

RECOLLECTION OF PAST MEMORIES IN CROATIA:
HOW PROCESSES OF *REMEMORATION*
CAN BUILD A NEW IDENTITY

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Introduction

The end of Communist era and the end of Marxist-Leninist ideology that occupied the Central and Eastern European space for half a century, proved a blessing in many regards for these countries, enabling them to push forward with democratic and free-market reforms that in long run would culminate in their eventual democratization, prosperity and joining European Union. A rather awkward exception to this rule has been the former federation of Yugoslavia, which experienced an abrupt change from Tito`s somewhat relaxed communism toward a violent disintegration that cost thousands of lives, exhausted billions of dollars and left behind wreckage and devastation, whose imprints can be still distinguished. It is rather puzzling that Yugoslavia did not experience any kind of (liberal)-democratic opposition, or that long time dissidents of the communist regimes like Milovan Djilas, Dobrica Cosić or Franjo Tuđman to mention just a few, instead of being promoters of an organized opposition to the regime, were either marginalized or turned nationalists, leaving thus little room for a peaceful, democratic change that was the norm elsewhere. A lot of explanations are offered of why this violent disintegration took place and different interpretations of the empirical observations, ranging from elite conspiracies to electorate pressure to foreign intervention as the main causes of the breakdown of the state and eventually war. Nevertheless, it seems that efforts of state-building through a reshaping of the understanding of nationalist identities and the means employed for such ends have been rather missed from the existing literature, especially in the case of Croatia.

The case of Croatia is taken into analyses, given that while it was one of the two biggest states together with Serbia, little attention has been paid in the literature, which has focused almost exclusively on Serbian case and its rapid rise of nationalism and subsequently irredentism, which led to the breakup of Yugoslavia. Croatian sudden rise of nationalism and its

active irredentist engagement in Bosnia that soon followed is somewhat overlooked, especially in an interpretive, historical context.ⁱ Furthermore, as Jill Irvine has put it, among the post-Yugoslav states that engaged in intra-state fighting afterwards, “state-building has developed most extensively there” (Irvine, 1997) and this process of state-building, as well as nation-building as this paper argues, was largely based on revival of memories and ‘living the past into the present’. The aim of this paper is to analyze the shaping of a new nationalist identity from the perspective of the recollection of past memories, mostly the ones from the pre-World War II period, which eventually led to the rise of a new discourse in post-communist Croatia and created the conditions for ethnic cleansing and other related phenomena that accompanied the first years of transitions.

The main question that this essay answers is how memories of pre-communist Croatia were brought into the public fora and came to be dominating the discourse of late 1980s, which in turn led to the rise of new nationalism and subsequent disintegration of Yugoslavia?ⁱⁱ Proxy questions that are related to this, are: how the new (nationalist) identity was shaped by these recollection of past memories? What role did the honoring of memory of the pre-communist period come to play in the aftermath of communism in Croatia? Finally and related, if were to paraphrase French historian Pierre Nora and adopt a narrow concept of its *lieux de mémoire*, what role did the commemoration processes, new emblems, anthems, mottoes, or institutions, as well as men, who make possible the creation of many of the means through which “memories are perpetuated” (Nora, 1996: xvii) come to play in the aftermath of communism in Croatia and forging of the new identity?

The case of Croatia, where patterns of a desire to re(built) a post-communist identity, based on strong national identification and exclusion of the other (non-Croat),ⁱⁱⁱ were visible and encouraged, leading to a strong executive, under the leadership of Tudjman, is telling. This rebuilding process was forged through processes of commemoration, in an attempt to (re)create the past in the present and although at first sight this may sound counter-intuitive, it aimed at state-building, rather than nation-building, as Nora would have put it.^{iv} Thus, it goes along the lines of Francis Fukayama, when he reminds us that: “[the] overwhelming bulk of wars (including Yugoslavia) have not been related to democracy, but to state-building” (Fukayama, 2007).

The paper is composed of four main parts. In the first section, a general theoretical framework that draws mostly from the works of Pierre Nora and Friedrich Kratochwil is delineated. Second part deals with a short background of Croatian pre-Communist era, to follow in the next section with post-Communist Croatian commemoration of national myths. Then, it

proceeds with an overview of the recent past, referring mostly to the changes that have occurred in the post-Tudjman era and how the European and NATO integration processes have shaped a new public and political discourse that has marginalized the once predominant nationalist one. In the conclusion, main arguments and insight from the Croatian case and the way that its commemoration processes fit with the recollection of the past in a process of state-building are restated and evaluated.

History, Memory and Identity: Theoretical Considerations

Most of explanations that are offered in relation to the rise of nationalism in Yugoslavia, which supplanted the communist ideology, are concerned (or rather fixated), with the causal relationship of events and trying to figure out why things evolved the way they did. To paraphrase Kratochwil, a combination of “knowing ‘what’ with the knowing ‘how’” (Kratochwil, 2006: 7), would yield a higher resonance of the understanding, beyond a simple causal analyses of why nationalism replaced communism as the dominant discourse in public and political life. An interpretative narrative, specifically concerned with the interplay between memory, history and (national) identity is better suited to encapsulate the chronology and the dynamics of a discourse that saw itself suddenly emerge in the ruins of communism and came to play a significant role in the later events. History is important to be looked upon because it provides the longitudinal lenses of seeing the intrinsic relationship between (holistic) historical accounts and bits of memory that survive through time to resurface when needed. In the first volume of his seminal edited work, Pierre Nora talks of history as “neither a resurrection nor a reconstitution, nor a reconstruction, nor even a representation but, in the strongest possible sense, a “rememoration”—a history that is interested in memory not as remembrance but as the overall feature of the past within the present: history of the second degree” (Nora, 1996: xxiv). For Nora, the understanding of how commemorative acts and practices help in constructing a public memory is crucial in order to link private experiences to collective understanding of history.

The idea of history, as well as memory is strongly connected to that of the nation, or more exactly to the nation-states. The later cannot exist without the former. Ernest Renan, the great French historian has defined the nation based on two main pillars: “to have done great things together” and “to want to do more” (Renan, 1992), or as Nora succinctly puts it: “the nation as heritage and the nation as project” (Nora, 1998: 634). The difference between Renan and Nora is that while Renan saw them as indistinguishable features of the nation, Nora talked about the separation of the two. Herein lays the main difference between history and memory.

History is the chronological, broadly accepted and official blessed narration of how things have proceeded smoothly and in a continuous, linear progression, while memory can be somewhat more malleable, shaped by the progress of understanding of the collective identities. As Kratochwil suggests, collective identities are more easily redefined than individual ones, which are an intrinsic part of one's self. To put it in other words, if the first is often a necessity for survival, the changing of one's identity can prove catastrophic. That may explain why politicians often appeal to collective identities (which are affected by ideology etc.), rather than try to persuade someone to change its most fundamental convictions, which lay on the core of his/her personality.

Maurice Halbwachs on the other hand, investigated how individual memories and identities could be used as instruments through which "collective memory recomposes an image of the past tied during each époque to the dominant ideas of society [at that moment in time]"^v (Bucur, 2004:159). But turning to the idea of differences between history and memory and how they relate to the idea of the nation, we must stress that although both may seem as (mutually) constitutive of it, the differences remain. When referring to the historical nation, Nora writes that it specifically relies:

on specific sites, designated institutions, fixed dates, classified monuments, and ritualized ceremonies to tell its story, maintain its image, enact its spectacle, and commemorate its past... The memorial nation does the opposite. All space is suffused with traces of its virtual identity, and everything in the present is given an added dimension extending into the past. What was once perceived as innocently displayed along the axis of space is now apprehended along the axis of time (Nora, 1998: 636).

But as the author reminds us, national memory needs a fragmentation of the historical framework of the nation (Nora, 1998: 636), a break of the understanding of history according to the prevalent official narration, in order to introduce itself and shape the new understanding of past and present events. And when this historical framework is shattered and there is a need for re-creation of collective identity, the "modality of remembering" as Kratochwil puts it, takes new meaning and shapes the past as looked from the standpoint of the present. "It is the present problem that informs the selection of what is considered worth remembering" (Kratochwil, 2006:11) and not vice-versa, where an enduring history dictates the present in a deterministic fashion. This is what in Nora's language constitutes what he calls the *lieux de mémoire*,^{vi} where the attitude toward the past and the changes within that attitude constitute the core of Nora's attached label (Nora, 1996: xvi). On the other hand,

metamorphosis and continuous adaption comprise the very essence of the realm of memory. Lawrence Kritzman, in his foreword to Nora's first volume, writes that "recycling of knowledge through associations and new symbolic representations" (Kritzman, 1996: xiii), create the conditions for such metamorphosis to take place. He adds that the realm of memory becomes so strongly identified with the national identity that in turn, it may serve as a 'brain-washer' for future generations, who through processes of repetition tend not only to blend, but also to inform their myths with their wishes (Kritzman, 1996: xiii).

The symbolic representation is important here, because it may be seen as procedure that helps the fusion of these (collective) desires into cultural myths, while translating them in the easiest of (popular) language, so that everybody can have a taste of 'living history'. Sometimes open-ended symbolic manipulations are needed to justify the presence of the new ideology. In the case of Croatia, such a case can be for example that of connecting religious experiences, such as apparitions of Virgin Mary to the nationalist cause, although at first sight this looks even beyond comprehension. Zlatko Skrbiš has shown that nationalist discourse and apparitions (such as that of Virgin Mary in Medugorje)^{vii} not only are linked, but moreover, such apparitions "have been appropriated by Croatian nationalist discourse" (Skrbiš, 2005). Later by repeating continuously these 'felt' and 'living' experiences, through the rite of repetition, they see themselves being all of the sudden 'memorized' and passed in the collective memory. Repetition, writes Nora, paraphrasing Voltaire "after all is what distinguishes commemoration from celebration."^{viii}

Pre-communist Croatia and Ustasha legacy

A short description of pre-communist Croatia and the legacy of the proto-fascist Ustasha regime,^{ix} as well as deeper historical memories that go as far back as the 'great times' of the national hero, Ban Jelačić,^x are necessary to understand the transformative post-communist nationalist changes that took place. Elisabeth Pond writes that "Croat Serbophilia reached its apogee during the Balkan Wars of 1912-14" (Pond, 2006: 125). Not only did Croats at the time perceive themselves as superior to their larger neighbors, the Serbs, but on top of that, they also recalled the myth of "holy defenders of Catholicism and the West-military against the Turks, culturally against the Orthodox Serbs" (Pond, 2006: 123). This kind of national myth as a matter of fact is common to most of the countries that today comprise the so-called 'Western Balkans' territory, with Serb history

books written in such a way that they claim as the only 'significant' battle against the Ottomans, that of Kosovo Polje in 1389, which since it was lost, is commemorated as a 'sacrifice' of the Serbs in defense of Christendom, while Albanians have built their national mythology around the Scanderbeg, national hero, who is said to have been the only 'true' defender of Christianity values, against Ottoman hordes, in this part of Europe.

One of the biggest paradoxes that history tells us in the case of Croatia, is that while in the beginning of the 20th Century, Croats were in the forefront of forging for unity among South Slavs,^{xi} which later culminated with the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, while Serbs being suspicious of Croats' intentions of "diluting them in some amorphous greater identity," (Pond, 2006: 124) the situation during the Ustasha regime, as well as in the first years of post-communism, was reversed. During the Ustasha regime, infamous leaders, like Ante Pavelić boasted in claims like killing a third of Serbs, while deporting or converting the rest to Catholicism (Pond, 2006: 126). And these were not main rhetorical claims for that matter. As the experience of Jasenovac camp, where thousands of people perished, or the massacres of Jews and Serb Chetnik guerilla fighters or just civilians (Glenny, 1999: 773-780) showed, Ustashes and their leader Pavelić seemed to be true to their word.

The post-communist paradox consisted when almost five decades later the Serbs who wanted to keep past privileges and moreover, reinforce them, were pushing for a greater recentralization of the federation under Belgrade firm hand, whereas Croats, as well as Slovenes, susceptible of Milosević's intentions, grew increasingly incessant toward separatist goals, and with a nationalist discourse already pervading the public sphere, the step toward declaring independence seemed in a way anticipated. So in less than a century, Croats turned twice from initiators of federalist system who would bring all southern Slavs together in the same polity, toward promoting state-building and nation-building that were highly divisive and discriminatory vis-à-vis the other minorities, notably the Serbs.

Another turning point in between that in fact gave hints of Croatian growing nationalism, was the 1971 Croatian Spring movement, which initially had the backing of Tito, but was later crushed by him because of the concern of putting the entire regime in jeopardy, which brought in mind situations like the Croatia's Nazi-allied fascist state during World War II (Fisher, 2003: 77). This in itself created the conditions for a growing class of Croatian nationalist intellectuals, including its most prominent member Franjo Tuđman, who would seize the moment and see themselves catapulted in power in first democratic election in 1991. This was made possible through a shifting of nationalist discourse from the margins toward the mainstream public space, to substitute the faltering communist

ideology. Processes of commemoration and other symbolic politics helped Tudjman and his allies to create a new collective memory that was strongly linked to state and nation-building, through these processes of "politicization of commemoration" if we were to borrow the way Nora coined the phenomenon. In turn, these processes helped forging a (myth of) a new Croatian identity, distinct from both primarily Slav and Yugoslav ones.

Remembrance and processes of commemoration in post-communist Croatia

In the beginning of the 1990s, Franjo Tudjman started to use popular rhetoric and demagogy, "as he dropped his Communist atheist persona altogether and embraced the fascist Ustasha regime and the Catholic Church as preservers of Croat identity" (Pond, 2006: 127). Elisabeth Pond writes that:

both rallying symbols were problematic. The resurrection of Ustasha leaders who had butchered tens of thousands of Serbs, Roma, and Jews repelled non-Croats. And the Roman Catholic Church, perceiving itself in fact as a catholic, universal religion, did not lend itself to nationalist particularism as readily as did the autocephalous Orthodox churches (Pond, 2006: 127).

National identity is fluid rather than fixed, as history often depicts it and the case of Croatia where in the early 90s, despite the historical trait of religion which distinguished Croats from their Slav 'brethren', a new trait of national identity, that of a distinct language was added, is telling. Mila Dragojević writes that the intellectuals and the new political elites (mostly former dissidents), promoted the new "linguistic engineering" through publication of new books and dictionaries that promoted new rules, from what till then was considered a 'Serbo-Croatian' language. As she writes:

Language was the "ideal" trait for the construction of a national identity at the time of Croatia's independence, because not only reinforced the existing ethnic boundary but it also provided the secular elites promoting late 20th-century nationalism with a superior status and influence within the new state. Religion, on the other hand, continued to an important trait of the Croatian identity, but its role had clearly changed and diminished in comparison to the World War II period (Dragojević, 2005: 79).

The role of a separate Croatian language as a marker of national identity is puzzling if we see it in the historical perspective, when not only was Serbo-Croatian identified as a single, unitary language of all Yugoslavs, but also the new Croatian language did not fundamentally differ from its

predecessor. Only the way of writing the language had a significant shift, with Croats deciding to write their 'new' language with Latin letters (rather than Cyrillic) and some other minor changes. If one is to consider former Yugoslavia, where as Roy Gutman writes, the mere possession of a "Croatian" dictionary- rather than a "Serbo-Croatian" dictionary could be a reason for imprisonment (Gutman, 1992), one can be only bewildered by such abrupt changes taking place in such a short time and how recent memories can see themselves not only as shaping the new identity, but also shaping the former history. Dragojević has further argued that the new language "was chosen primarily by secular elites with a goal not only of distinguishing between "us" and "them," but also in order to secure a privileged status within their own group" (Dragojević, 2005: 61).

But the extreme nationalist discourse that first emerged from the far right (the so-called *pravasi* in Croatian) came to dominate the mainstream political discourse in a very short time. Former marginalized intellectuals like Tudjman proved to be some of the necessary catalysts of bringing together a memory of the first independent state in Croatian history, the infamous legacy of the Ustasa regime, while in the same time revitalizing or creating the means for such catapulting of the new discourse, in order to shape the (post-Communist) identity in the making of the Croats. Such means were museums,^{xii} memorials, such as that of Ban Jelačić in the center of Zagreb (previously destroyed by Communists), the new anthem, the new emblem (the same used by the Ustasas), the new (way of writing the) language and other means that served to create a new national identity. Furthermore, a New York Times article of 1993 captures some of these efforts of re-introducing of fascist regimes symbols when it writes that: "[a]t Mr. Tudjman's instigation, Croatia calls its new currency the kuma, the name used during the Ustasha years. Croatia's new coat of arms closely resembles the symbol of the Ustasha state. And Mr. Tudjman not only defends the reputation of surviving Ustasha leaders, but has named one to a seat in Parliament, and another as his Ambassador to Argentina" (Times, 1993). This signaled a dangerous turn of the newly independent Croatian state into an *ethnocracy*,^{xiii} which in itself led to engagement of the new Croatian state in irredentism, especially versus Bosnia-Herzegovina, on behalf of their kin there (Saideman and Ayres 2008).

Tudjman's nationalist regime made use of many of the symbols of Ustasha regime, while simultaneously distancing himself from a formal endorsement of its legacy. In a way, this seemed logical for a shrewd politician "who planned to build a state on nationalism rather than ideology..." (The Economist, 1999). The appropriation of the symbols from nationalist politicians was merely used as a mean to legitimize them in the political vacuum that the end of communism left. For this reason, a "new

normative order" that "was essential both to legitimize the actions of the new regime and to mobilize the population for the important task of state-building" (Irvine, 1997: 2) was both needed and desired. The new ultranationalist ideology that came to occupy the mainstream political discourse in Croatia at the time consisted of six main features, where the "insistence upon the historical continuity of the Croatian state and the state-building "accomplishments" of the interwar Ustasa fascist movement and the independent State of Croatia (NDH)" (Irvine, 1997: 4), was one of the foremost ones.

The new ideology and efforts of forging a new Croatian national identity, were such that even sportsmen, such as Goran Ivanisević, who went on to win the world's most acclaimed tennis tournament, that of Wimbledon, soon acquired a status of hero in national media and public discourse (The Economist, 2001). The pantheon of old heroes, such as Ban Jelačić, or the infamous Ante Pavelić, needed more contemporaneous ones, like the war criminal Ante Gotovina or sportists, like Ivanisević, who in different ways represented the best of Croats and the model to aspire. The main problem with this, is that even sport champions like Ivanisevic, or famous musicians, writers and so on, were portrayed as champions of national cause and pillars of superiority of Croats versus the Serbs or the Bosnians, thus constructing a Croat own identity in relationship to the other. And when the other became almost extinct from Croatian society, with the expulsion of hundred thousands of Serbs from the Krajina region, the necessity to enlarge state territory to include Croats living elsewhere (like in Herzegovina part of Bosnia), came just naturally. An ethnocracy, or to put it differently, the politicians in the pinnacle of such nationalist regime, who were the main architects of this form of 'ethnic cleansing', need continuously the presence of the Other and the need for to reconstruct it perpetually in order to justify their existence.

One of the best examples of how commemoration processes can help the process of *rememoration* and how they are closely linked to the process of recreating the collective identity is the monument of Ban Jelačić-- who in 18th Century was the civil and military governor of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia, appointed by Austro-Hungarian Empire-- in the main city square of Zagreb. He was credited for the fact that "for the first time after many centuries, at least in formal terms, united under his authority the majority of the Croatian lands," although as Rihtman-Auguštin claims, "Jelačić`s conception of Croatian national identity lay within the framework of Austro-Slavism. He was loyal to the Austrian crown, but yearned for unity among Slavs" (Rihtman-Auguštin, 2006:182). His statue was removed during Communism and renamed the 'Square of the Republic', although he was one of the few uncontested figures in Croatian history, which was much

respected from Serbs and other minorities alike. This is mostly because during his governorship, he did not use a nationalist discourse, but rather a language of improvement of living conditions, especially in rural areas, inhabited both by Croats and Serbs alike and forging ahead together for development and greater autonomy from Vienna. Nevertheless, since the monument, which was positioned in the middle of the market place "was present in everyday life of Zagreb's citizenry," (Rihtman-Auguštin, 2006:184) communists perceived it as a threat to their newly found regime and in order to add more legitimacy to themselves, they thought would be better if a *tabula rasa* should exist, where all the pre-existing memories would be just deleted. Thus, in a Soviet pattern that saw itself manifested in other Eastern European countries as well, objects of commemoration were either tossed away or adjusted accordingly to add to the legitimacy of the new regime. The monument of Jelačić was not an exception.

When the monument was returned in 1990, after being preserved by some self-conscious Croat historians, who protected it from being destroyed by Communist authorities, "[i]t seemed that the reinstallation of the statue symbolized the establishment of democracy" (Rihtman-Auguštin, 2006:188). Everybody seemed satisfied of this historical return and to properly rejoice the event and commemorate Jelačić's legacy, an entire week, named 'Ban Jelačić Week', with musical entertainment and concerts was dedicated to the event. As Rihtman-Auguštin writes, a speech by the new president, Franjo Tuđman, made possible for him to present himself "as a personality who creates history- and then interpreting history for us. So he paced Jelačić in the context of current politics" (Rihtman-Auguštin, 2006:188). This speech was very significant, similar with Milošević's speech in Kosovo Polje in 1989, which caused his star to rise and made possible the rise of a new nationalist ideology in Serbia. In his speech Tuđman: "...mentioned the 'undaunted spirit of the Croatian people', extolled the Homeland, and boasted how 'Croatia's prestige has been reinstated" (Rihtman-Auguštin, 2006:189).

The use of monuments and other form of symbolic forms for pure benefit of political ends has persisted even after Tuđman's death and his nationalist party HDZ split, albeit in a much more moderate fashion. A new leader of what remained from the party after a crushing defeat in 2000, Ivo Sanader, not only managed to recapture power and win two consecutive elections, but most importantly was involved in an inner battle against the (nationalist) hardliners inside his party. These battles or "clashes between Sanader and right-wing nationalists took the form of the competitive construction and dismantling of monuments to Ustasha leaders- and the continued poster wars over Gotovina and Ustasha chief Ante Pavelić" (Pond, 135). The symbolic appeal that such monuments of posters have on mob

psychology and creation of collective memory is not to be overlooked. As Rihtman-Auguštin points out: “[t]he statue of a historical personality displayed in a public place is a medium which makes history tangible in everyday life. The monument rescues the historical personality from oblivion” (Rihtman-Auguštin, 193). It takes much time to re-create the recent history and efforts from different sources of authority among the population.

Post-Tudjman era and the shift in public discourse

In the post-Tudjman era, it seems that the realm of memory has ‘ceased’ to suffuse itself with the national identity and the process of nation-building is not seen as closely identified with that of state-building. Seen from this perspective, we might infer that the “three-fold transformation process” (Offe, 1991) directed simultaneously toward the creation of nation-states as well as transformation toward capitalism and democracy, is almost complete in the Croatian case. Thus, Kritzman’s reminder of processes of repetition that inform collective myths and merge them with populism, to rememorize the past into present seems to largely have been overcome.

Furthermore, the Croatian post-Tudjman governments have proven to be more and more willing to cooperate with EU institutions and other international bodies. An example of this is a Croatian court which for the first time handed a conviction to a war general and hero, Mirko Norac (BBC, 2008), as well as the Croatian state decision to cooperate in handing over Ante Gotovina to the Hague where he was charged for crimes against humanity.

But problems relating to the exclusion of participation of the minorities, especially vis-à-vis the Serbian minority can be easily traced. For example, as Djuric has observed, although there is such a Law on the Election of Representatives to the Croatian National Parliament which prescribes at least five to seven representatives elected to the House of Representatives of the Croatian National Parliament, on the other hand, we witness “the fact of only one reserved seat for Serb minority in the Croatian National Parliament in its 2000-2004 mandate.” (Djuric, 2008). Examples like this somewhat show a lack of political will for raising political inclusion and participation from minorities and other marginal groups within society. If more participation is guaranteed, then we may confidently say that Croatia has reached a new level of political maturity and permanently ends the cycle of transition to consolidation of democratic rule.

However, the NATO invitation and prospects of entering EU possibly in 2010, have generated a new wave of Europeanization through the diffusion of norms and values that are completely different and opposed to

the prevailing discourse of nationalism of Tadjman`s era. The shift in public opinion can also be easily observed and not much pressure is put on government when it has taken actions that curtail the power of the military, have reduced the pensions of former commandeers and have sent some of them behind jail, or as the case was with Gotovina, surrendering them to an international Court. This process of de-mystification of national heroes, in association with de-commemoration of certain historical events have not only helped in radically transforming the public and political discourse in the country, but also it has helped to depart from the 'perpetuation of the memories' and from living the past in the present. Thus, we witness a departure from such processes of *rememoration*, if we use Nora`s conceptualization.

Conclusion

This essay addressed the emergence of a new Croatian identity, born from the 'ashes' of Communism and built through a process of *rememoration*. In other words, an identity that is dimensioned through a reinterpretation of history. A history that as Nora suggests, is lived through memory in the present. And this explains why history is interested in memory. The case of Croatia is illuminating because it shows how a past identity of 'Croatness' that came to exist only at a particular time and was associated with one of the most infamous fascist regimes in Europe was reintroduced and reinforced in order to justify the ground of first breaking up from Yugoslavia and then as a mean of maintaining the allegiance of its citizens. Jacques Le Geoff writes that often historians help accidentally in constructing collective memories and such thing as writing history objectively, does not exist, since themselves, they are caught in the societal web or context that surrounds them (Le Geoff, 1992). It is not necessarily the case that "collective memory, reflected upon historically, may serve, again, as in Kratochwil, 'the liberation and not the enslavement of human beings'" (quoted in Astrov, forthcoming: 2008). True, as Alexander Astrov writes, the state has indeed "overtaken commemoration" (Astrov, 2008: 7), which in turn has overtaken the process of liberation that Kratochwil mentions. The case of Croatia where a former nationalist dissident historian-turned-president, Franjo Tadjman, is the strongest evidence for this claim, where a direct overtaking and moreover, abuse of the commemoration processes from the state has taken place.

Nora writes that "[a] new concern with identity resulted from the emergence of this historicized present" (cited at Astrov, forthcoming: 10). And one cannot look at the future and deal with it unless one deals with its past if we were to paraphrase Nitzche. The process of "deciphering one's memory' is what Kratochwil believes political activity to be" (Astrov,

forthcoming: 10). But since the ways of dealing and reconstructing such (collective) memories in order to fit the interests of (identity of the) present are not only finite but moreover concentrated in only few hands, who is better suited to perform such task than historians and politicians. Even better when the two of them are merged in one as the case of post-Communist Croatia and its first President Tudjman, tells us. It takes time and efforts from different societal groups, as well as willingness from the political class, for resisting the populist appeal of usage of commemoration processes or nationalist symbols to help reshaping a new collective memory and subsequently a re-definition of one's collective identity.

Croatia in the post-Tudjman era, seems to have witnessed a fresh and vigorous start in its race toward democratic consolidation and the completion of integration toward Euro-Atlantic structures. Not only it was recently invited to NATO, but also is on the forefront of Western Balkan countries for membership in European Union, most probably expecting to join in 2010. This has in turn impacted domestic discourse, by shifting the focus of debate away from nationalist talk and raising public awareness of democracy, rule of law and other EU-advocated issues that signal an abrupt break with the past. A new collective memory is slowly being shaped and this in turn requires a new historical revisionism, including the recent past. The ability of dealing with the past in a rational and impassionate manner and distancing themselves from leaving the past within present, will serve the greater absorption of democratic values, a move toward a more civic and inclusive national identity and a quicker pace in the race toward full integration in the European family.

ⁱ In fact, since this is a case-oriented analysis, this paper tries to pursue both a historically interpretive and casually analytic investigation. As Charles Ragin has pointed out: "There is not necessary contradiction, between doing empirically based causal analysis and interpreting cases historically. Both goals are important; having one does not entail a denial of the other." See Charles Ragin. 1987. *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*. Berkley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press. P.35

ⁱⁱ A point of clarification: here I do not mean that the idiosyncratic character of Croatian nationalism led to the break-up of Yugoslavia, but that its new nationalistic discourse in tandem with Serbian, Slovenian, Kosovar and other nationalist discourses that came to be predominant in each of the republics and autonomous regions, led to the violent fragmentation of once the most successful federal republics. For the purposes of this paper I focus only at the Croatian case, but traces of same patterns that are analyzed in this essay can be easily discerned in other neighboring republics as well.

iii Mostly Serbs, particularly those living in Krajina, which were systematically discriminated, persecuted, forced to leave or even killed in a similar fashion that for many Serbs was a reminder of Ustasha (fascist regime) of World War II.

iv I make this (counter-intuitive) point here, because some events of commemorations, which will be discussed below looked like came spontaneously, either from citizens` direct request or from local municipalities, rather than the power-center of Zagreb and the executive. However, even when the initiative came from below (or at least looked like it), it was broadly supported from the center.

⁵ Maria Bucur. 2004. "Edifices of the Past: War Memorials and Heroes in Twentieth-century Romania." In Maria Todorova ed., *Balkan Identities: Nation and Memory*. New York: New York University Press. Original citation from: Maurice Halbwachs, *Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1925, x1.

⁶ Nora has defined such *lieux* (ang. realms) as "any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community" (Nora, xvii).

⁷ Such apparitions and the consequent turning of these 'sacred' places into pilgrimage sites through rites of commemoration, like in the case of this village of Bosnia-Herzegovina, have significant symbolic relevance for shaping of the nationalist discourse, which may in turn lead to irredentist policies, like the case of Croatian state heavy involvement in partitioning of Bosnia as a mean of 'protecting' not only Croatian population there, but also sites of particular significance to its (recent) history and collective memory.

⁸ See for initial claim: Voltaire, article "Esprit," in *Encyclopédie* (Paris, 1755), 5: 973.

⁹ From 1941 to the end of the World War II, Croatia was ruled from a fascist regime, called Ustasha. Although they were local fascist, Ustasas were backed openly by their counterpart fascist regimes of Italy and Nazi Germany. Ustasas soon passed racial discriminatory laws against Jews, Serbs and Gypsies and set up the Jasenovac concentration camps where thousand of people perished. Tudjman, after starting out as a partisan and devoted Communist in its early career, turned to be a nationalist later on, when he first talked about a myth of Jasenovac, when the actual number of people, was exaggerated (as he maintained). After these claims, he was dismissed as one of the leading official historians of Croatia from the Communist regime, but used (successfully) this nationalist and populist rhetoric to catapult himself to power in 1991.

¹⁰ Ban Jelačić, (16 October 1801-25 May 1859) was the civil and military governor of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia and governor of Rijeka.

¹¹ The genesis of this come from the 16th Century with Domenican Vinko Pribojević preaching the ideology of pan-Slavism, "and in the nineteenth century a Croat "Illyrianism" romantically cast all Slavs as descendants of the pre-Roman inhabitants of the Balkans, rather than fourth-century late-comers" (Pond, 123-124).

¹² In the case of museums, despite changing the content of the most of them, making thus room for more pre-communist commemoration objects, the case of the Jasenovac is somewhat the reverse, where the new regime at least neglected (or even helped tacitly) the destruction of the some of its content that served symbolically to commemorate thousand of Jews, Serbs and Gypsies killed during the Ustasha regime.

¹³ State rule or total political dominance lies exclusively with an ethnic group.

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