, by projects and initiatives in Israel, the United States, France and Germany, Armenia and Turkey, to just name a few. Every society and every context are unique. However; the technology of denial, coercive propaganda, use of history as a tool of division and as a basis for adversarial ideological positioning towards ‘the other’ and an identity-based view of history are all well-known processes far from being endemic to the Balkans.

Maja Nenadović and Mario Mažić



EPILOGUE



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EPILOGUE



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It is hard to convey in words the sense of collective positive disbelief that settled in at the end of the Writers' Retreat that took place in Samobor, Croatia, in January 2019. The group of 18 of the most active Shared Narratives participants gathered to edit and finalize the texts of all the bilateral working groups. Perhaps it is the nature of most collective processes that it is only at the end that we are allowed to openly admit the doubts we had about the endeavour at its very outset? Be that as it may, our Shared Narratives journey was special because for most of us, it was a deeply personal yet collective effort. It allowed us to confront some of the skeletons of our own unresolved past and to have our assumptions challenged over and over again.



For us, as organizers, the biggest assumption we were thrilled to have proven wrong was our initial idea that all the topics selected for the bilateral working groups' narratives would be the most controversial, bloodiest episodes of Yugoslavia's dissolution. While many such topics are present in the book, we were surprised by the initiative coming from each of the bilateral groups to explore the cultural scene and anti-war protests in their respective countries – a topic that is largely hidden and near forgotten part of the 1990s narratives. The fact that there were anti-war protests taking place in each of the countries of former Yugoslavia, and that there were artists (writers, actors, singers) who used their voices against the descent into war is a suppressed part of history because it directly goes against the dominant narratives of unanimous and courageous desire of national self-determination. We were happy that the Shared Narratives youth group chose to focus on these protests as a way of shedding light and attention on the fact that wars were not an inevitability, but a choice made by political elites at the time.

The full name of the project was “Past Continues: Shared Narratives” to denote two things: the detrimental fact that past was all too present in our current daily lives, and our own realistic attitude as to whether construction of shared narratives was even a possibility at this point in the region. However, this process has shown to us that we need to halt our own doubts, keep our assumptions in check and be open to a co-creative, collaborative process of collective (civic) engagement to generate the steps ahead. At the end of this journey, we are reconciled with the fact that history cannot be tidied up in neatly organized drawers and compartments. Our overall goal was and continues to be to pave the way from the current ‘Past Continues’ status quo in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, to one where this adversarial past is once and for all – discontinued.

Maja Nenadović

ABOUT THE USE OF *SHARED NARRATIVES* METHOD







○ Shared Narratives project aroused public interest even before the full text was published. The process of approaching the past and learning history, designed and implemented by the Youth Initiative for Human Rights at the regional level, aroused the interest of a large number of young people, civil society organizations, academic and state institutions and individuals interested in politics, culture of memory, education and teaching history.

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○ Going through all the phases with the participants of the project, which were brought to an end by writing narratives, dominant and shared, the fact that the project is ending brought to light the fact that the process of creating shared narratives in the Western Balkans will not end. Likewise, it quickly became clear that it would be extremely important to provide the public with an insight into what has been done.

○ The high level of interest of the participants in the realization of each step of the project and their success in creating shared narratives about the past of the 1990s, above all, proved that such steps are possible. Given the satisfaction of the participants with what was done, we estimated that it would be useful to incorporate a successful process into a didactic tool for learning history. Thus, an interdisciplinary model of learning, dialogue and history making emerged that summarizes the method and experience used to connect young people of different ethnic backgrounds or nationalities in conversation and approach to topics that separate the societies of which they are a part.

We presented the created tool at the *3rd National Fair of Tools and Methods of NonFormal Learning*, which was held in May 2019 on Sljeme (Croatia), organized by the Agency for Mobility and European

Union Programs.

Thanks to the interest in our didactic tool that contributes to reconciliation, we were invited to present it at the international event Tool Fair XIV - #know-how held in Rovaniemi (Finland) organized by SALTO-YOUTH EuroMed and Good Practices Resource Center, Finnish National Agency for Erasmus+ and the City of Rovaniemi in November 2019, which brought together more than 140 young experts in youth work from 38 countries to exchange knowledge on new educational methods and tools.

In cooperation with the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and the European House Vukovar, in 2019 and 2020 we presented the project Shared Narratives as part of the conferences *Untold Stories and The Past in Our Everyday Life: Attitudes of Young People*. We did this in panel discussions and group work on the relationship of young people to the past. Alongside youth the groups consisted of experts and activists in the field of politics of memory and history, and many young people from Croatia and Serbia, either participating live or through virtual platforms.

On the eve of the 25th anniversary of Operation Storm, Documenta - Center for Dealing with the Past on behalf of the RECOM Reconciliation Network, organized in August 2020 a debate *Storm in the Culture of Remembrance* where we also highlighted the benefits of using our model to find common interpretations of history. creating better interethnic and international relations.

Interest in presenting the experience gained with the Shared Narratives project was also shown by history professors at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb, several academic experts whose expertise is the history and culture of memory, but also the French Embassy in Croatia and the City of Zagreb.





