

Dissonant Heritage and Contested Narratives in the Former Yugoslavia

Public monuments are perhaps the most readily visible examples of a country's culture of memory, and are therefore also often at the centre of controversies during periods of political transition. After dramatic political, economic and social changes, memorials that once supported a regime's official narrative often become "dissonant heritage", remnants of political systems that potentially falsified the historical records or committed massive human rights' violations in conflict with post-transition values. Socialist Yugoslavia built thousands of monuments, statues, and memorial plaques to commemorate the Partisan victory in World War Two and, more specifically, to provide legitimacy for the post-war regime. Along with other kinds of memory sites that are not necessarily physical (public holidays, national symbols, institutions, etc.), monuments play an important role in celebrating a nation's victories and commemorating its dead. But precisely because they are physical objects, whether a stone plaque describing a historic event or a massive victory arch, monuments both represent a regime's official interpretation of the past as well as challenge a new administration's ability to overcome a problematic historical legacy. Thus the construction, destruction, restoration, or censorship of a country's monuments allow scholars to analyse how political elites seek to transmit their ideological worldview and the mechanisms they use in moulding the past for contemporary political legitimacy. The dissolution of communism and the Yugoslav state meant that the topography of Partisan monuments lost its original function. Some monuments obtained new meanings, others were destroyed or damaged, and in many cases new monuments were built to reflect the independent countries that used to be part of the former Yugoslavia. The rehabilitation of former WW2 collaborationists clashed with previous heroic antifascist interpretations of the past, resulting in the ongoing distortion of competing historical narratives in everyday politics. This lecture deals with the fate of the rich cultural heritage of the socialist period and how new memory politics have transformed the transitional landscapes of the Yugoslav successor states.

Vjeran Pavlaković is an assistant professor and Chair of the Department of Cultural Studies at the University of Rijeka, Croatia. He received his Ph.D. in History in 2005 from the University of Washington, and has published articles on Yugoslavs in the Spanish Civil War, the politics of memory and transitional justice in the former Yugoslavia. Recent publications include *The Battle for Spain Is Ours: Croatia and the Spanish Civil War 1936-1939* (Srednja Europa, 2014), "Symbols and the Culture of Memory in Republika Srpska Krajina," *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 41, No. 6 (2013), and "Fulfilling the Thousand-Year-Old Dream: Strategies of Symbolic Nation-building in Croatia", in Pal Kolsto, ed., *Strategies of Symbolic Nation-building in South Eastern Europe* (Ashgate, 2014). He is also a co-editor of the book *Confronting the Past: European Experiences* (2012) and is the lead researcher on the project "Framing the Nation and Collective Identity in Croatia: Political Rituals and the Cultural Memory of Twentieth Century Traumas" funded by the Croatian Science Foundation.