

# Memory of War or War over Memory? The Official Politics of Remembering in 1990s Croatia

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*“It is a poor sort of memory that only works backwards.”*  
*Lewis Carroll*

## 1. Introduction

As Jan-Werner Müller argues, “Memory matters. (...) ‘Memory’, both individual and collective, lies at the intersection of so many of our current concerns and organises many of our current projects” (Müller 2002, 1). According to French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, all memory is a social construct, whether it is institutionalized (as interpretations of the past offered by political elites are) or individual (Halbwachs 1992). He argues that it is impossible for individuals to remember in a coherent way outside their group contexts. It follows that there are as many collective memories as there are groups in a society. However, Halbwachs reminds us that it is only individuals who remember, even if they remember together, because remembering still takes place in their own minds. Group membership provides individuals with materials for memory, and groups can even produce, in individuals, memories of events they have never actually “experienced” (Halbwachs 1992). In this sense, memories are “as much products of the symbols and narratives available publicly (...) as they are the possessions of individuals” (Olick 1999, 335).

This paper focuses on the relationship between ‘official’ collective memories<sup>1</sup> and the political changes that happened in Croatia during the war of the 1990s and in the immediate post-war period. The paper follows Olick’s and Robbins’ argument that collective memory is always something we *do* rather than something we *have*. This allows us to pose questions such as: Who oversees the practice of memory? Who are the participants? What rites and rituals are observed? What stories are told? (Olick and Robbins 1998).

Thus, the paper starts by showing that political changes (changes of the regime) in Croatia at the beginning of the 1990s were followed, as Dejan Jovi? puts it, “by a period of transition and consolidation, in which the bond between ‘real power’ and power to dominate over symbols, memories and forgetting remains strong” (Jovi? 2004, 98). The paper attempts to show how the new political elites who came to power in Croatia after the collapse of Yugoslavia came to control the narratives of the past, but in this way also controlled “the construction of narratives for an imagined future” (Barahona de Brito et al. 2001, 38).

## 2. Contested Pasts and Imagined Futures

In the literature on collective memory that has flourished following Halbwachs’ classic work, collective memory has come to be understood as a phenomenon ontologically more complex than a mere aggregation of individual recollections (Middleton and Edwards 1990). Contemporary studies generally agree that social or collective memory is a product of power relations in a society. According to Paul Connerton, the memory of a social group can be shaped by using the state apparatus “in a systematic way to deprive its citizens of their memory” (Connerton 1989, 14). Thus, those with political power in a society promote ‘official memory,’ which claims to be collective, but which is also inevitably selective, since it includes memory of only certain events which are convenient in a given historical moment (Jovi? 2004). Those which are not convenient are excluded and ‘forgotten.’ For this reason, official politics of memory<sub>2</sub> are always followed by official politics of ‘forgetting’ (ibid.). Official social memory is a “political process without an end” which needs the art of forgetting, as much as the art of remembering, in order to function successfully (Connerton 1989). Paul Ricoeur also argues that the past cannot be simply ‘forgotten’ and erased from memory, but is set aside (*oubli de reserve*) and used again when it is needed, i.e. when new political orders and elites try to re-introduce certain events into social memory that former regimes wanted to forget (Ricoeur 2004).

In the former Yugoslavia, the collapse of old, ‘official’ narratives opened space for new interpretations of history. In an attempt to revitalize former taboos of the past and re-introduce into public memory those aspects and events of history which were, up to that moment, officially ‘forgotten,’ new political elites in the former Yugoslavia in general, and in Croatia in particular, aimed to deconstruct the old and construct new narratives of the past. What was previously ‘forgotten’ by the old regime, was now ‘remembered’ by new national elites.<sup>3</sup> In Croatia, with the collapse of Yugoslavia and the change of government, a need for re-defining ‘national history’ arose. This re-definition was framed with anticommunism and a new, nationalistic explanation of the Second World War, employed in order to replace the Yugoslav past, now unwelcome in the new historical narrative of the Croatian people.

With the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ)<sup>4</sup> winning the first multi-party elections and coming to power in 1990, its president Franjo Tu?man tried to implement the idea of an “all-Croatian reconciliation,”<sup>5</sup> which represented the unification of the entire corps of the Croatian people. Such attempts enabled memories of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH)<sup>6</sup> and of the Ustashe movement to be brought back from the margins of social memory, where they were cast during the era of socialist Yugoslavia. The suppression of

public memory of Ustashe crimes committed during the existence of NDH against (mostly) Serbs, represented “the policy of Titoist Yugoslavia to suppress reminders of that vicious interethnic conflict, in the interests of a multiethnic state” (Denich 1994, 367). Thus, after the Second World War, the memories of war-time ethnic hatred and of violent civil war were officially ‘erased.’ However, the new HDZ politics of national reconciliation enabled reoccurrence, in the public narrative of the past, of that part of history which was forgotten and suppressed from the official narrative of the Second World War in Yugoslavia. While the past had a strong influence on the way the present was shaped and explained, the present in turn modified public perceptions of the past. Nationalism, which was the only alternative offered by new political elites in power to the decaying socialism, influenced the change of social memory.

Although Tuđman’s aim was not to rehabilitate the Ustashe ideology (since he was himself a former partisan officer), HDZ’s ideology of national reconciliation opened space and allowed for such rehabilitation to take place. As a result, a part of the Croatian public, with the beginning of the war, started seeing rehabilitation of the Ustashe ideology as “a strong feeling of Croatianness needed for the defence of Croatia” (Cipek 2009, 159).<sup>7</sup> Previous memory of NDH went through a process of re-evaluation, so that, in the period after 1990, it acquired a mythic, central space in the new narrative of the past, as an important link in the historical continuity of the Croatian state. President Tuđman, for example, described NDH as “an expression of the historical longing of the Croatian nation for a state of its own” (quoted in Hajdinjak 2006, 4).

The attempt to implement the idea of national reconciliation can be best exemplified by the change of meaning of Jasenovac labour camp.<sup>8</sup> In his proposal presented to the Croatian public in 1996, president Franjo Tuđman suggested that Jasenovac should be turned into a place of “Croatian national reconciliation.” According to him, Ustashe and partisans fought during the Second World War, each in their own way, for a joint cause: creation of the Croatian state. For this reason, he proposed to turn Jasenovac memorial centre into a place for commemorating all *Croatian* war victims. This proposal also included victims from the ‘Homeland war’ of the 1990s, so he suggested that “we should here, at this site, but separately, create space for all those killed during the Homeland war (...) In this way, Jasenovac could become a site of all war victims which would warn the Croatian people that they have been separated throughout history, that they have been forced to fight each other, and remind them this should never happen again and that the dead should be reconciled in the same way in which we have reconciled the living, their children and grandchildren” (“Not only victims of fascism died in Jasenovac” 1996, 5). Numerous criticisms followed, so Tuđman tried to justify his idea with the unfounded claim that not only victims of fascism died in Jasenovac: “After the camp Jasenovac, which existed during NDH, in that place also existed a communist camp, which was ran from 1945 to 1948” (ibid.). However, the Croatian Association of Antifascists fiercely resisted the idea of transforming the Jasenovac site into a memorial to all Croatian victims, as did the Jewish community in Croatia and the international community headed by the Washington Holocaust Memorial Museum. In the end, the idea was abandoned, and some authors argue that this idea provoked reaction from international actors

because “reallocation of a former labour camp memorial was in conflict with ‘Western’ and ‘European’ memory standards” (Radonić 2010, 55). This would later prove to be extremely important for the direction that memory politics took in Croatia in 2000.<sup>9</sup>

### **3. Landscapes of Memory Destruction**

The change of memory landscape in Croatia can be best examined through examples of commemorations of important events, destruction of monuments, changes in public holidays, and renaming of public spaces, all of which underwent significant changes in order to explain to the public the new national historical narrative.

Public monuments are often the most visible examples of a transition that a country is going through, since they play an important role in celebrating a country’s victories and commemorating its victims, i.e. in bringing to public attention (only) certain historical events. In Croatia, monuments became one of the main tools by which the new government showed the public what and how it should remember from the period of the Second World War. Monuments which commemorated the national-liberation struggle (NOB)<sup>10</sup> from the Second World War experienced an ideological and ethno-national transformation, in order to replace the joint past of the people of Yugoslavia, unwelcome in the new historical narrative, with the past of the Croatian people. In this way, these monuments underwent a change from “a symbol of victory over fascism (...) to a symbol of failed communist dictatorship” (Cipek 2009, 161).

With the beginning of the war in Croatia in 1991, monuments from the Second World War went through severe ‘censorship,’ which included not only their removal and replacement by new monuments, but also their destruction and various forms of vandalism. Destruction of monuments is one of the most obvious signs of intervention into collective memory through the destruction of remembering and forceful forgetting. Violence committed over antifascist monuments during the 1990s represents not only a re-evaluation of the past, but also a negation of antifascist values—which are even mentioned in the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia.<sup>11</sup>

According to incomplete data collected in a monograph and published by the Croatian Association of Antifascists and Antifascist Fighters, “in the period between 1990 and 2000 in Croatia, 2.964 memorials have been demolished, damaged or removed, out of which 731 are monuments and other memorials of high artistic and cultural-historical value” (2002, xii). The large number of destroyed or removed monuments and the fact that no one was ever prosecuted for their destruction serve witness to the fact that the Croatian state, during the 1990s, tolerated such an attempt of implementing ‘collective amnesia.’ Destruction and vandalism of monuments ended with the end of the war, since the war determined in which territories/areas monuments would be destroyed. Thus, for example, destruction of partisan monuments happened in small numbers, or did not happen at all, in those areas which were not affected by the war (Hrženjak 2002). This points to the fact that, during the 1990s war in Croatia, the aggressors (rebel Serbs) were identified with partisan army members of the Second World War, so that, through the removal of partisan monuments, memory of the partisan movement in Croatia was trying to be erased. However, these monuments, which were erected throughout Croatia (and

the former Yugoslavia in general), not only symbolized the communist regime, but also stood as reminders of the antifascist struggle and were, moreover, valuable works of art by some of Croatia's most important and celebrated sculptors of the twentieth century, so that their devastation also stands for destroying the country's cultural heritage.

On the other hand, some other monuments were put or put back into the place where they used to stand, in order to symbolically mark the end of one and beginning of another regime. According to Dejan Jović, replacement of old with new monuments sometimes represents “just as good an end of a revolution or a regime collapse as the actual killing or capturing of the former leader himself” (Jović 2004, 100). In Croatia, this was the case with the monument to ban Josip Jelačić<sup>12</sup>, which in 1991 was returned to the main square of Zagreb (the capital), the very place from which it was removed during the previous attempt of implementing ‘collective amnesia’ in 1947 (Rihtman-Auguštin 2000, 91-92). Franjo Tuđman's speech during the ceremony of erecting the monument witnesses to the connection between the monument and the change of government, since he interpreted the erection of the monument as “the result of triumphant victory of Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) at the elections” (quoted in Rihtman-Auguštin 2000, 91-92).

The renaming of streets and invention of new public holidays were other tools employed to deprive citizens of their memory. Thus, the first changes in memory politics which happened at the beginning of the 1990s included the renaming of streets, squares, schools and other public places which were named after famous partisans, communists, and antifascists. As ethnologist Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin notes, “in a city landscape, the names of streets, together with monuments and memorials, contribute to the semiotic presence of the governing ideology, since they provide the city architecture with a special symbolic content” (Rihtman-Auguštin 2000, 51).

One of the most famous examples of renaming a public space, which sparked many controversies and heated public debates, was that of Victims of Fascism Square, which was renamed as Square of the Croatian Great Men<sup>13</sup> in December 1990. This act resulted in fierce demonstrations, which showed the extent of public dissatisfaction with the new politics of remembering of the Second World War. The decision of those in power to abolish public remembrance of victims of fascism resulted in the founding of a civil initiative—the Committee for returning the name ‘Victims of Fascism Square.’ The Committee organized, every year for ten years, public demonstrations and commemorations for victims of fascism on a symbolic date—May 9 or the Day of Victory over Fascism. The demonstrations and commemorations, which were attended by more and more people every year, were organized until the square was given back its name in December 2000, which happened only after the change of government and death of Franjo Tuđman.<sup>14</sup> The fact that violence often occurred during the annual demonstrations for renaming the square shows just how deeply Croatian society was divided on the issue of memory of the country's antifascist past. The violence culminated at the very end of Tuđman's government, in 1999, and the founder of the Committee for renaming of the square, Zoran Pusić, explains these events with reference to the inactivity of the Croatian police, who made no effort to prevent violence from occurring.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to the renaming of streets with the aim of forgetting the country's antifascist and partisan pasts, some streets were renamed in order to bring back into public memory that side of history which was, during socialist Yugoslavia, intentionally forgotten. For this reason, at the beginning of the 1990s, streets in some Croatian cities were named after Mile Budak, education minister during NDH, or were given the name 'April 10,' after the date of proclamation of NDH.<sup>16</sup> This shows us that, although HDZ's official politics did not really aim at rehabilitating the Ustashe ideology in public discourse, because Tu?man's main aim was implementation of the idea of national reconciliation, it also did nothing to prevent this from happening.

Calendars, i.e. public holidays, also played an important role in the (de)construction of memory. The first post-communist government completely abolished some holidays, such as the former Day of the Republic (November 29), which was celebrated as one of the biggest national holidays throughout Yugoslavia. Some other holidays were 'adjusted' in accordance with the politics of 'all-Croatian reconciliation.' Thus, the former Uprising Day, which was celebrated on July 27, was replaced with June 22, also named the Day of Anti-Fascist Struggle. This change of dates on which the fight against fascism was celebrated in Croatia is also important for the reason that, in the former state, this day was celebrated in each of the republics on different dates, which were decided by the central committee of the Yugoslav Communist Party. In the hierarchy of the Uprising Day celebrations, as historian Drago Roksandi? refers to them (Roksandi? 1995), first place went to Serbia which celebrated the uprising on July 7, followed by Montenegro which celebrated it on July 13, while Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina celebrated the uprising on July 27. The chosen date was connected to the mass revolt of the Serbian people against Ustashe. So the problem with this date lay in the fact that memory of the Second World War in Croatia was marked with a *Serbian* uprising. The new date of celebration, June 22, marked the day when a group of communists, near a Croatian town of Sisak in 1941, after they heard the news that the Germans had attacked the USSR, organized the first partisan movement in Croatia, but also in the whole of Yugoslavia in general. According to Roksandi?, this date was kept unknown in Yugoslavia, due to the myth that Serbs were the first initiators of the National Liberation Struggle (Roksandi? 1995).

However, since the group that founded the movement consisted mostly of Croats, the new Croatian government felt that it was precisely this date which should be celebrated as a holiday, and not July 27, which was considered to have been forced onto Croatia by the Yugoslav government. In this way, the new state kept the celebration of an uprising against fascism, but the new date of celebration also marked the new, official ideology and relation to the antifascist heritage. As historian Vjeran Pavlakovi? remarked, this change of the date of celebration is also important since the new state, in this way, "stood against communist misinterpretation of facts, but at the same time respected the debt to the Croatian antifascist heritage, which was not the case with many other revisions of important dates" (Pavlakovi? 2009, 53).

#### **4. Official (Re)Membering of Victims of the 'Homeland War' and 'Irruptions' of Unwanted Memory**

Changes that happened in memory politics in Croatia are also reflected in the ways in which the government started to officially remember war victories and victims of the 'Homeland War,' and those can be best exemplified by official monuments built in the memory of (only certain) victims.

From the perspective of the state, the goals of public memorials are often, in the words of Benedict Anderson, related to nation-building and defining an "imagined community" (Anderson 1983). Public monuments can play an important function in telling the story of a national group, which reinforces the group's chosen self-image. What is remembered may not be based on what actually happened, but on what (post-conflict) governments and decision-makers perceive as possible or politically convenient to tell a story about. The goal of those in power, therefore, may not be to commemorate victims and contribute to public dialogue about the past, but to assert particular identities in the public sphere that articulate narratives of political legitimation, and these narratives may even be harmful for victims.

New monuments, which were erected in the memory of victims of the 1990s war in Croatia, reflect yet another example of selective remembering and creating a specific kind of identity—that of a victim-nation. Thus, for example, all sites of mass graves in Croatia are marked with an identical monument that has an inscription which reads: "in memory of x Croatian defenders and civilians killed in Greater Serbian Aggression against the Republic of Croatia," while the text is signed with "the Croatian people." Such monuments leave us wondering who exactly erects them and in whose name, while, at the same time, they leave little or no space for victims of other national groups, except for Croats, although there have been several mass graves discovered with only victims of Serbian, Bosniak or Albanian nationality. The sites of these mass graves remain unmarked to this day, but are "in the process of being marked,"<sup>17</sup> which leaves us wondering whether the mentioned inscription would also be used on monuments erected at these sites.

Moreover, there are also monuments which are problematic and even dangerous since they blur the definition of victim and wartime casualty. These monuments, at the same time, commemorate victims from different wars. For example, a monument that the state erected in 2001 in the village of Kostri?i has inscribed the names of both victims who died in 1991, as well as those who died in 1945. This is significant because victims from 1945 were mostly Ustashe officers and civilians who accompanied them in their retreat after the defeat of Germany at the end of the Second World War, and who were killed by partisans in extra-judicial executions. On the other hand, 1991 victims were (mostly) Croats killed during the war and occupation of a part of Croatia's territory by the Yugoslav National Army and Serb rebel forces. What these victims seem to have in common is a presumption that they were all of Croatian nationality.

Another similar monument exists in the village of Donja Budi?ina, which is shaped as a large cross and bears the names of victims from both the 'Homeland War'<sup>18</sup> and the Second World War. The monument does not mention whether it was erected in the memory of civilian victims or army members, and which army members. An interesting example is also the monument in the village of Kozarice, erected in 2006, "in the memory of all inhabitants of Kozarice, both soldiers and civilians, who died during the Second

World War or the Homeland War, for the independence and survival of the Croatian state.” This monument bears the names of those who died on the side of Ustashe army forces, of victims of fascist terror, of those killed in partisan army units, as well as those who died as victims of the communist terror. This and similar monuments are problematic for the culture of memory in Croatia because they do not differentiate between civilian victims and army members, between those who fought and died as members of Ustashe army, and those who died as partisans. In this way, an impression is created that all victims are the same, whether civilian or army, as far as they gave their lives “for the independence and survival of the Croatian state.” It does not seem problematic for those who fought on both sides during the Second World War to be properly memorialized, but it becomes problematic when a fascist regime is given public legitimacy through a public monument.

However, public remembrance is also a focus for civic activism and political critique, which is why memorialisation is regularly subject to, and infused with, political resistance (Ibreck 2010). Therefore, in Croatia there are also a (small) number of monuments which commemorate Serbian civilians who died during the 1991-1995 war, and which were mostly erected at the initiative of some local organizations or family associations. Two such monuments (in the villages of Kistanje and Varivode) were erected by the Serbian National Minority Council, in the shape of crosses with names of the victims inscribed in Cyrillic letters. However, one of the two monuments was destroyed in April 2010 by an unknown perpetrator, while the plaque with names of the victims was taken away. The monument was erected in the memory of nine Serbian civilians who were killed by Croatian army members at the end of the war, in August 1995. An attempt to commemorate Serbian victims of the war was also made recently by a civil society organization named Youth Initiative for Human Rights, which tried to put up a plaque in the memory of all Serbian refugees who had to flee from their homes during the operation ‘Storm’<sup>19</sup> in 1995. On the occasion of the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the operation ‘Storm,’ in August 2010, the plaque was set up along the road by which people fled their homes, many of whom never returned again. The plaque read: August 5, 1995 – August 5, 2010 / On the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the Croatian army’s operation ‘Storm,’ alongside the road by which thousands of refugees travelled, this plaque is erected by citizens of the Republic of Croatia, offering victims their apology, due to the lack of an apology from those who are responsible. / The plaque has been erected with financial help from the Croatian government.<sup>20</sup>

However, the plaque was removed within 24 hours, with an official explanation that no permit was issued for erecting it, while the government’s office for human rights denied providing financial support for its placement.

A small number of other memorials to Serbian victims of the war were also built at the initiative of citizens’ or victims’ families. A more recent example of controversies surrounding the erection of a monument dedicated to Serbian victims was the monument that inhabitants of the village of Golubi? near Knin tried to put up in the memory of (Serbian) inhabitants of that village who died in the period 1991-1995. The monument and memorial plaque were put up in front of the local Orthodox church and the plaque

had inscribed names of 34 victims, the majority of whom died during the Croatian army military operation 'Storm' in 1995. However, a few people whose names were inscribed on the plaque died in 1991 and 1992, during rebel Serbs' occupation of that part of Croatia, so the public speculated whether these people were members of the Serbian army who died during fighting. Due to protests from Croatian war veterans, the Croatian interior minister banned the opening of the monument, while a commemoration, which was also supposed to take place, was cancelled. However, it is interesting to note that in November 2011, regardless of the official ban, the plaque was changed, so that names of the victims were erased, while the plaque only read that it was being put up in the memory of all inhabitants of the village of Golubi? who died in wars, without mentioning which wars or in what years the people died.

The mentioned examples reveal what Wilde calls "irruptions of memory." "Irruptions of memory" are public events which "receive extensive coverage in the media and involve the authority of public institutions and of the elites responsible for them. They involve a period of recent national history notably framed by conflicting political memories (...)" (Wilde 1999, 475). During these irruptions, as Wilde shows with the example of Chile, there is "an arena of deeply divided public discourse, shot through with contending and mutually exclusive collective representations of the past" (ibid.). This shows us that, although memory is likely to be controlled by those in power, especially in politically unstable times, this does not imply that no other memories exist, besides the official mnemonic discourse. However, those 'counter memories' are likely to be set aside by those in power and made publicly invisible, in an effort to make officially promoted memories legitimate, but all of them are equally part of "a continuous process generating ongoing *cycles* of social memory-making" (Barahona de Brito 2010, 364).

The mentioned examples also show how complex, and potentially how divisive, memorials are in terms of post-conflict reconstruction. New public memorials built after the war in Croatia are mainly ethnically exclusive and reflect the view that the role of victim belongs exclusively to the majority community. The official memory remains unchanged even 15 years after the war had ended and the officially promoted narrative about the 1991-95 war in Croatia still leaves little space for victims 'of the other side.' Although efforts have been made recently by those in power to acknowledge the suffering of all victims, regardless of their ethno-national or religious affiliation, it seems that some time will still need to pass before official narratives start talking about and allowing those victims to enter the commemorative arena.

## **5. Conclusion**

This paper argued that new political elites, who came to power after the collapse of Yugoslavia, also came to control the narratives of the past, through politics of memory, which determined what should and what should not be remembered from the past. The new post-communist regime, which based its ideology on anti-communist nationalism, understood political change to mean a replacement of one official narrative by another. This happened in and is characteristic of all Yugoslav successor states, which needed to create new historical narratives in order to legitimate the existence of new nation-states.

Thus, in Croatia, after the collapse of Yugoslavia at the beginning of the 1990s, there also existed a need to create new, official politics of remembering (and forgetting) and to redefine the past. For this reason, many changes happened in the production, distribution and reception of memory. The new government started officially remembering certain events which, up to that moment, were not present in the collective, social memory, but also to forget certain events which were publicly remembered by the old regime. The forgotten, hidden past, which was up to that moment cast to the margins of social memory, was reintroduced into collective memory in order for the government to legitimate its actions, i.e. to legitimate the future.

Deconstruction of the collective memory mainly happened through destruction of partisan monuments, which were devastated in the 1990s throughout Croatia. That act represented not only a re-evaluation of the past, but also an attempt by radical nationalists to erase the memory of the Serbian minority in Croatia, members of which participated, in large numbers, in the partisan movement. Although the Second World War ended almost 70 years ago, it could be said that memory of the events from that war still constitute a political battlefield in Croatia, not just in public discourses, but also in historiography polemics, the media, sporting events and even popular culture.

However, memory of the more recent 'Homeland War,' as Serbian sociologist Todor Kuljić remarked (Kuljić 2011), has not (yet) divided the collective memory of the Croatian people and is integrated in the social memory to such an extent that we cannot talk of 'memory wars' in this case. Efforts recently made by those in power show that there does exist a political will to include voices of victims 'from the other side' in the narrative on the 'Homeland War' and to allow them to enter the arena of commemorative practices. However, it seems that some time will still need to pass before official narratives start mentioning and remembering all innocent victims of the war, regardless of their ethno-national and religious belonging, and before commemorative practices start contributing to the process of reconciliation.

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1 'Official memories' are defined in this paper as those memories which are officially supported and promoted by those in power in a particular society, and which also claim to be collective.

2 According to Barahona de Brito et al., “the politics of memory is two things. Narrowly conceived, it consists of policies of truth and justice in transition (*official or public memory*); more widely conceived, it is about how a society interprets and appropriates its past, in an ongoing attempt to mould its future (*social memory*)” (Barahona de Brito et al. 2001, 37).

3 However, I do not consider the old narratives to be merely repeated by new political elites, rather I see remembrance as an active process, during which narratives are re-constructed, and not merely re-produced.

4 HDZ is a political party which won the first multiparty elections in Croatia in 1990, at the time when Yugoslavia was falling apart. The party was headed by Franjo Tuđman, who later became the first president of Croatia.

5 The ‘all-Croatian reconciliation’ was the main idea of Tuđman and his party, HDZ, which was based on the unification of the entire Croatian nation in order to fulfil the ‘centuries old’ dream of forming an independent Croatian state.

6 Independent State of Croatia (NHD) was a fascist puppet state established on April 10, 1941 at the initiative of national-socialist Germany and fascist Italy, and the state was governed by the leader of the Ustashe movement, Ante Pavelić.

7 My translation. All translations are my own, unless specified otherwise.

8 Jasenovac was the biggest labour camp that existed during the Independent State of Croatia, in which Ustashe killed mostly Serbs, Jews, the Roma, and Croatian antifascists. A heated debate started in the Croatian public, during the 1990s, on the number of Jasenovac victims. The number ranged from 40.000, the number quoted by Franjo Tuđman in his book *Bespuća hrvatske zbiljnosti*, to 1.000,000. Although the exact number will probably never be known, serious scientific research argues that the number ranges between 80.000 and 100.000. For the number and structure of Jasenovac victims see the web site of Jasenovac memorial at [www.jusp-jasenovac.hr](http://www.jusp-jasenovac.hr) See also Mataušić 2003.

9 For the influence of ‘European standards’ on the Croatian politics of the past see Radonić (2011).

10 National-liberation struggle (or NOB for short) is a term denoting the fight of Yugoslav peoples, lead by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, for liberation from fascist occupation during the Second World War.

11 See the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, *Narodne novine* 56/1990, 22.12.1990. at <http://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/232289.html>

12 Ban Josip Jelačić was the *Ban* (lord) of Croatia between 1848 and 1859 and supported independence of Croatia from the Austrian throne. He is remembered for his abolition of serfdom in Croatia.

- 13 There was also a proposal to name it the Square of Croatian Rulers, since the streets which surround the square all carry names of famous kings from Croatia's history.
- 14 At parliamentary elections held in January 2000, HDZ lost power for the first time after the declaration of Croatia's independence. A coalition which consisted of six left-oriented parties won the elections.
- 15 Personal interview with Zoran Pusi?, the founder and secretary of the Committee for returning the name of the Victims of Fascism Square, held on September 7, 2011.
- 16 Although many streets which were named after Mile Budak or were given the name 'April 10' have been, to this day, renamed, there are still streets in some cities which carry these names, such as in the cities of Slavonski Brod and Pleternica.
- 17 Written answer given to the author by the state secretary at the Ministry of Family, War Veterans, and Inter-Generational Solidarity, dated September 19, 2011.
- 18 The 'Homeland War' is the official name of the war fought for state sovereignty and territorial integrity of Croatia, which took place between 1991 and 1995.
- 19 Operation 'Storm' was a Croatian army military action which happened on August 5, 1995, and during which almost the entire occupied Croatian territory was brought back under the Croatian constitutional and legal order. It was, together with operation 'Flash', the key military operation which ended the 1991-1995 war. During the operation, some 10.400m<sup>2</sup> or 18.4 percent of Croatia's territory was liberated.
- 20 See the web site of Youth Initiative for Human Rights at [www.yihr.org](http://www.yihr.org)

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