

## **Croatia's Contested Memoryscape<sup>1</sup>**

Croatia's memoryscape underwent several waves of dramatic transformation during and after the country's War of Independence (referred to as the Homeland War, or *Domovinski rat*, 1991-1995). As noted in the growing body of work analyzing memory politics in the Yugoslav successor states, the monumental heritage related to the Second World War was systematically targeted and partially destroyed, while hundreds of new memorials were erected by a wide array of organizations, veterans' groups, religious communities, and state actors. This revitalized need for memorialization included not only monuments, plaques, busts, and museums dedicated to the events of the 1990s, but numerous new interpretations of the Second World War. While some memorial spaces sought to reexamine the historical narrative and recognize the victims and fallen soldiers who had been excluded from the collective memory during communist rule in a dignified manner, other monuments were blatant attempts at politicized revisionism that attempt to turn perpetrators into innocent victims. The debates over memorials reflects a broader division in Croatian society about the conflicts in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, reaching beyond simply historiographical differences and spilling into the political arena, cultural politics, education, and human and minority rights.

Memorials, because of their visibility in public spaces and role in politicized commemorative practices, draw particular attention in the media and public discussions. Memorial spaces often include a variety of objects which seek to create a narrative of past, often traumatic events, but for the purpose of this study the focus is on physical monuments rather than museums or intangible forms of remembrance. The erection and destruction of monuments, both old and new, continue to spark controversies for a number of reasons, and this collection seeks to provide a number of case studies that illustrates the various ways these memorial objects exemplify

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Croatia's challenges in dealing with the difficult past. Some monuments are controversial because of the symbols, names, or inscriptions that are found on them, while others can be problematic because of the way they present an individual or historical event. Some monuments have drawn attention due to their location or the kind of commemorations they attract, which often put them into conflict with other nearby memorial spaces. There is also the subtler issue of the aesthetic quality of a memorial space, since many monuments were the result of grass-root initiatives without formal artistic, historic, or legal criteria.

In addition to their visibility, the competing goals of the memory actors involved in designing, lobbying, and erecting a monument contributes to their frequently contested nature. State authorities invest considerable public funds in memorials in order to justify the sacrifice of their citizens in conflicts, as well as draw political legitimacy from patriotic narratives, especially if they are associated with founding events such as wars of independence. Other political actors, whether part of ruling coalitions or in the opposition, often initiate the creation of memorials that often politicize "their" victims in an attempt to demonstrate their contribution to the nation or particular political ideology. Soldiers, police, and other armed forces (and their associated veteran organizations) tend to support the creation of monuments which glorify battle and embody the martial values of these services, even when poor political decisions resulted in the deaths of their comrades. In contrast, NGOs, human rights organizations, and other civil society groups push for the creation of memorial spaces that explicitly criticize violence, conflict, nationalism, and other forms of intolerance, as well as recognizing marginalized groups excluded from the dominant historical narrative. Finally, victims' organizations and family members of victims seek to create memorial spaces that draw attention to their pain and suffering at the cost of trying to drown out the voices of other victims. As Dell Upton notes in his analysis of Civil Rights statues in the United States, monuments have the potential not only to "commemorate or to remind but to argue one's particular viewpoint."<sup>2</sup> Monuments thus delineate borders, reinforce hegemonic narratives, and push forward one interpretation of the past that is often in conflict with the perception of other, often marginalized, groups.

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<sup>2</sup> Dell Upton, *What Can and Can't Be Said: Race, Uplift, and Monument Building in the Contemporary South* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), p. 14.

These issues with controversial monuments is not limited to the former Yugoslavia, although the complex nature of the Second World War (with its multisided, interethnic, and ideological mass violence), legacy of communist rule, and new cycle of warfare in the 1990s makes the memoryscape in the Yugoslav successor states particularly susceptible to passionate debates over which monuments to remove, erect, or transform. All of the former Soviet bloc countries had to deal with the monumental legacies of communist rule. Lenin statues were almost universally torn down, but memorials to the liberation by the Red Army, most of which contained ossuaries with the remains of fallen soldiers, were allowed to stay as part of an agreement with Mikhail Gorbachev during the final days of the Soviet Union. In Hungary, monuments were removed and collected in memory parks (Memento Park) and museums (House of Terror). In Estonia, protests by the country's Russian minority erupted when a monument to Red Army soldiers was moved from the center of Tallin to a cemetery, which was seen as an effort to minimize symbols of Russian identity in the city. The war in eastern Ukraine, after the events of Euromaidan (2014), sparked a wave of Lenin statue removals throughout Ukraine over twenty years after the fall of communism, and the parallel erection of the Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera.<sup>3</sup> Spain's Historical Memory Law (2007) called for the removal of public monuments and plaques to Francisco Franco, although there are ongoing debates about the largest of the memory sites related to the Spanish Civil War, the Valley of the Fallen, which also serves as Franco's mausoleum. And finally, the United States is currently facing a crisis of what to do with over 1,500 symbols of the Confederacy (including 700 monuments and memorial plaques)<sup>4</sup> following a number of hate crimes over the past few years. Supporters of these monuments argue that they represent Southern heritage, while African Americans and liberals consider them to be racist, intolerant, and a legacy of segregation in the United States, not to mention a political movement which sought to destroy the unity of the country.

When compiling this list of controversial monuments, the first question that needs to be asked is what is considered controversial? The concept of dissonant heritage is often used in describing the monumental legacy of former, usually authoritarian, regimes, and in the former Yugoslavia the issue of what to do with the thousands of Partisan monuments and memorial sites

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<sup>3</sup> Andre Liebich and Oksana Myshlovska, "Bandera: memorialization and commemoration," in *The Nationalities Papers*, vol. 42, no. 5 (2014).

<sup>4</sup> The Southern Poverty Law Center has a detailed map of all the Confederate symbols, place names, and monuments on their website at: <https://www.splcenter.org/20160421/whose-heritage-public-symbols-confederacy>.

has been debated since the 1990s. In Croatia alone, about 3,000 out of 6,000 Partisan objects were removed, destroyed, damaged, defaced, or transformed in the 1990s, only a few of which have been restored. But the focus of this study is on memorials erected since 1990, even though many of the examples are related to the Second World War. The majority of the debates about memorials are the ones dedicated to the Ustaša movement or contain symbols considered to be Ustaša, that is, fascist. This includes monuments to individuals who held important positions in the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), fallen Ustaša or Domobran (members of the NDH's regular army) soldiers mixed in with victims of communist extrajudicial killings, and the use of the NDH salute "*Za dom spremni*" (Ready for the Homeland). The latest controversy deals precisely with the appearance of *Za dom spremni* on a memorial plaque to members of the Croatian Defense Forces (HOS – *Hrvatske obrambene snage*)<sup>5</sup> killed in the Homeland War that was erected in 2016 in the same town as the location of the notorious Ustaša concentration camp Jasenovac, sparking outrage, protests, and boycotts of the official commemoration because of the government's refusal to remove it. The organization Hrvatski Domobran has erected hundreds of other monuments and memorial plaques to fallen members of the NDH, often with problematic texts that seek to rehabilitate the Ustaša movement and distort the truth about the Second World War rather than honor the fallen with a dignified memory site. Some monuments dedicated to the Homeland War are controversial for aesthetic, discursive, or financial reasons, such as the Victory Monument in Knin, which lacked full financing. Other monuments are related to controversial individuals from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially because of bilateral relations with neighboring countries such as Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Finally, monuments commemorating Serb civilian victims have been challenged by right-wing political groups (who have been active in denying recognition to Serb

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<sup>5</sup> The Croatian Defense Forces (HOS) were paramilitary units made up of volunteers and coordinated by the Croatian Party of Rights (HSP – *Hrvatska stranka prava*) of Dobroslav Paraga. HOS forces were known for their use of Ustaša symbols, particularly the salute *Za dom spremni*, while the HSP openly praised Ante Pavelić and called for the reestablishment of the NDH. The decision to name their units HOS is a clear reference to the Croatian Armed Forces (HOS – *Hrvatske oružane snage*), which were formed by uniting Ustaše and Domobrani forces into one military organization. After a conflict almost erupted between HOS and the Croatian Army after the fall of Vukovar in November 1991, HOS units were integrated into the regular army structure while Paraga was replaced with Anto Đapić, who was less critical of President Franjo Tuđman and the HDZ. Although it is clear that HOS used symbols directly referring to the NDH, in recent years a number of these symbols have been accepted as Homeland War symbols in a calculated attempt to whitewash them of any association with the Ustaše. See Vjeran Pavlaković, "Opet *Za dom spremni*: desetotrvanjske komemoracije u Hrvatskoj nakon 1990. godine," in Tihomir Cipek, Olivera Milosavljević, and Suljeman Bosto, eds., *Kultura sjećanja 1941*. (Zagreb: Disput, 2008); and Dario Brentin, "Ready for the homeland? Ritual, remembrance, and political extremism in Croatian football," in *Nationalities Papers*, vol. 44, no. 6 (2016).

victims from the Second World War as well) and veteran organizations, resulting in a number of memorials being damaged or defaced.

Although there is a general consensus that there should be no place for openly pro-fascist or racist memorials in public space, controversies over memorials is not always a negative phenomenon. Monuments and other memory spaces frequently go unnoticed and disappear into the landscape no matter how dramatic the event they are commemorating can be, especially if they are not part of a significant commemorative ritual. Controversy can draw public attention and provoke a broad discussion over difficult historical issues. For example, Alfred Hrdlicka's sculptural ensemble *Mahnmal gegen Krieg und Faschismus* (1988) at the Albertinaplatz in Vienna, Austria, drew considerable criticism due to its portrayal of a Jew forced to clean the street in a demeaning pose. This not only led to the building of a second memorial on Judenplatz, but raised the issue of ongoing anti-Semitism in Austria and the challenged the earlier perception of Austrians as merely victims, and not willing perpetrators, of Nazism.<sup>6</sup>

### **Ustaša memorials and Ustaša symbols**

#### **Jure Francetić (Slunj, Otočac)**

Jure Francetić (1912-1942) was an Ustaša commander of the infamous Black Legion (*Crna legija*) and Commissioner for Bosnia-Herzegovina before dying of wounds suffered during his capture by Partisans near Slunj after his plane crashed. As an early member of the Ustaša movement who spent considerable time in exile before the Second World War, Francetić was known for both his close ties to the Ustaša leader, Ante Pavelić, and his ruthlessness as commander in military operations against Četniks, Partisans, and civilian enemies in the parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina incorporated into the NDH. He is venerated as a hero among Ustaša supporters, and is immortalized in the song “Evo zore, evo dana” (Here comes the dawn, here comes the day) along with another Ustaša military commander, Rafael Boban. During the Homeland War and the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, several HOS units carried Francetić’s name, including the 19<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Gospić) and the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Tomislavgrad).

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<sup>6</sup> Eva Kuttnerberg, “Austria's Topography of Memory: Heldenplatz, Albertinaplatz, Judenplatz, and Beyond,” in *The German Quarterly*, vol. 80, no. 4 (2007).

The first memorial to Francetić was erected on 2 June 2000 Dragan Hazler and Hrvatski Domobran in Slunj, the site of his death in December 1942. The monument was a simple stone pillar with a plaque referring to Francetić as a Croatian knight. Although the Croatian government at the time the monument was erected consisted of a left-wing coalition, the monument was not considered problematic. Only on 27 August 2004, during Prime Minister Ivo Sanader's (HDZ) mandate, did the government decide to tear down the monument. Sanader argued that the Francetić monument's "glorification of the Ustaša movement is unconstitutional and damages Croatia's international image,"<sup>7</sup> especially important at the time when the country was seeking NATO and European Union membership. Three months later, a simple metal plaque was placed there and quickly removed.<sup>8</sup> Although a permanent monument was gone, passing through Slunj in 2007 I saw a simple wooden cross, candles, and wreaths at the previous location of the controversial memorial.

On 14 August 2008, a small memorial plaque in honor of "Croatian knight Jure Francetić" appeared in the same location, signed only HD Chicago. The monument was removed immediately and police determined that Josip Bašan, an émigré from Chicago, was responsible for its erection. Even though police determined there was no basis for a criminal charge since there were no explicit Ustaša symbols on the plaque, Bašan was charged with violating city ordinances by not obtaining a permit. In 2012, during another drive past Slunj, I observed more flowers and candles at the site, and what looked like the remains of a simple cross.

On 1 July 2017, the Croatian Academic Union in the Homeland and Diaspora (HAZUD) attempted to unveil a memorial plaque on Francetić's birthplace in Otočac. Since HAZUD announced their intentions several days in advance, police intervened and confiscated two plaques (one without *Za dom spremni*), claiming they "encouraged violence and hatred."<sup>9</sup> One version of the plaque even referred to Francetić as an "Ustaša – antifascist", pushing the debate of fascist and antifascist symbols to a new level of absurdity.

### **Mile Budak (Sveti Rok, Bilice)**

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<sup>7</sup> *Novi list*, 28 August 2008, p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> *Večernji list*, 15 August, 2008, online version at [www.vecernji.hr](http://www.vecernji.hr).

<sup>9</sup> *Dnevnik.hr*, 1 July 2017, online version at <https://dnevnik.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/policija-uklonila-ploce-juri-franceticu---481495.html>.

Mile Budak (1889–1945) was one of Ante Pavelić’s closest collaborators and leading intellectuals of the Ustaša movement even before the establishment of the NDH in 1941. A writer, lawyer, and newspaper editor, he had survived an assassination attempt apparently orchestrated by the Yugoslav police in 1932, at which point he joined Pavelić in exile. The Yugoslav authorities allowed him to return in 1938 and he soon began publishing *Hrvatski narod*, which became the leading daily paper of the NDH. In 1941, Pavelić made Budak the Minister of Education and Faith in the NDH, during which point he was one of the chief ideologues of the regime’s plans to deport and exterminate Serbs, Jews, and Roma.<sup>10</sup> Later he served as ambassador to Germany and was briefly the Minister of Foreign Affairs until he retired in 1943. Captured by the Allies while fleeing the Partisans in 1945, he was handed over to the Yugoslav authorities who sentenced him to death after a quick trial in June 1945. Communist historiography characterized Budak as one of the most notorious Ustaša leaders, attributing to him slogans such as *Srbe na vrbe*, or “hang the Serbs from the willow trees,” and the claim that the Ustaše will expel a third of the Serb population, convert a third, and kill the remaining third, although the exact origin of these phrases is still disputed. After 1991, Budak was partially rehabilitated in Croatia, with right-wing intellectuals emphasizing his legacy as a writer<sup>11</sup> while overlooking his leading role in the NDH government. A number of cities throughout Croatia carried Budak’s name, although many were subsequently removed. About a dozen cities in Croatia still have streets still named after Budak.<sup>12</sup>

In 2004, Josip Vidaković erected a monument to Budak in his hometown of Sveti Rok, financed by emigres from Canada, the United States, Australia, and Germany.<sup>13</sup> The monument consisted of a small stone wall with a plaque featuring an image of Budak in the middle situated next to the church in Sveti Rok. The prime minister at the time, Ivo Sanader, ordered the removal of this monument, along with that of Jure Francetić in Slunj, on 27 August 2004 as part of Croatia’s effort to enter the EU. Several days later a number of right-wing politicians and individuals with pro-Ustaša sympathies (including Ivan Gabelica, Ivan Pandža, Ivan Ficko, and Ana Lučić) gathered at the site to commemorate Budak. Sanader’s decision to demolish this controversial monument

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<sup>10</sup> Ivo Goldstein, *Nezavisna Država Hrvatska 1941. godine: put u katastrofu*,” in Sabrina P. Ramet, ed., *Nezavisna Država Hrvatska 1941.-1945.* (Zagreb: Alinea, 2009), pp. 30–32.

<sup>11</sup> The communist authorities banned all of his novels, including *Ognjište (Hearth)*.

<sup>12</sup> Cities with streets named after Mile Budak in Croatia include Slavonski Brod, Vinkovci, Virovitica, Pag, Pleternica, Komiža, Lovinac, Jasenice, Klakar, Draga, and Pakoštane.

<sup>13</sup> *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 31 August 2004, online at <http://arhiv.slobodnadalmacija.hr/20040831/novosti02.asp>.

epitomized his efforts to steer the HDZ to the center-right and away from the flirting with the Ustaša legacy of the 1990s, clearly aware that Europe would not tolerate such open glorification of Nazi collaborators. When visiting the site in 2012, I saw a cross at the location of the demolished monument with a sign dedicated to the “Victims of Bleiburg, the Way of the Cross, and Communist Terror,” along with a wreath in memory of Budak and his daughter, also killed in 1945.

On 25 June 2016, the mayor of Bilice near Šibenik unveiled a plaque on a newly built pier named after Mile Budak. Local activists, shocked that a place with such a strong antifascist tradition – there were over 300 Partisans and 192 victims of fascist terror from this small town – responded by throwing black paint on the plaque and spray painted “Antifa” on the billboard at the entrance to Bilice.<sup>14</sup> The simple plaque is on a stone pedestal and features Mile Budak’s name under a *šahovnica* and the caption “Croatian writer and patriot” (*hrvatski književnik i domoljub*). According to media reports the pier was constructed illegally, although the mayor said he would be happy to pay the fine, adding that to him Budak was “a Croatian patriot and author, not some kind of Ustaša war criminal.”<sup>15</sup> One local, speaking to journalists, expressed shock at the appearance of a monument to an Ustaša official, stating “who joined the Ustaše from Bilice? No one! We were always a Partisan village, from each house at least one person joined the Partisan movement.”<sup>16</sup>

### **Miro Barešić (Drage)**

On 31 July 2016, the “Association of the Croatian Knight Miro Barešić” unveiled a larger than life monument to Barešić (1950-1991) in front of his childhood home in Drage, near Pakoštane in Dalmatia. As a Croatian émigré and extreme nationalist, Barešić gained notoriety in 1971 when he assassinated Vladimir Rolović, the Yugoslav ambassador to Sweden. Although sentenced to life in prison in Sweden, he was released to serve time in Spain after Croatian nationalists hijacked a plane and demanded his freedom.<sup>17</sup> After eighteen months, the Spanish authorities allowed him to travel to Paraguay, where he served in the Paraguayan military before being deported to Sweden to serve out seven more years of his sentence. In 1991, he returned as a volunteer to fight in

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<sup>14</sup> *Večernji list*, 30 June 2016, p. 13.

<sup>15</sup> *Jutarnji list*, 7 July 2016, p. 15.

<sup>16</sup> *Večernji list*, 9 July 2016, p. 34.

<sup>17</sup> *Novi list*, 1 August 2016, online at [http://www.novolist.hr/Vijesti/Hrvatska/Jos-jedan-ubojica-dobio-spomenik-blagoslovio-ga-umirovljeni-biskup-a-pozdravili-HDZ-ovi-ministri?meta\\_refresh=true](http://www.novolist.hr/Vijesti/Hrvatska/Jos-jedan-ubojica-dobio-spomenik-blagoslovio-ga-umirovljeni-biskup-a-pozdravili-HDZ-ovi-ministri?meta_refresh=true).

Croatia's Homeland War, but was killed in an ambush by Serb rebels in Mirjane Donje shortly afterwards. Numerous conspiracy theories allege that former communist intelligence officials who had switched over to the Croatian side during the war informed the Serb side about Barešić's movements as revenge for Rolović's assassination.<sup>18</sup>

The two-meter high metal statue, by sculptor Ivan Kujundžić, is surrounded by marble pillars and is located across from Mile Budak Street. According to some media estimates, nearly five thousand people, including notable right-wing elite (such as former Minister of Culture Zlatko Hasanbegović, Bruna Esih, Josip Jurčević, Velimir Bujanec, and others), attended the unveiling of the monument to an individual who by most definitions was a terrorist.<sup>19</sup> Both the mainstream media in Croatia and the Serbian press reacted with outrage that a convicted murderer would receive a monument, regardless of his patriotism or participation (however brief) in the Homeland War. A week later unknown persons splashed red paint on the arms of the statue, clearly wanting to draw attention to Barešić's "bloodied hands."<sup>20</sup> After antifascists in Šibenik commented the successful action against the monument, the radical right furiously demanded the names of the perpetrators, offering a 20,000 kuna reward for the identities of the "bastards" and "bandits" who committed this crime against a "Croatian hero".<sup>21</sup>

The erection of the monument is emblematic of the right-wing's efforts to relativize crimes and whitewash past murders if done in the name of the fight for Croatian statehood. Whereas the radical right automatically assigns collective guilt to all Partisans, even those ethnic Croats who had sacrificed themselves in the struggle against Nazi-fascism, because of post-war crimes (which justifiably need to be condemned), they excuse atrocities committed by extreme nationalists such as the Ustaše or terrorists like Barešić because it was allegedly in the name of the nation. This failure to apply universal criteria in objectively dealing with the past is symptomatic of the deliberate distortion of history that results in the glorification of murderers (as long as they are "ours") and the ongoing denial of victims (if they happen to be "theirs"). The Barešić monument remains controversial not only for the liberal spectrum of Croatian society, but continues to be

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<sup>18</sup> See Mario Barišić and Stipe Jukić, *Hrvatski vojnik Miro Barešić* (Šibenik: Self-published, 2014).

<sup>19</sup> *Hrvatski tjednik*, 4 August 2016, pp. 14-15.

<sup>20</sup> *Net.hr*, 8 August 2016, online at <http://net.hr/danas/hrvatska/nedavno-otkriveni-spomenik-miri-baresicu-osvanuo-krvavih-ruku-nedostajao-je-završni-detalj/>.

<sup>21</sup> *Mondo.rs*, 8 August 2016, online at <http://mondo.rs/a928003/Info/Ex-Yu/Miro-Baresic-spomenik-osvanuo-krvavih-ruku.html>.

problematic for Serbian officials. Rejecting Croatian criticism of the monument to JNA Major Milan Tepić in Belgrade, the Serbian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dačić said Zagreb had no justification for protesting since the government tolerated the statue to the “Ustaša terrorist” Mire Barešić.<sup>22</sup>

### **Monument to Stjepan Devčić (Jadovno)**

Some monuments are controversial simply for the subject they commemorate or the symbols they contain, while others become problematic because of their location, as seen in the case of the Jasenovac memorial plaque. In the area in and around the town of Gospić, local authorities and unknown members of the Croatian Army destroyed nearly all the antifascist memorials commemorating victims of the Ustaše in the 1990s. In 1941 the Ustaše authorities established a series of concentration camps from the center of Gospić, on the slopes of Velebit Mountain, and on the island of Pag. The most notorious of these sites of mass killing was the Jadovno camp, still a subject of debate about the number of victims, thousands of whom ended up in various karst pits and caves scattered throughout the forest.<sup>23</sup> The association of victims raised a memorial near the site of Šaranova jama (Šaran’s pit) in 1988, but unknown perpetrators destroyed it in 1991. The Jadovno commemorations resumed in 2009, and the Serbian National Council (SNV – *Srpsko narodno vijeće*) financed the restoration of the memorial in 2011.

Denying representatives of Serb, Jewish, and antifascist organizations to remember their victims, right-wing groups have sought to disrupt the commemorations, organizing protests on the road leading to the memorial. On 14 September 2013, veteran organizations (*Udruga hrvatskih dragovoljaca domovinskog rata*) from Rijeka and Gospić erected their own memorial on the roadside in Jadovno, commemorating the death of the Ustaša Stjepan Devčić in the aftermath of the Brušane uprising in September 1932. Devčić was a member of an Ustaša group that attacked Yugoslav gendarmes in the nearby village of Brušane, and while most of the attackers fled to Italian-held Zadar, he died in Jadovno after the authorities tracked him down. Although a memorial already exists in Brušane to commemorate this event, the positioning of this memorial is clearly a

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<sup>22</sup> *Politika*, 2 October 2017, online at [www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/389972/Protest-Zagreba-zbog-spomienika-majoru-Tepicu](http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/389972/Protest-Zagreba-zbog-spomienika-majoru-Tepicu).

<sup>23</sup> See Slavko Goldstein, *1941. Godina koja se vraća* (Zagreb: Novi liber, 2007); and Vladimir Geiger, Mario Jareb, and Davor Kovačić, *Jadovno i Šaranova jama – Kontroverze i manipulacije* (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2017).

provocation to those who come to Jadovno to remember the victims of Ustaša terror. The monument, consisting of a memorial plaque set on a large stone next to an enormous cross, refers to Devčić as the “first victim of Serb-Četnik terror” even though his armed attack against gendarmes (supported by a foreign power, Italy) was by most definitions a terrorist act. The plaque also claims that the “Croatian national revolutionary Ustaše” were the first to light the “spark of Croatian independence...that was realized after the defeat of the Četnik-Yugocommunist aggression during the Homeland War.” Not only does this monument transform Ustaša terrorists into victims, it seeks to create a narrative in which the Ustaše, and not Croatian antifascists, are responsible for the establishment of the modern Croatian state, counter to the preamble of the Croatian Constitution.

### **HOS monument in the Mariner’s Cemetery (Pula)**

On 15 January 2005, the Pula branch of Hrvatski Domobran erected a memorial to Home Guards (*domobrani*) in the Austro-Hungarian Naval Cemetery in Pula, a protected cultural heritage location. Although a Home Guard unit was stationed in Pula until the end of the First World War, the initiators of the monument use this site to commemorate 10 April (the founding of the NDH) every year. Pula, however, was never a part of the NDH, even though neo-Ustaša supporters include Istria (and other regions such as Sandžak) on their maps of the imagined Greater Croatia. According to the city administration, this monument was illegally erected in the cemetery. In 2012, unknown persons defaced the monument with red paint.

### **Domovinski rat (Homeland War)**

#### **Pakovo Selo**

Whereas many monuments are controversial because of the individuals they memorialize or because of potentially divisive phrases such as *Za dom spremni*, the monument erected in Pakovo Selo in 1993 was perhaps the most explicit in its allusion to the Ustaša movement: the entire monument was in the shape of a giant “U”. According to the plaque on the monument, members of the Sandoran platoon erected it on 17 September 1993 at an intersection in the middle of the village. Pakovo Selo, on the main road from Drniš to Šibenik, was an important defensive position for Croatian forces seeking to stop rebel Serbs from reaching the coast. The monument remained

unnoticed until 2008, when reporters stumbled upon it during the renewed attempts to erect a monument to Jure Francetić in Slunj. While authorities in Slunj claimed they removed the plaque to Francetić because it violated communal regulations and not because of Ustaša symbols, in the case of the Pakovo Selo monument it was more than evident that the entire object was a giant Ustaša symbol.<sup>24</sup> Locals claimed they had no idea who funded or initiated the monument, suggesting that it was never completed. One month later, on 22 September 2008, communal workers from Šibenik tore down the controversial memorial.<sup>25</sup> A memorial to Niko Cigić (1968-1992), a Croatian soldier killed during Operation Miljevci (Miljevački Plateau), is now located on the site of the former U monument.

### **Bojna Rafael Boban (Split)**

On 9 May 2014, Mayor Ivo Baldasar of Split attended the unveiling of a monument to the IX. Battalion “Knight Rafael Boban” (IX. bojna “Rafael vitez Boban”) of the Croatian Defense Forces (HOS), the HSP’s military unit. The white stone obelisk featuring the words “IX. bojna” under a *šahovnica* and HOS was in honor of the 2,500 volunteers who served in this unit, of which forty-six lost their lives.<sup>26</sup> Whereas other HOS units were less explicit about their symbolic connection to the Ustaše, this battalion explicitly featured the name of Ustaša commander Rafael Boban<sup>27</sup> in its name. Moreover, this unit openly prided itself on the use of Ustaša symbols, slogans, and uniforms, which was even reported in the international press in the 1990s.<sup>28</sup> According to human rights workers, members of this unit were involved in the eviction of Serbs, families of Yugoslav Army personnel, and individuals perceived as being disloyal Croats during the Homeland War, many of them from apartments in the neighborhood where the monument stands. The fact that the unit had such a controversial past apparently did not stop the mayor, a member of the center-left Social Democratic Party (SDP), from attending the unveiling along with right-wing singer Marko

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<sup>24</sup> *Novi list*, 21 August 2008, p. 4. The headline of a *Novi list* article about the Francetić plaque on 20 August read “No U, no Ustaše”, followed the next day by an article titled “There is a U, no police”, suggesting that Croatian authorities were not responding to obvious violations that they themselves had referred to.

<sup>25</sup> *Novi list*, 23 September 2008, p. 2.

<sup>26</sup> *Večernji list*, 9 May 2014, online at <https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/otkriven-spomenik-9-bojne-hos-a-rafael-vitez-boban-937741> (accessed 4 October 2017).

<sup>27</sup> Boban (1907-?) became the military commander of the Ustaša Black Legion after Jure Francetić’s death in 1942. He was promoted to the rank of general and was involved in a number of key battles during the final defense of the NDH before retreating with Pavelić into Austria in the spring of 1945. He returned to Croatia to fight with the *Križari* (Crusaders) against the newly established communist authorities, but his exact place of death is unknown.

<sup>28</sup> *New York Times*, 12 April 1997, online at <http://www.nytimes.com/1997/04/12/world/fascists-reborn-as-croatia-s-founding-fathers.html> (accessed 4 March 2011).

Perković Thompson, former HSP presidents Anto Đapić and Dobroslav Paraga, and numerous HOS veterans.

The controversies surrounding the monument continued over the following years. In September 2014, unknown perpetrators covered the monument in red paint. In January 2015, Luka Podrug of the marginal right-wing party Croatian Pure Party of Rights (HČSP – *Hrvatska čista stranka prava*) initiated the replacement of “IX. bojna” with the Ustaša salute “Za dom spremni”. The Split police and communal services reacted promptly and chipped away the problematic phrase during the night of 29 January, stating that it was “inappropriate”.<sup>29</sup> HOS veterans, including the unapologetic Ustaša sympathizer Marko Skejo, provoked another scandal when they decided that they would commemorate the founding of the unit on 10 April every year, the anniversary of the establishment of the NDH, even though Paraga actually formed the unit on 2 November 1991.<sup>30</sup> While Croatian veterans of the Homeland War certainly deserve to have their sacrifice to the country honored, the use of their death to openly promote Ustaša symbols and values is problematic, to say the least. What is more troubling is that despite the obvious Ustaša symbols, phrases, uniforms, Roman salutes, and anniversaries, the initiators of this monument deny they are fascists because they resisted Slobodan Milošević’s fascism in the 1990s. The attempt to empty certain symbols, which are intricately associated with horrific crimes in the Second World War and were revived in the 1990s to specifically allude to the perpetrators of those crimes, is troubling for Croatia if it wants to develop an inclusive, tolerant, and progressive society for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Rafael Boban (Koprivnica)**

The Autochthonous Croatian Party of Rights (A-HSP – *Autohtona Hrvatska stranka prava*) attempted to place a small plaque dedicated to Ustaša commander Rafael Boban in park in Koprivnica on 22 December 2015. Boban had led the defense of the city against Partisan attacks in 1944, which gained him considerable praise among the NDH leadership. The A-HSP’s

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<sup>29</sup> *Al-Jazeera Balkans*, 29 January 2015, online at <http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/sa-spomenika-uklonjen-natpis-za-dom-spremni> (accessed 6 October 2017).

<sup>30</sup> *Direktno.hr*, 10 April 2017, <https://direktno.hr/domovina/10-travnja-rodendan-ix-bojne-hos-i-nam-nitko-nece-promijeniti-82156/> (accessed 4 October 2017). See also *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 12 May 2000, online at <http://arhiv.slobodnadalmacija.hr/nedjeljna/20000512/> (accessed 4 October 2017).

provocative move drew a little bit of media attention but the authorities quickly removed the plaque.<sup>31</sup>

### **HOS Memorial Plaque (Jasenovac)**

Whereas in the past the Croatian government and local administrations responded quickly in removing or altering the most explicitly controversial monuments (see the previous entries regarding monuments in Slunj, Sveti Rok, Split, and Pakovo Selo), since 2016 the administration of Andrej Plenković (HDZ) has refused to act decisively concerning the erection of a memorial plaque in the village of Jasenovac, near the infamous Ustaša concentration camp. The memorial plaque, erected on the wall of the local kindergarten by the Zagreb Association of HOS volunteers on 5 November 2016, is dedicated to the memory of eleven HOS soldiers who died in or near Jasenovac during the Homeland War. The controversy exploded when it became publicly known that the plaque contained the Ustaša salute “Za dom spremni” in the emblem of the HOS organization, which was legally registered in Zagreb. The presence of the same salute used by the perpetrators in the Jasenovac camp so close to the Jasenovac Memorial Park deeply offended families of the victims, Croatian Serb organizations, the Jewish community, antifascist organizations, and many other Croatian citizens who felt this was unacceptable for a country that supposedly valued its antifascist and European foundations. Prime Minister Plenković, at the head of a shaky coalition and already unpopular with the more radical right members of his party, opted to delay making a decision and instead announced the formation of a Commission for Dealing with Totalitarian Symbols (also known as the Council for Dealing with the Legacy of Undemocratic Regimes) on 8 December 2016.

Although at certain moments a controversial monument can spark a fruitful debate in society about a difficult past, in this case the polemics seemed an unnecessary distraction and merely provoked radical reactions from both the right and the left while the government appeared indecisive. Antifascists, Croatian Serb politicians, and the Jewish community kept up the pressure against the government, boycotting the official Jasenovac commemoration in April and warned of encroaching fascism in Croatian society. Their argument was that they had nothing against a memorial to fallen HOS volunteers, but demanded the removal of the Ustaša salute “Za dom

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<sup>31</sup> Drava.info, 22 December 2015, online at <http://drava.info/2015/12/foto-pravasi-postavili-spomen-plocu-rafaelu-bobanu-ali-nije-dugo-potrajala/> (accessed 7 October 2017).

spremní”. Right-wing pundits and HOS veterans refused to compromise, launching a campaign that claimed that not only was “Za dom spremni” a salute from the Homeland War that had nothing to do with the Ustaša movement, but that it was in fact an “old Croatian salute” going back centuries.<sup>32</sup> As in the case with the supporters of the HOS monument in Split, those defending this plaque attempted to erase the memory of the negative aspects of the Ustaše by reframing all of their symbols and imagery as originating in the Homeland War.

As his coalition partners increased pressure on Plenković over the summer, the government initiated direct talks with HOS veterans (but interestingly, not with representatives of the Jasenovac Memorial) and promised that the Commission would hurry with its work on controversial symbols. On 7 September, over eight months after the controversial plaque was erected, workers removed it from Jasenovac and transferred it to the memorial park Trokut near the town of Novska. Although the controversial monument was no longer visible in Jasenovac, “Za dom spremni” remained on the plaque, and moreover, the new location is on the site of a devastated Partisan memorial (destroyed during the Homeland War) and ossuary of fallen Partisans,<sup>33</sup> which at the time of this writing seems to only have deepened the controversy rather than solved it.

### **HOS Memorial Plaque (Kutina)**

While the debate over the memorial plaque in Jasenovac was just heating up, HOS veterans and local politicians, including the SDP mayor, erected another monument with the controversial “Za dom spremni” phrase in Kutina on 30 December 2016.<sup>34</sup> The modest memorial plaque is dedicated to Zdravko Bezuk, a HOS volunteer who died during the battle for Vukovar in 1991, and is located

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<sup>32</sup> Even a superficial examination of HOS and HSP publications, newspapers, video clips, interviews, and memoirs reveals that they were in fact very consciously drawing upon the legacy of the NDH in their choice of symbols in the 1990s, which paradoxically some veterans are now attempting to deny. However, HOS general Ante Prkačin in a number of interviews openly admitted that HOS directly took the imagery of the NDH and glorified the Ustaše when they were organizing their paramilitary units in 1991. See *7dnevno.hr*, 3 September 2017, online at <http://www.7dnevno.hr/izdvajanja/izdvojeno/da-se-ne-lazemo-hos-je-hrvatska-ustaska-vojska-nastala-na-tekovinama-hrabrih-domoljuba-iz-1941/> (accessed 4 October 2017). While the phrase “Za dom” had appeared throughout Croatian history, most famously in the opera “Nikola Šubić Zrinski” (1876), the formulation “Za dom spremni” is beyond a doubt an Ustaša salute and thus problematic when appearing in public space.

<sup>33</sup> For an overview of other sites where Homeland War memorials now stand on top of destroyed Partisan monuments and ossuaries, see *Novosti*, 29 September 2017, pp. 10-11, online at <https://www.portalnovosti.com/otimaci-kostiju> (accessed 4 October 2017).

<sup>34</sup> *Narod.hr*, 31 December 2016, online at <https://narod.hr/hrvatska/hos-ov-vukovarski-junak-zdravko-bezuk-dobio-spomen-plocu-kutini> (accessed 3 October 2017).

on the wall of the football stadium that also bears his name. As in the case of the Jasenovac plaque, “Za dom spremni” is written only within the HOS emblem at the bottom of the memorial.

### **Monument to Victims of Greater Serbian Aggression (Osijek)**

Osijek is widely known as a Croatian city that was on the front lines for most of the Homeland War and thus played a key role in the defense of Slavonia, but it is also infamous for the murders of Serb civilians, many of whom Croatian forces killed on the banks of the Drava River. Branimir Glavaš, the commander of Osijek’s defense and subsequently the prefect (*župan*) of Osijek-Baranja County and parliamentary deputy, was found guilty of war crimes against civilians in a highly controversial series of trials ending in his sentencing to eight years of prison in 2010.<sup>35</sup> In the two cases, “Selotejp” (Masking Tape) and “Garaža” (Garage), the court found Glavaš guilty of ordering the murder and torture of at least twelve Serb civilians.

On 28 June 2012, the city of Osijek opened a memorial to the “victims of Greater Serbian aggression” at the Queen of Peace Chapel on the left bank of the Drava River. The metallic memorial plaques next to the chapel feature the names of 1,327 fallen Croatian soldiers as well as 397 civilians. Included in the second list are Branko Lovrić, Bogdan Počuča, and Petar Ladnjak (three out of the ten victims mentioned in the Selotejp trial) and Đorđe Petković (one of two victims in the Garaža trial). Although Serb victims likewise deserve to be recognized on a public memorial, it is problematic that civilians murdered by Croatian troops are listed as victims of Greater Serbian aggression. This controversial monument raises the issue of polarizing inscriptions found on memorials, and suggests that war monuments need to use a more empathetic language to allow all victims, regardless of ethnicity, to be included.

### **Putičanje**

The simple marble plaque at the site of a battle in the village of Putičanje near Šibenik is a true example of bottom-up memorialization. According to the memorial, locals erected it on 24 February 1998 in honor of two fallen Croatian soldiers. The inscription notes that the “Croatian knights” fought off “Serbo-Četnik hordes” before being overrun and falling in combat.

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<sup>35</sup> Although the Supreme Court confirmed the verdict, in 2016 it ordered a retrial due to procedural mistakes. For details on the trial, see *Documenta*, <https://www.documenta.hr/en/branimir-glava%C5%A1-nije-oslobo%C4%91en-krivnje-za-ratne-zlo%C4%8Dine-reakcija-na-odluku-ustavnog-suda-rh.html> (accessed 4 October 2017).

## Wall of Pain (Zagreb)

State-led, as well as bottom-up, initiatives for building war memorials rarely take place while the conflict still lasts, since the memorial boom occurs immediately after a war or several decades later as individual memories are transformed into cultural remembrance.<sup>36</sup> One controversial wartime monument was the Wall of Pain (*Zid boli*), initiated by the Mothers of Peace (*Bedem ljubavi*) association in 1993 to draw attention to killed and missing Croats in front of the United Nations base in Zagreb. The “spontaneous” monument consisted of nearly 14,000 bricks, including over one thousands representing missing individuals, with the names and dates of death written on them. According to research by Višeslav Raos, the goal of the memorial was not to commemorate, but to act as an appeal to the international community to take action in finding the fate of missing persons in the war in Croatia.<sup>37</sup>

Already in the 1990s the authorities sought ways to move the wall from its prominent location, but the NGOs who built the wall resisted its transfer to another site. In 2002, the wall was damaged twice, once due to drunk international forces stationed in the UN base, and the second time by unknown passers-by. The inability to preserve the wall of bricks at a site with such heavy traffic renewed efforts to relocate the memorial, sparking debates about the authenticity of Homeland War monuments and fears that the original meaning of the Wall of Pain would be lost if transferred elsewhere. The final relocation took place in the summer of 2005 despite last-ditch efforts by some members of the NGO caring for the wall, which was undertaken in the early morning by communal workers brought in from Karlovac and during a picnic organized by the mayor of Zagreb for veteran families as a way to prevent effective protests at the site.<sup>38</sup>

The City of Zagreb incorporated those bricks that were not taken home by the families of victims or damaged during the transfer process into a new memorial located in Mirogoj, Zagreb’s central cemetery. The memorial, unveiled in October 2005 and titled “The Voice of Croatian Victims – Wall of Pain” (*Glas hrvatskih žrtava – Zid boli*), was based on sculptor Dušan Džamonja’s proposal for the 9/11 memorial. The initiators of the original wall were disappointed with the new

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<sup>36</sup> There are of course exceptions, such as the memorial wreath in Kusunje (where a landmine exploded in 1993 during a commemoration for fallen Croatian soldiers from 1991), or the monument next to Maksimir Stadium for Dinamo football fans who volunteered at the beginning of the war, erected by the Bad Blue Boys in 1994.

<sup>37</sup> Višeslav Raos, “The Wall of Pain: A Contested Site of Memory in Croatia,” in Davor Pauković, Vjeran Pavlaković, and Višeslav Raos, eds., *Confronting the Past: European Experiences* (Zagreb: CPI, 2012), p. 363-364.

<sup>38</sup> Raos, “The Wall of Pain”, pp. 370-371.

structure since the bricks were essentially “buried” inside the monument, while art historians criticized the way names of the victims were broken up and hyphenated to fit on the memorial. Today the memorial no longer provokes debates, but it is also practically forgotten and located on the periphery of Croatia’s capital city.

### **Franjo Tuđman (Pridraga)**

Most war memorials serve either a commemorative purpose, especially those initiated by associations of victims or veterans, or a political purpose, such as those top-down institutional memorial projects. The message of the memorial frequently trumps its aesthetic qualities, so many of them are simple constructions without much attention paid to criteria that would be important for other public art. Architect David Kabalin, who has worked on several monument projects in Croatia, strongly believes that “aesthetics and quality are crucial for every intervention in public space, and especially for monuments due to their significance for the community and symbolic importance these places hold.”<sup>39</sup> The issue of aesthetic qualities was raised during the competition in 2015 for erecting a statue of Croatia’s first president, Franjo Tuđman (1922-1999), on the fortress in Knin for the twentieth anniversary of Operation Storm.

As in the case of many influential historical leaders, Tuđman is a complex and controversial figure whose positive accomplishments were often marred by misguided decisions, and a more objective, and less politicized, account of his legacy will likely emerge only after a greater temporal distance.<sup>40</sup> It is clear that only someone with the nationalist vision and determination of Tuđman could have pushed the Croatian state-building process to its completion, and therefore his leading role in achieving an independent state is unquestionable. These characteristics are at the same time Tuđman’s strengths and weaknesses as a statesman. He was able to appeal to both the Croatian left and right in achieving his goal of independence, and was undoubtedly brave in resisting Milošević, the Yugoslav People’s Army, and the secret service apparatus that had the potential to liquidate him and other separatist Croatian leaders. However, his lack of political tact, elements of authoritarianism, and concept of a nation-state rather than civic state hindered the development of

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<sup>39</sup> David Kabalin, interview with author, 10 March 2016, Zagreb.

<sup>40</sup> For a variety of biographies that are both hagiographic and critical of Tuđman see Darko Hudelist, *Tuđman: biografija* (Zagreb: Profil, 2004); Ivica Radoš, *Tuđman izbliza: svjedočenja suradnika i protivnika* (Zagreb: Profil, 2005); Predrag Lucić and Ivan Lovrenović, *Stenogrami o podjeli Bosne* (Split: Kultura i rasvjeta, 2005); James J. Sadkovich, *Tuđman: prva politička biografija* (Zagreb: Večernji list, 2010); and Marinko Čulić, *Tuđman i poslje Tuđmana* (Zagreb: Novi liber, 2014).

a more tolerant liberal democracy. By elevating so-called “domoljublje” or national identity above accountability, tolerance, moral values, or even competence during the Tuđman era, corruption flourished, civil rights were violated, war crimes committed by Croatian forces were not adequately condemned, and mediocrity embedded itself in the political caste and economic system. Moreover, his role in the war in Bosna-Herzegovina continues to be debated in the region.

Regardless of the historical and ideological debates over Tuđman’s legacy, he is the most important individual of the Homeland War as the president who led Croatia to victory and the politician who preserved the country’s territorial integrity. Not surprisingly, there are over eighty monuments and busts of Tuđman throughout Croatia. Many, however, are problematic due to the widespread failure to meet the minimum criteria of art in public space. An analysis of existing Tuđman monuments at the time of the competition for the Tuđman monument in Knin concluded that “it is difficult to find any that treat the first president with respect...the majority of them were built with the intention of being deathly serious, but they turned out ridiculous and funny.”<sup>41</sup> The headlines of daily *Jutarnji list* carried the appeal of art history experts regarding potential Tuđman monuments, stating “we are tired of ridiculous and grandiose solutions that offend everyone, including Tuđman and citizens.”<sup>42</sup> Seventeen artists and sculptors submitted entries for the Knin monument, yet none of them were deemed adequate so the competition had to be repeated.<sup>43</sup> The jury eventually chose sculptor Miro Vuco’s vision of Tuđman, seemingly wrapped in a blanket, and a helicopter delivered the statue to the Knin fortress on 1 August.

Nevertheless, the country remains covered in poorly conceived monuments to Tuđman, in addition to the streets, squares, boardwalks, and even an airport named after him. The most ridiculed monument is perhaps the statue located in Pridraga by Ivan Malenica. Tuđman’s body is out of proportion and the glasses on his face seem cartoonish. The statue, erected on 15 July 2001, is situated in the center of a giant stone *šahovnica*. Regardless of the controversies over Tuđman’s legacy, it appears that this return to quasi-socialist realism in the attempts to realize monuments of

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<sup>41</sup> *Mediteran (Novi list)*, 30 August 2015, p. 5.

<sup>42</sup> *Jutarnji list*, 18 August 2015, p. 20.

<sup>43</sup> *Direktno.hr*, 25 March 2015, online at <https://direktno.hr/domovina/ponavlja-se-natjecaj-za-spomenik-dr-tudmanu-u-kninu-prijedlozi-losi-11215/> (accessed 3 October 2017). The seventeen submissions, referred to as “statues between grotesque and kitsch,” were exhibited at the Croatian Society for Visual Arts for public viewing in August 2015. *Jutarnji list*, 25 August 2015, pp. 22-23.

the first Croatian president will continue to offend the aesthetic tastes of art experts and occupy public space.

### **Serb Victims of the Homeland War**

One of the greatest challenges for a post-conflict society is how to memorialize the losing side of war, especially one that was an interethnic conflict fought between former neighbors and fellow citizens, as was the case in Croatia and other former Yugoslav republics. The dominant nationalist narratives about the Homeland War ascribe collective guilt on Croatian Serbs, even though a small percentage actively supported Serb rebels and as many as 10,000 fought in the Croatian Army, which is reflected in the discourse on war memorials. A true monument boom since the end of the Homeland War inundated the memoryscape with all kinds of memorial objects, which vary from aesthetically problematic kitsch to monumental abstract constructions, which seem to pay homage to their socialist modernist predecessors.<sup>44</sup> Yet this memoryscape, especially in public space, lacks adequate recognition of Serb civilian victims who shared the tragedy of the war with their Croat fellow citizens.

It is of course rare for a victorious country to allow monuments to enemy soldiers, and in some cases where the “other side” was allowed to equally erect memorials, as in the case of former Confederate veterans in the United States, it enabled severe historical revisionism and perpetuated the ideology (slavery) that led to the war in the first place.<sup>45</sup> But in order for a multiethnic society such as Croatia’s to integrate its remaining Serb population as loyal citizens and to have normalized relations with its neighbors, political leaders need to show empathy for the defeated side and allow for all victims to have dignified memorials regardless of ethnicity. According to an IPSOS Puls survey conducted in 2011 among 1,500 individuals in Croatia, when asked whether or not Serb victims deserved official monuments and commemorations, only 25.1% of the total

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<sup>44</sup> Sandra Križić Roban, “Vrijeme spomenika. Skulpturalni, arhitektonski, urbanistički i drugi načini obilježavanja Domovinskog rata,” in *Radovi Instituta povijest umjetnosti*, vol. 34 (2010).

<sup>45</sup> See Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001); and Kenneth E. Foote, *Shadowed Ground: America’s Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003).

respondents said that they fully or mostly agreed with that statement.<sup>46</sup> The answers varied by region, and it is indicative that respondents in the parts of Croatia least affected by direct fighting, North Croatia, Istria, and the Rijeka Littoral, were more willing to support the erection of Serb memorials than in war ravaged areas such as Slavonia and Dalmatia. Furthermore, younger, more highly educated, and better-paid respondents tended to support memorials for victims on the defeated side of the Homeland War. A number of monuments for Croatian Serbs have been erected in the last decade, but they remain controversial and contested by right-wing forces that challenge the right of the Serb community to recognize their civilian victims.

## **Varivode**

The villagers from Varivode in the Dalmatian hinterland erected the first official monument to commemorate Serb civilian victims in October 2010, an event that was attended by then-president Ivo Josipović, former minister of education Radovan Fuchs, and the president of the SNV, Milorad Pupovac.<sup>47</sup> The simple memorial, resembling a large headstone with two plaques in both Latin and Cyrillic script, recalled the victims of 28 September 1995, when the Croatian Army killed nine elderly villagers in Varivode, nearly two months after the end of Operation Storm. In 2004, the locals had raised a wooden Orthodox cross in the center of the village with the names of the victims, but in April 2010 a vandal smashed the cross, drawing national attention to the incident.<sup>48</sup> The government reacted swiftly and condemned the incident, which led to the initiative to erect a true monument in the center of the village. Since then, both sides have frequently manipulated the number of civilian victims on the Serbian side. Croatian nationalists sought to portray all casualties as combatants who rebelled against the state, and therefore could not be considered “victims.”<sup>49</sup> In Varivode, however, the victims were between the ages of sixty and eighty-five years old, and

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<sup>46</sup> Strategies of Symbolic Nation Building in South Eastern Europe, IPSOS Puls Survey, Croatia outcomes <http://www.hf.uio.no/ilos/english/research/projects/nation-w-balkan/>, pp. 72-74.

<sup>47</sup> *Večernji list*, 5 October 2010, online version at <http://www.vecernji.hr/hrvatska/josipovic-otkrio-prvi-spomenik-srpskim-civilima-stradalima-u-ratu-199841> (accessed 6 October 2010).

<sup>48</sup> *Jutarnji list*, 23 April 2010, online version at <http://www.jutarnji.hr/varivode--nepoznati-vandali-unistili-spomenik-ubijenim-srpskim-civilima-1995-/735989/> (accessed 6 October 2010). The police arrested a 47-year old man several days later for destroying the monument.

<sup>49</sup> This argument is well-developed in the book by former minister of health Andrija Hebrang, who argues that only eighty Serb civilians were killed during the war (while at the same time seemingly arbitrarily claiming that the communist regime killed 200,000 civilians without trial after the Second World War). In other words, his logic is to accuse the Serbian side of exaggerating and lying about the number of Serb civilians by inflating the numbers of those killed after 1945. Andrija Hebrang, *Zločini nad civilima u srpsko-crnogorskoj agresiji na republiku Hrvatsku* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 2013). See also his article on the subject in *Večernji list (Obzor)*, 24 January 2015, pp. 12-13.

included three women, and were thus undoubtedly civilians who had heeded President Tuđman's message to peacefully await the arrival of the Croatian Army.

The presence of former President Josipović and an honor guard from the Croatian Army at the unveiling ceremony seemed to herald a new policy of dealing with the legitimate civilian victims on the other side. While the stigma of being a war criminal was still applied to anyone who had fought in the Krajina armed forces, even those who had been mobilized or had clearly not committed any violation beyond wearing a uniform, at least there seemed to be public recognition of civilian victims. NGO activists and art historians criticized the poor aesthetic qualities of the memorial, which was designed without a formal competition, but the local population wanted this kind of marker to symbolize their loss so in that sense it can be said to have fulfilled the wishes of those individuals drawing the most meaning from it.

### **Gošić**

On 28 September 2013, the SNV unveiled a new memorial to Serb civilian victims in the village of Gošić, less than ten kilometers from Varivode. Croatian soldiers had killed seven elderly Serb villagers on 27 August 1995 during mopping up actions after Operation Storm. Unlike in Varivode, the SNV organized a competition for conceptualizing the monument, won by Zagreb-based architect David Kabalin. The design of the memorial, a circular stone wall around a central tree with the names of the victims etched in a steel plate, was meant to create a space for gathering and not just a monument that would be used once a year. Although progressive in its design, the surviving villagers considered it controversial because the names of the victims were located low to the ground where livestock defecated and urinated, which caused a scandal at the unveiling. The SNV quickly replaced the nameplate with an upright plaque made of rusty steel commonly used in many other contemporary monuments, yet the locals were again upset because they considered the new material to be too ugly.<sup>50</sup> Although the Gošić memorial is not controversial in its content, it is an example of how contemporary memorialization practices can clash with local expectations and the actual needs of victims of violence.

### **Golubić (Knin)**

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<sup>50</sup> Aneta Lalić (SNV), interview with author, 29 September 2017, Rijeka.

In 2011, local Serbs erected a marble cross and a plaque in the Orthodox cemetery in Golubić, near Knin, listing locals who had died in the conflict between 1991 and 1995. Croatian veterans' organizations were upset because two of the names on the list were of soldiers killed while serving in the Republika Srpska Krajina Army, while the rest were civilians. As a compromise the local community, supported by the organization of missing Croatia Serbs "Suza" (Tear), replaced the controversial plaque with a more neutral text, featuring no names and simply saying "In memory of those from Golubić who died in wars," not even specifying which wars. Yet even this was too provocative for some, and in September 2013 an unknown perpetrator shattered the marble plaque.<sup>51</sup> Many of the acts of vandalism take place after the summer commemorations of Operation Storm and annual heightened tensions with Serbia over the legacy of the war, which are then frequently expressed in attacks on monuments.

### **Mokro Polje**

In July 2014, inhabitants of Mokro Polje near Knin, Dalmatia, erected a simple commemorative plaque in the center of the town in memory of civilians killed in August 1995 in order to "prevent forgetting." Other than a cross and a short text written in Cyrillic, the plaque does not contain any controversial symbols or references. Nevertheless, a Croatian veterans' internet portal immediately issued a warning for "Serbs to cease their provocations," and insisted that only after Serbs apologize for aggression against Croatia will they be allowed to build their memorials.<sup>52</sup>

### **Medare**

On 19 August 2015, locals in the Western Slavonian village of Medare erected a monument to sixty-five locals who had died during the war. The marble cross and pedestal are located on the property of the Orthodox church in the village. Shortly after its erection, Croatian nationalists attacked and damaged the monument following a virulent online campaign. According to media reports and the SNV bulletin, a right-wing website posted that "since the text on the monument stated simply 'to all fallen villagers', we have concluded that it is referring to Serbo-Chetniks from these two villages," prompting them to take matters into their own hands and smashing the

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<sup>51</sup> *Jutarnji list*, 14 September 2013, <http://www.jutarnji.hr/skandal-kraj-kinina-ostecen-spomenik-srpskim-stradalnicima-domovinskog-rata/1126055/> (accessed 20 September 2013).

<sup>52</sup> Braniteljski portal, 26 July 2014, [http://www.braniteljski-portal.hr/Novosti/DRUSTVO/Srbi-prestanite-s-provokacijama!-Opet-sok.-U-Mokrom-Polju-kod-Ervenika-podigli-spomen-plocu-za-pobijene-srbe-1995-godine#!prettyPhoto\[gallery\]/0/](http://www.braniteljski-portal.hr/Novosti/DRUSTVO/Srbi-prestanite-s-provokacijama!-Opet-sok.-U-Mokrom-Polju-kod-Ervenika-podigli-spomen-plocu-za-pobijene-srbe-1995-godine#!prettyPhoto[gallery]/0/) (accessed 30 March 2016).

monument.<sup>53</sup> Although in this case the monument was not exclusively to civilian victims, it had not contained any explicitly pro-Chetnik or anti-Croatian symbols or texts. This, however, is emblematic of the situation that all Serbs are guilty of war crimes merely for having been present in occupied territory during the war, which is one way of pressuring even the remaining Serb population to leave Croatia.

### **Youth Initiative for Human Rights memorial for Victims of Operation Storm (Knin)**

The most provocative and controversial commemorative plaque was the one prepared by the Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Croatia, which activists placed along the roadside in Knin on 5 August 2010 during the Day of Victory and Homeland Thanksgiving and the Day of Croatian Defenders. The plaque, located where thousands of Croatian Serbs streamed past on their way to exile in the summer of 1995, offered an apology from Croatian citizens to Serbs who were victims of that mass exodus. Knin's communal services responded quickly and removed it immediately.<sup>54</sup>

### **Borovo Selo (Vukovar)**

The cemetery in Borovo Selo, near Vukovar, contains not only the graves of Serbs who were killed as soldiers during the battle for Vukovar, but a large memorial to war victims of the entire period from 1991-1995. The citizens of Borovo erected the memorial on 15 September 2011, and unknown persons defaced it with graffiti at least once. It is controversial because the names on the monument include those of rebel Serb soldiers, including those considered to be war criminals by Croats, such as Vukašin Šoškoćanin, who was a commander during the ambush of Croatian forces in May 1991. Next to the large memorial is a smaller marble plaque erected in 1997 by members of the White Eagles (*Beli orlovi*), a notorious Serb paramilitary unit.

### **Second World War memorials**

Since the 1990s, new political and social actors not only erased one set of symbols (communist) from the memoryscape in Croatia, but engaged in a number of parallel actions in an attempt to revise the historical record. As mentioned previously, both Croat and Serb nationalists destroyed, removed, damaged, or defaced over 3,000 memorial objects dedicated to the antifascist struggle

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<sup>53</sup> *Blic*, 17 August 2015, <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/svet/ostecen-spomenik-pobijenim-srpskim-civilima-u-medarima-1995/wv12c4h> (accessed 30 March 2016); *SNV Bulletin* #6, p. 59.

<sup>54</sup> *Index.hr*, 6 August 2010, <http://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/grad-knin-skinuo-spomenplocu-izbjeglicama-oluje-inicijativi-zaprijetio-hcsp/505578.aspx> (accessed 6 August 2010).

since the beginning of the Homeland War. Certain memorials were rebuilt yet continue to be controversial or have been destroyed multiple times. Other monuments suffered symbolic interventions, in the sense that antifascist symbols, particularly the red star (*petokraka*) have been removed and replaced with the Croatian coat of arms (*šahovnica*), crosses, or new plaques. Finally, and most dangerous in terms of politicized historical revisionism and the rehabilitation of fascist collaborators, is the activity of associations such as Hrvatski Domobran (Croatian Home Guard) in erecting memorials to fallen NDH soldiers, in some cases on the sites of destroyed Partisan memorials.

Building a dignified memorial to soldiers of a defeated side is certainly not problematic in itself, as the German and Austrian Black Cross maintains military cemeteries throughout Europe for fallen soldiers who undoubtedly are considered aggressors in the Second World War. However, the monument boom initiated by Hrvatski Domobran (several hundred new monuments since 1991) is problematic in that the discourse and symbols used on the memorials actively distort the historical record, transforming perpetrators into innocent victims. The huge number of war memorials built during Titoist Yugoslavia always made a distinction between *pali borci* (fallen fighters) and *civilne žrtve fašističkog terora* (civilian victims of fascist terror), albeit with numerous manipulations and errors in whose name ended up on a monument. Nevertheless, this distinction, however one-sided and under the watchful eye of the Communist Party, did present a more or less accurate narrative of the war. The new memorials are controversial for labeling all the individuals who died on the “other side” during the Second World War as victims, even though the majority of names are often of Ustaše or Home Guards who died in battle, i.e. as legitimate wartime casualties. Instead, the discourse of victimization seeks to pump up the number of innocents allegedly killed by the communist regime as way to delegitimize the antifascist movement and glorify fascist collaborators as martyrs.

### ***Replacing symbols***

#### **Bregane**

A monument to fallen Partisans and victims of fascist terror erected in Bregane near the Croatian-Slovenian border in 1989 was modified on an unknown date when the red star at the top was replaced by the official Croatian coat of arms.

### **Sveti Matej (near Donja Stubica)**

Once clearly a Partisan memorial, the concrete monument along the roadside in this Zagorje village no longer has any visible inscription or antifascist symbols. All that remains is a cross and a partially missing Croatian coat of arms.

### **Kijevo**

The simple concrete obelisk in the center of Kijevo was clearly once a Partisan memorial, but instead of a star the memorial now has a Croatian coat of arms and a plaque dedicated to fallen Croatian soldiers and victims of Četnik terror.

### **Vukoševac**

This monument to fallen Partisans and victims of fascist terror in Vukoševac, south of Sisak, was erected on 4 July 1975. A simple obelisk topped by a red star, it was not controversial until unknown persons replaced the star with an Orthodox cross and *ocila*, more commonly associated with four Cyrillic “s” symbols and Četniks. Upon the discovery of this modification to the monument, Croatian veteran groups reacted promptly and demanded that the villagers remove the “Četnik provocation”.<sup>55</sup> Interestingly, the veteran organizations claimed this violated the protection of antifascist cultural heritage objects, even though they had previously remained silent regarding the destruction of thousands of other monuments, many of them destroyed by Croatian Army units.

### ***Historical revisionism***

#### **Marino Selo**

Local villagers, along with emigres from Canada and the United States, erected a memorial to victims of Bleiburg and the Way of the Cross on 26 June 1995 in Marino Selo, near Pakrac made infamous for the murder of Serb civilians by Tomislav Merčep’s paramilitary forces at the beginning of the Homeland War. The memorial’s inscription is not provocative in itself, but the shape of the memorial clearly evokes a giant Ustaša “U”.

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<sup>55</sup> *Večernji list*, 12 August 2012, online at <https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/branitelji-traze-kaznu-za-simbol-cetnistva-na-mjestu-petokrake-442961> (accessed 12 August 2012).

## **Bakić**

The memorial erected by Hrvatski Domobran in Bakić, near Slatina, in 1998 is a typical example of the new wave of monuments for NDH soldiers. The monument consists of a stylized cross with a *šahovnica* over a marble base. The inscription refers to the Ustaše and Home Guards as *branitelji* (defenders), the phrase used for veterans of the Homeland War of the 1990s. Moreover, it blurs the Second World War and the Homeland War (defined as Četnik-communist aggression) by adding fallen soldiers of both wars on one monument, attempting to create a continuity between the NDH and the modern Croatian republic, even though the Croatian Constitution draws statehood continuity from the antifascist movement (ZAVNOH).

## **Slatina**

Hrvatski Domobran erected a cross and inscription in Slatina's central cemetery in August 1993 in honor of the hundreds of NDH soldiers who "gave their lives for their Croatian homeland." The inscription adds that their graves were plowed over by "Yugo-Bolsheviks and Četniks," seeking to characterize the Partisan movement as anti-Croatian and the same as the Četniks. The fallen soldiers of the NDH deserve to have their final resting place publicly identified, but the discursive revisionism seeks to strip Croatian Partisans of their patriotism and cover up the fact that NDH forces fought for the goals of Nazi Germany.

## **Badljevin**

In the village of Badljevin near Pakrac, Hrvatski Domobran erected a large memorial combining victims from the Second World War and the Homeland War, including a large number of NDH soldiers. The NDH troops, along with the fallen soldiers in the 1990s, are described as "martyrs and victims of Yugo-communist and Serbo-Četnik terror" from 1941-1945-1991-1995, creating an alleged continuity between the two different conflicts.

## ***Destroying and rebuilding***

### **Srb**

The village of Srb in Lika remains one of the most contested sites of memory in contemporary Croatia. For local Serbs and antifascist associations, the uprising of 27 July 1941 symbolizes the massive resistance to Ustaša terror and genocide. For nationalist Croats, the uprising was not

antifascist but anti-Croat, since the insurgents carried out revenge attacks on the Croat and Muslim population in the region in the weeks and months of the uprising. During socialist Yugoslavia, 27 July was the official Uprising Day, and the village was dominated by a 15.5 meter white obelisk decorated with bronze figures sculpted by Vanja Radauš. The figure on top of the obelisk carried the flag of the Communist Party, while two other figures depicted a rebel with a rifle and a villager armed with a pitchfork. At the front of the monument was the figure of a mother in traditional peasant garb, while the base was encircled by reliefs depicting scenes from the war. Completed in 1950 on a hilltop near the center of the town, the monument was formally unveiled on the tenth anniversary of the uprising in 1951. The decision to use stone from the island of Brač for this monument proved unwise, as the harsh Lika winters quickly eroded the building materials and it had to be renovated in the 1960s. During Operation Storm in 1995, Croatian Army tanks destroyed the imposing monument in Srb, and Croatian troops pillaged the town after its population fled into neighboring Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The monument was finally restored in 2010 as part of a coalition agreement between the Independent Democratic Serb Party (SDSS) and the HDZ, which was then in power. The annual commemoration draws counter-commemorations organized by right-wing political parties protesting what they consider to be a “Četnik celebration.”<sup>56</sup> The Autochthonous Croatian Party of Rights (A-HSP – *Autohtona Hrvatska stranka prava*) of Dražen Keleminec organizes the most vocal annual demonstrations numbering several dozen individuals sporting Ustaša symbols and flags. Keleminec wants to prevent the SNV and antifascist groups from holding their commemoration, going so far as to erect a tent beneath the monument in July 2016 before being evicted by police.<sup>57</sup>

The Srb monument and the commemoration continue to divide the Croatian public, and a number of monuments and memorial plaques have been erected in neighboring Boričevac, a Croat village burned to the ground after the uprising in the summer of 1941. The most recent monument was unveiled in 2017 and is based on the new standard design adopted by the Croatian government for

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<sup>56</sup> See Vjeran Pavlaković, “Contested Pasts, Contested Red-Letter Days: Antifascist Commemorations and Ethnic Identities in Post-Communist Croatia,” in Ljiljana Šarić, Karen Gammelgaard, and Kjetil Ra Hauge, eds., *Transforming National Holidays: Identity Discourse in the West and South Slavic Countries, 1985-2010* (London: John Benjamins Publishing, 2012).

<sup>57</sup> *Novi list*, 10 July 2016, online at <http://www.novolist.hr/Vijesti/Hrvatska/Kelemincevi-pravasi-digli-sator-u-Srbu-ispred-cetnickog-spomenika-predavanja-o-Domovinskom-ratu> (accessed 5 October 2017).

official memorials (two others were erected in Sinac near Otočac and in Zagreb), noting that “Serb insurgents” killed the villagers in Boričevac.<sup>58</sup>

### **Slana concentration camp (Pag)**

The concentration camp located in the cove of Slana on the island of Pag, which the Ustaša regime established in the summer of 1941, was part of the Gospić-Jadovno-Pag extermination camp system and lasted only a few months. Hardly anything remains of the camp, since it was never established as a long-term solution but rather a place to kill Serbs, Jews, and other enemies of the Ustaša regime.<sup>59</sup> Pag antifascists erected a simple memorial plaque in 1975 that was destroyed by Croatian nationalists in 1991. Two more attempts by the SNV and antifascist organizations to restore the plaque (on 26 June 2010 and 29 June 2013) resulted in it being torn down almost immediately. Currently only faint traces remain where the plaque used to hang.<sup>60</sup>

### **Kozarice**

The memorial in the center of the village of Kozarice near Novska, erected in 2006, is not a controversial memorial as many others described previously, but in fact is a possible solution to memorialization of complex historical events. The inscription lists all of the human losses of the village from the Second World War and the Homeland War, but instead of using provocative language it categorizes each of wartime casualties and victims according to how they lost their lives. The memorial perhaps is lacking in aesthetic beauty, but it does serve to depict the tragedies of the twentieth century in a more balanced manner than many other similar monuments.

### **Monuments to Tito**

While the twenty-five years since independence has seen an explosion of monuments, busts, streets, squares, and even an airport dedicated to Franjo Tuđman, sites of memory to Partisan leader and Yugoslav president for life Josip Broz Tito (1898-1980) have systematically been removed

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<sup>58</sup> Narod.hr, 27 July 2017, online at <https://narod.hr/kultura/foto-boricevac-otkriven-spomenik-ubijene-clanove-obitelji-ivezic>.

<sup>59</sup> Ante Zemljarić, *Haron i sudbine* (Belgrade: Četvrti jul, 1998).

<sup>60</sup> Press release by Documenta, 22 July 2013, online at <https://www.documenta.hr/hr/uni%C5%A1tena-spomen-plo%C4%8Da-%C5%BErtvama-usta%C5%A1kog-logora-slana-i-metajna-na-pagu-priop%C4%87enje-snv-a-i-koordinacije-%C5%BEidovskih-op%C4%87ina-u-rh.html> (accessed 4 October 2017).

from Croatia's memoryscape. He is perhaps one of the most powerful symbols of socialist Yugoslavia, and Croatia's red-black divide over twentieth century history can equally be applied to perceptions over this looming political and military figure that held the country together for nearly forty years. For some, he is a blood-thirsty dictator who not only ensured that Croatia remained in a Yugoslav state after the Second World War, but was personally responsible for the tragic events known as the Bleiburg massacres and other post-war repression. For others, he was the most liberal of the communist authoritarian leaders who created a successful antifascist movement that defeated both Hitler's and Stalin's pretensions over Yugoslavia, which rocketed him up to the highest echelons of global politics. Whether seen as a brutal tyrant who crushed all expressions of national identity or a modernizing autocrat who placed Yugoslavia on the world stage, Tito continues to polarize the citizens of the Yugoslav successor states.<sup>61</sup> According to the results of the research project *Strategies of Symbolic Nation-building in Southeast Europe*, Tito (7.5%) was considered to represent Croatian values by the greatest number of respondents after Tuđman (10.3%).<sup>62</sup> Tito remains a brand name when it comes to tourism, and while he is not always advertised explicitly, places such as the Brijuni Islands (where Tito had a villa and private zoo), Vis (location of his headquarters in a cave during 1944) and Kumrovec (his birthplace in the Zagorje region) draw thousands of visitors who are interested in this aspect of the Yugoslav past. Other ex-Yugoslav countries also rely on Tito to draw tourists, such as Drvar, Bosnia-Herzegovina (location of a museum and another cave used by Tito during the war) and his grave in the House of Flowers (*Kuća cveća*) in Belgrade, Serbia.

Although practically every town and city had a Tito street or square, monuments to him were quite rare. In Croatia the main monument to Tito, by the Zagorje sculptor Antun Augustinčić, is located in front of his birthplace in Kumrovec and features the Partisan leader in his most famous wartime pose. Unknown perpetrators destroyed this monument on 26 December 2004 in what many perceived as revenge for the removal of the Jure Francetić and Mile Budak monuments in August of that year. The monument was quickly restored, and Kumrovec continues to draw thousands of

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<sup>61</sup> For an indepth analysis of the cultural memory of Tito, see Mitja Velikonja, *Titostalgija* (Belgrade: XX vek, 2010); Todor Kuljić, *Sećanja na Titoizma: između diktata i otpora* (Belgrade: Čigoja štampa, 2011); and Todor Kuljić, *Tito: sociološkoistorijska studija* (Zrenjanin: Kulturni centar Zrenjanin, 2012).

<sup>62</sup> IPSOS Strategic Marketing, *Symbolic Strategies of Nation Building – Croatia*, October 2011, available at <http://cultstud.ffri.hr/istrazivanje/projekti/118-symbolic-strategies>. The opinion poll included 1,500 respondents from each of the following former Yugoslav countries: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia.

“yugonostalgics” every year in May when Tito’s birthday was officially celebrated.<sup>63</sup> In Istria, the region of Croatia that had been under fascist rule since 1922 and resisted the destruction of Partisan memorials in the 1990s, new busts of Tito were erected in recent years, such as in Labin (2005, destroyed and replaced in 2009) and in Pula (2013).

Over the past twenty-five years, many towns and cities removed reference to Tito from public space, some at the beginning of the Homeland War while others more slowly. Cities in Istria, the Kvarner area around Rijeka, and many islands kept their public spaces named after Tito, as did various other cities around the country even when governed by the HDZ. One of the most prominent squares in the country bearing Tito’s name was located in the capital, Zagreb, which resulted in a long process of challenging this controversial site of memory. The endurance of Marshal Tito’s Square (Trg Maršala Tita) in the center of Zagreb at the location of the Croatian National Theater and University of Zagreb rectorate can be attributed to Tuđman’s own respect for Tito, whom many claimed that Tuđman wished to emulate. Even though Tuđman enabled the rehabilitation of the Ustaša movement as part of his idea of national reconciliation, he had been a Partisan and was also from Zagorje like Tito, and refused to allow direct attacks on him even as thousands of other antifascist monuments were destroyed throughout the country. The long-time mayor of Zagreb, Milan Bandić, likewise “protected” Tito’s place in the center of the city, managing to appease both antifascist veterans (he had formerly been in the Social Democratic Party) and right-wing supporters and Catholic believers through a well-established patronage networked maintained by a heavy dose of populism.

Beginning in 2007, the civic initiative Circle for the Square (*Krug za trg*) began an annual protest at Tito’s Square calling for its renaming into Theater Square (the name it carried at the end of the Second World War), University Square, or some other name as long as it wasn’t named after Tito. For the first several years the protests attracted only a few hundred people, but the numbers gradually increased and the demonstrations were sometimes held multiple times in the year. A number of right-wing intellectuals joined the protests, reading open letters and petitioning the city council to change the name. The initiative seemed to represent a marginal group of individuals until the issue of Tito was raised during the presidential election campaign in 2015. The HDZ’s

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<sup>63</sup> Nevena Škrbić Alempijević and Kirsti Mathiesen Hjemdahl, *O Titu kao mitu: proslava Dana mladosti u Kumrovcu* (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2006).

candidate, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, had promised to remove a bust of Tito from the Presidential Palace (Pantovčak), where even Tuđman had kept it alongside other important Croatian historical figures. Her opponent, incumbent Ivo Josipović (formerly Social Democrat), made the issue of keeping Tito's bust a key political promise, which ultimately cost him the election during a period when the population had grown bitter at the left-wing government's handling of the ongoing economic crisis and divisions over the Second World War had once again entered the political arena.

After Grabar-Kitarović's narrow victory in the elections, she fulfilled her promise and moved Tito to a regional Zagorje museum, opening the way for further attacks on Tito's legacy. Parliamentary elections at the end of 2015 brought a right-wing coalition to power and catapulted Zlatko Hasanbegović, a little-known historian, into politics as the controversial Minister of Culture. Along with his colleague from the Ivo Pilar Institute and former president of the Croatian Way of the Cross Association (*Hrvatski križni put*), Bruna Esih, he established himself as one of the most popular right-wing politicians, calling for lustration, cutting of funds for perceived liberal and left-wing media, and an end to commemorative speeches at Jasenovac. Although the right-wing government of Prime Minister Tim Orešković collapsed after six months, Hasanbegović and Esih waged a successful campaign in local elections in 2017 and secured enough seats in the city council to force the re-elected Mayor Bandić into negotiations. The elections took place in an already charged ideological atmosphere due to the ongoing debates about the HOS memorial in Jasenovac. Since the key pillar of Hasanbegović and Esih's campaign was the removal of Tito's Square, Bandić was forced to cancel his suggestion of a city-wide referendum and capitulated to the demands of the new right-wing city councilors in order to secure a governing majority.<sup>64</sup>

Despite several big protests protesting the change of the name, including on Antifascist Struggle Day (22 June 2017), and attempts to delay the initiative in the city council, on 1 September 2017 at 1am in the morning, the Zagreb City Council voted to change the name of Marshal Tito Square into the Republic of Croatia Square.<sup>65</sup> The street signs were soon taken down, and allegedly one of the controversial signs was given to provocative television host Velimir Bujanec as a wedding

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<sup>64</sup> *Dnevnik.hr*, 26 June 2017, online at [dnevnik.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/ipak-preimenovanje-bandic-ima-novo-ime-za-trg-marsala-tita---480965.html](http://dnevnik.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/ipak-preimenovanje-bandic-ima-novo-ime-za-trg-marsala-tita---480965.html).

<sup>65</sup> *Slobodna Europa*, 1 September 2017, online at [www.slobodnaeuropa.org/a/28709122.html](http://www.slobodnaeuropa.org/a/28709122.html).

present by no other than Hasanbegović.<sup>66</sup> The removal provoked numerous criticisms of Bandić, who attempted to deflect the anger of his leftist supporters by restoring a bust of Ivo Lola Ribar, a Partisan killed during the Second World War whose statue was removed during the 1990s. While even the left-wing admitted that Tito was authoritarian and responsible for post-war repression, many intellectuals and journalists felt that allowing the right to remove Tito undermined Croatia's antifascist heritage and represented an ongoing slide towards radical nationalist positions as seen in the 1990s, which is reflected in the situation with some of the other controversial memorials described in this volume.

### **First World War**

Since 1991, the Croatian Homeguard Association (*Hrvatski Domobran*) erected several hundred monuments throughout Croatia honoring soldiers (and sometimes civilians) who were part of the NDH's armed forces or victims of communist repression. The vast majority of memorials deal with the Second World War and the post-war period, but a few have been raised in honor of other periods of time, such as the commemorative plaque on Zagreb's main square to memorialize the killing of Croatian soldiers in December 1918 who were protesting the formation of the first Yugoslavia. Hrvatski Domobran also financed the addition of an inscription on a monument to fallen soldiers from the First World War in Zagreb's central cemetery, Mirogoj.

In this case the monument itself is not controversial, but rather the placing of the inscription. The ossuary was completed in the mid-1930s, but due to a lack of funding the statue, by sculptor Vanja Radauš, was installed only in 1940 and with no inscription. The outbreak of the Second World War and the takeover of power by the communists resulted in a kind of amnesia about the Great War, so this memorial stood for decades with no information about its purpose. In 1994, Hrvatski Domobran, without properly investigating the history of the monument, placed a plaque on the base of the monument reading "To the fallen Croatian soldiers of the First World War, 1914-1918."

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<sup>66</sup> Večernji list, 2 September 2017, online at [www.vecernji.hr/showbiz/bujanec-se-ozenio-hasanbegovic-mu-poklonio-plocu-trg-marsala-tita-a-mamic-pjevao-1192003](http://www.vecernji.hr/showbiz/bujanec-se-ozenio-hasanbegovic-mu-poklonio-plocu-trg-marsala-tita-a-mamic-pjevao-1192003).

However, as the historian Boris Kukić has shown, the ossuary actually contains the bodies of a variety of soldiers of different nationalities and not just Croats. When the ossuary was reopened during repairs in 2014, it was determined that there were approximately 3,300 bodies of soldiers who died in Zagreb hospitals during the war buried in the crypt. According to Kukić, about 2,800 are listed as Slavs (including Croats, Serbs, Montenegrins, Slovenes, citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Czechs), 450 as Hungarians, and 110 Austrians.<sup>67</sup> While Hrvatski Domobran claimed that the Partisans had removed the original inscription honoring Croatian soldiers, Kukić argues that there had never been an inscription and that the current one is misleading about the purpose and contents of the ossuary. The controversy over this memorial shows the problematic tendency to “nationalize” dead bodies in an apparent effort in increasing the number of victims, regardless of the war or the actual circumstances of their deaths. While in the case of the First World War memorial it is not so relevant to contemporary political events, but the right-wing’s insistence on describing every mass grave in the region as containing innocent Croat victims of communist repression distorts the truth about the actual events at the end of the Second World War.

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<sup>67</sup> *Večernji list*, 2 April 2014, online at [www.vecernji.hr/premium/na-mirogoju-pronasao-kosturnicu-s-ostacima-3300-vojnika-930451](http://www.vecernji.hr/premium/na-mirogoju-pronasao-kosturnicu-s-ostacima-3300-vojnika-930451).