

Remembering the Partisans and Yugoslav socialism: Memories and counter-memories

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the politics of memory and the transformations of memories of WWII and socialist Yugoslavia in the present-day Slovenia. I focus on the grass-roots, bottom-up memories that invade Slovenian public space, and I investigate 174 in-depth interviews with the middle- and old-age people. In this regard, the Slovenian nation is divided, positive memories of Yugoslav socialism's well-being and prosperity and the heroic Partisan struggle strongly clash with negative counter-memories of communist repression and Partisan inter- and post-war killings of Home Guards. The forced forgetting of WWII, the Partisans and Yugoslavia, which is promoted also by politically institutionalised top-down politics of memory, is created also in the popular, bottom-up memories of the informants. Such memory politics foster antitotalitarian and anti-communist discourses, creates Communism as the Other and produces Slovenian nationalism. Moreover, it blurs the WWII liberator-aggressor paradigm, when it suddenly becomes unclear who was liberator and who was aggressor during WWII, and it absolutely equates Hitler's Nazism with Communism.

KEYWORDS: memory politics, Slovenian memory landscape, Yugoslavia, WWII, regime of memory-truth

Introduction: Conflicting narratives about the past

The enormous break marked by the disappearance of communist revolutionary Yugoslavia,¹ which was grounded in the history of Partisan struggle,² was also characterised by the transformation of the repository of the Slovenian nation's collective memory. For this reason, the topics of WWII, Partisans and Home Guards, state socialism, the Communist Party, and Yugoslavia are highly disputable in Slovenia nowadays. Not only monuments, statues, textbooks, museum exhibitions, street and square names connected to these past eras as the primary 'sites of memory' (Nora 1989: 7) have been erased or transformed, but especially people's knowledge about these past events is subjected to memory struggles. The national consensus about these past periods has not yet been reached and, as Corcoran (2002) maintains, this is a peculiar characteristic of young democracies, especially Eastern European countries as a former Communist bloc, which are still struggling to define their pasts. Moreover, these memory struggles can be most clearly examined 'at those 'sites of memory' where the slow formation of ideology, consensus and collective identity takes place' (Corcoran 2002: 49).

In this regard, the Slovenian nation is divided, while some call for the erasure of these past periods and especially for the revisionist writings of recent history, others argue for an absolute preservation and recovery of revolutionary histories. This divide is possible because collective memory is always a representation of the past, to use Wertsch's (2008: 120) words, shared by members of a group such as for instance a generation, political group or nation-state. Therefore, positive memories of Yugoslav socialism's well-being and prosperity and heroic Partisan struggle strongly clash with negative counter-memories of communist repression and Partisan inter- and post-war killings of Home Guards, which is also obvious in the lack of consensus and indeterminacy of the meaning of those existing material memory sites that represent these past eras. Moreover, as Esbenshade similarly shows for the case of communist monuments in post-socialist Hungary, due to the memory struggle specific material objects can gain a totally opposite meaning to what they carried in the past: 'Monuments command us not merely to remem-

¹ On November 29, 1943, the Communist-led Yugoslav Partisan resistance movement constituted Yugoslavia. After the war, Josip Broz Tito and the Partisans were promoted as national heroes. In this regard, Partisans and their resistance to occupation became the dominant signifier of the past in Yugoslavia, and all other narratives were silenced. A Soviet-type administrative socialism was introduced following the war, but in 1948, due to the conflict between Tito and Stalin, Yugoslavia left the Eastern bloc and built a new political-economic model. The slogan of 'brotherhood and unity' united Yugoslavia and became a national slogan until its collapse, beginning in 1991. We should bear in mind that Yugoslav socialism was distinct in comparison to other Eastern European socialist regimes. It was based on one-party rule (Communist Party), but it also invented an economic system of workers' self-management and Yugoslavia developed open relations with the Western capitalist countries.

² Nazi aggressors and occupation forces invaded Yugoslavia on April 6, 1941. On April 27, 1941 the National Liberation Front was established and an organised Partisan armed resistance began. Its primary goal was armed resistance against Nazism and Fascism but its secondary goal was Communist revolution. Yugoslav Partisans were led by Marshal Josip Broz Tito, who had also been the Communist Party leader since 1937. From the beginning of the war, a civil war began also between Partisans and Nazi collaborating counterrevolutionary organisations, as also Home Guards, which were established in September 1943 and who were against communist revolution. After the war ended and Germany surrendered collaborating forces, including Home Guard squads, fled to Italy and Austria. Many were returned to Yugoslavia as war prisoners by foreign liberation armies. Most of them were killed without trial and the Communist leadership in Yugoslavia never properly addressed these post-war killings.

ber, but to remember a triumph, in this case one that was now meant to be seen as tragedy' (1995: 72).³ In the same sense, in the Slovenian context counter-memories dictate new revisionist histories and new sites of memory, which would see the Partisan and Yugoslav pasts, once seen as victorious and glorious pasts, as a tragedy of the Slovenian nation. As it is shown, this past period is not a result of agreed-upon interests in the society neither of "collaborative remembering", as Weldon (2001) terms the process when different groups of individuals in the society work together to similarly recall events from the past.

As various studies show, recently many attempts have been made all over East-European Europe to reprocess the Communist and Partisan past (see, for example, Tileagă 2012 for Romania; Velikonja 2009 and Komelj 2012 and Kirn 2014 for Slovenia; Petrović 2007 and Buden 2014 and Kladnik 2016 for ex-Yugoslav countries; Brunnbauer 2004 for Southeast European countries; Todorova, Dimou & Troebst 2014 for Bulgaria, Romania, Poland and Germany (the GDR); Christophe 2010 for Lithuania; Palonen 2008 and Kovács 2005/2006 for Hungary; Zajda & Zajda 2003 for Russia). Todorova (2014) in this sense describes the Bulgarian case as the one with similar trajectories but different memories, what is characteristic also of the Slovenian public space, which is filled with a collision of memories. This collision is already becoming almost institutionalised in museums, exhibitions, school programs, and textbooks.⁴ Such an institutionalised conflicting "memory governance" (Lindenberger 2014) is positioned between memory and counter-memory or, in other words, between nostalgia for socialist Yugoslavia on one side (see Velikonja 2009) and the demonisation of Communist Yugoslavia on the other (see Ramet 2007).

Slovenia is now torn apart as far as memory is concerned and does not know how to correctly interpret its recent past. For this reason, the collision of memories itself is becoming a fuel, which currently guides the interpretation of Slovenian nation's recent history. As Young (1993) argues from another perspective, such a case can also enable us to recognise how many different memories have overlapped and collided in the nation's history. In the Slovenian case, the once glorious past of Partisans and Yugoslav state now becomes, in Esbenschade's words, 'past-to-be-erased' (1995: 72). The new round of debates over Partisan or Home Guards war guilt and over socialist well-being or Communist repression appear each time the history of the 20th century is discussed. Moreover, this collision of memories is also politically institutionalised (cf. Corcoran 2002); left-oriented parties show commitment to remembering the Partisan struggle, its National Liberation Front organisation and Communist revolutionary Yugoslavia, while right-oriented parties attempt to erase this interpretation of the past, to stress the Communist Party's repressive apparatus and to give voice to more or less forgotten people in the previous Yugoslav regime who had been aggressors and Nazi-collaborating oc-

³ For a similar study of the transformation of monuments and the meaning of these monuments in the Slovenian and broader post-Yugoslav context, see Kirn (2012).

⁴ For instance, history teachers all over the country report that if it is possible they rather skip the topic of WWII and Yugoslavia or they just quickly address this topic since they do not know how to explain it and, as they argue, which political stance they should take. Wertsch (2008) notices similar chaotic situation of history instruction in Russian schools in the 1990s.

cupying losers in WWII. To understand such a collision of memories and divided narratives about the past I use the concept of “counter-memory”, which is meant to suggest that memory operates under the pressure of challenges and alternatives (Zemon Davis & Starn 1989: 2). For this reason, every politics of forgetting is a form of counter-memory. Foucault (1977a) argues that counter-memory designates the residual or resistant strains that withstand official versions of historical continuity. In the times of Yugoslavia until the independent Slovenia in 1991, the official national history was based on the triumph of Partisan struggle and on the clear roles of victims (Partisans) and aggressors (Nazi army and all-home-collaborating intelligent services). All other memories that were not consistent with this interpretation were rigorously silenced. However, with the fall of Yugoslavia and the emerging new state of Slovenia in 1991, various local memories as sources for writing histories, which were ignored by historians of the previous regime, now have come to the surface. Those memories that were previously locked and silenced in the private sphere, now have become louder. Zemon Davis and Starn say ‘much of the ‘new’ social history written in recent years about marginal and otherwise forgotten people depends on the return to (and of) such counter-memories’ (1989: 5). In Yugoslav times, their voices were suppressed, which now has caused them to be even additionally more emotionally charged and, for this reason, even louder and more virulent, now offering the totally opposite narrative of the recent past than was offered before.⁵ Moreover, such an active erasure and attack of previous dominant narratives of the past also means the evasion of responsibility of those who attempt to erase the Partisan and Yugoslav past. In this manner, their role in the WWII as Nazi collaborating forces is pushed into oblivion and only their victim aspect is pushed forward. In such a memory game, certain memories rise to the surface level, while others are submerged below it.

Therefore, I want to examine the role of various memories in national narratives constructed in Slovenia after independence in 1991, particularly in the alternatives to the previously official Yugoslav state socialist version of the past. My purpose in this paper is also to study the processes of ‘forced forgetting’ (Esbenshade 1995: 74). Although collisions of memory and conflicting narratives are commonly known in all East-Central Europe, which experienced strict socio-political and economic transformations in the late 1980s and 1990s, Todorova (1994) suggests the West privileges a particularly Western version of stability to argue that history and memory in Eastern Europe is out of control, permeated with ethnic conflicts and thus threatening the stability in Europe. Esbenshade adds:

What these opposing positions have in common is their failure to recognize the full complexity of the phenomenon of collective memory and of the region’s history of struggles over concepts of nation, political power, economic entitlement, and the contradictory lessons of the past (1995: 73).

Many authors (Anderson 1991; Hutton 1987; Gillis 1994; Nora 1989) have already agreed that an important connection exists between national identity, national

⁵ Zemon Davis and Starn (1989) similarly note this for the case of the Soviet massacre of Polish officers in the woods of Katyn in 1940.

narrative, collective memory and individual memory. For this reason, my intention is to investigate various memories of WWII and Yugoslavia that invade Slovenian public space in the present times. I use 87 in-depth interviews with the middle (born between 1955 and 1975) and 87 interviews with the older (born before 1955) generations in Slovenia to deconstruct and analyse their memories of Yugoslavia, socialism, WWII, and the Partisans.⁶ I use narrative analysis and discourse analysis to interpret the data (memories) from the interviews. The research questions that guide this investigation are: What kind of memories of WWII and Yugoslavia are created when people are faced with these topics? How do they construct their memories? How do they link the present with the past and how the past affects their present? I treat memory here in terms of ideas and experiences that the respondents presented. My purpose is to show and understand how it is possible that conflicting memories of the same past events can exist at the same time in a specific society. Tileagă ascertains about such a grass-roots (from bottom-up) constitution of memory that ‘there are multiple perspectives and alternative ways of meaning-making that are sourced in the subjective standpoint of the social actor, experiences and ‘typifications’ of everyday life, and the seemingly anarchic interplay of ‘well-informed’ opinion in the public sphere’ (2012: 464).

I examine interviewees as ‘active agents,’ to use Wertsch’s (2008: 122) formulation, to investigate their narratives and active constructions of the past. According to Wertsch, I will presuppose ‘that narratives are always half someone else’s, and it leads to questions about how narrators can coordinate their voice with those of others that are built into the textual resources they employ’ (2008: 122). Following this model, I shall be interested, in how the perspective of the modern state and hegemonic political discourses are manifested in narrated memory. Or in Tileagă’s terms, I shall deal with ‘bottom-up analyses of political practices and political representations’ (2012: 474), that is, how these practices and representations are embodied in individuals’ narratives. What I actually analyse is the popular memory and its connection with power mechanisms in the Slovenian state, as Foucault would argue about popular memory: ‘Since memory is actually a very important factor in struggle, if one controls people’s memory, one controls their dynamism. And one also controls their experience, their knowledge of previous struggles’ (1977b: 22). We should bear in mind that there are specific institutional mechanisms from political, educational to media sources which influence the content and transmission of popular memory: ‘Now, a whole number of apparatuses have been set up to obstruct the flow of this popular memory ... effective means like television and the cinema. I believe this is one way of reprogramming popular memory which existed but had no way of expressing itself’ (Foucault 1977b: 22). To put it differently, I investigate popular memory through people’s narratives and their personal ways of how to come to terms with the recent past. If we want to fully understand all shades of the debates about what ought or ought not to be part of public/official memory, we must study the whole range of memories that exist in society (cf. Wertsch 2008).

⁶ The interviews are a part of the project within the course Media and Collective Memory and were conducted by the students in 2015–2016 throughout Slovenia, in urban and rural areas, with members of both sexes. This research was a part of the broader study project of transformations of memories in the 20th- and 21st-century Slovenia. I am very grateful to the students for their help.

Memory as a site of discursive struggle: forced forgetting and a stream of revision

In 2011, there was a heated discussion in Slovenia about whether to name one of the capital's Ljubljana street after Josip Broz Tito. The discussion was so serious that it went the Slovenian Constitutional Court, which decided that the provision of the ordinance of the Municipality of Ljubljana, which in 2009 named one street after Tito (*Titova cesta*),⁷ is inconsistent with the constitutional principle of respect for human dignity. They stated that the name of Josip Broz Tito symbolises the former totalitarian Yugoslav Communist regime and that renaming a street after him could therefore be seen as recognition of this undemocratic regime. The constitutional court decided about this at the initiative of the right-wing party NSi,⁸ while the left-wing parties opposed this decision.⁹ This case proves the political instrumentalisation of memory and shows that Tito as the commander of the Yugoslav Partisans during WWII and the President of the Republic of Yugoslavia after the war, which was previously seen as a national hero, now suddenly become viewed as a criminal and the Yugoslav regime as totalitarian.¹⁰

Tileagă argues for Eastern Europe: 'The 1989 moment and the fall of Communism in eastern Europe have been posing acute problems for collective memories and issues of representation of recent history' (2012: 462). A politically institutionalised ambivalence towards the Communist past in Slovenia exists, which goes hand in hand with the collision of memories about Yugoslavia and the Partisans – on one side there is reluctance towards Communism and on the other there is nostalgia for socialist times and in this way 'we don't know yet what our past is going to be' (Singer in Todorova 2010). In such circumstances, political and social memory meet, whereby political memory is based on the more durable carriers of symbols and material representations and it is an institutionalised top-down memory, while social memory is an embodied, implicit and fuzzy bottom-up memory (Assman 2004: 25). In this regard, I will analyse how social, bottom-up memory, 'the ways in which historical events are perceived and remembered by individuals within their own life-span' meet the top-down political memory and 'the role of memory on the level of ideology formation and ... its immediate impact on collective identity formation and political action' (Assman 2004: 25).

How is it then possible that different memories of the same past event exist? Maurice Halbwachs (2001) states that memory is socially constructed and present oriented and that remembering is shaped by participation in collective life, which means that different groups can generate different accounts of the past. As such, memory can also

⁷ Between 1952 and 1991, one of the main and biggest streets in Ljubljana was named after Tito and was called *Titova cesta* (Tito's Street), which after the independence of Slovenia was renamed into *Dunajska* and *Slovenska cesta* (Vienna and Slovenian Streets).

⁸ The NSi party suggested to naming the street after Andrej Bajuk, a prominent deceased right-wing politician, while the biggest right-wing party SDS suggested naming this street after the folk musician Lojze Slak.

⁹ The name *Titova cesta* was supported by 60 percent of respondents from Ljubljana (Rebernik 2011).

¹⁰ The designation of Yugoslavia as a totalitarian state was thus legally institutionalised in Slovenia with the order of Constitutional Court, although many authors would disagree with such a definition, arguing that Yugoslavia was rather an authoritarian and not a totalitarian regime (cf. Lešnik 1998; Arendt 2003; Kirn 2014).

change and develop with various socio-political and economic changes in time. Precisely for this reason, because memory is a social construct, it ‘does not remain static through time – memories are shaped and reconfigured, they fade and are rescripted’ (Sturken 1997: 17). It is possible that one memory is attacked by another memories. Memory that is used in the society, therefore, should be examined in plural and should take into account all those memories that struggle in the society and that ‘whenever memory is invoked we should be asking ourselves: by whom, where, in which context, against what?’ (Zemon Davis & Starn 1989: 2). In other words, ‘the motives of memory are never pure,’ as Young (1993: 2) argues. Memory is very much context dependent and Zemon Davis and Starn note that ‘one’s memory of any given situation is multiform and that its many forms are situated in place and time from the perspective of the present. To put this another way, memory has a history, or more precisely, histories’ (1989: 2). Olick (2007; cf. Olick & Levy 1997) in this regard suggests a diachronic model of memory, while every memory has its own development through the history. Memories can change due to the present situation; memory, thus, says more about the present than about the past.

In the context of coming to terms with the legacy and recent history of Communism and Partisan struggle, I use the phrase “politics of memory” when talking about the conflicting memories and a stream of revisionist histories. For Nora (1989), memory is in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation; it is a perpetually current phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present and it only accommodates those facts that suit it:

Memory is blind to all but the group it binds – which is to say, as Maurice Halbwachs has said, that there are as many memories as there are groups, that memory is by nature multiple and yet specific; collective, plural, and yet individual (Nora 1989: 9).

This allows for the existence of dominant as well as counter, alternative memories in a specific context. In the Gramscian (1971) sense, the dominant memory has to continually maintain its hegemonic position, while there are subjugated memories that attack its hegemony in society. His concept is useful and it can be connected to the production of memory consent in the society. Corcoran adds that this is crucially important for analyzing the power of memory, ‘because it forces us to examine the relationship between cultural process and political power’ (2002: 52). In this sense, memory is understood as ‘a site of discursive struggle’ (Anderson 2001: 22). Alternatively, collective remembering is conceived ‘primarily as a matter of political negotiation and contestation’ (Wertsch 2007: 655). There is a constant struggle for the meaning of the past, because memory and history are constructed narratives, and we now know that memories as well as histories can change. Some past events and periods can be pushed into oblivion, while others, which were suppressed for years, emerge as dominant.

Zemon Davis and Starn ask, ‘isn’t forgetting only the substitution of one memory for another; don’t we forget to remember, or remember to forget?’ (1989: 2). Memory changes can be seen also as memory developments in time always due to the present situation (cf. Olick 2007). To deconstruct the development of memory in time, means to

deconstruct the hegemonic and subjugated memories in the specific socio-political context, because memories and their counter-memories always construct the whole memory landscape of a specific time. This means that memories ‘remain “under erasure” in the Derridean sense, neither truly there nor fully absent, the presence of an absence, memory markers of a most ambiguous, yet eerily appropriate, kind’ (Esbenshade 1995: 72–3). Such memories under erasure tell the specific story of the Slovenian and of the whole East-Central European memory landscapes, where consensus about memory is very loosely defined or even not yet reached. This explains how it is possible that colliding memories strive between oblivion and remembrance, to suppress certain memories while raising others. A normative, hegemonic version of the past, which is a dominant version of the past and thus also serves as a means of control over the past in a society, can at any moment be torn or subverted into multiple and changing narratives. To borrow from Foucault (1980), it could be argued that each society has its own regime of truth about the past. Esbenshade (1995) in this manner talks about the regime of memory-truth and shows how different agents have been fighting for the truth in the previous Communist context:

Party ideologues (the state), dissident writers, intellectuals, nationalist politicians, all claim to portray or shape a ‘truer’ collective memory, or one more in line with the ‘true’ collective past. In fact, they are involved in creating and developing discourses – state socialist discourse, resistance discourse, discourse of intellectual responsibility, nationalist discourse – that compete to shape or take over the ‘regime of (memory-)truth’ (1995: 87).

For Esbenshade forgetting is not the negation of memory – it is only ‘remembering otherwise’ (1995: 87). In the Slovenian context, we could mark this as another revision in a stream of constant revision and memory evolution.

Struggle for the meaning of the Partisans: The continuing divide

I study present Slovenia as ‘a natural laboratory for the study of collective memory’ (Wertsch 2008: 124) and I focus on a grass-roots, bottom-up creation of memory, to see how all different memories meet, coexist, and struggle to win the hegemonic position and to acquire a dominant interpretation of the past. I believe we can explain the present chaotic situation in Slovenia regarding the memories of the recent past if we face all different grass-roots memories that exist here and try to understand how these bottom-up memories coexist, compete and how they meet with the top-down, politically institutionalised memories, which nowadays aggressively spread the transformations of memories of WWII and Yugoslavia and the forced forgetting of these time periods. In this way, I can argue that the Slovenian context is in a way similar to the Russian one, as analysed by Wertsch, whereby ‘this setting has witnessed a transition from strict, centralised control over collective memory to open, if not chaotic public debate and disagreement, and the result is that it provides examples of an unusually wide range of collective memory forms’ (2008: 124). This is also evident in Slovenia when, in a situation of a lack of consensus

between different political top-down memories, people are questioning which memory is right and how to remember WWII and the Partisans (cf. Vidmar 2015).

According to the informants' stories and their living memories, I can argue that there is a chaotic situation in Slovenia. When, after the fall of Yugoslavia, the previous strict and uniform state control over memory of WWII with Partisans as national heroes and positive figures was destabilised, different personal memories of people, which were previously hidden in the private space, suddenly rose to the surface. The result is that today different memories openly meet in the public space. Top-down, state centralised memories are institutionalised in right- and left-wing parties' memory politics. The first are very loud in their actions, attempting to highlight the Partisans' crimes; in this way, they also rehabilitate Home Guards and aggressively promote a forced forgetting of Partisans. While the second still reveres the Partisan past, it explicitly argues for national reconciliation and, in this way, it also implicitly agrees with the rehabilitation of Home Guards and implicitly promotes the forced forgetting of Partisans (cf. Kim 2014).

However, since there is no wide state-formed consent on these topics, in many cases people are confused about how to see the past. This is evident from the informants' stories, while they report different personal stories from WWII from different sides. On one side, quite a few of my informants started to publicly speak about their memories, which they had been hiding for years in the intimacy of their private spaces. With the loud actions of the right-wing regime of memory-truth, which in the 1990s slowly started to commemorate the inter- and post-war killings done by Partisans, my informants also started loudly to express their personal memories and experiences. It seems that these subjugated, counter-memories in the previous regime now started to successfully attack the previously hegemonic memory. To give a couple of examples:

Until now or even still today it is a problem to tell the truth that happened. My father went to Home Guard's outpost and enrolled in the organisation. And then he was there, I do not know for how long. Then he came home when the war ended, for three to four months he was hiding, and then he went to surrender. This was an amnesty for him. American amnesty. Otherwise they killed all of them, who surrendered. They took them to Kočevski rog and killed them there. But my father was not in a prison. Nowadays, the whole Slovenian nation learns wrong what really happened. We should compare how many they killed, where they killed them and how they killed them. But we were always stigmatised. My brother wanted a job and that man who should sign the papers first asked him where his father was during the war. And told him, you do not fit the conditions for the employment. And they accused us such things. Nowadays, they fear to tell the truth and they cannot tell the truth because all documents are ruined. Mitja Ribičič was the main commander for killing. When they called him to the court, he said 'I do not know anything.' And it was ok. But those who were with the White Guards, they interrogated them horribly. This is an injustice. But it is not that I would glorify Hitler, maybe also Hitler himself was wrong, but German people supported him. Communists were guilty for everything (Darko, 75 years old).

We talked very little about this, because people were afraid. In the Dolenjska region, where I was born and lived, there were a lot of Home Guards, who were seen as very hostile by the then government. The less we talked about it, the better it was for us, but if we talked about it, we talked about it inside, in the intimacy of our homes (Magda, 78 years old).

Our family has an experience with the killings – ten of my aunts and uncles. They took them into the caves and shot them. For a long time, we didn't know where their bodies were. In 2015, we found about this cave in a hill near Hruševo. Then we buried their bones. I think children should learn about this in the school. Younger generations should be faced with everything – WWII as well as post-war killings (Ivica, 82 years old).

I chose these examples to show how such personal memories, which rose to the surface after years of silence, go hand in hand with the ever louder state voices about post-war killings. They all argue for the new regime of memory-truth, that the meaning of WWII and the Partisans should be set anew and that the position of Home Guards during WWII should be rehabilitated. I can argue that approximately one fifth of my informants' stories conform to such an interpretation. Such counter-memories do not fit at all with the previous state glorifying of the Partisan past, which promoted a clear distinction between aggressor and victim. Suddenly, with such politics of memory, when counter-memories are slowly occupying the position of hegemonic memories, the positions of aggressor and victim are not so clear anymore. For this reason, it is possible that one informant even publicly asks himself whether Hitler was wrong or not and accuses Communism of everything.

What is happening with these counter-memories that have risen to the surface, is that they started to transform the memory regime in a way that totalitarian regimes, like Hitler's Nazi regime is in such a context blurred and excused with the argument that all killings (also post-war killings) should be faced on the same level. Despite these counter-memories, which struggle to win ever more successfully the hegemonic position, the majority of my informants confirm the interpretation of Partisans as victims and seem confused when they are confronted with such an interpretation of the past, which denigrates the Partisans. It either does not conform with their personal memories and experiences or with their previous firmly anchored knowledge about the past, gained in their families or in the school system. Moreover, the ever louder counter-memories and political discourses about the WWII past even lead to the situation when the majority of my informants started to question certain historical facts about WWII in Slovenian society. For instance, I found several statements in which my informants were not quite sure who was an aggressor and who was a liberator during the war. Alternatively, I also determined that in many cases my informants felt they have to make excuses for their personal memory, and this is a result of a new regime of memory-truth that is shaping in Slovenia. I present a few examples of this still hegemonic memory, but which is slowly attacked by alternative, counter-memory:

I do not know whom to believe today. Germans were aggressors, Partisans were liberators. I think this is for sure. The school taught us that Home Guards were against the country. But media nowadays attack the picture that we gain in the primary school. I see a difference between facts and interpretation from those Partisan traitors. Nowadays, the role of the Partisans should be stressed more. They say that Trieste was liberated by the Partisans, but on the other side they say that people had to flee from the Partisans. So, I have a feeling that they speak too much about Home Guards and not of their victims, the Partisans, they do not speak enough about the Partisans. I think that the topic of post-war killings is overblown to propagate certain people and political options. The media should stress WWII more, they should talk more about concentration camps and the spirit of that time, which was very cruel. I am afraid that younger generations know less and less about this period. I think that this forgetting of WWII is dangerous because I really would not like that this would be repeated (Silvana, 55 years old).

When I remember WWII, these were the years of fear, darkness, and denial. In our village, first there were Italians and later Germans. We could not walk freely from the village, there were controls everywhere. We children served as a link with the Partisans. Our parents sewed messages in the waists of our trousers or in some hidden part of the dress. If I think in what kind of danger we were, a shiver goes down my spine. It is sad that we forget about the Partisans' suffering, I never felt that war was inside the country, but as a resistance to the occupiers. So, I feel sad, when today they worship Home Guards and try to place them side by side with Partisans (Angela, 84 years old).

I come from a Partisan family, my relatives were all only Partisans, and I have a very positive attitude towards the Partisans, they had a vision of what is right, they fought for the right side in the war. My grandmother was pregnant during the war and she worked illegally and helped the Partisans to carry guns under her coat to the secret meetings. But she had to cross the entry of a White Guard neighbour and this was very dangerous. The White Guards captured my grandmother's sister and brother, who were active Partisans and they tortured them to death in a bunker. Then they came to their mother's home to wash their bloody hands and asked for food and drink. It is well known for ever who fought on the right side, that these were the Partisans and I really do not know why they want to distort that picture today (Mojca, 49 years old).

From the very beginning, our family was a member of a liberation or Partisan army. Also, my mother's brother was among the first Partisans in our places. Nowhere in the world do they build monuments for the collaborators with the enemy and they do not glorify them. Nowhere in the world do they belittle our liberators (Lidija, 75 years old).

Such struggle for the meaning of the Partisans, Home Guards, post-war killings and WWII is created and institutionalised in the political memory, but this divide is increasingly evident also in social, popular, people's memories expressed in public space. The divide, which was a crucial divide in Slovenia in the times of WWII between the Partisans and Nazis and their collaborating armies, is continuing to be that force that, through the memory politics, divides even those generations who do not have any direct experience with WWII. In many cases for most of my informants this memory statement regarding WWII either on the side of the Partisans or contra the Partisans is also their present political positioning – left or right wing politics. However, I should argue that most of my informants still remember a Partisans in very positive way, but it is important to stress that this is so with the generations that were raised under the univocal interpretation of WWII in the times of Yugoslavia, while after independence strong and loud voices of the opposite side has destabilised the victorious meaning of the Partisans and blurred the roles of victims and aggressors in WWII. I also noticed that despite positive experiences of my informants with the Partisans they are in a way sceptical about how to remember them, because counter-memories and revisionist discourses of the past have strongly entered the memory schemata in Slovenia.

What causes even more chaotic situation in remembering WWII among my informants are a few cases of personal experiences with compulsory mobilisation in the German army. Furthermore, these counter-memories, which do not comply with the previous hegemonic memory, or moreover, memories of those who were on neither side during the war, cause certain confusion in the memory landscape of WWII in Slovenia. For instance:

I have knowledge of WWII from the school, while I was in the school in socialist times and history had an emphasis on WWII then. But I also know it from personal experiences of my parents. My father was mobilised in the German Army as a 20-years old boy and he served as an officer in the neighbouring Austria. We did not sing any patriotic songs at home. I am sorry that media nowadays want to show those organisations and people, who collaborated with occupying forces, as patriotic Slovenians, but this still does not mean that I support people who killed all innocent people after the war in a very ugly way. Those who were unfortunately, in many cases even not through their own fault, on the wrong side (Sabina, 51 years old).

Subsequently, what is to be done in a society in which such conflicting memories meet? Where personal memories are so conflicting that it seems they do not talk about the same past event? Testimonies of my informants show that memory landscape of WWII is very diverse and multidimensional in Slovenia – different counter-memories coexist and compete with the majority memories. Moreover, we must bear in mind that this situation is so complex also because it addresses the questions of trauma. The time of WWII was also a very traumatic time for different sides. My informants' testimonies prove the examples of conflicting, but also very painful memories on different sides:

After the war, they placed all the blame on German Army and Home Guards, like they, Partisans all did right. They said what Germans did wrong. But they all fought only for freedom. When father returned and when some men came to visit him and they talked, he always threatened me that I should be quiet. They could kill him immediately. Also in the school, everything was separated. Those more left oriented were more welcomed, we right oriented were more marginalised, no help from the Red Cross or something similar for us. We were scum, inferior... in the school there was a kitchen and only the left oriented got something for eating. From the rest of our village we didn't get any food in the school. We were all right oriented in the village, no Partisans. Partisans hid their sins for 50-60 years, but only now this came public, how many killings there were. God forbid saying anything about this before. Once I said at my workplace to the colleague, who was a Party secretary, do you know what Partisans did after the war. He told me, hush, don't speak about this and that so somebody won't hear you. They knew everything, but this was not allowed to speak about. They were killing even before war. My father told me that Partisans came, stole things and they did not bother to work. They came, they dragged you into the woods and they killed you. This was happening even before war. But when the war was over, OZNA came, that is an army, extended police. They killed someone from our neighbouring village, when he was in the field, they came and they shot him, nobody could help him (Štefan, 74 years old).

I was for four years in a concentration camp. This is mostly humiliation, famine. I was still a child. It was very hard. We only waited for the moment to go home. The right wing nowadays speaks as if we were on the holidays and not in the concentration camp. They collaborated with Hitler and they only pushed themselves in the front. Home Guards and White Guards who collaborated with occupying forces nowadays do not say the truth about WWII. Nobody never says that we were hungry, humiliated, beaten... this is forgotten for them. Partisans only wanted to free Slovenia, but Home Guards wanted to destroy Slovenians and they collaborated with Germans. I respect the Partisans, I have no respect for the Home Guards. We knew that these were people, who work with occupiers, they were our Slovenian traitors (Antonija, 83 years old).

They took almost the whole Poljane valley to the concentration camp in Italy. Italians built a barbed wire fence around our village. Partisans wanted to liberate our village, but home traitors told this to Italians, so Partisans could not liberate the village, and they killed them. My three uncles were Partisans, and they were all killed in the woods. We still do not know where exactly they are buried. One of them had to dig his own grave. If Partisans had not killed those Home Guards, they would not give peace. They would fight for the supremacy and they would destroy all, the traitors (Marija, 65 years old).

The continuing divide between different sides in Slovenia is seen in my informants' memory schemata, while they also continually used such a vocabulary to signify the state of the war and different war sides also for the time of present Slovenia (e.g. traitors, liberators, aggressors, killers, murderers, etc.). Trauma becomes the central divisive point, while through evoking trauma and personal traumatic experiences people's feelings are becoming the central schema for shaping of the memory landscape. Hatred, antagonism, and anger become the main regulatory mechanisms of shaping the memory of WWII instead of tolerance, understanding, and reconciliation. According to Olick's (2007) diachronic model of memory schemata, I could argue that the present situation of memory conflicts in Slovenia is only a phase of memory evolution, while collective memory is evolving all the time.

Yugoslavia as a memorial terrain: Between nostalgia and dictatorship

Memories of Yugoslavia are in my informants' testimonies stretched between two extremes: either they express very positive, reflective nostalgic memories, which see Yugoslavia as a promised land (cf. Boym 2002) or very negative, painful or even traumatic memories, which see Yugoslavia as a dictatorial country (cf. Tileagă 2012). This divide is seen also in the top-down political discourses, while the right-oriented parties intensively shape the memorial climate in the country when loudly repeating that Tito was a dictator and Yugoslav Communism a totalitarian regime. Such discourses create new regime of memory-truth, which is in opposition with the previous hegemonic memory that was glorifying Yugoslavia and communist revolution. In many cases, these discourses also completely delete the Yugoslav part of the Slovenian history, deliberately pushing it into oblivion.¹¹ They transform memories of Yugoslavia according to the dictatorial paradigm, arguing that Yugoslavia was a black mark in the Slovenian history. As my results show, this coincides with the grass-roots, bottom-up memories, which are divided between two extremes. The period of Yugoslavia, thus, becomes the terrain of memory struggles between Yugonostalgic and Yugoslav dictatorial discourses. The first are seen in the form of Yugonostalgia, but which is not turned to re-establishment of Yugoslavia as lost country, but rather expresses feelings of my informants towards the past in the sense of their inability to identify with the new national post-socialist spaces and their socio-economic order (cf. Velikonja 2009; Petrović 2007). I have to argue that the great majority of my informants were expressing nostalgic memories,¹² which were connected also with the present socio-economic situation. Most of them expressed social values from the times of socialism, such as solidarity, reciprocity, brotherhood, equality, public good, peace, freedom, happiness, faith in the future, progressiveness, and economic independence while many were simultaneously lamenting the present capitalist consumer-oriented situ-

¹¹ This is evident also in the school discourses, in which Yugoslavia is deleted from school programmes and most of my informants argue that their children or grandchildren do not learn anything about Yugoslavia in the school and that they have very poor knowledge of that part of history.

¹² For more nostalgic memory connections of the present-day people to Yugoslavia, see Petrović and Mlekuž (2016).

ation. For example, these nostalgic memories are constantly mixed with the laments of the present situation, either because of capitalist privatisation or because of that top down political discourses, which denigrate Yugoslavia and Tito. For instance:

All workers had regular jobs, regular payments. Factories had their own apartments, also holiday apartments, where workers could go for a vacation. So, everybody could go for a vacation every year. Human relations were much better than today, it was really made well for people, we had a lot of common activities and societies (scouts, gymnasts, partisans etc.) (Ana, 74 years old).

Yugoslavia was economically and politically innovative. There was elementary honesty, there were no tycoons. However, we could learn honesty from Yugoslavia, and not tycoonism, as it is appearing nowadays (Ferdo, 70 years old).

I have very good memories of Yugoslavia, my personal experiences are beautiful. I was in the army in Tito's Guard, and I am very proud of that, I will remember this until the rest of my life because it was a good experience for me and a great honour. Yugoslavia was equal and there were no differences and hatred between nations, like it is today. Tito was positive character for me and a role model. Today mostly people who did not experience this wrongly interpret socialist Yugoslavia and they wrote untruth about it. Yugoslavia was the right country in the right place, life was beautiful, who wanted to work, worked. Nobody had too much or too little. We were all equal and we had chances and hopes for the future. Life was not easy, but freedom was there and only that counted, people were satisfied, we showed solidarity to other people. Today everything is different (Franci, 58 years old).

Although I was not a Party member, I still have Tito's picture on the wall. Under his leadership, my wife and I could build a house, as could anyone else. But he was a human, like I am, everybody has sinned. I do not criticise our Republic, we were friends with all. I travelled a lot around Yugoslavia and if I go to any of these ex states today, I would find a friend there (Anton, 72 years old)

I have very good memories of Yugoslavia, sometimes I feel I am just dreaming that I lived in such beautiful times, when there were values, like solidarity, friendship, reciprocity, honesty, collective work, when there was no fear that one could lose a job, when there were no waiting lines in the health system. I do not like that people criticise socialism too much (Helena, 55 years old)

I was a part of the Party and I do not remember that I would punish somebody because he or she was not a Party member. I think that many rumours about Communist purges are nowadays fictionalised. Purges happened, although not on the massive scale as they present it today. At that time, people knew

well that they do not live just for themselves, but also for others, because there was a bigger solidarity in the state, people were prepared to help each other (Geza, 73 years old)

During the Yugoslav period, there was a uniform discourse of socialism as a promised and most desirable socio-economic order, and the great majority of my informants remains attached to this interpretation through nostalgic memories. However, as I can see from their testimonies, despite their positive evaluation of Yugoslavia, their narratives also show some critical form (e.g. there were good things and bad things) or they make excuses for their memories (e.g. Tito was just a human etc.), while their grandchildren, as they argue, have no attachment to Yugoslavia.

This is also evident in Wertsch's case of Russia, when he argues that older and especially middle generations 'reflect a transition from a highly regimented and officially sanctioned collective memory, to a more critical form, and finally to an account of the past that retains only the skeleton of previous versions' (2008: 125).

In Yugoslav times, there was a state regulated vision of the system and regime, while after 1991 with the independence of Slovenia this vision started to loosen and collective memory started slowly to reshape. Younger generations, which have no personal experience with Yugoslavia and no emotional attachment to it, are more susceptible to the new state regimented regime of memory-truth about Yugoslavia. That is something that my informants lament: their children and grandchildren do not have a true picture of Yugoslavia, while they retain only the skeleton of previous versions of the past.

Moreover, with the right-oriented top-down interpretations of the Yugoslav past, which rose to the surface after 1991 and slowly started to strengthen, anti-communist and antitotalitarian discourses appeared (cf. Kirn 2014). These discourses aggressively transform the memories of Yugoslavia and they are, to use Brunner's words, 'a cookie cutter imposing a shape' on people's understanding of the past (in Wertsch 2008: 131). Yugoslavia is presented as a place of Communism, which is pictured as Other, and this discursive operation is also made in the national frameworks – Yugoslav Communism is condemned as not "us" and it is distanced from the national Slovenian self (cf. Tileagă 2012). Such perspectives are also seen in the grass-roots, bottom-up memory, although there is a minority (approximately one sixth) of my informants whose memories of Yugoslavia are very negative and are placed in the schemata of a dictatorial regime. It is interesting to note that they commonly use specific attributes (e.g. criminal, inhuman, illegitimate, dictatorial) to signify the category of communism and Yugoslavia. Tileagă similarly observes for the Romanian case:

Describing communism using highly loaded terms institutionalises a particular memory of communism that paves the way for distancing the (national) self from the communist ideology (communism as 'Other') and advances a 'preferred' version that reflects more the ideologies of elite interpreters than those of ordinary people (2012: 474).

As my case also proves, most of the informants who had personal experiences with Yugoslavia remember it positively, while the negative memories of minority of my informants in some cases come from their own personal negative experiences with Yugoslavia

and are in some cases also the embodiment of the political top-down memories, which construct Yugoslavia and communism as Other, an alien to “our nationness”. As I determined through their testimonies, their negative attitude towards Yugoslavia is constructed through the positive national evaluation as democratic Slovenians, oriented to Europe and not to the Balkans. In most cases, these memories go hand in hand with anti-Partisan memories and are connected to some traumas from the period of Yugoslavia. To list a few examples:

We didn't dare to speak that we were in the church, we should stick to the facts they told us. They liquidated opponents. They drove them away and we had never seen them again. As a schoolboy, I helped to tear down the synagogue in Murska Sobota, which was one of the most wonderful synagogues. So, I remember Communism in this way. For the time of Tito, there was an unequivocal system, the subordinated should listen to him... nowadays it is not like that. Today people can feel freedom. At that time, repression ruled, about which people do not talk enough today. There are still many secrets to be revealed and still today they preferred to be silent about these issues (Peter, 78 years old).

My father was arrested after the war, because he talked about contra-revolutionary things. If you talked against the state they immediately arrested you or even killed you (Miran, 48 years old).

I remember Yugoslavia as being very bad, also from the storytelling of my father. To those who thought differently and to the Christians very bad things happened from the side of Communists. In the post-war period, Home Guards' children and those who thought differently were also seen as enemies of Communism. I remember that there was no freedom of speech in Yugoslavia, we could not read forbidden books, which talked about post-war killings and bad things from the war. We, Christians could not celebrate our holidays, on Christmas we had to go to the school. It happened many times that if you turned down the invitation to the Party, they later took revenge on you, we got bad marks in the school, for example. It was wrong that we all had to go to these marches. And then they were later boasting that there were so many people there, although we were there under pressure. Many people were blind, they did not see the injustices that happened to many people. There was a strict Communist repression and today all those should be punished, because there is no excuse for torture and murder of people. I do not think it was right that they took companies and all other property from the people. Tito was only an aggressor of the state. And I found it stupid when people cried so much when he died, they were like fanatic worshippers. Socialism has misery behind glamour (Klara, 46 years old).

Yugoslavia represented dark times ... it was a post-war creature, where the Communist Party continued tough fight and stayed on top for another 50 years. Today, we can hear many times how nice it was to live in Yugo-

slavia. But this was a closed economy, and the Communist Party with Tito on its top had an absolute power, they imprisoned and killed their political opponents. Everything that we learned about Yugoslavia was a lie, distortion and a trick. Socialism and its political police (UDBA) scared people, who lived in a constant fear. Tito and his colleagues had absolute power, and they simply removed their political opponents ... they liquidated them (Jože, 58 years old).

As in the case of WWII, Yugoslavia also represents a terrain of memory struggles, where different, opposing bottom-up memories clash and struggle to win the dominant position in the interpretation of history. It seems that specific circles of memory struggles appear in Slovenia, which unite pro-Yugoslav and pro-Partisan against anti-Yugoslav and anti-Partisan. These memories and counter-memories continually battle to win the hegemonic position and seriously affect the public debates. Previously subjugated interpretations of Yugoslavia as contained in bottom-up memories are now publicly faced with hegemonic interpretations and both fight to win the dominant official memory of Yugoslavia. According to Olick and Levy (1997), we might argue that this divided memory between nostalgia and dictatorship, when talking about Yugoslavia, is only one phase among many phases of the evolution of collective memory of Yugoslavia, which is becoming less and less emotionally connected with the past. In both cases, WWII and Yugoslavia, the memory politics is similar and we can talk about the evolution of post-war memory, which is based on the interpenetration and interdependence of both memories, pro-Yugoslav and pro-Partisan on one side and anti-Yugoslav and anti-Partisan on the other. They constitute the divide as a constitutive element of the present post-war memory in Slovenia.

Conclusion: Slovenian memory landscape

The debate about Partisans and Home guards and socialist Yugoslavia has become the most important point of memory in Slovenia. And this memory landscape is divided between memories and counter-memories. As the results of my research show, instead of building a consensual memory schemata, which would recognise the coexistence of diverse memories with the clear roles of Nazi aggressors and Partisan liberators, there continues to be an impassable divide between different memories, which perpetuates and creates hatred, conflict and intolerance and produces a divided memory schemata in Slovenian society.

Moreover, the intersection of top-down memories (left wing vs. right wing politics) with bottom-up memories clearly shows how the tensions of the present might determine and shape collective memory, while 'present conditions shape the selective memory of past events' (Corcoran 2002: 61). The forced forgetting of WWII, the Partisans and Yugoslavia, which is promoted by right-wing top-down politics of memory, is also created in the bottom-up memories of my informants. This is a special memory project, which would like to set not only the Slovenian memory landscape but also to foster specific discursive regimes and collective identity. Such memory politics fosters anti-totalitarian and anti-communist discourses, creates Communism as Other and produces Slovenian nationalist schemata; moreover, it blurs the WWII liberator-aggressor paradigm, when it suddenly becomes

unclear who was liberator and who was aggressor during WWII, and it equates Hitler's Nazism with Communism. Zemon Davis and Starn warn: 'To forget the past willfully is to threaten the fragile links that, however tenuously, guard us from oblivion' (1989: 6). My informants' testimonies prove that two memory circles are being constructed in Slovenia, which unite anti-Yugoslav and anti-Partisan counter-memories against pro-Yugoslav and pro-Partisan majority memories. I argue that specific post-war memory is being evolved and constructed in Slovenia, which rests on the divide between pro-Yugoslav and pro-Partisan memories on one side and anti-Yugoslav and anti-Partisan on the other.

The results of my research of grass-roots memories might provide insight into the transformations that give rise to the new forms of collective memory, which is at the present split collective memory, consisting of memories and counter-memories – that is, forced forgetting of the Partisans and pro-Partisan interpretations of the past, dictatorial discourses and reflective nostalgia regarding Yugoslavia. The struggle for the meaning of the past in bottom-up memories show the loss of unified state control over collective memory and the struggle of different political top-down memories. These political top-down memories create and are embodied in people's testimonies (cf. Wertsch 2008: 133).

Such a public debate, in which different memories openly meet and compete, has also a profound effect on the historical imagination of Slovenia's postwar generations. It presents a complex post-war memory landscape in post-socialist Slovenia. It also proves that social remembering of WWII and Yugoslavia remains something in need of formation. Therefore, many political discourses want to win the position of defining the interpretation of the past and to set a specific regime of memory-truth. Precisely this unconsensual situation of a lack of consensus among different political discourses is seen also in the unconsensual situation among popular/people's memories. All of them struggle to win the position to define the past.

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Povzetek

Namen tega članka je proučiti politiko spomina in transformacije spominov na drugo svetovno vojno in socialistično Jugoslavijo v današnji Sloveniji. Osredotočam se na spomine, ki prihajajo od spodaj navzgor in ki vdirajo v slovenski javni prostor, in tako proučujem 174 poglobljenih intervjujev z informanti srednje in starejše generacije. Slovenska nacija je v tem oziru razcepljena, pozitivni spomini na jugoslovansko socialistično dobro počutje in prosperiteto in na herojski partizanski boj močno trčijo z negativnimi proti-spomini na komunistično represijo in na partizanske medvojne in povojne poboje domobrancev. Vsiljeno pozabljanje druge svetovne vojne, Partizanov in Jugoslavije, ki ga promovira tudi politično institucionalizirana politika spomina od zgoraj navzdol, pa je kreirano tudi v popularnih spominih informantov, ki prihajajo od spodaj navzgor. Takšna politika spomina spodbuja in razširja antitotalitarne in antikomunistične diskurze, kreira komunizem kot Drugega in proizvaja slovenski nacionalizem. Nadalje, zabriše paradigmo osvoboditelj-agresor, ko kar naenkrat postane nejasno, kdo je bil osvoboditelj in kdo agresor v drugi svetovni vojni, in popolnoma izenači Hitlerjev nacizem s komunizmom.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: politika spomina, slovenska spominska krajina, Jugoslavija, druga svetovna vojna, režim spomina-resnice

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