



WER IST WALTER?

International Perspectives on
Resistance in Europe during
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Edited by

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Remembering All-Yugoslav Antifascist Resistance Through Performative Practices in (front of) Post-Yugoslav Metamuseums

Nataša Jagdhuhn

Conceptual roots and political motives of the restored “Socialist Pilgrimages”

For the past two decades, thousands of people from all the Yugoslav successor states have gathered in memorial-museums related to the 1941-1945 People's Liberation Struggle (*Narodnooslobodilačka borba* – NOB) on dates from that era they consider important. The NOB museums, where they rally, were built during socialist Yugoslavia, mainly on sites related to the uprising(s), military-political sessions of the NOB leadership, battles, concentration camps and execution sites. These sites have been strongly affected by the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the wars of the 1990s. Some were heavily damaged in this time and most of them fell into a state of neglect, before being reopened at a later stage.¹ The largest portion of the loyal public that regularly gathers at these sites consists of representatives from the organisations that succeeded the Federation of the Associations of Veterans of the People's Liberation War of Yugoslavia (*Savez Udruženja Boraca Narodnooslobodilačkog Rata* – SUBNOR), and especially those who participated in the renovation of the damaged or neglected NOB museums after the wars in the 1990s. In general, these people are from the genera-

1 The NOB memorial museums that are the objects of these gatherings and of the present article are not to be confused with the Museums of Revolution which were built during Socialist Yugoslavia in the capitals of each Republic and in some regional capitals (e.g. Novi Sad, Rijeka). One difference is that the first were built on authentic sites, and another that the Museums of Revolution were not only dedicated to events and personalities of the NOB but they dealt with a broader period: the history of the workers' movement (1878–1941, the NOB period (1941–1945) and the development of the socialist self-management system (the period after 1950). Also, while the Museums of Revolution have all changed their name and their content, several of the NOB Museums continue to exist today under their former name and their content was not removed.

tions who were born in Yugoslavia or spent most of their life in Yugoslavia, and among them a very few remaining World War II veterans. The younger generations, born in and after the 1990s, mostly come with their families.

In different ways, they all participate in and determine the course and form of these ritualistic and museal events. Many visitors dress up for the occasion in Partisan or Pioneer² uniforms, bringing objects such as badges, medals, T-shirts, banners, posters with various symbols of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (*Komunistička Partija Jugoslavije – KPJ*) or of Yugoslavia more generally: flags, orders, decorations, medals, portraits of Josip Broz Tito. In front of museums, or even while walking through the museum, people sing Partisan songs and perform the *Kozaračko kolo*, a Partisan circle dance and symbol of unity and the strength that unity brings. Visitors also reenact Partisan greetings by means of various gestures, such as holding the fist to the forehead or saying the “Death to fascism, freedom to the people” slogan. Often these greetings are exchanged not only between the participants in the events, but also in front of museum exhibits or when laying wreaths.³ The majority of visitors pose for a photograph for the occasion, as much for personal memory as for the various onlooking media from the entire region of former Yugoslavia.

In order to fully understand these sorts of restored “socialist pilgrimages”,⁴ it is important to shed light on the conceptual roots from which

2 During socialist Yugoslavia, all children from the first grade of elementary school became members of the Union of Pioneers of Yugoslavia. They pledged a solemn oath, which required them to follow the “noble aspirations” of the “anti-fascist struggle”. Frequently, the ceremony was organised on 29 November, Republic Day, often in front of or inside museums. See Igor Duda, *Danas kada postajem pionir: Djetinjstvo i ideologija jugoslavenskoga socijalizma* (Zagreb: Srednja Evropa, 2015).

3 The internet is filled with numerous interviews on different media, including video recordings. I have myself conducted interviews with the visitors of the Museum of the Second AVNOJ (Anti-Fascist Council for the People’s Liberation of Yugoslavia) Session in Jajce on 29 November 2013, 2014 and 2015. The people that visit Jajce on 29 November are for the most part the same people that visit Kumrovec and/or Belgrade on 25 May. I conducted an interview with the curator of the Museum of Yugoslavia (House of Flowers) Marija Đorgović in 2016. I visited the “25 May 1944” museum in Drvar 2016 and conducted an interview with former curator Drago Trninić. Materials related to commemorations from the last five years are mostly based on newspaper articles, photo and video-archives of the museums and informal conversations with their employees via email. Research material about ritual visits, i.e. statements of participants and organisers of the “Day of Youth” in Kumrovec, was mainly collected through media reports (newspapers, Youtube, TV reports, podcasts) as well as through consultations with Prof. Nevena Alempijević Škrbić.

4 The Association of World War II Veterans in Yugoslavia wholeheartedly augmented the increase in the number of museum visitors by organising so-called socialist pilgrimages, in the form of “revolution routes”, “partisan marches”, etc.. The socialist pilgrimage as a mnemonic device insured collective experience and patriotic feelings.



Fig. 1: Photo-collage from the 29 November commemoration in Jajce 2018. Author of the photos: Sandro Nuhanović. (Photos ©Museum of the Second AVNOJ Session)

this phenomenon originates. Namely, as political and museological concepts, they originate from Soviet museology discourse, whose strong influence was felt in Yugoslavia until the very end, especially when it came to commemorative practices.⁵ The practice of celebrating state holidays and important historical dates in museums during socialist Yugoslavia became a medium of bringing the past into the present, with the intention to create circumstances that allowed visitors to become witnesses of the moment in which the past and present were dialectically merged, creating a participatory platform for the creation of a collective sense of belonging.⁶ Socialist pilgrimages to and around NOB Museums reached their peak during the 1970s and 1980s. With the firm collaboration between museums and the purposely formed “Self-Governing Communities of Interest in Culture”, a so-called “consciousness industry”⁷ was created. Mass gatherings in museums and/or memorial sites took place in different forms: Partisan marches, pioneer expeditions, the Relay of Youth,⁸ mountaineering and Partisan “transversals,”⁹ exploration hikes along the routes of World War II offensives as well as car and motor races and more.

5 See for example: Archives of Yugoslavia/*Arhiv Jugoslavije* – AJ, SUBNOR, 297, Materijali Odbora za proslave, 1956-1971.

6 Nataša Jagdhuhn, “Heritage industry”, in *Memory Cultures in Southeast Europe since 1945: Proceedings of the International Academic Week at Tutzing, October 2021*, eds. Christian Voß, Sabina Ferhadbegović and Kateřina Králová (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2023), 128.

7 On the term “consciousness industry” see Hans Magnus Enzensberger and Michael Roloff, *The consciousness industry: On literature, politics and the media* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974).

8 The Relay of Youth (*Štafeta mladosti*) was a relay race held in Yugoslavia every year on 25 May. The relay carried a baton with a birthday pledge to Josip Broz Tito and led through the various republics of Yugoslavia as an illustration of the motto of “brotherhood and unity”.

9 *Partizanske transversale* were Partisan hiking trails/tours along Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. One example was the 1.200 km long Partisan transversal of brotherhood and unity from Petrova Gora in Croatia to Žabljak in Montenegro.



Fig. 2: Collage of photographs published in the newspaper *Glas Kozare*, 4 July 1982.
 Extracts from the newspapers kept at the Museum “Kozara in NOB”.
 (© “Kozara in NOB” on Mrakovica)

In this context, NOB Museums served as stages for this type of cultural and/or diplomatic performances.¹⁰ Wearing their uniforms, army units, sports or recreational associations often gathered in the NOB Museums on state holidays such as 29 November – The Day of the Republic, or 4 July – Fighter’s Day.¹¹ Also, those who took part in World War II, especially those who had won state bravery awards, would come to the NOB Museums for these special occasions wearing their original uniforms, or in civilian dress while still showcasing their medals (People’s Hero and other awards). Many flags and visitors carrying banners would be seen, while shouts of gratitude to Tito could be heard. It was a whole-day, sometimes even several-day event, held within the environs of the museum(s). Many brought harmonicas and other instruments. Partisan songs and the *Kolo* dances would spontaneously begin throughout the events.

The photos above show glimpses of the 1982 commemoration of the 1942 Kozara Battle. They illustrate the dramatic template for the celebration of important historical dates in Yugoslavia’s memorial museums. Those visitors to today’s memorial museums, who bring the experience of the above-described ritualistic museum visits, continue to use the same template, seemingly replicating the organisation of group visits to the NOB

10 For example: at the commemorations for the 15th anniversary of the Battle of Sutjeska on Fighters’ Day (4 July) in 1958, Josip Broz Tito and the Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser Hussein were guests and the ceremony was broadcast by Yugoslav television. See AJ, SUBNOR, 297, Materijali Odbora za proslave, 1956-1971, f. 35, Materials for the celebration of the 15th anniversary of the Battle of Sutjeska 1958, Orjentacioni program proslave.

11 For 29th November/”Republic Day” see the chapter titled “29 November – The Days of AVNOJ” in this text; “Fighters Day” referred to 4 July 1941, when the KPJ decided to launch an armed uprising in occupied Yugoslavia.

Museums in Yugoslavia. If the two photographic compilations are compared (*Fig. 1* and *Fig. 2*), one can see that the socialist choreography, which was planned down to the utmost detail in Yugoslavia and thus inscribed directly into the collective body of the commemoration participants, is now being cathartically re-performed by the generation that spent the greater part of its life in socialism.

The conceptual roots of group visits to museums, as argued in the previous lines, belong to the theoretical framework of the “visitor as witness” museum concept.¹² However, an issue that has thus far not been addressed in the literature concerns the political motives for repeating the outdated Yugoslav commemorative matrix. In media reports, these events are exclusively characterised as nostalgic gatherings. In this way, a generally accepted social attitude has formed: that these are apolitical masquerades with purely entertaining character.¹³ This means that this two-decade social phenomenon has never been discussed, in academic circles at least, as a cultural and political performance. Nevertheless, a deeper look into the developmental stages of this phenomenon clearly points to the fact that these ritual gatherings in museums, on significant historical dates, are not apolitical. Indeed, the main reason for their initiation, as well as their duration to this day, is to demonstrate political *engagement par excellence*. For example, gathering in/near World War II Museums started even in the museum buildings desolated in the most recent Yugoslav wars, which were often fought directly in former NOB Museums.¹⁴ The brutal physical destruction of these museums, a form of nationalist reckoning with the heritage of Yugoslav “brotherhood and unity”, aimed to establish new ethno-national boundaries in the collective memory of Croats, Serbs and Bosniaks. Afterwards, while cultural theorists tried to articulate this social phenomenon

12 For more on the socialist museum visitor as a “witness” and the “pilgrimage” to museums of the Eastern Bloc on the example of Romania, see Simina Bădică, “Curating Communism: A Comparative History of Museological Practices in Post-War (1946-1958) and Post-Communist Romania”, (Unpublished PhD diss. Central European University, 2013), 173-178.

13 What is common to this type of “nostalgia”, as the culturologist Mitja Velikonja reminds us, is that it finds its stronghold in the criticism of the present and projections of a better future. See Mitja Velikonja, *Titostalgia – A Study of Nostalgia for Josip Broz* (Ljubljana: Mirovni inštitut, 2008); see also: Mitja Velikonja, “Between Collective Memory and Political Action: Yugonostalgia in Bosnia-Herzegovina”, in *Bosnia-Herzegovina Since Dayton: Civic and Uncivic Values*, eds. Ola Linstead and Sabrina P. Ramet (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 2013).

14 Nataša Jagdhuhn, *Post-Yugoslav Metamuseums. Reframing Second World War Heritage in Postconflict Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 93-105.

through concepts such as *heritocide*,¹⁵ *urbocide*,¹⁶ *knjigocid*,¹⁷ engaged intellectuals felt a moral obligation to document the conditions in which they found the former NOB Museums, and to initiate their restoration. It was as part of these efforts that people began to gather in the ruined museums.

As early as the beginning of the 2000s, when nationalist currents began to lose their intensity, bottom-up citizen initiatives appeared, demanding the restoration of World War II Museums in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia. They were mainly made up of people who had participated in the building of these institutions in Yugoslav times:¹⁸ curators and engaged intellectuals (mainly historians and university professors who deal with the subject of World War II). Members of antifascist associations from all Yugoslav successor states also engaged in these bottom-up efforts in very large numbers. These former “visitors as witnesses”, now facing circumstances in which the survival of the former NOB Museums was threatened and uncertain, decided to act as “heritage guerrillas”.¹⁹ They did so by bringing together individuals from all the former Yugoslav republics to rescue their common heritage and return to it to the supranational values of Yugoslav antifascism, which they had once symbolised. A quote from the prominent Bosnian-Herzegovinian historian Dubravko Lovrenović, who participated in the restoration of the Museum of the Second Session of AVNOJ (in Jajce, in central Bosnia)²⁰ illustrates the motivation behind their engagement:

Life cannot be brought to a standstill simply because we do not have a state level Ministry of Culture. Therefore, we cannot wait for someone to give us a Ministry of Culture, we must work and in some way be guerrilla fighters. Fight a guerrilla war. You aim to be somebody who is recognized as relevant in the world (UNESCO), and you do

15 Marko Sjekavica, “Sustavno uništavanje baštine – prema pojmu kulturocida/heritocida”, *Informativa Museologica* 43, no.1-4 (2012): 57-75.

16 Bogdan Bogdanović, *Die Stadt und der Tod: Essay* (Klagenfurt: Wieser, 1993).

17 Ante Lešaja, *Knjigocid: Uništavanje knjiga u Hrvatskoj 1990-ih* (Zagreb: Profil, 2012).

18 *Ibid.*, 376.

19 The “heritage guerilla” term was taken from Dragan Nikolić. See Dragan Nikolić, “Depolitizacija i rekulturalizacija. Muzej II zasjedanja AVNOJ-a kao lieu de mémoire”, *Glas Antifašista* 7 (2013): 24.

20 During the Second AVNOJ Session, on 29 November 1943, Yugoslavia was proclaimed as a multi-ethnic federal state. In the building where the session took place a museum was opened in 1953.

not have the basic system that can defend this, i.e. defend this cultural good.²¹

Beyond the Museum of the Second Session of AVNOJ in Jajce, several other World War II museums have been renovated in the same manner. Among them are: the Memorial Room to the Battle of Batina (in the Draž municipality, Croatia),²² the “25 May 1944” Museum (Drvar, Bosnia and Herzegovina)²³ and the Museum Battle for the Wounded on Neretva (Jablanica, Bosnia and Herzegovina).²⁴ The priority was returning these museums to their previous functions, literally “returning to the old”, that is, replicating and restoring the exhibitions as they were conceptualised in Yugoslavia. This was only a symbolic act reinstating these institutions’ status. Nevertheless, given the general ethnonationalist climate, the goals of these “heritage guerillas” would be only partially achieved.

Namely, even if many NOB museums re-opened their doors to visitors in the early 21st century, the broken link between identity and the (World War II) heritage was not re-established. The narrative of Partisan resistance during World War II was the pillar on which the identity of socialist Yugoslavia rested, and NOB museums were their most important expression. As mirrors of Yugoslavia, they found themselves targeted by all the warring sides in the first half of the 1990s. With the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the link between heritage and identity, in other words the socio-cultural values and museum objects, was broken. Consequently, the Yugoslav narrative structure was suddenly no longer present.²⁵ In this situation, after their re-opening, the majority of World War II memorial museums now function as “time-capsules”, retaining and/or replicating permanent exhibitions conceived in Yugoslavia.²⁶ There are however, some museums that

21 Nikolić, “Depoliticizacija i rekulturalizacija”, 24.

22 The battle of Batina in November 1944 was fought by Yugoslav Partisans and the Red Army against the Axis powers. A memorial complex on the site was opened in 1976.

23 See the chapter titled “25 May – Commemoration of the Raid on Drvar” in this text.

24 The museum was opened in 1978 in Jablanica, the title referring to the rescue of 4.000 wounded soldiers by the Partisans during an attack led by the Axis powers in 1943.

25 See Jagdhuhn, “Heritage industry”, 79-144.

26 See Nataša Jagdhuhn, “The Post-Yugoslav Kaleidoscope: Curatorial Tactics in the (Ethno)Nationalization of Second World War Memorial Museums in Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina”, in *Transforming Heritage in the Former Yugoslavia: Synchronous Pasts*, eds. Gruiua Bădescu, Britt Baillie and Francesco Mazzucchelli (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 295-322.

are reconceptualized as “dysfunctional mosaic narratives”²⁷ by adding additional museum niches to the old settings. One example is the “21 October” Museum in Kragujevac, Serbia, related to the massacre of over 3.000 civilians by the German army on this day in 1941. Next to a painting by Petar Lubarda and a sculpture by Nandor Glid, which represent the victims as a collective and in a rather abstract form, a new art installation by Igor Stepančić and Irena Paunović was placed with information and photos of individual victims. The result is an exhibition collage of artworks that do not belong to the same spatial and discursive order. All together, it appears that the Yugoslav successor-states do not really know how to deal with these memorial museums, reflecting the fact that no social consensus has been found in the national frames of these states regarding memory of World War II. That memory is a highly politicised topic in a public sphere dominated by ethnonationalism.

It is because of this broken link between the present and the past that after the reopening of the museums, the restoration of their commemorative scripts from the outside also began. Given that the joint, Yugoslav, supranational, anti-fascist struggle could no longer be communicated through these now decontextualized museum exhibitions, the “guerilla-visitors” reenacted repertoires of commemorative scripts as the only way to communicate the joint resistance in World War II. The performances of these “visitors as mediators”²⁸ transmitted knowledge about the past in a way that the now decontextualized or re-purposed museum exhibitions did not allow.²⁹ They became living exhibits – both observers and subjects of observation. More generally, the ritual visits to World War II museums in the post-Yugoslav context fulfil a role as a social corrective. Bringing Partisan and Pioneer uniforms into museums is the visitors’ response to “amnesiac and hegemonic ethno-national memory narratives”³⁰ in the public sphere and

27 See Jagdhuhn “Heritage industry”, 175-244.

28 Referring to Latour’s notion of “mediators”, see Bruno Latour, “The Berlin Key or How to Do Words with Things”, in *Matter, Materiality and Modern Culture*, ed. Paul Graves-Brown (London: Routledge, 2000), 10-12; Nikolić explains the role of the participants of the Days of “AVNOJ” event through their willingness to travel to another country and bring with them a variety of memorial emblems. See: Nikolić, “Depolitizacija i rekulturalizacija”, 22-24.

29 Here I am recalling Diana Taylor’s question “What tensions might performance behaviors show that might not be recognized in texts and documents?” See Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), XVIII.

30 Mirko Milivojević, “Re-reading/Writing Yugoslav Pasts and Presents in Post-Yugoslav Literature: Between (Yugo-)Nostalgia and “Lateral Networks”, in *Reconsidering (Post-) Yugoslav Time*, eds.

the processes of de-ideologization and ethno-nationalisation of World War II memory. In addition, the aim of their wearing costumes, is to re-establish the link between museum sources and communist ideology, which is now blurred in these revalued institutions of memory. The participants in these unusual ceremonies do not claim that they live in the past, nor is it their opinion that Yugoslavia should be restored as a state entity. They insist their aims are to remind the public of certain values that have depreciated with the disappearance of Yugoslavia, values such as solidarity, social justice and equality, universal antifascist values and multiculturalism.³¹ Therefore, their engagement could be a form of effective civic conscience and reminder of what must not be forgotten.

Performing confiscated memory and sense of identity

Since the dissolution of Yugoslavia, almost all forms of Yugoslav remembrance culture have been exiled from public discourse in the post-Yugoslav states, and moved to the space of individual private memory. In accordance with this assessment, Maria Todorova observes in her analysis of “post-communist nostalgia” that “it is, first and foremost, a matter of the wishes of those who lived communism, even when opposing or being indifferent to it, to introduce meaning and dignity to their lives, and not to be considered, remembered or felt sorry for as losers or ‘slaves’”.³² Celebration of former Yugoslav holidays such as 25 May (Day of Youth) or 29 November (Republic Day), can be understood as need to express a “confiscated identity”,³³ based on the experience in the NOB, led by Communist Party of Yugoslavia. The largest gatherings take place on the two mentioned dates, which both had clear political connotations in Yugoslavia: celebration of Josip Broz Tito’s birthday for 25 May, and celebration of socialist Yugoslavia’s “birthday” for 29 November, referencing the aforementioned AVNOJ

Aleksandar Mijatović and Brian Willems (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 149.

31 See Predrag Marković, “Sozialismus und seine sieben ‘S’-Werte der Nostalgie”, in *Zwischen Amnesie und Nostalgie: Die Erinnerung an den Kommunismus in Südosteuropa (Visuelle Geschichtskultur)*, eds. Ulf Brunnbauer and Stefan Troebst (Köln: Böhlau, 2007), 153-164.

32 Marija Todorova, “Reimaginacija Balkana”, in *Dobro došli u pustinju postsocijalizma*, eds. Srećko Horvat and Igor Štiks (Zagreb: Fraktura, 2015), 139.

33 See Dubravka Ugrisić, “The Confiscation of Memory”, trans. Celia Hawkesworth, *New Left Review* 218 (1996): 14-39.

session on this day in 1943, which laid the foundation for the Yugoslav Federation. The gatherings on these days follow common patterns, but also have their specificities regarding which museum locations they take place in, as the following four case studies will show. Differences can also be seen in the way the museums that are the target of these new “socialist pilgrimages” react to this social phenomenon.

25 May – *Day of Youth* in Kumrovec

After the 1990s, tensions of the recent wars in the former-Yugoslav region subsided and the war-instigating rhetoric was slowly substituted with a peace-focused rhetoric. In this context, several thousand people started gatherings in Kumrovec (Croatia) on 25 May, around and in the open-air “Old Village Museum”, which to this day also encompasses the house in which Josip Broz Tito was born. Streams of applauding people passed in front of the museums, singing Partisan songs, carrying Yugoslav flags, wearing Partisan uniforms and showcasing medals, using the museums’ exhibitions as *mise en scène* for taking photographs and filming home videos, which were later distributed via the internet and local media. These events still are repeated annually.

The “Old Village Museum” in Kumrovec does not organise such gatherings; the official organiser is the “Josip Broz Tito” association from Croatia. Nevertheless, the museum provides ample tourist content and the event itself is advertised in the media as “The Day of Youth and Joy” (in 2018) or “Youth Day” under the motto “In youth there is joy – in joy there is youth” (2023).³⁴ On this occasion in Kumrovec, most of the visitors, if they were unable to find a Partisan or Pioneer uniform in their closets, choose a T-shirt emblazoned with Tito quotes or with generally known odes to him (such as, *Comrade Tito, white violet, by all the Youth, you are beloved*). An important part of the ritual are the salutations, caresses and addresses made to the statue of Josip Broz Tito, a sculpture by Antun Augustinčić which is placed in the centre of the memorial park, where bouquets of flowers are also laid. As perceptively observed by Hjemdahl and Škrbić Alempijević in their ethnographic study, it is impossible to determine one single, true goal and reason for this event:

34 See the Kumrovec municipality’s website: “Dan mladosti”, *Općina Kumrovec*, <https://kumrovec.hr/dan-mladosti/>. All quoted internet sources were last accessed on 12 January 2024.



Fig. 3: Marking 25 May in Kumrovec, 2006. (Photo © Nevena Skrbić Alempijević)

The Day of Youth is not, as a rule, a moment of glorifying the life and work of Tito, a wish to reclaim a past political system, nor is it regret for the “good old days,” a time-machine of sorts, which through songs, distinct visual symbols, shared memories, takes the participants back to an idealised epoch of youth; nor is it, on the other hand, an opportunity to meet old acquaintances, or good fun, youthful rebellion against the ruling discourse, a quest for unusual souvenirs, nor, simply – a picnic into a Zagorje village. Nevertheless, this celebration can be all of this for all its different participants.³⁵

In Kumrovec, an increasing number of actors from the cultural scene participate in the May event. The festive atmosphere is slowly transforming from being a “nostalgic gathering” to taking the form of a festival. In 2017, the “Old Village Museum” opened its doors for visitor participation, inviting them to share their family memories with the museum on the day of Tito’s death.³⁶ Group visits are increasing year by year at this place.³⁷ When asked why such a large number of people gather in Kumrovec to celebrate

35 Kirsti Hjemdahl and Nevena Škrbić Alempijević, “Kako “misliti u hod” na proslavi Dana mladosti? Fenomenološki pristup Kumrovcu”, in *Etnologija bliskoga: Poetika i politika suvremenih terenskih istraživanja*, eds. Jasna Čapo Žmegač, Valentina Gulin Zrnić and Goran Pavel Šantek, (Zagreb: Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku, 2006), 162.

36 See the “Old Village” Museum’s website: “Izložba “Umro je drug Tito”, Muzej “Staro selo” Kumrovec, 18 May 2017, <https://www.mss.mhz.hr/clanak/izlozba-umro-je-drug-tito>.

37 In 2004, around 5.000 people attended the event; the following year, the 25th anniversary of Tito’s death, between 8.000 and 10.000 were there. In 2015, the 35th anniversary of Tito’s death, 15.000 people attended. See the conversation between Jovan Vejnović and Peter Korchnak on the Remembering Yugoslavia podcast: Peter Korchnak, host, “One Day in Kumrovec’: Remembering Yugoslavia Podcast Episode #73, Remembering Yugoslavia (podcast), 29 May 2023, <https://rememberingyugoslavia.com/dan-mladosti/>.

the 130th anniversary of Tito's birth in 2022, Jovan Vejnović, president of the "Josip Broz Tito" association, answered: "The reason is the memory, not only of the past, but to a time in which we lived both richer and safer."³⁸

25 May – *Day of Youth* in Belgrade

Besides Tito's birth house in Kumrovec, the House of Flowers (*Kuća Cveća*) in Belgrade is another emblematic place for gatherings linked to the memory of Tito. The House of Flowers, which is situated within the Museum of Yugoslavia, has been Josip Broz Tito's final resting place since his death in 1980, as well as of his wife, Jovanka Broz, who died in 2013. Like the Tito Memorial House in Kumrovec, the House of Flowers in Belgrade is both a remainder and a reminder of the Yugoslav memorial space in a nationally-codified memorial landscape, provoking and dividing its museum audience. Although the Museum of Yugoslavia, like the Museum in Kumrovec, also reached the decision not to interfere in the organisation of such gatherings, it, nevertheless, opened the "Figures of Memory" exhibition in the House of Flowers in 2015, on the occasion of the 35th anniversary of Josip Broz Tito's death and 70 years since the first baton race. This exhibition relied directly on the "surviving holiday" theme by presenting a three-channelled video installation of "Youth Day celebrations" (one segment shows the *Slet* events³⁹ and the other two were video documents from Kumrovec and Belgrade on 25 May, after the breakup of Yugoslavia).

Above rows of relay batons, visitors were able to see the people who brought these objects to the museum. Initially the idea was to install a two-channel video installation in the form of live streaming, simultaneously showing the people visiting the House of Flowers and Tito's birth house in Kumrovec on 25 May. However, because of technical demands, the live-broadcast was abandoned, and the exhibition showed only the photo material, as is demonstrated in Figure 4.

Interestingly, the group of people that embodies the 25 May phenomenon, in front of and within the Museum of Yugoslavia, consists of

38 Hina, "Par tisuća ljudi na proslavi Dana mladosti u Kumrovcu: 'Nekad smo živjeli bogatije i sigurnije'", *Novi List*, 21 May 2022, <https://www.novolist.hr/novosti/hrvatska/foto-par-tisuca-ljudi-na-proslavi-dana-mladosti-u-kumrovcu-nekad-smo-zivjeli-bogatije-i-sigurnije/>.

39 These were gymnastic performances by young people that took place at the Yugoslav People's Army Stadium in Belgrade as part of the "Day of Youth" event from 1965 to 1987.



Fig. 4: Introductory installation to the “Figures of Memory” exhibition.

(Photo © Museum of Yugoslavia)

individuals who are not actively engaged in these projects, but involved in a rather passive way. They are present in the House of Flowers exhibition through recordings of 25 May celebrations and through messages left in the visitors’ books, but not as co-creators of the exhibitions or the public debates organised by the museum. By positioning itself in such a way, the Museum of Yugoslavia clearly dissociates from these groups’ visits, their form and their protagonists. Such a stance was made official by the museum staff following the “May 25th and the Museum of Yugoslav History Today” roundtable discussion in 2013, which was “the first public debate on the topic that aimed to problematize the position of the Museum and its relationship to the visitors linked to this particular date”.⁴⁰

Up until the present, the Museum of Yugoslavia has continued the practice of interviewing those who visit the museum on 25 May, receiving the baton from visitors, and recording conversations with public figures from the fields of culture, art and science on the topics of Yugoslav heritage. Recently, it has been possible to view and write in the book of impressions digitally.⁴¹ In 2021, an exhibition entitled “Comrade Tito died” was opened in the House of Flowers.⁴² The number of visits has not decreased over time.

40 Marija Đorgović, “The Museum as Mediator of Memory. Dealing With Nostalgia at the Museum of Yugoslav History”, in *Nostalgia on the Move*, eds. Mirjana Slavković and Marija Đorgović, (Beograd: The Museum of Yugoslavia, 2017), 98.

41 See: “Utisci”, Muzej Jugoslavije, <https://muzej-jugoslavije.org/utisci/>.

42 This exhibition also includes art works of contemporary artists: Dragan Srdić, Goranka Matić, Novi kolektivizam and Milenko Mihajlović. See: “Umro je drug Tito”, Muzej Jugoslavije, <https://muzej-jugoslavije.org/exhibition/umro-je-drug-tito/>.

On 25 May 2022, five buses from North Macedonia were parked in front of the museum. Among the visitors was Mirjana Lalić from Lika in Croatia, who described the reasons for paying respect to the former president of Yugoslavia with the following words: “Tito freed us and helped us build houses that were destroyed by the Ustasha, and then he educated us.”⁴³

29 November – *The Days of AVNOJ*

Unlike the celebrations of most other World War II or Yugoslavia-related dates that take place in museums (though not as part of their exhibition complex), the celebration of 29 November in Jajce was inaugurated in 2008 and has for the past consecutive years been organised by the Museum of the Second AVNOJ Session. The 65th anniversary of the historical session was not only an opportunity to reinstitute the original function of this museum; the ritual of marking the historical meeting in Jajce was also reestablished on this date.⁴⁴ Since 2008, 300 to 500 people from the whole former Yugoslavia region have participated in the annual “Days of AVNOJ” event. The central moment is a gathering within the AVNOJ-museum, in the hall where the historic session took place in 1943, with a script following the dramaturgy of the gatherings on this day during socialist Yugoslavia: welcome speech by the host (every year there is a different person in the role of host), the playing of the “Internationale” anthem, the host’s speech on the importance of preserving memory of the AVNOJ; an address by a representative of the “Society of the Antifascist Fighters of the People’s Liberation War of Bosnia and Herzegovina”, an address by the mayor of Jajce, then the host’s speech on historical date of 29 November 1943, addressing representatives of antifascist associations from all republics of the former Yugoslavia, the host’s speech about AVNOJ’s decisions, a performance by a cultural-artistic association (a different one each year), and a closing speech and acknowledgements by the host.⁴⁵

43 BBC News, “Tito, istorija i Jugoslavija: “Umro je drug Tito” – 42 godine kasnije”, *b92.net*, 4 March 2022: https://www.b92.net/bbc/index.php?yyyy=2022&mm=05&dd=04&nav_id=2149370.

44 Shortly before the opening of the Museum of Second AVNOJ Session, the scenario of the “Solemn Academy” – based on the script of ceremonies that took place in Yugoslavia – was written by Dijana Duzić (senior associate for information and protocol in the Jajce council) and Enes Milak.

45 For a more detailed description of the scenario – the transcript of the scenario Days of AVNOJ from 2013 – see: Nataša Jagdhuhn, “Walking Heritage: Performance as a Method of Transmitting a Confiscated Memory and Identity”, in *Nostalgia on the Move*, eds. Mirjana Slavković and Marija Đorgović (Beograd: Muzej Jugoslavije, 2017), 90-91.



Fig. 5: “Days of AVNOJ”, 2022. (Author of the photos: Sandro Nuhanović.
Photo © Museum of the Second AVNOJ Session)

On the one hand, the “Days of AVNOJ” event was envisioned as a reminder of the Second AVNOJ Session’s importance to the renewal of statehood of the states created after Yugoslavia, in the sense that the borders of the Yugoslav Republics decided by AVNOJ during World War II also constituted the legal basis for the new independent states that emerged in the 1990s. On the other hand, it was also the initial idea of Enes Milak, the first director of the museum, that “Days of AVNOJ” should “loosen nationalists’ frictions in the region”.⁴⁶

The “Days of AVNOJ” cultural performance has opened the possibility of transmitting hybrid Yugoslav heritage on a transnational, post-Yugoslav level – respecting the ties and divisions between Yugoslav successor states – which to this point has not been achieved by a single museum or exhibition. Furthermore, the purpose of the principle that drives the perpetuation

46 Enes Milak, interview with the author, 21 September, 2012.

of Yugoslav rhetoric, from the perspective of the representatives of the city of Jajce, is promoting Bosnian-Herzegovinian identity, emphasising the unity of its different nations against dominating nationalist parties. Conversely for museum visitors, the purpose of the AVNOJ Museum and its “holiday” is the preservation of the “antifascist tradition”, as one often hears the “Days of AVNOJ” speakers saying. As a result of both these motivations, the “Days of AVNOJ” ceremony “opens the space for broadening our understanding and awareness, not solely regarding the historical event – 29 November 1943 – but also forms of its ritualization”.⁴⁷

25 May – Commemoration of the Raid on Drvar

25 May was celebrated in Yugoslavia as Youth Day in connection with Tito’s birthday, even though his real day of birth was actually 7 May. Tito chose 25 May, which he considered as his second birthday, in reference to a major event in the Partisans’ struggle during the war. On 25 May 1944, he escaped a massive aerial and ground German attack on Drvar in northwestern Bosnia where his headquarters were situated in a cave.⁴⁸ In socialist Yugoslavia, the “25 May 1944” memorial complex related to the “raid on Drvar” was established in different steps in and around the city; after being destroyed during the 1992-1995 war, parts of the complex were reopened 15 years later. Similar to the AVNOJ days in Jajce, the annual commemorations in Drvar are full of socialist, Yugoslav symbols, and the Museum in Drvar is directly part of the organisation of the commemorations, together with the municipality and the Center for Culture and Sports. However, while in Jajce a crucial part of the gatherings takes place within the museum, the events are organised in the outside space in Drvar. The cultural and artistic program in Drvar is mainly dedicated to the presentation of musical performances by youth from the local folklore society, school choirs and kindergartens. As part of the 2023 commemoration’s program, Drvar High School students carried the youth relay to the “25 May 1944” memorial complex. They handed it over to Olga Stoiljković Trifunović from SUBNOR Serbia, who led a delegation of fighters, descendants and admirers of the 6th Lika

47 Jagdhuhn, “Walking Heritage”, 84.

48 See Igor Duda, “Ritam godine”, in *Nikad im bolje nije bilo?: modernizacija svakodnevnog života u socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji*, ed. Ana Panić (Beograd: The Museum of Yugoslavia, 2014), 95.



Fig. 6: Commemoration of the Raid on Drvar in 2023.
(Photos: ©Archive of the First Proletarian NOU Brigade)

Division and the First Proletarian People's Liberation Strike Brigade which had been part of the Partisans army during the battle of Drvar in 1944.⁴⁹

In addition to laying wreaths of flowers on the remains of the destroyed Monument to the victims of fascist terror, as part of the program, in 2017, "Drvar was flown over by aeroplanes of the Aero Club from Prijedor, and a descent of mountaineers down Tito's path was organised, as well as a paraglider flight over Tito cave."⁵⁰ One of the major motivations for organising these commemorations stemmed from their touristic potential. Drvar receives between 5.000 and 10.000 visitors a year, which is, as Nebojša Jovičić, the director of the 25 May 1944 memorial claims, a negligible figure compared to the 190.000 who would come in the Yugoslav period, when, as the inhabitants of the city testify, it was possible to make a living from tourism.⁵¹ Jovičić also emphasises that Drvar "is a monument of regional resistance and heroic struggle against fascism."⁵² Transnational reading of the heritage of World War II as a political demand of peaceful coexistence in Bosnia and Herzegovina (and the region) is obviously the wish of the visitors to the "Raid on Drvar" ceremony as well. At the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of this event, one of the visitors in a Partisan uniform – Rade Pilipović from the "Josip Broz Tito" association from Banja Luka – stated:

49 See: "Godišnjica obeležavanja desanta na Drvar", *Subnor Serbia*, 25 May 2023, <https://www.subnor.org.rs/godisnjica-obelezavanja-desanta-na-drvar>.

50 See: "Antifašisti na obilježavanju godišnjice Desanta na Drvar", *Visoko.ba*, 26 May 2019. <https://visoko.ba/antifasisti-na-obiljezavanju-godisnjice-desanta-na-drvar/>.

51 See: Edis Bulić, "Drvar – razglednica iz Titovog doba", *Al Jazeera*, 25 May 2017, <https://balkans.aljazeera.net teme/2017/5/25/drvar-razglednica-iz-titovog-doba>.

52 Ibid.

It would be a sin for future generations to forget that here on that day, before and after that day, there was a fighting brotherhood of one, second and a third nation. Only this truth can lead future generations to a better life. We would not have been winners in 1945 if that fighting brotherhood would not have existed or been passed on to the people. There is only one solution for Bosnia and Herzegovina, as the most complicated country in Europe, only a brotherhood of one, second and a third nation! We have a solution, a blessing for the generations who accept it and go for it.⁵³

From the statements of the head of the memorial complex in Drvar, as well as from the above quoted visitor, it can be concluded that the commemoration of the Raid on Drvar has two goals: 1) restoring the city to the status it had in Yugoslavia, when the catchphrase “Tito’s Drvar” gave it great tourist potential and 2) liberating the town and the museum from the stigma brought by the wars of the 1990s and the burning Tito’s cave in 1992.⁵⁴ Taking into account the general political climate in Bosnia and Herzegovina – “fragmented memories in a fragmented country”⁵⁵ – Pilipović proposes as a solution, which can be considered as the ultimate political message of ritual gatherings described in this text, the re-articulation of the politics of inclusion, as symbolised by the common antifascist heritage of all southern Slavs. This type of political demand is not aimed at re-actualising the “Yugoslavisation” of the memorial landscape, or implementing the concept of “Europeanisation” in collective memory. Rather, it is the need to embody the transnational dimension of Yugoslav antifascism, which is missing from the institutional interpretation of the common past in all the successor states. This proposal contains a solution for re-establishing the link between NOB heritage, in the form of the museums, and the social and cultural values that were originally inscribed in them.

53 Banjalučka Hronika, “PUTOKAZ – Desant na Drvar”, YouTube Video, 22:41, 2 June 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=MMfzRTgbsVk>.

54 See Dejan Šajinović, “Partizani se vraćaju u Drvar”, *Deutsche Welle*, 13 October 2009, <https://www.dw.com/bs/partizani-se-vra%C4%87aju-u-drvar/a-4785992>.

55 Nicolas Moll, “Fragmented memories in a fragmented country: memory competition and political identity-building in today’s Bosnia and Herzegovina”, *Nationalities Papers* 41(6), (2013): 910-935.

Instead of conclusion: Rituals as last vestiges of a multiethnic, antifascist identity

World War II – related museums in Yugoslavia were, from the very beginning, conceived as gathering places and their repertoire of embodied memory – gestures, dances, speeches – was at least as important as their exhibitions. In this sense, the central message of the NOB Museums was mediated through performance, the collective body of the visitors, rather than through the museum and its artefacts. Their exhibitions did not offer a large number of original objects, relying mostly on archival materials and art installations, but gatherings in/around museums on important historical dates offered an authentic experience in performing memory of the NOB, based on Yugoslav identity.

After the collapse of Yugoslavia, the values on which Yugoslav heritage and identity were founded lost their epistemological base. Consequently, Yugoslavs and Yugoslav museums were forced to search for the new realms of belonging. Ritual visits to World War II museums, in the manner described in this text, are one of the ways to resist forced amnesia and “confiscated identity”. Museum visits, which were once common (in Yugoslavia) are now performed as reflection of the “museum in us” – a collection of “our” formative memories. The display of Partisan uniforms, medals, flags and other state symbols retrieved from personal closets, and their transmigration from state to state along with the participants,⁵⁶ is aimed at making an intervention into the domain of official remembrance politics, where there was/is no room for the representation of Yugoslavia’s multiethnic, antifascist emancipatory aspects. In this political climate, where the museums have become hostages of (local) politics and the curatorial profession lost its integrity, the medium of performance seems the only possible way to convey the idea of Yugoslavia’s uprooted heritage.

One conclusion that could be reached is that the subversive nature of marking 25 May, in Belgrade and Kumrovec after the breakup of Yugoslavia, is evident in the act of transferring this “social choreography”⁵⁷ through

56 Nikolić, “Depolitizacija i rekulturalizacija”, 24.

57 I use the term “social choreography” as defined by literary theorist Andrew Hewitt. See Andrew Hewitt, *Social Choreography: Ideology as Performance in Dance and Everyday Movement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

the performance of “embodied rituals as a mechanism of the ideology”⁵⁸ of socialism. This ideology was adopted from Yugoslav times into a new socio-political context, strategically into (meta)museums,⁵⁹ which are now “positioned between the past and the future, [as] places in which a certain society creates its own identity values”.⁶⁰ Because of this, the Museum of Yugoslavia in Belgrade, as well as the Kumrovec Memorial Zone, become – each 25 May – places where heritage is “acted-out” without curatorial control. That kind of unusual autonomy shown by visitors in abolishing the authoritative framework of the museum institution, is even illustrated by the entries in the visitor books. Participants in the group visits do not address the museum but often write messages to Josip Broz Tito (as a symbol of the former social system).⁶¹ Unlike the gatherings in Belgrade and Kumrovec, the commemorations in Jajce and Drvar are organised by the museums, in cooperation with the parent municipality. In this sense, the commemorative scripts are clearly defined and thus, so is the choreography of the visitor’s movement inside (Jajce) and in front (Drvar) of the museum. However, what is common to all four manifestations is that group visits to museums, as a form of socialist pilgrimages that gather people from all Yugoslav successor states, appeared as a form of resistance to the wave of

58 Hewitt’s “social choreography” concept is explained by performance art theorists Ana Vujanović and Bojana Cvejić. See: Ana Vujanović and Bojana Cvejić, “Uvodnik”, *TkH časopis za teoriju izvođačkih umetnosti*, 21:3 (2013).

59 A Metamuseum is a museum within a museum, a museum that reveals its own history and discovers its own medium (of creating knowledge and memory). Ultimately, the metamuseum is a museum in transition. See Jagdhuhn, “Heritage industry”.

60 Pjotr Pjetrovski, *Kritički muzej* (Beograd: Evropa Nostra Srbija, 2013), 9.

61 An example of this attitude is one of many messages from the delegation of the Alliance of Josip Broz Tito Societies and the Alliance of Anti-Fascists of Croatia dating May 2010:

“Comrade Tito,

On this day, 30 years ago, your physical farewell took place. We are in mourning that you no longer lead us, and we are sad that we no longer live in a time worthy of man. Today we are without self-managing specificity and we are reduced within the framework of capitalist exploitation, lacking human dignity.

This year we will mark 65 years of the victory over Nazi-Fascism and domestic traitors, which you directly contributed to as head of the reputable People’s Liberation Army of Yugoslavia. On this year’s event Day of Youth-Joy, leaders of the Fighter’s Alliance from all SFRJ republics will meet to express, in unity, their commitment to NOB heritage, won freedom and the building of a self-managing socialist society.

In the past years, intentional lies have been written about you and your achievements. The intensity of the downpour is as great as the power of the people’s realisations of what they had and the extent to which they cared.

Your devout followers from the Alliance of Josip Broz Tito Societies and the Alliance of Anti-Fascists of Croatia.”

NOB heritage destruction that occurred during the 1990s. They are also a result of the radical (ethno)nationalism-charged turn in remembrance culture, caused by Yugoslavia's bloody dissolution. By comparing the commemorative scenarios in Yugoslavia and the now ritualised visits to World War II memorial museums after the breakup of Yugoslavia, this text opens a space for the identification and analysis of the continued transmission of historical messages through a sensory repertoire – from wearing a certain suit, to certain ideologically coded gestures, to the performing particular songs and dances – both in front of and within museums.

WER IST WALTER?

Resistance against Nazism, fascism, occupation and collaboration occurred throughout Europe during World War II. But how much do we know about this history in other European countries? Gathering 32 contributions and case studies on the history of this resistance, as well as on its transmission after 1945, especially in museums, the present book is an invitation to look at resistance in Europe in an interdisciplinary, international, transnational and comparative perspective. It is the result of the international research project “Wer ist Walter? Resistance against Nazism in Europe” which gathered historians, curators and other researchers mainly from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, France and Germany.



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