

"DEATH TO ALL FASCISTS! LIBERTY TO THE PEOPLE!"

HISTORY AND POPULAR CULTURE IN YUGOSLAVIA 1945 – 1990

By

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A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
degree of Masters' of Arts.

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October, 2006

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ISBN: 978-0-494-32569-8

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ISBN: 978-0-494-32569-8

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>ABSTRACT</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>L'ABRÉGÉ</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>LITERATURE REVIEW</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>CHAPTER I – Historical Background</u>	<u>13</u>
1) <u>The Second World War</u>	<u>14</u>
2) <u>The Independent State of Croatia and the Ustaša Movement</u>	<u>17</u>
3) <u>The Government of National Salvation and the Četnik Movement</u>	<u>21</u>
4) <u>The KPJ and the Partisans</u>	<u>26</u>
<u>CHAPTER II - Inventing Socialist Yugoslavia</u>	<u>31</u>
1. <u>The Arts</u>	<u>33</u>
2. <u>Popular Music</u>	<u>35</u>
3. <u>Literature</u>	<u>39</u>
4. <u>Cinema</u>	<u>46</u>
<u>CHAPTER III: The Halcyon Days</u>	<u>49</u>
1) <u>Popular Music</u>	<u>50</u>
2) <u>Literature</u>	<u>52</u>
3) <u>Cinema</u>	<u>56</u>
4) <u>Dissidents</u>	<u>62</u>
<u>CHAPTER 4: Ethnic Times</u>	<u>67</u>

1) <u>Literature</u>	70
2) <u>Cinema</u>	78
3) <u>Popular Music</u>	80
<u>CONCLUSION</u>	84
<u>BIBLIOGRAPHY</u>	87

ABSTRACT

This essay analyzes the changing portrayal of Yugoslavia's World War II experience in music, film, and literature. It argues that the disappearance of unifying themes from the cultural sphere opened the doors to the popularization of controversial and divisive subjects. Shifting perceptions of how Yugoslavs fought and survived the Second World War contributed to the destruction of Yugoslavia.

The first chapter focuses on World War II in Yugoslavia. The second chapter discusses the early development of Yugoslav culture and its dependence on the Second World War. The third chapter follows the development of Yugoslav culture through the 1960s and 1970s when political liberalization promoted greater freedom in the arts. Aside from inspiring artists to address new themes and approach old themes from a fresh perspective, it also permitted the stirrings of political dissent. The fourth chapter addresses the disappearance of the Yugoslav idea from the cultural realm during the 1980s.

L'ABRÉGÉ

Cette dissertation analyse la représentation changeante de l'expérience de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale de la Yougoslavie en musique, film, et littérature. Elle raisonne que la disparition des thèmes unifiants au sein du milieu culturel a ouvert les portes à la vulgarisation des sujets contestés et discordants. Les perceptions changeantes de la façon dont les Yougoslaves ont battu et survécu la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale ont en effet contribué à la destruction de la Yougoslavie. Le premier chapitre trace l'histoire de l'expérience de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale en Yougoslavie. Le deuxième chapitre relate le développement d'une culture proprement yougoslave et de sa dépendance sur l'expérience de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale. Le troisième chapitre suit le développement de la culture yougoslave dans les années soixante et soixante-dix quand la libéralisation politique a favorisé une plus grande liberté dans les arts. Alors que la libéralisation politique a inspiré certains artistes à s'engager avec de nouveaux thèmes et de reformuler de vieux thèmes à l'aide d'une nouvelle perspective, elle a également cultivé de la dissidence politique. Le quatrième chapitre se concentre sur la disparition de l'idée yougoslave du milieu culturel pendant les années quatre-vingt.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to express my deep appreciation to the Department of History at McGill University for its continuous patience and support. I especially want to thank Professor Valentin J. Boss, who read and evaluated my work, giving me constructive criticism and feedback. I am especially grateful to Kathryn Steinhaus for taking the time to read and edit every draft, to Margaret Carlyle for her invaluable help with French translations, and to all of my family and friends who helped and supported me throughout the process of researching and writing. I am also greatly indebted to all the historians whose thorough research allowed me to further explore this fascinating topic.

I dedicate this work to my parents Miralem and Mirjana Turković. Their continuous devotion to Yugoslavia and all it stood for served as my inspiration and their unwavering love and support continue to be my greatest asset.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In 1991, the implosion of Yugoslavia attracted the attention of the international community. The escalation of public interest in a previously ignored part of the world allowed anyone who had ever visited the Balkans to write a book and sell it well. More literature on the region appeared in the 1990s than during the entire century.¹ Alternating floods and droughts in writing on the former Yugoslavia have made distinct times and trends in the historiography especially evident. Among the research material consulted for this particular work, four dominant schools of thought can be detected.

The earliest type of discourse anchors itself in the theory of primordial nationalism and used catch phrases such as “age-old animosities” and described Yugoslavia as a “tinderbox in history” to evoke the image of a violent and difficult people who fought because they always have. For example, journalist Robert Kaplan wrote in 1993 that “[Yugoslavia was] a time capsule world, a dim stage upon which people spilled blood...rural, isolated, and full of suspicions and hatreds....”² These works include very little factual information and analytical thought. Rather, they are of interest because they express the dominant opinions espoused by the international community during the first years of war. While not particularly helpful for a paper such as this because of their gross oversimplification of the Balkans, they pose such a strong presence in the field that they cannot be entirely ignored in any work on the area.

¹ Gale Stokes et al. “Instant History: Understanding the Wars of Yugoslav Succession.” Slavic Review 55, no. 1 (1996): 148.

² Robert D. Kaplan, Balkan Ghosts: A Journey through History (New York: Random House, 1993), xxi.

Ethnic advocacy motivates the second trend in Yugoslav histories. Such tracts often stem from the period after Tito when nationalists began to dominate historical discourse in the Balkans. Works that follow this line subscribe to a narrow nationalism that focuses on the grievances of a chosen ethnic faction and exploits the historical narrative as a way of justifying the acts of that particular group and dismissing any accusation against them. It frequently includes a litany of accusations against other groups and a dismissal of any attempts at explaining or legitimizing the claims of these groups. For example, various justifications for Croatia's conduct in the war are liberally peppered through the articles in the anthology Genocide after Emotion: the Post-emotional Balkan War. Alex Dragnich does a similar service to Serbia in Yugoslavia's Disintegration and the Struggle for Truth. Although often factually and analytically misleading, these books provide valuable insights into the way nationalists warped and manipulated history in the cultural sphere and subsequently in popular consciousness. Understanding these histories is essential to understanding the role history played in the disintegration of Yugoslavia, which this thesis attempts to address.

The third trend in Yugoslav literature eschews the ethnic tangles and focuses on the economic and political difficulties Yugoslavia faced throughout its history. These accounts are generally free of ethnic bias and tend to lean toward a more pro-Yugoslav stance. Among these books the most notable are Sabrina P. Ramat's works such as Balkan Babel as well as John Lampe's Yugoslavia as History: Twice there was a Country. These books are the most helpful in factual and analytical research. Occasionally, their desire to remain impartial ignores the role of culture in Yugoslavia's disintegration. A notable exception, however, is Ramat who devotes special attention to

the sphere of rock music. As this trend has grown within the last few years, attempting to discern reasons for Yugoslavia collapse, more and more authors have elected to follow Ramat's lead towards discussions of cultural themes ignored by earlier authors. Among these books are Andrew Wachtel's Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation: Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia as well as the works of Carol S. Lilly, Daniel Goulding, Dejan Djokic, and others.

Perhaps the most extraordinary area of Yugoslav history is the fourth, the separate niche of discourse which solely addresses the questions of authorial partiality in historical works about Yugoslavia. Inspired by the sudden surge of literature on Yugoslavia, the authors of "Meta Bosnia," "Instant History," and Yugoslavia and its Historians discuss the emotional responses to Yugoslavia's collapse and the difficulties associated with the objective reporting of current events. These analyses are vital to any comprehension of the bias that shape Yugoslav history writing and popular culture because of their keen examinations of the second school of thought. They have been invaluable in the understanding of other historians' bias and the writing of this paper.

INTRODUCTION

A popular joke told in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia [*Socjalistička Federativna Republika Jugoslavija*, SFRJ] went something like this: the teacher asks a little boy in her class, “Do you know who the Partisans were?” “They were our liberators from fascism and from horrible occupiers and because of them we all lead much better lives today.” “Excellent answer! And do you know who the Četniks were?” the teacher asks. “Well, there was uncle, and grandpa, and...” The joke facetiously summarizes the Yugoslav approach to and understanding of World War II history. In many cases personal histories and memories differed significantly from official historiography. The question “Who were the Partisans?” raised a number of social and political issues throughout the short life span of the SFRJ.

Historically, the Partisans were the military arm of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia [*Komunistička Partija Jugoslavije*, KPJ]. Officially known as the National Liberation Army, the multi-ethnic Partisan forces fought against Axis occupation and domestic collaboration in World War II. Culturally, however, the Partisans were so much more. While in the official narrative every good Yugoslav had been a Partisan, in fact, a number of individuals who had not wished to be Yugoslavs had actively supported domestic ultranationalist movements. The discrepancy existing between official history and private memory caused tension and confusion. Effectively it was this discrepancy that led to the disintegration of official Yugoslav historiography.

The regime was only partially responsible for the Partisans’ dominance of post-bellum history and popular culture. Since the KPJ had attracted some of the greatest Yugoslav artists and writers before as well as during the war, the Partisan struggle served

as inspiration in a number of their creations. Through the dual effort of the regime and the artistic community, the Partisan image became omnipresent in books, on movie screens, in songs, and on posters. The ubiquitous presence of Partisan rhetoric in popular culture represented the KPJ's first attempt to create an acceptable version of World War II history in Yugoslavia. By submerging the torn and devastated country in the cult of the Partisans, the KPJ hoped to create a new united nation out of the myriad of Slavic and non-Slavic groups that populated the Balkan Peninsula. The Partisans were an ideal object for myth making. They were domestic heroes belonging to all creeds and ages. Their valiant struggle had liberated Yugoslavia and the image of the young Partisan had the potential to appeal to everyone and forge supra-ethnic unity.

During Tito's presidency, the public revered the Partisans who had done some magnificent things during the war and had endured drastic sacrifices to the point of deification. The Partisans' opponents became mere caricatures of evil to further demonstrate and emphasize the greatness of the Partisans. Such a simplified and one-dimensional representation of history could not endure, especially once the idealistic young heroes of World War II grew old, privileged, and pudgy. The taboos imposed by the regime discouraged a more nuanced approach to historical research for four decades. After President Josip Broz Tito died in 1980, Yugoslavia's economic and political situation began to change. Economic recession exacerbated the collective confusion caused by the loss of Tito's political authority. The concept of "Brotherhood and Unity" lost ground amidst the first stirrings of nationalism. Without Tito's overwhelming presence, the new regime could not sustain the taboos which had been imposed on historical discourse to keep the country united. Instead of inspiring a balanced look at

history, however, the open discussion of taboo topics quickly degenerated, reinstating the black and white approach that had been an essential part of Yugoslav post-bellum historiography.

By changing the casting in the major roles of heroes and villains the popular concept of the Yugoslav Partisan was the first victim of historical revisionism. Revisionist historiography and the new crop of cultural artifacts first questioned and later completely dismantled the Partisans' role as the heroes of the Yugoslav nation. They became the scapegoats for all the ills that had befallen the constituent nations of the country. Prominent individuals who had been Partisans during World War II and had gained wealth and prestige through their exploits often denied their connection to the Partisan movement.³ As nationalist parochialism gained momentum, the Yugoslav Partisans, the SFRJ's role models for inter-ethnic unity and co-operation, became the villains of the new national narrative. They had humiliated Serbia, denied Croatia's 'millennial dream', and shamed the Muslims' Islamic heritage. They had destroyed a budding multi-party democracy, had suppressed religion and religious custom, and had terrorized the countryside during the war so that they could force people into the shackles of communism.⁴

To promote the renaissance of militant nationalism, its proponents vilified the Partisans and all they had stood for. The leaders of nationalist movements attempted to rehabilitate World War II criminals in history and in popular culture. Their attempts at the revision of history not only demonstrated a lack of understanding for historical facts

³ Prominent examples are the last president of Yugoslavia Dobrica Ćosić and the first president of independent Croatia Franjo Tuđman.

⁴ These are some of the most common accusations leveled at the Partisans and the KPJ during the nationalist revival. They are elucidated in the writings of Slobodan Selenić, Vuk Drašković, Franjo Tuđman, Munevera Hadžišehović, as well as a number of others.

but also shocking disdain for the hundreds of thousands of Yugoslavs who had fallen victim to occupation and domestic collaboration during World War II. The bêtes noirs of united Yugoslavia were resurrected to bring about its disintegration. During the late 1980s, one could speak about the Četniks⁵ and the Ustaša⁶ in a neutral manner. By the 1990s the ultranationalists and criminals of World War II had become so popular and well established that leaders of nationalist paramilitary movements during the Wars of Yugoslav Secession commonly adopted the regalia and the noms de guerre of their World War II predecessors.⁷

The destruction of Yugoslavia thus began as a war on history, and its first victims were the historical Partisans. This essay will look at the increasingly chasmal shifts in the prevalent perception of the Partisans and the War of National Liberation through the looking glass of Yugoslav popular culture. It will argue that the disappearance of a common historical interpretation within the cultural framework contributed significantly to the disintegration of the Yugoslav idea among the populace.

CHAPTER I: Historical Background

In 1991, the Belgrade newspaper Borba published a cartoon by Vojin Stanković, which illustrates a book with the title “History”. On the cover of the book is the map of post-World War II Yugoslavia. The cover and the pages inside have been cut from all sides. Around the scissors which had been used to cut the book are wreaths, which

⁵The Četniks were a nationalist Serbian guerrilla movement during World War II.

⁶Croatian ultranationalist terrorist organization that founded the Independent State of Croatia (*Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*, NDH) during World War II.

⁷David B. MacDonald, Balkan Holocausts? Serbian and Croatian Victim-centered Propaganda and the war in Yugoslavia, [Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2002], 140.

symbolically commemorate the act of cutting as an act of killing.⁸ The cartoon is a poignant eulogy to the demise of Yugoslavia's history. In a subsequent interview, the cartoonist commented that just prior to the war "the history of Yugoslavia became an unprotected oasis where everybody mowed what he needed and how much he needed. History was excised following the needs and interests of political leaders."⁹ The nationalist movements of the 1980s were not the first to modify Yugoslavia's historical experience. The past of the South Slavs has been officially revised at least three times in the twentieth century. Following each political change, the new regime rewrote history from the standpoint of the time and taking into account the most recent events. Revisionist historians determined which facts would be attributed diminished importance and which facts would be granted excessive relevance. The discrepancy found in different accounts of Yugoslav history reveal the "inescapable politics of representation" involved in the narration of historical events.¹⁰

1) The Second World War

While World War II in Yugoslavia has elicited a number of personal accounts, it has left less primary evidence for an agreed, definitive historiography than anywhere else in Europe.¹¹ This is particularly true of the domestic dynamics that precipitated the rapid disintegration of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the interaction between the three crucial

⁸ Goran Jovanović, "The Yugoslav War Through Cartoons," in Neighbors at War, ed. Joel M. Halpern and David A. Kideckel [University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000], 284.

⁹ Jovanovic, 284.

¹⁰ David Campbell, "Meta Bosnia: Narratives of the Bosnian War," Review of International Studies 24 (1998): 264.

¹¹ John R. Lampe, Yugoslavia as History: Twice there was a Country, 2nd ed. [Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000], 201.

domestic players: the Partisans, the Četniks, and the Ustaša.¹² The commonly accepted yet factually simplistic approach to understanding the domestic dynamics of World War II in Yugoslavia has been to assume that the Serbs fought on the Allied side, while the Croats collaborated with the Axis forces. The actual picture is far more complex.¹³

Against fierce opposition at home and abroad Prince Regent Aleksandar Karađorđević proclaimed the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes on December 1, 1918.¹⁴ The new country resulted from the unification of the kingdom of Serbia, the principality of Montenegro, and the Austro-Hungarian territories of Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina. From the onset, the chances of the newest European state were meager. The kingdom had a mere twenty years to establish unity and prosperity before the onslaught of fascism. In the precarious interwar period, it failed to create an enduring consensus that could resist the might of Axis armies. Fully aware of its weaknesses, the royal government had tried to keep Yugoslavia out of the war by signing a treaty of cooperation with the Axis on March 25, 1941, but the news of the Tripartite Pact enraged the population. It took to the streets of Belgrade on the morning of March 27, 1941, chanting slogans such as “war over pact” and “grave over slavery.” Winston Churchill was thrilled and gushed that “now Yugoslavia has found its soul.”¹⁵ For Yugoslavia, however, the open display of disapproval toward collaboration sealed the country’s fate. Infuriated, Hitler launched “Operation Punishment” to “destroy the Yugoslav state as it currently exists.”¹⁶ In spite of the willingness of the citizenry to accept war, Yugoslavia’s

¹² Lampe, 201.

¹³ Christopher Bennett, *Yugoslavia’s Bloody Collapse: Causes, Course, and Consequences* [New York: New York University Press, 1995] 47.

¹⁴ King Aleksandar changed the name of the country from “Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes” to the “Kingdom of Yugoslavia” in 1929.

¹⁵ Lampe, 202.

¹⁶ Lampe, 200.

antiquated and decrepit army stood little chance against the powerful Axis forces that first decimated Belgrade and later invaded the entire country.

Between April and June 1941, Axis forces dismembered the first Yugoslavia, effectively destroying all existing institutions and the infrastructure. Cvjeto Job describes the demolition of the kingdom as "... a Walpurgisnacht of obliteration and genocide [meant] to drive a stake through what was then the already dead heart of a dead Yugoslavia so that no one could even think that that supposedly unnatural country might rise again."¹⁷ Once destroyed, the invaders tore Yugoslavia's carcass to pieces. The Axis powers kept large portions of territory and assigned the rump to the dictatorship of enthusiastic domestic accomplices.¹⁸ The chaos of disintegration allowed a number of minor movements that would have never been able to muster public support or defy the state government during peace times to become contenders in the fight for Yugoslavia and its people. The three domestic factions in the battle for Yugoslavia were the Fascist Ustaša, the Royalist Četniks, and the Communist Partisans. They shared very little in terms of ideology and approach. Throughout the war, they continuously fought a brutal civil war while vying for the hearts and minds of the Yugoslav peoples, with each movement, whether pro-fascist or adamantly opposed to the Axis, resorting to "national liberation" rhetoric.

¹⁷ Cvjeto Job, *Yugoslavia's Ruin: The Bloody Lessons of Nationalism, a Patriot's Warning* [Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002] 19.

¹⁸ Germany incorporated one-third of Slovenia, while the other two-thirds, including the capital Ljubljana, went to Italy. Italy took most of Dalmatia with its principal ports and the Adriatic islands; Montenegro became an Italian protectorate; Italy occupied parts of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina; Italian Albania incorporated Macedonia and Hungary annexed parts of Croatia and Vojvodina. Serbia was reduced to what it was before the Balkan Wars and occupied by German troops. The Axis set up a quisling government. The fascist Ustaša founded the Independent State of Croatia. They proclaimed an Italian duke as their king. Branka Magaš, *The Destruction of Yugoslavia: Tracking the Break-Up 1980 – 1992* [London: Verso, 1993], 43.

2) The Independent State of Croatia and the Ustaša Movement

The moment of liberation has come! Croatian people! Rise on your feet, take your arms. Align into combat ranks and stand under the Ustaša flag, on which the glorious deeds of victory are already written. Rise, the moment of our liberation has come, arise to cleanse our homeland from enemies and to establish our freedom in our own house, in a sovereign and Independent State of Croatia, in which all Croatian lands will be united... Our victory is assured.¹⁹

On April 10, 1941, Slavko Kvaternik, deputy leader of the fascist Ustaša movement, proclaimed the Independent State of Croatia [*Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*, NDH] in the name of Ustaša leader Dr. Ante Pavelić who still lived in exile in Italy. It was a minor political coup since the Ustaša had not been Germany's first choice and less than ten percent of politically active Croats supported the movement.²⁰ Since legitimate Croatian parties and politicians refused to cooperate, the Germans eventually ran out of options and agreed to an Ustaša government on April 5, a mere five days before the proclamation of the NDH.

Prior to the war the Ustaša movement was merely an insignificant organization on the extreme right, lacking power or popular support.²¹ Founded in 1929, their initial prerogative was the execution of terrorist attacks and distribution of racist propaganda.²² During the early years of their existence, the Ustaša had little success. In early October 1934, however, they engineered the assassination of Yugoslavia's King Aleksandar in Marseilles, significantly disrupting the kingdom's already precarious stability. For the next six years, the Ustaša continued to execute terrorist acts on Yugoslav soil but failed to instigate a general uprising.

¹⁹ "Pavelić's Radio Address to Croatia," May 18, 2004, <<http://www.pavelicpapers.com/documents/pavelic/ap0048.html>> [July 2006].

²⁰ Lampe, 208.

²¹ Bennett, 43.

²² Lampe, 173

This was the state of affairs in April 1941 when German tanks rolled into Zagreb and allowed the Ustaša to put their principles into action.²³ A majority of Croats had felt disadvantaged in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and were happy about the unexpected independence. The popularity of the Ustaša surged during the early euphoria, only to be replaced by disillusionment, disappointment, and disgust once unmitigated terror became national policy. The sheer scope of Ustaša atrocities and the relish with which they violated every aspect of human decency quickly fermented rebellions across the territory of the NDH.²⁴

The Ustaša did not adapt the political ideology of the German or the Italian fascist movement. They did not develop a coherent set of political ideas of their own either. Rather, they preached a hodgepodge of modern totalitarianism, conservative traditionalism, Roman Catholic clericalism, and primitive populism, which they tried to impose on the population through violence and intimidation. Lacking clear political policy, the most coherent aspect of their ideology was the drive toward racial purification, used as a justification for mass murder.²⁵

In the view of the Ustaša movement, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia had been an abominable and artificial creation, imposed on the Croats in order to deny them independence. They believed that political and social Serbian domination had been forced upon Croatia like a yoke. As a result of this forced association with the Serbs in "the greatest dungeon of Croats: Yugoslavia,"²⁶ the purity of the Croatian nation had

²³ "Principles of the Ustaša Movement," February 2003, <http://www.pavelicpapers.com/documents/pavelic/ap0040.html> [July 2006].

²⁴ Bennett, 44.

²⁵ Bette Denich, "Dismembering Yugoslavia: Nationalist Ideologies and the Symbolic Revival of Genocide," *American Ethnologist* 21, no.2 [1994]: 374.

²⁶ "Pamphlet: The Victorious Axis," March 9, 2003, <http://www.pavelicpapers.com/documents/hss/hss0001.html> [July 2006]

been compromised. Like the Jews in Nazi ideology, in Ustaša view the Serbs were the racial polluters of Croatia and had to be exterminated. Ustaša fascination with ritualistic violence and gruesome methods of killing lent itself well to the project of genocide.²⁷

In the partition of Yugoslav territory, the NDH had received parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina. An ultranationalist terrorist group thus became the absolute ruler over the life and death of a multiethnic population.²⁸ This particular move on the part of the Axis marked millions of people for death since the overriding purpose of the Ustaša was the assurance of an ethnically pure territory cleansed of Serbs, Jews, and Gypsies. The terror that the Ustaša unleashed on the parts of the population they considered inferior immediately after the proclamation of independence was so large in scope and so violent in its execution, that even the war-hardened Axis forces were appalled at the savagery and terror that Pavelić sanctioned in the name of Croatian purity.²⁹ The German plenipotentiary in Zagreb, Edmund Gleise von Horstenau, wrote in June 1941 that "according to reliable information [from German observers] during the last few weeks in country and town, the Ustaša have gone raging mad."³⁰ When Dr. Hermann Neubacher, the German Plenipotentiary for Southeast Europe, informed Adolf Hitler of the atrocities, the Führer commented "I have also told [Pavelić] that one cannot exterminate such a minority [as the Serbs]; it is simply too large!"³¹ While the extent of the violence that the NDH government had unleashed genuinely disturbed the German

²⁷ Alexander Pavković, *The Fragmentation of Yugoslavia: Nationalism and War in the Balkans*, 2nd ed. [New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000], 37.

²⁸ Out of a population of 6.3 million, only 3.4 million were ethnic Croats.

²⁹ Lampe, 209.

³⁰ Richard West, *Tito and the Rise and Fall of Yugoslavia* [London : Sinclair-Stevenson, 1994], 98.

³¹ Dr. Hermann Neubacher, "Special Assignment in the Southeast: A Crusade of Destruction," October 2002, <<http://www.pavelicpapers.com/documents/jasenovac/ja0006.html>> [July 2006].

leadership, it was not as much the appalling human sacrifice as the threat to security and stability that bothered them.³²

German disapproval did not deter the Ustaša killing machine and within a few months of coming into power the regime had supervised the execution of thousands of its citizens. The Serbs, being the numerically strongest undesirable minority and the general ogre in Ustaša ideology, suffered the largest losses. On June 22, 1941, the Minister of Education, Religion, and Cults Mile Budak announced during a propaganda meeting in the town of Gospić that out of the 1.9 million Serbs living in the NDH, one-third would be deported, one-third would be converted, and one-third executed, a plan that the Ustaša eagerly sought to implement during the four years of their reign of terror.³³

Ustaša concentration camps such as the slaughterhouses of Jasenovac and Stara Gradiška epitomized the depravity of the regime. Gleise von Horstenau described the NDH as the place where concentration camps “[...] have reached their peak of abomination under a [head of state] installed by us.”³⁴ Jasenovac was one of the most barbaric concentration camps in Europe. Notorious for the inhumane ways in which the guards murdered and tortured their victims, it was “[the] most wicked of all [the Ustaša concentration camps], [a place] where no ordinary mortal is allowed to peer in.”³⁵

The crimes of the NDH not only repelled their Axis allies, they also fermented a powerful opposition. One third of the Croatian Peasant Party [*Hrvatska Seljačka Stranka*, HSS] members elected to the NDH puppet parliament refused to serve in 1942

³² Ann Lane, *Yugoslavia: When Ideals Collide* [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004], 78.

³³ Lampe, 209.

³⁴ Edmund Glaise von Horstenau, “On the Ustasa Concentration Camps,” October 2002, <<http://www.pavelicpapers.com/documents/jasenovac/ja0004.html>> [July 2006].

³⁵ Edmund Glaise von Horstenau, “On the Ustasa Concentration Camps,” October 2002, <<http://www.pavelicpapers.com/documents/jasenovac/ja0004.html>> [July 2006].

while the Ustaša incarcerated the party's leader Dr. Vladko Maček in Jasenovac for refusing to support the Pavelić regime.³⁶ Men and women across Croatia fled their homes to join Partisan contingents.³⁷ Across Bosnia and Herzegovina, thousands of Bosnian Muslims whom Pavelić was desperately courting by proclaiming them the "pearl of the Croatian nation" refused to participate in the racist pogrom and openly opposed the persecution of the Serbian, Jewish, and Gypsy populations.³⁸ As the war continued, the Ustaša hold on power began to disintegrate. Pavelić's inner circle fled Croatia on April 15, 1945. The German government, growing increasingly desperate and needing a line of retreat, continued to uphold the remnants of the NDH around Zagreb until May 1945.

3. The Government of National Salvation and the Četnik Movement

In tomorrow's Yugoslavia, which we are adopting as our state and existential framework, the union of all Serb lands must be realized. Serb lands are all those where Serb blood was spilled and where Serb heads fell, because by their very sacrifice they irrefutable marked the boundaries of Serbdom.³⁹

The German assault lasted about ten days and inflicted far more physical and psychological damage on Serbia than on any other part of the country.⁴⁰ Most political leaders and members of the royal family fled into exile while German armed forces fanned across Serbia, capturing over half a million soldiers and officers of the Yugoslav Royal Army. The population was thus bereft of its army and its government within a few

³⁶ Lampe, 212.

³⁷ Lampe, 223.

³⁸ Lampe, 213.

³⁹ Kosta Nikolić, "Dragoljub – Draža Mihajlović" in The Serbs and their Leaders in the Twentieth Century, ed. Peter Radan and Aleksander Pavković [Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 1997], 221.

⁴⁰ Lampe, 204.

days, leaving the devastated country at the mercy of occupying forces and domestic collaborators.

The Germany military governed Serbia until August 1941. By the end of the summer they decided to install General Milan Nedić in much the same role as Marshal Pétain in Vichy France.⁴¹ Nedić had fallen under the spell of the Nazis in 1937 when he became convinced that Germany would come to rule the world.⁴² As a Nazi puppet regime, the Government of National Salvation [*Vlada Nacionalnog Spasa*] implemented the German racial laws. "Soon after the occupation on May 31, the military commander announced a regulation that imposed various restrictions on Gypsies and Jews."⁴³ Hitler hoped that the puppet regime could control the outbreak of further conflict, suppress guerrilla activities, and regulate the ghettos and labor camps.⁴⁴ Although the Government of National Salvation enjoyed some support, uprisings continued to mount.⁴⁵ In response, the occupying forces installed horrendous repercussions for all who dared to rebel and erected concentration camps on Serbian soil.⁴⁶ The concentration camp at Sajmište near Belgrade, erected in December of 1941, was the only camp in Europe within clear view of a city. In an attempt to intimidate and frighten the residents of Belgrade, the authorities ensured that they could watch the horrors that transpired in the

⁴¹ West, 104.

⁴² Marjeta Adamić, *Oktobar u Jugoslaviji 1918 - 1943* [Belgrade: Institute for the Study of the Workers Movement, 1967], 33.

⁴³ Elizabeta Jetvić, "Blank Pages of the Holocaust: Gypsies in Yugoslavia during World War II" [M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 2004], 60. <<http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/ETD/image/etd463.pdf>> [June 2006].

⁴⁴ Jetvić, 62.

⁴⁵ MacDonald, 134.

⁴⁶ For every German soldier that was shot, the Germans executed 100 people. For every soldier injured they executed 50.

camp.⁴⁷ Almost 90% of Serbia's 16,000 Jews, a massive percentage of the Roma population, as well as countless resisters of all ethnicities were killed in Serbia during World War II.

In spite of its atrocious impact on the native Jewish and Roma populations of Serbia, the Government of National Salvation has inspired little interest in Serbia's World War II historiography. This is mostly due to the fact that Nedić's government did not operate independently. Instead, according to recent scholarship, "Wehrmacht instructions and a largely Austrian contingent of local German officers bore that responsibility."⁴⁸ The attention of historians, native and foreign, has thus always rested on Serbia's controversial Četnik movement.

In the chaos that ensued after Yugoslavia's army collapsed in April of 1941, a number of soldiers and officers managed to escape. Among the few who successfully avoided capture was Colonel Dragoljub (Draža) Mihajlović. With a small contingent of men, Mihajlović escaped into the mountains of Serbia, where he organized the Ravna Gora movement in the spring of 1941.⁴⁹ Mihajlović's contingents were commonly known as the "Četniks" a title that paid symbolic homage to the mountain guerrillas who had fought Ottoman occupation in the nineteenth century.⁵⁰ The Četniks were active in Serbia, Montenegro, parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to a lesser extent in Croatia.⁵¹ Although most Četnik units accepted Mihajlović as their leader, his authority was often only nominal. While the contingents of Četniks under Mihajlović's control initially

⁴⁷ Katka Krosnar, "In Belgrade, a Concentration Camp Nearly Slips Away," Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 11 April 2003, <http://www.jewishsf.com/content/2-0/module/displaystory/story_id/20101/edition_id/410/format/html/displaystory.html> [June 2006]

⁴⁸ Franke Wilmer, Social Construction of Man, the State, and War: Identity, Conflict, and Violence in the Former Yugoslavia [London: Routledge, 2002], 39.

⁴⁹ Lampe, 205.

⁵⁰ Nikolić, 210.

⁵¹ Mihajlo Crnobrnja, The Yugoslav Drama [Montréal : McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994], 66.

decided to work toward ousting the Germans, a smaller independent Četnik organization led by Kosta Pečanac chose open collaboration with the Germans from the outset.⁵² Initially, the wider Četnik resistance inspired great hopes in the Serbian population as well as in the Allies.⁵³ The Yugoslav government-in-exile promoted Mihajlović to the rank of General and made him its official representative on Yugoslav territory.

The Četniks struggled to mount a strong resistance at the very beginning of the movement. Domestically, the greatest problem facing the Četniks was their ideological devotion to the cause of Greater Serbia or at least a Serb-dominated Yugoslavia. They held no appeal for non-Serbs, a fact that critically reduced their pool of potential recruits.⁵⁴ Mihajlović was a devout monarchist and Serbophile, who identified the monarchy's interests with Serbian hegemonic ambition.⁵⁵ He was also a believer in ethnic purity. In the 1930s, he had received a serious reprimand for a nationalist proposal to divide the Yugoslav army into equal Serb, Croatian, and Slovene units.⁵⁶ Mihajlović's idea of a restored royal Yugoslavia was the division of the kingdom into ethnically homogenous enclaves created through population exchange and, if necessary, murder.⁵⁷ According to a map by Četnik ideologue Stevan Moljević, a homogenous Serbia would cover two thirds of Yugoslav territory and would require the expulsion of one million Croats.⁵⁸

⁵² MacDonald, 135. For the purposes of this paper, I will focus on those Četnik units that accepted Mihajlović as their Commander-in-chief.

⁵³ Lampe, 205.

⁵⁴ Denich, 375.

⁵⁵ Branka Prpa - Jovanović, "The Making of Yugoslavia" in Yugoslavia's Ethnic Nightmare: The Inside Story of Europe's Unfolding Ordeal, ed. Jasminka Udovički and James Ridgeway, [New York: Lawrence Hill Books, 1995] 54.

⁵⁶ Lampe, 205.

⁵⁷ Denich, 375.

⁵⁸ Lampe, 206.

Between July and August of 1941, the Četniks engaged in a number of military actions against the Axis forces, mostly of diversionary character.⁵⁹ In September, the two anti-fascist movements operating on Yugoslav soil, the Četniks and the Partisans, carried out their first co-ordinate actions, giving the rebellion the flavor of a mass national uprising.⁶⁰ The co-operation was short-lived mostly due to ideological issues. The Četniks wanted to resurrect a Serb-dominated royalist Yugoslavia while the Partisans hoped to create a more equalitarian social order that encouraged ethnic mixing. Such diametrically opposed national platforms made co-existence and co-operation between the two movements impossible and by the end of the year they were engaged in a brutal civil war.

Faced with serious domestic obstacles and severe German repercussions, the Četniks lost their zeal for active rebellion. Instead of continuing on the path of open resistance, Mihajlović chose to arrange a precarious *modus vivendi* with the occupiers, while maintaining a façade of official co-operation with the Allies. Throughout the course of the war, the Četniks engaged in more and more unsavory acts of collaboration and ethnic violence.⁶¹ These exploits played a significant role in the perpetuation and intensification of inter-ethnic discord in Yugoslavia. The Četniks continued to lose ground throughout the war although they managed to keep Allied support until 1944. In the autumn of 1944, the disenchanted Allies switched their support from Mihajlović's Četniks to Tito's Partisans.⁶² During the last months of the war a number of Četnik defectors joined Partisan forces, and Mihajlović could not muster sufficient support to

⁵⁹ Nikolić, 211.

⁶⁰ Nikolić, 211.

⁶¹ Crnobrnja, 66.

⁶² Lampe, 225.

continue the war. By 1944, the Četniks had lost the war. The new government arrested Mihajlović on March 12, 1946 and incarcerated him in Belgrade. He stood trial for treason and collaboration on June 10, 1946 and was executed a week later.⁶³

While both Serbia and Croatia produced extremist nationalist movements and puppet governments during World War II, their levels of effectiveness were disparate. The major difference between the Četniks and the Ustaša was that the former consisted of relatively isolated guerrilla units who engaged in random massacres and skirmishes while the latter had a state apparatus to support its genocidal policies. Thus the scale of murder, plunder, and ethnic cleansing performed by the Četniks never equaled the evil deeds of the Ustaša.⁶⁴

4) The KPJ and the Partisans

The term 'National Liberation Struggle' would be a mere phrase and even a deception if it were not invested with both an all-Yugoslav and national meaning for each people individually. ...The liberation and emancipation of the Croats, Slovenes, Serbs, Macedonians, Albanians, and Muslims...therein lays the essence of the National Liberation War.⁶⁵

Two weeks after Yugoslavia had officially surrendered a poster appeared in Belgrade's central square. In bold letters it stated: "Germans! We give you solemn warning: leave Yugoslavia. Death to all fascists! Liberty to the people!" In spite of such belligerent statements, it is difficult to speak of the existence of an organized and coherent resistance movement at the beginning of the war in Yugoslavia.⁶⁶ While the Communist Party of Yugoslavia [*Komunističa Partija Jugoslavije*, KPJ] was collecting

⁶³ Nikolić, 226.

⁶⁴ Crnobrnja, 66.

⁶⁵ Lenard J. Cohen, Broken Bonds: Yugoslavia's Disintegration and Balkan Politics in Transition, 2nd ed. [Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995], 23.

⁶⁶ Lane, 79.

abandoned arms and ammunitions for a future uprising and the Allies were hoping that the Četniks might be able to disrupt the German war effort, very little was actually done in the first chaotic months of war. It was not until June 1941, shortly after Germany attacked the Soviet Union, that the KPJ issued an official call for an all-national armed uprising against fascist forces.

In 1919, a small group of Yugoslav communists founded the KPJ as an opposition party in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia's parliament. At the beginning of the war, the KPJ was relatively small, and its membership was predominantly young. In the interwar years its utopian ideals of socialism and equality had failed to attract popular support in a largely traditionalist society.⁶⁷ In the spring of 1941, the KPJ seemed like an unlikely contender in the battle for Yugoslavia. Nonetheless, the small party had a number of unexpected resources in its arsenal. During the first years of his tenure as Secretary of the KPJ, Josip Broz had managed to assemble a talented, multinational leadership team and had harnessed the support of a number of idealistic young activists. As an outlawed political entity for a great part of its existence, the KPJ had also developed a clandestine underground organization, which allowed its members to escape dangerous situations and transport supplies.⁶⁸ These factors would become invaluable during the war.

The KPJ advocated the establishment of a broad-based, multi-ethnic movement that would restore the unity and regain the independence of the Yugoslav state. The party's emphasis on ethnic equality and federalism provided it with numerous political advantages during the war. By combining a call for social revolution with a promise to create separate republican and provincial units for the major nationalities in a new federal

⁶⁷ Lampe, 142.

⁶⁸ Lampe, 201.

state, the KPJ was able to differentiate itself from other domestic forces vying for the support of the Yugoslav population.⁶⁹ The Partisans' appeal lay in their acceptance of all ethnic and religious groups, their active defiance of the Axis, and their ability to inspire hope in the midst of horror by planning and confidently speaking of inter-ethnic unity and a better future.⁷⁰ Although the leadership of the KPJ was devoutly Communist, political ideology did not determine membership in the Partisans. While the Četnik bands settled into an uneasy cooperation with the Axis forces, the Partisans wanted to make the occupation as uncomfortable and expensive as possible. Since they fought all foreign invaders, domestic collaborators, and quisling formations, in time they established more viable liberated territories and in the process protected all populations and creeds. The exploits of the Partisans and the utopian rhetoric of the KPJ kindled the romantic desires of those who wished to participate in a patriotic and dangerous adventure.⁷¹ New recruits often failed to realize the harsh conditions that accompanied the Partisan life. Continuous exposure to psychological and physical stress was a part of daily life for the Partisan forces. "Harsh relentless pursuit, complete mastery of the sky [by the Axis forces], [as well as] superior [enemy] armaments and numbers" were a part of life as a Partisan and tested the limits of human endurance on a daily basis.⁷²

During the war, the Axis launched seven offensives intended to annihilate the main Partisan force. The successful repulsion of the first three offensives combined with the Partisans' growing numbers and a more coordinated war effort convinced the Axis to take them seriously. In the winter of 1943, the Germans commenced "Operation Weiss",

⁶⁹ Lenard J. Cohen, 22.

⁷⁰ Job, 22.

⁷¹ Job, 22.

⁷² Daniel J. Goulding, *Liberated Cinema: the Yugoslav Experience 1945 – 2001*, 2nd ed., [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002], 90.

the fourth of seven offensives they would launch in their attempt to eradicate the main Partisan force. Axis forces numbering about 150,000 including auxiliary Četnik and main Ustaša units encircled the numerically inferior Partisans who carried large numbers of their wounded through the mountains. "Operation Weiss" was the largest offensive carried out in Yugoslavia during the war. The Partisans engaged in battle with the Axis units in the midst of a severe winter. In spite of heavy losses,⁷³ the Partisans fought bravely and confused the enemy by crossing and re-crossing the Neretva River in order to escape encroaching German units from Sarajevo. After crossing the river, they successfully scattered a force of 12,000 Četniks that attempted an ambush. Due to a combination of remarkable bravery and brilliant strategic planning, the Partisans managed to extricate themselves from the Axis noose in Bosnia and escape into the mountains of Montenegro.

After a short respite, the German's launched the fifth offensive, also known as "Operation Schwarz." In mid-May 1943, an amalgam of German, Bulgarian, Italian, and Ustaša units whose numbers exceeded 100,000 tried to encircle and exterminate Tito's main force of 20,000 in the mountains of southeastern Bosnia. The German telegram dated May 29, 1943 ordered the Axis forces to completely close the encirclement, kill every man who attempted to escape the gorge of the Sutjeska River, and ensure that no men escaped disguised as women.⁷⁴ Against all odds, the Partisans broke through again, although their rear guard suffered horrific losses. The Četniks arrived to contribute to the Axis offensive towards the end, a pivotal event witnessed by British emissary F.W.

⁷³ Germans: 514 killed, 1,214 wounded, and 158 missing; Italians: unknown; Ustaša: 126 killed, 258 wounded, and 218 missing; Partisan: 11,915 killed, 616 captured and executed, and 2,506 captured and held. <<http://www.axishistory.com/index.php?id=7465>> [June 2006].

⁷⁴ "Abschrift: Fernschreiben, 29 May 1943," April 08, 2005, <<http://forum.axishistory.com/viewtopic.php?t=75080&>> [June 2006].

Deakin. The reports of the Special Operations Executive, F.W. Deakin's eye-witness account, as well as electronic intelligence confirmed that the Partisans caused serious problems for the Axis while the Četniks languished between ineffective rebellion and ungracious collaboration. By 1944, the Allies diverted their full support to the Partisans.

"Operation Weiss" and "Operation Schwarz" propelled the unlikely feats of the Partisans to mythical proportions ensuring that thousands of new recruits would replenish the heavy losses. By the fall of 1943, Tito's forces numbered 100,000 soldiers. In the wake of the battle of Sutjeska, the KPJ assembled in Jajce on November 29, 1943 for the second meeting of the Anti-Fascist Council for the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia [*Antifašističko Vijeće Narodnog Oslobođenja Jugoslavije*, AVNOJ]. The Declaration of the Second Meeting of AVNOJ expounds as the most important success of the National Liberation War "[...] the fact that the National Liberation movement and the National Liberation Army are the result of individual resistance movements which had sprung up among all [Yugoslav] ethnic groups."⁷⁵ The multi-ethnic resistance fulfilled "[...] not only economic and political but also moral requirements for the recreation of a future brotherly, democratic, federal union of all [Yugoslav] nations...built on equality[...]"⁷⁶ The delegates dismissed the royal government-in-exile as treacherous and unworthy of its people and proceeded to set up a provisional government, which articulated for the first time their vision of a post-war Yugoslavia.⁷⁷

By 1944, the Partisans were the unchallenged victors of the wartime struggle. Through four years of war, the miniscule Partisan faction had evolved into the first

⁷⁵ "Declaration of the Second Session of the Anti-Fascist Council of the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia," in Yugoslavia through Documents: From its Creation to its Dissolution, ed. Snežana Trifunovska, [Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1994], 203.

⁷⁶ Trifunovska, 203.

⁷⁷ Lampe, 221.

grassroots all-Yugoslav mass movement in history. They successfully expelled the Axis forces with minimal foreign support, thus denying the Red Army the last chunk of southeastern Europe.

CHAPTER II: Inventing Socialist Yugoslavia

Liberated Yugoslavia was a physically and psychologically devastated country that had barely survived a brutal occupation and an internecine bloodbath. During the war, the KPJ had successfully reinvented itself as the first national party that could stand above ethnic rivalries and insecurities. After the war, the leadership of the KPJ asserted its authority with the legitimacy bestowed by genuine and significant popular support.⁷⁸ The KPJ immediately proceeded to implement the guidelines decided upon at the second meeting of AVNOJ. Burdened with the urgent need for reconstruction the leadership had little patience and less time to listen to historical grievances and land claims of each ethnic group. According to Milovan Djilas, the KPJ believed that after the war, which had witnessed a communal effort to defeat domestic and foreign enemies, “Yugoslavia would be unified, solid, that one needed to respect language, cultural differences...but they aren’t essential.”⁷⁹

Mindful of the mistakes made by the government of the first Yugoslavia, the KPJ set out to build a stable and durable cultural framework. Their first step was the state-wide promotion of the slogan “Brotherhood and Unity”, a continuous reminder of the multiethnic composition of the resistance movement, which had nonetheless fought for a common goal. Secondly, the Party decided to downplay the civil war chapter of World

⁷⁸ Lane, 93.

⁷⁹ Lenard J. Cohen, 24.

War II history. The KPJ wanted a clean historical slate for the new Yugoslav state.⁸⁰ In accordance with that policy, official Yugoslav historiography attributed all war crimes to foreign invaders and morally inferior domestic collaborators.

The ideology of Yugoslavism as envisioned by the KPJ was different from the early pan-Slavic concepts of the 19th century.⁸¹ Rather than creating a new culture through fusion, the KPJ wanted to create a supranational culture that would initially allow individual national cultures to exist within their own peripheries. Since the new Yugoslav state was not to be the creation of a unified ethnos, unity had to be created on an ideological level. Hence the goal of the fostered supranational culture was to successfully sidestep the ethnic affiliations and create ties on a cultural and ideological level instead. The national slogan “Brotherhood and Unity” embodied the vision of a single nation state uniting ideological Yugoslavs regardless of ethnicity, rather than a collage of semi-independent ethnocentric nations that coexist equally but separately.⁸²

The KPJ harnessed historiography and culture to serve the construction of a socialist Yugoslav nation. The new government modified official Yugoslav history to begin with the first stirrings of resistance within the Communist party in 1941.⁸³ It juxtaposed the evil of the Axis forces to the heroism and endurance of the Partisans. Artists and politicians used the fact that men and women of all ages and creeds had joined the Partisans and fought for liberation as the basic layout for socialist Yugoslavia’s founding myth. Political and cultural elites ardently promoted the heroic stories of the

⁸⁰ Pavković, 43.

⁸¹ The idea of a single South Slav nationality first surfaced early in the nineteenth century during the French occupation of Croatia and Slovenia. During the 1830s, a small group of Croatian intellectuals known as the Illyrians coined the first clear definition of the Yugoslav idea. They focused on the unity of language.

⁸² Andrew Wachtel, Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation: Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia [Stanford, CA : Stanford University Press, 1998], 131.

⁸³ Pamela Ballinger, History in Exile: Memory and Identity at the Borders of the Balkans [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003], 106.

Partisan struggle in the hopes that they would eventually become an integral part of society and replace parochial ethnic histories and cultures. The Yugoslav ideologues hoped that ideological homogenization would take root without being violently enforced, causing the individual ethnic cultures to fade out over time without being actively eliminated.⁸⁴

1) The Arts

The political and social disintegration of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia had caused the destruction of its intellectual and artistic sphere. Many intellectuals perished in the war as prisoners or civilian casualties.⁸⁵ A large number joined the Partisans and worked on inspirational literature that promoted the war effort. Most artistic creations continued to be dominated by the war theme through the years of reconstruction. Artists produced an endless stream of wartime Partisan songs and novels, short stories, poems, plays, and films. The ubiquity of the war theme in artistic works during those years is comprehensible. The government encouraged artistic initiative and provided artists with considerable financial incentives. It sponsored cultural-artistic unions and offered cultural-artistic personnel a great deal of moral support. At the same time, the war had deeply affected the life of nearly every citizen of Yugoslavia. From the point of view of the government, the artistic community, and large segments of the population the war of liberation was an ideal subject for glorification and myth construction and it constituted an inexhaustible source of inspiration for the arts.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Wachtel, 132.

⁸⁵ Thomas Eekman, Thirty Years of Yugoslav literature, 1945-1975 [Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1978], 10.

⁸⁶ Eekman, 11.

It is the responsibility of social and political elites to create the symbols that define the uniqueness of a nation, which filter to the population at large.⁸⁷ Yugoslavia's post-war elites emerged from the ranks of the Partisans. The values, interests, and experiences of war engrossed the men and women who comprised Yugoslavia's new cultural and social nobility. With the specters of recent fratricidal warfare looming over Yugoslavia, they took on the gargantuan task of reinventing the concept of a culturally and ideologically unified Yugoslav nation. They treated the concept of nationhood as a malleable state of mind, which was open to overt and covert manipulation through cultural and political propaganda.⁸⁸

In order to nurture Yugoslavs, one of the elite's main goals was to make culture really and truly the property of the people. Top leaders had great respect for culture and valued its role in their program for change.⁸⁹ They tried to involve the whole Yugoslav citizenry in artistic creation.⁹⁰ Prominently displayed artistic works such as sculptures and paintings commemorated wartime events, while musicians composed and orchestrated popular songs and marches that promoted Yugoslav heroism, courage, and unity.⁹¹ The KPJ hoped that through intimate involvement in the process of crafting culture, Yugoslavia would cease to be a mere geopolitical entity and become a state of mind, an integral aspect of the character of each of its citizens.⁹²

⁸⁷ Wachtel, 3.

⁸⁸ Wachtel, 2.

⁸⁹ Carol S. Lilly, Power and Persuasion: Ideology and Rhetoric in Communist Yugoslavia, 1944-1953 [Oxford: Westview Press, 2001], 96.

⁹⁰ Lilly, 98.

⁹¹ Lilly, 98.

⁹² Wachtel, 3.

1) Popular Music

In the immediate post-bellum period, the KPJ was determined to bring Yugoslavia's people onto cultural common ground by minimizing mutual differences and promoting supranational cultural artifacts. Music played an important role in the construction of the new national identity.⁹³ During the war, the ethnic and religious diversity of the Partisan army had given birth to a musical culture, which consisted of a mixture of various regional musical styles and genres. Hence the first genuine cultural expression of modern Yugoslavism was found in music. Partisan songs absorbed elements of diverse folk music traditions and infused them with modern themes that described their present reality and ideology.

Even during the war the KPJ actively promoted the performance of programs with songs and dances from all of Yugoslavia's regions while restricting the performance of exclusionary music that emphasized the past of a constituent ethnic group outside the Yugoslav framework.⁹⁴ Songs that comprised Partisan musical culture frequently avoided drawing from just one of the musical traditions from various parts of Yugoslavia, and old melodies left intact acquired texts that promoted the new Yugoslav gospel. Political commissars and musicians responsible for cultural work invested considerable energy into making the Partisan units familiar with inspirational tunes, sung during marches and battle charges.⁹⁵ Nikola Hercigonja states that "in the most harrowing moments...a song and playing of music would echo through the lines of exhausted,

⁹³ Martin Cloonan, "Pop and the Nation State: Towards a Theorization," Popular Music 18, no. 2. [1999]: 201.

⁹⁴ Naila Ceribašić, "Heritage of the Second World War in Croatia: Identity Imposed upon and by Music," in Music, Politics, and War: Views from Croatia, ed. Svanibor Pettan, [Zagreb: Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, 1998], 10.

⁹⁵ Ceribašić, 119.

starving, and wounded fighters, defying fatigue, hunger, exhaustion, defying the enemy and the weather, giving the fighters new strength, consolidating their faith in victory.”⁹⁶

Partisan units brought these “songs of the struggle” to the regions of the country where they were active. Although the songs included the specific traits of the regions from which they originated, they spread across the country with the army, thus becoming “the property of the entire people.”⁹⁷ The Partisan musical repertoire comprised a “musically homogenous fund of songs which differ in respect to text content and origin, and were consequently given different names: the revolutionary song, song of rebellion and resistance, combat song, workers’ songs,...”⁹⁸ The songs had simple and catchy melodies, most often in march rhythm but sometimes hymn-like in character.⁹⁹ They spoke about Partisan ideology, Partisan heroes, and the exploits of the Partisan units.

Among the first cultural artifacts the new regime created for mass consumption was a collection of sixty-seven songs and poems from the war published in December of 1944. It included individual chapters devoted to Tito, the Partisans, the KPJ, and the Partisan Youth. Yugoslav poets who had participated in the National Liberation War used their personal experience to contribute to the arsenal of Partisan songs. Vladimir Nazor was a successful poet, short story writer, and novelist before the war. Nazor wrote various lyrics during the war, which became popular tunes during the immediate post-bellum period. The general theme in Nazor’s lyrics is the glorification of Tito and his achievements. In “Our Leader” [*Naš Vođa*], Nazor deifies Tito and ascribes to him

⁹⁶ Nikola Hercegonja, “Muzicka Nastijanja u Narodnooslobodilackoj Borbi,” in *Napisi o Musicici*, ed. Nikola Hercegonja [Belgrade: Academy of Arts, 1972], 189. In the movie *Battle on the Neretva*, a group of wounded Partisans trapped in a hospital chant the communist hymn “Down with Aggression and Injustice” in the midst of an enemy attack.

⁹⁷ Hercegonja, 188.

⁹⁸ Ceribašić, 119.

⁹⁹ Ceribašić, 119.

mythical qualities. He describes Tito as a man who "...is made out of steel, but in the steel beats/ a warm heart."¹⁰⁰ Subsequent imagery attributes to Tito the ability to disperse dark clouds and break ice with a mere touch. Nazor describes the amazement of Tito's followers at the mythical aura radiated by their leader: "We don't know if he is a man of the present or a fairytale hero."¹⁰¹ Nazor adopts a similar approach in the lyrics to "Comrade Tito" [*Drug Tito*], "With Marshal Tito" [*Uz Maršala Tita*], as well as a number of others.

Numerous professional poets as well as enthusiastic amateurs wrote similar songs that glorify the persona of Marshall Tito and the National Liberation Struggle. Miroslav Feldman's poem "They Will Ask How It Was" [*Pitat će kako je bilo*] projects the national liberation myth from the immediate present to the distant future. "One year / many years / later / in two hundred, three hundred years / it will ask / the happy nation / how it was for us."¹⁰² The poem continues to describe how the generations of the future will look through the pages of dusty books to learn about the National Liberation Struggle. "They will search through our worries / our fame and our glory/ our paths and our tears/ our Sutjeska and Kozara / our Bihać and Drvar!"¹⁰³ The song relates the most famed successes of the Partisan war to the longevity of the Yugoslav nation, which will, according to the poet, continue to succeed and prosper for centuries to come, remembering its difficult birth and those who made it possible.

¹⁰⁰ Vladimir Nazor, "Naš Vođa," n.d., <<http://de.geocities.com/opiumzanarod/pjesme.htm>> [August 2006].

¹⁰¹ Nazor, "Naš Vođa."

¹⁰² Miroslav Feldman, "Pitat će kako je bilo," n.d., <<http://de.geocities.com/opiumzanarod/pjesme.htm>> [August 2006].

¹⁰³ Feldman, "Pitat će kako je bilo." Sutjeska, Kozara, Bihać, and Drvar are the locations of the Partisans' most important battles.

¹⁰³ Mira Alečković, "Najljepša Uspoma," n.d., <<http://de.geocities.com/opiumzanarod/pjesme.htm>> [August 2006].

Other writers addressed particular audiences. Mira Alečković's poem "Favorite Memory" [*Najljepša Uspomena*] specifically illustrates the special relationship that Tito and the KPJ fostered with the children and the youth of Yugoslavia. In the song, Tito interacts with a small boy whom he "regards as if he is his own child".¹⁰⁴ Tito and the boy converse with ease and familiarity and the boy asks "which memory / Comrade Tito, is your favorite?"¹⁰⁵ Tito tells the little boy that his fondest memory is of the first book he read as a child. The book introduced him to the heroic history of the Yugoslav people and taught him "how to love one's country."¹⁰⁶ Tito encourages the boy to read books and learn the valuable lessons they offer because "Good books teach us / that honor has to be defended / that people lead difficult lives / but that better days are coming."¹⁰⁷

Particularly important is the communicative function of these songs. By participating in their performance, individuals demonstrated their connection to the social group to which they chose to belong.¹⁰⁸ During the immediate post-war period, music was the most accessible medium of cultural promotion. The KPJ ardently promoted Partisan musical culture by staging music concerts as part of festive and politically important events, which mixed popular Partisan songs and traditional folk songs.¹⁰⁹ Thus the KPJ attempted to integrate new cultural artifacts into the traditional cultural sphere. To promote the creation of a unique Yugoslav culture, the government also eschewed foreign musical imports. It was the decadence of American culture they feared the most

¹⁰⁴ Alečković, "Najljepša Uspoma."

¹⁰⁵ Alečković, "Najljepša Uspoma."

¹⁰⁶ Alečković, "Najljepša Uspoma."

¹⁰⁷ Alečković, "Najljepša Uspoma."

¹⁰⁸ Ceribašić, 122.

¹⁰⁹ Ceribašić, 121.

as a potential corrupter of Yugoslav youth.¹¹⁰ The KPJ expected that Partisan-inspired socialist songs, written and performed in Serbo-Croatian with passion and élan would soon become the norm, effectively replacing traditional, religious, and foreign music.

2) Literature

In The Mythmakers: An Anthology of Contemporary Yugoslav Short Stories, the editor Edward J. Czerwinski states that “Yugoslav writers are conscious mythmakers...”¹¹¹ The editor attempts to summarize the importance of myths in the historical narrative of the South Slavs, concluding that “In World War II the heroism of a nation surpassed myth. Against all odds, a little country almost turned myth into reality by challenging universal evil and by winning, almost turned reality into myth.”¹¹² The Partisans’ victory in World War II had enraptured Czerwinski, as it had many Yugoslav writers who, supported and encouraged by the political elite, mythologized the events of World War II in their creations. Government ownership of theaters, publishing houses, newspapers, and magazines further solidified the close relationship between literature and ideology.¹¹³

In the immediate post-war period, Yugoslav literature belonged within the greater movement of socialist realism. The split with Stalin in 1948 and the process of political and cultural decentralization, however, led to the rejection of the rigid guidelines of

¹¹⁰ Sabrina Ramat, Balkan Babel: The disintegration of Yugoslavia from the death of Tito to the fall of Milosevic, 4th ed., [Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2002], 128.

As Ramat points out, jazz in particular aroused the wrath of the Communist elite. The only universally accepted foreign musical import was Mexican folk music.

¹¹¹ The Mythmakers: An Anthology of Yugoslav Literature, ed. Edward Czerwinski, Stony Brook, NY: Slavic Cultural Center Press, 1984], 3.

¹¹² Czerwinski, 4.

¹¹³ Ivan Matković, “From the Second World War to This War: Croatian Literary Life between Ideology and Nationalism,” TriQuarterly, no. 97 [1996]: 137.

socialist realism. Popular Yugoslav literature evolved into a number of unique approaches and styles although it rested on a thematic common ground. Literary works commonly addressed overarching historical and moral themes associated with the National Liberation Struggle and the Partisans such as heroism, glory, unity, and sacrifice.¹¹⁴ Writers concentrated on the popular genre of the war novel, which juxtaposed the humaneness and heroism of the Partisans with the bestiality and cowardice of their opponents.

Literary critic and historian Ante Kadić classified post-war Yugoslav authors according to their relationship to the Second World War. According to Kadić, the war represented the first crucial experience in life for an entire generation of artists. It made an indelible impression on the character and the world view of individuals and their subsequent artistic creations.¹¹⁵ It is therefore not surprising that former Partisans such as Čedomir Minderović, Mihajlo Lalić, Jure Kaštelan, Dobrica Ćosić, Vjekoslav Kaleb, and Branko Ćopić proceeded to use the war as the inspiration for their literary works.

The first books to be published once peace came were war diaries and memoirs. Among the most remarkable of these personal accounts is Čedomir Minderović memoir Following Tito [*Za Titom*, 1945]. His book described the “incredible hardship of the Partisan struggle, the bloody immolations it demanded, [and] the heroism it generated.”¹¹⁶ Although there is a clear tendency to romanticize the events, the heroes, and the spirit reigning among the freedom fighters, Following Tito successfully evades epic elements and focuses on the individual experiences of men and women fighting an

¹¹⁴ Wachtel, 142.

¹¹⁵ Ante Kadić, “Postwar Croatian Lyrical Poetry,” American Slavic and East European Review 17, no. 4. [1958]: 509.

¹¹⁶ Eekman, 30.

incredibly harsh but glorious struggle.¹¹⁷

The 1950s ushered in a new era of prosperity in Yugoslavia. The country had successfully weathered the harshness of the reconstruction period. Five years after the war, "...one could travel safely from one end of Yugoslavia to another, irrespective of nationality, religious beliefs, or language. In a country where one tenth of the population had died fighting the occupation or had fallen victim to genocide, this amounted to a miracle."¹¹⁸ Yugoslavia's successful defiance of the Soviet Union in the summer of 1948 reaffirmed the faith of the population in the policies of the regime and the political prowess of Tito.

During the 1950s the war novel commemorating the Partisan struggle emerged as the most common cultural artifact of the era. During the immediate post-war period, Mihajlo Lalić was Yugoslavia's most prolific novelist. His first book The Wedding [*Svadba*, 1950] epitomizes the initial black and white approach to character depiction, which was typical of early Yugoslav literature and its approach to the war narrative. The novel is set in Montenegro where a group of local Četniks have imprisoned a number of Partisans. Lalić portrays the Četnik unit as a gathering of wretched and mean cowards without any redeeming qualities. The imprisoned Partisans on the other hand are infallibly courageous, noble, humane, and affable. Shortly after the publication of Lalić's novel, the government ushered in a period of greater cultural openness and permissibility, allowing novelists to adapt a more multifaceted and realistic approach to the war

¹¹⁷ Eekman, 31.

¹¹⁸ Mirko Tepavac, "Tito: 1945 – 1980," in Burn this House: The making and unmaking of Yugoslavia, ed. Jasminka Udovički and James Ridgeway, [Durham: Duke University Press, 2000], 65.

experience.¹¹⁹ As a result of more liberal cultural policies in the fifties, the artistic interpretation of the revolutionary past moved away from one-dimensional glorification and began to take on an increasingly more tragic and human dimension.

Jure Kaštelan was a dedicated Communist and one of Yugoslavia's leading Partisan poets. Kaštelan joined the Partisans in 1942 and his experiences in the war greatly influenced his work. His first post-war collection of poetry was The Rooster on the Roof [*Pjetao na Krovu*, 1950]. Kaštelan's poems are frequently depressing and morbid, wrestling with the themes of death and war.¹²⁰ According to literary critic Božo Milačić, "it is as if [Kaštelan] still stares into the eyes of his departed comrades or listens to their lost, dying whispers" while writing his poetry.¹²¹ Representative of Kaštelan's war poetry is the cycle "Typhus Patients" [*Tifusari*] which describes the horrific trials Partisan units faced on a daily basis, fighting against enemy, nature, and disease. Although "Typhus Patients" is unquestionably bleak, its fundamental message is optimistic. The author concludes the cycle with the statement that the liberation struggle was worth the sacrifice and that "even in death, we are still Partisans / and our dead continue to fight even harder."¹²² Although Kaštelan struggled with the horrors of his war experience throughout his career, his later poetry also includes some cheerful patriotic verse. In the cycle "Poems about my Country" [*Pjesme o mojoj Zemlji*], Kaštelan celebrates the natural beauties of Yugoslavia, its Partisan past, and its socialist

¹¹⁹ The Constitution of 1953 promoted political and cultural decentralization and enshrined the concept of worker's self-management.

¹²⁰ Kadić, 522.

¹²¹ Kadić, 522.

¹²² Jure Kaštelan, "Tifusari," January 1, 2005,

<<http://www.almissa.com/povijesnitrenutak/pjesmeomojojzemlji.htm>> [June 2006].

present, without coming across as a sycophant.¹²³ Kaštelan's genuine love for his country rescues his patriotic poetry from sounding false or propagandistic.¹²⁴

Dobrica Ćosić was another former Partisan who enjoyed literary success after the war.¹²⁵ He published a number of significant historical novels, which prompted the literary critic Sveta Lukić to praise him as one of Yugoslavia's most influential post-war writers.¹²⁶ In 1951, he published his most well-known literary work, the war novel Far Away is the Sun [*Daleko je Sunce*]. The novel tells the story of a small unit of Partisans encircled by a superior enemy force. Ćosić devotes a lot of attention to the development of individual characters. Although there is an unmistakable tendency to show the moral superiority of the Partisans, "Ćosić manifests an endeavor to differentiate, to demonstrate that even among the heroes in a [Partisan] novel there can be various opinions and that the person who is defeated is not necessarily a villain."¹²⁷ The main character in Far Away is the Sun is Gvozden, a hero whose courage and initiative lead to his execution by his fellow Partisans. This major deviation from the usual one-sided approach to the Partisan theme was of great significance for the development of the Yugoslav war novel. Authors portrayed heroes who were Partisans, but at the same time individuals with their own fears and doubts.¹²⁸ Although the book exposes the cruel and bitter side of the War of Liberation, the novel's essential message is the heroic and self-sacrificial nature of the Partisans.

¹²³ Jure Kaštelan, "Pjesme of Mojoj Zemlji," n.d., <<http://www.almissa.com/povijesnitrenutak/pjesmeomojojzemlji.htm>> [June 2006].

¹²⁴ Eekman, 80.

¹²⁵ Nicholas J. Miller, "The Nonconformists: Dobrica Ćosić and Mica Popović Envision Serbia," Slavic Review 58, no. 3 [1999]: 517.

¹²⁶ Goulding, 48.

¹²⁷ Eekman, 179.

¹²⁸ Eekman, 11.

Branko Ćopić was an established writer during the interwar period, having published several volumes of short stories. The impact of the Second World War on daily life in his native Bosnia, however, gave Ćopić's writings a new inspiration. During the war, he became famous for his rousing war poetry.¹²⁹ In 1952, he published Break-Through [*Prolom*], a novel about the feats of communist fighters in rural Bosnia. Break-through is set in Bosnia during the war. The first section of the novel focuses on the different reactions and attitudes of the population, as they face the first atrocities of war and the labored beginnings of local resistance. The second and third section of the book focus on the resistance movement as it gains in momentum and importance. The mourning hero Todor summarizes the moral of the story in the finale when he exclaims: "It will again be all right with men, completely all right!"¹³⁰

Although Ćopić was a devoted Yugoslav, his works are neither propagandistic nor one-dimensional. Ćopić's works reflect a profound confidence in the innate goodness of human nature. He created various heroic characters who symbolize the positive moral force which the Partisan war had inspired in the people of Yugoslavia. In the 1950s, Ćopić began to write children's books. The heroes of these books are young people who are intelligent, witty, patriotic, and courageous. His classic Eagles Fly Early [*Orlovi Rano Lete*] could be found on school curriculums across Yugoslavia and was a general favorite among youngsters. According to literary critic Muharem Bazdulj, "Whole generations of today's avid readers began their love affair with literature by reading the works of Branko Ćopić."¹³¹ Aimed at a young audience, the novel describes the effort of a group of young

¹²⁹ Eekman, 113.

¹³⁰ Branko Ćopić. Prolom [Belgrade: Prosveta, 1952], 633.

¹³¹ Muharem Bazdulj 'Pisac iz bašti djetinjstva.' *Bosanskohercegovački Dani*, no. 379: [2004]. <http://www.bhdani.com/default.asp?kat=txt&broj_id=379&tekst_rb=17> [June 2006].

boys to help the Partisan war effort. Čopić employs an engaging and optimistic tone in his children's books, successfully enthralling his readership while teaching the young readers the lessons of heroism, patriotism, loss, courage, and honor.

Dalmatian author Vjekoslav Kaleb joined the Partisans in 1943. Although his pre-war short stories had established his reputation as a chronicler of life in the Dalmatian countryside, he published his most famous works during the immediate post-bellum period and addressed war themes. In 1954, Kaleb published his greatest literary work, the short novel Glorious Dust [*Divota Prašine*]. The story focuses on the journey of two men, both Partisans, who in the midst of despair and starvation fight for their lives and the survival of their country. This spin on the Partisan theme was, in numerous variations, extremely popular among Yugoslav writers. In Kaleb's book, the group consists of a young man called Goli and an adolescent who is merely referred to as Boy. They find each other by accident and start on their perilous odyssey through the barren mountains. As the plot develops, their journey acquires a deeper significance and becomes symbolic of "the endless, difficult road of human life replete with unforeseen obstacles and frightening dangers."¹³² Nonetheless, even the bleakness of Glorious Dust fades once the two Partisans reach their symbolic destination: the successful conclusion to the War of National Liberation.

Minderović, Ćosić, Kaleb, Kaštelan, and Čopić were devoted Yugoslavs, whose literary talents allowed them to actively contribute to the creation of Yugoslavia's founding myth. By artistically weaving the events of World War II into a compelling mythology of heroism and sacrifice, they were significant contributors to the persuasive narrative of Yugoslavia's glorious foundation.

¹³² Eekman, 57.

3) Cinema

Along with a vibrant literary scene, post-bellum Yugoslavia also developed a flourishing movie industry. It is surprising that such a frivolous pursuit could be considered significant in a country that had barely survived a devastating war and was on the brink of starvation. The KPJ, however, understood the potential of moving pictures, establishing a film section in the Department of Agitation and Propaganda [Agitprop] in October 1944. Daniel J. Goulding points out in his study of Yugoslav cinema that "...it is a significant testimonial to the high importance which the new socialist regime placed upon film that the first concerned effort to establish and build a national cinema occurred in these early years[...]"¹³³

From its inception, Yugoslavia's cinema was an important domain for the propagation of new cultural ideals due to its potential to reach large sections of society.¹³⁴ The main goal of early films was the celebration of Yugoslavia's heroic birth on celluloid. Although the initial efforts at movie making adhered to social realism, as in literature, it would be inappropriate to dismiss these movies as mere propaganda. Socialism in Yugoslavia was a grassroots movement, and early Partisan movies "reinforced a will to coexist in a unified nation rather than attempted to win support for such a cause."¹³⁵ The genre of Partisan movies initially promoted the national program of establishing "Brotherhood and Unity" and creating an acceptable version of collective memory.

¹³³ Goulding, 2.

¹³⁴ Goulding, 7.

¹³⁵ Stephanie Baric, "Yugoslav War Cinema: Shooting a Nation Which No Longer Exists," [M.A. Thesis, Concordia University, 2001], 6.

The first feature film produced in Yugoslavia was Slavica [1947], an epic drama about a young Dalmatian woman who sacrifices her life for the Partisan cause. The characters in Slavica are fundamentally one-dimensional. The portrayal of workers is sympathetic, showing them as honest and hard-working. The factory owner is a ruthless capitalist who chooses collaboration for the sake of profit. Once the war begins, the movie depicts the Partisans as heroic and merciful, while the occupying forces are ruthless and brutal. Slavica was a tremendous success. Its mix of romantic heroism and realistic scenery appealed to the public. For the first time, the Yugoslav people saw a feature film that was in their own language and based on their own experiences.¹³⁶ In terms of the development of Yugoslav cinema, Slavica was a pivotal film. It anticipated many of the directions Yugoslav war films would take because it created

...a pattern which begins by affirming Partisan-led local initiatives in specific locals, involving distinctive nationalities of the region, and builds organically to an affirmation of the epic all-Yugoslav character of the Partisan fighting forces, which becomes the essential guarantor of ultimate victory in war, as well as the basis upon which to build a completely new Yugoslavia.¹³⁷

The popularity of war movies increased rapidly. By 1956, Partisan films based on the easily duplicated formula of Slavica represented eighty percent of Yugoslav film production.¹³⁸

As novelists and poets produced more harrowing portrayals of the war experience during the 1950s, a few directors followed suit, reexamining the war and its aftermath in a more critical light. To the popular genre of romanticized war epics, film makers added

¹³⁶ Baric, 30.

¹³⁷ Goulding, 20.

¹³⁸ Michael J. Stoli, Balkan Cinema: Evolution after the Revolution [Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1982] 90.

movies which focused on intimate psychological analysis and realistic depictions of war and its aftermath. One of the most affecting Partisan productions of that era is the film Partisan Stories [*Partizanske Priče*, 1960], based on the literary work of Antonije Isaković and directed by Stole Janković.¹³⁹

The movie consists of two stories: “Return” [*Povratak*] and “The Red Shawl” [*Crveni Šal*]. In “Return” a young woman shelters a wounded Partisan soldier in an occupied town. Although her family is afraid and opposed to her association with the stranger, the woman decides to nurse him. The young Partisan recovers and escapes while the occupiers arrest the young woman and she pays for her kindheartedness and patriotism with her life. In the second narrative, a unit of Partisans stops in a small town. It is winter, and a young soldier steals a wool shawl to ward off the extreme cold. As the soldiers are preparing to continue on their march, a woman runs from the house, screaming that someone has stolen her red shawl. The young soldier admits to his crime and, in accordance with the Partisan code, is sentenced to death. Films like Partisan Stories did not idealize the war experience or obscure the human cost with shallow heroics.¹⁴⁰

Representations of the past in artistic creations became more realistic but the break from romantic idealism did not lead to an investigation of social issues or a dramatic transformation in the treatment of the National War of Liberation'.¹⁴¹ Although films like Partisan Stories and novels such as Far Away is the Sun and Glorious Dust exposed the cold brutality and human tragedy of the war, the struggle against fascism

¹³⁹ Goulding, 52.

¹⁴⁰ Goulding, 52.

¹⁴¹ Baric, 40.

always took precedence over the loss of life. The fictional Partisans of the 1950s are still heroes even though they are flawed. In spite of the harsh conditions, the physical and psychological terror they were exposed to, and the strictness of their self-imposed moral code of conduct they managed to emerge victorious. The tremendous popularity of war themed films and novels demonstrates how closely intertwined Yugoslav national identity and collective memory were with the National Liberation War and the Partisans during the early post-war period.

CHAPTER III: The Halcyon Days of Yugoslav Culture

From the early sixties until the early seventies, Yugoslavia was thriving. A majority of the population lived in modest prosperity, and Yugoslavs “could speak, study, and travel more freely than the people of any other Communist country.”¹⁴² Tito played a prominent role in Yugoslavia’s expanding prosperity. In foreign affairs, Tito’s political acumen and diplomatic skills proved vital to the country’s successful balancing act between the West and the Soviet bloc. By encouraging competition for Yugoslavia’s political allegiance, he extracted valuable economic concessions from both sides. Domestically, a number of progressive political and cultural leaders promoted extensive market reforms that opened Yugoslavia to Western imports. The Constitution of 1963 reaffirmed Yugoslavia’s move toward political decentralization, economic liberalization, and greater autonomy for the republics. In retrospect, Yugoslavia’s third Constitution sounded the death knell to the project of ideological Yugoslavism. While it promoted economic prosperity and cultural experimentation, it also opened the doors to the first stirrings of ethnic nationalism in the form of intellectual dissidents and student

¹⁴² Lampe, 265.

movements. Yugoslavia's golden age abated in the early 1970s. The effects of the turmoil caused by the "Croatian Spring" of 1971 had shaken the governing elite to the core. Tito put an end to the popular movement, and the backlash resulted in increased repression as hard-line communists came to dominate the government. The Party moved to suppress critical voices within the political and cultural spheres of Yugoslav society, further fermenting popular opposition, which opened the doors to chauvinist nationalists.¹⁴³

1) Popular Music

During the 1960s, political and economic liberalization fostered an atmosphere of openness in the social and cultural spheres of development. Closer diplomatic collaboration as well as economic and military aid opened Yugoslav markets to Western cultural imports. Hollywood movies and rock 'n' roll music penetrated Yugoslavia with comparative ease and became established aspects of the cultural sphere well before they were embraced in other parts of Eastern Europe.¹⁴⁴ Initially, the impact of Western music was miniscule. Official antagonism and the popularity of Partisan-inspired and traditional musical fare limited the appeal of Western imports. As with other aspects of Yugoslav culture, the sixties caused sweeping changes to the music scene. For the first time, Yugoslav musicians became actively involved in the adaptation of foreign musical genres to the particular tastes of Yugoslav audiences.¹⁴⁵ By the late 1960s, Yugoslavia was a hub of musical activity. Many Yugoslav musicians attracted a respectable domestic audience and their records sold reasonably well. A few others, such as the band

¹⁴³ Baric, 57

¹⁴⁴ Ramat, Balkan Babel, 129.

¹⁴⁵ Ramat, Balkan Babel, 129.

“Korni Grupa” even dared to venture into international markets. Realizing that the popularity of the traditional Partisan songs was quickly giving way to the sensual melodies and provocative lyrics of rock musicians, the government decided to harness the new force in popular culture. By adopting a profitable *modus vivendi*, the leadership successfully recruited many popular musicians into the cadres of loyal and persuasive mythmakers. As authors and directors became more critical of Yugoslavia’s heroic past, the cooperation of musicians was invaluable. The policy of toleration within limits was a tremendous success, and from the mid-sixties on, Yugoslav musicians produced a number of rousing patriotic anthems celebrating Tito, the Partisans, and the War of National Liberation.¹⁴⁶ This was particularly important for the regime since Yugoslav youth, which had become increasingly removed from history, took song lyrics very seriously.¹⁴⁷

While most artists simply chose to adapt established songs for their Partisan repertoire, others wrote original lyrics expressing their patriotic sentiments.¹⁴⁸ The more hagiographic lyrics bear a strong resemblance to those written by Vladimir Nazor and Miroslav Feldman during the 1940s. Among the bands who produced original songs supporting the regime was the influential group “Indexi”. Founded in the early 1960s, it was the first band to write rock music in Serbo-Croatian, thus appropriating a decidedly foreign trend for the Yugoslav palate. Although famous for their love songs and experimental instrumentals, “Indexi” also recorded some patriotic tunes for popular consumption. Among them is the song, “My Generation” [*Moja Generacija*], a nostalgic

¹⁴⁶ Ramat, *Balkan Babel*, 130.

¹⁴⁷ Pedro Ramat, “Rock Scene in Yugoslavia,” *East European Politics and Societies* 2, no. 2 (1988): 398.

¹⁴⁸ The pop singer Zdravko Colic performed a number of favorite Partisans songs during the 1960s and 1970s.

ditty about the gratefulness of the current generation to those who fought the war for them. It includes the lyrics “In 1942...the war began ... my mother gave birth to me / to dream of peace.” They also wrote a few songs eulogizing Tito, with lines such as “We knew that the sun was smiling on us/ because we have Tito for our marshal.”

Another musician who extolled the regime in his lyrics was the popular singer Djordje Balašević. He is most famous for his political songs like the one that jumpstarted his career in the late 1970s. The song is called “You Can Count on Us” [*Računajte na nas*], a patriotic reaffirmation of the commitment of the younger generation to the revolution. The song includes lyrics such as “In the name of all of us who were born in the fifties / I have composed a vow to Tito...Ahead of us there still battles to be fought / which threaten us like a deep chasm/ and I know that more offensives await us... you can count on us... within us lies the destiny of our future / and some may fear it / but in our veins flows the blood of the Partisans...”

2) Literature

The thematic constraints the government imposed on the newly emerging music scene, it chose to relax in the fields of literary and film production during the sixties and seventies. The government permitted the limited exploration of a number of taboo themes. The two cultural spheres benefited significantly from these concessions, experiencing their most innovative and flourishing phase. Twenty years had passed since the end of the Second World War, and the Partisan myth had nearly receded from collective memory. Yugoslav authors and film makers began to explore issues related to contemporary existence and previously ignored historical events. Those who chose to

revisit the War of National Liberation did so in a critical manner. They began to ask probing questions about the foundational narrative of the nation. The portrayal of the Partisans and the War of National Liberation underwent a critical transformation during the period.¹⁴⁹

The most celebrated literary masterpiece of the 1960s in Yugoslavia was Miroslav Krleža's unfinished multivolume novel Banners [*Zastave* 1962 - 67]. Miroslav Krleža was Yugoslavia's most respected and prolific writer for almost seven decades. His career began before the First World War, and he quickly became involved in all fields and genres of literary activity.¹⁵⁰ The Saturday Review once wrote that "Paris had its Balzac and Zola; Dublin its Joyce; Croatia its Krleža... one of the most accomplished, profound authors in European literature."¹⁵¹ Although he was a committed Marxist throughout his life, Krleža opposed the concept of socialist realism in literature and chose to explore other styles. As a young man he became enamored with the concept of Yugoslavism.

In Banners, Krleža explores the failure of the monarchy in Yugoslavia, which resulted in popular disillusionment. Through the eyes of the protagonist Kamilo, Krleža describes Yugoslavia's journey from imperialism to socialism, focusing on the events that fermented the socialist revolution. The continuous central theme is the intimate, often precarious relationship between Dr. de Emeruczi, a Croatian politician in the Austro-Hungarian government, and his only son, the student Kamilo, whose initial passion for Croatian nationalism eventually evolves into ardent Communism. The first volume focuses on Dr. de Emeruczi and his work and offers a clear and detailed picture

¹⁴⁹ Baric, 50.

¹⁵⁰ Eekman, 42.

¹⁵¹ Miroslav Krleža, The Return of Philip Latinowicz, March 1995, <<http://nupress.northwestern.edu/title.cfm?ISBN=0-8101-1245-0>> [August 2006].

of the national political problems facing Croatia at the beginning of the twentieth century. Vibrant discussions and newspaper articles written by Kamilo describe the emergence of revolutionary ideas in Croatian society. The second volume provides a detailed account of the life and adventures of the young Kamilo. The volume concludes with Kamilo's departure for the front in the uniform of the Austro-Hungarian army. Volume three begins in the new Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Emeruczi Senior occupies a prominent place in the diplomatic hierarchy of the new state and implements his previous experience as a special envoy to Hungary. Although Kamilo has joined the establishment by becoming a lawyer, he remains committed to his revolutionary sympathies and eventually joins the Communist party. As a gesture of breaking with the past, he changes his surname to Mirković, a generic Slavic name that signifies Kamilo's official denunciation of his Magyar heritage. The novel ends with the death of Emeruczi-père, which represents the symbolic demise of the old order. The ideological conclusion Krleža offers in Banners is that the failure of capitalism led to its rejection by the masses, thus inspiring a natural and inevitable progression to socialism. He strives to show the historical development of the social conditions in the Balkans, which predetermined the emergence and victory of the Communist movement.¹⁵² Essentially, Krleža's work provides socialist Yugoslavia with a pre-history of its birth.¹⁵³

Although Banners was the most celebrated literary achievement of the era, a few other authors published novels which addressed the more painful aspects of national history. Among them is Tomislav Slavica, a writer from the Croatian town of Split. He published the novel Kunara in 1968 and addresses the devastating effects of civil war on

¹⁵²Dubravka Juraga, "Miroslav Krleža's Zastave: Socialism, Yugoslavia, and the Historical Novel" South Atlantic Review 62, no. 4. (1997), 51.

¹⁵³Juraga, 43.

the social order in a small Croatian village. The villagers are a primitive bunch, surrounded by misery and dirt. Their ignorance and poverty work in favor of the fascists, whose compelling propaganda convinces a number of men from the village to join the Ustaša movement. The author provides detailed descriptions of the morbidity of daily life in a village ravaged by internecine warfare. He describes how Ustaša units planned and executed massacres of the local Serbs. Kunara depicts the forceful and enticing nationalist rhetoric employed by the Ustaša, which successfully polarized and destroyed a multiethnic society. Although Slavica introduces a number of characters in the novel, there is no central hero who saves the day. Kunara has little in common with the heroic Partisan novels of the forties and fifties. Rather, it is a harrowing chronicle of a brutal civil war, which exacted a terrible price from the population.

Another writer whose first controversial book appeared in 1968 was Slobodan Selenić. His book Memoirs of Pero the Cripple [*Memoari Pere Bogalja*] dismantled the popular illusion of an egalitarian society in socialist Yugoslavia. The theme of the novel is one that was frequently discussed during the 1960s: “the degeneration, from the time of the Partisan struggle, of a “New Class” of people with a privileged position in the new socialist society, the loss of their idealistic world outlook, the lowering of their high moral standards, and their increasing materialism.”¹⁵⁴ The hero of the novel is a war invalid who lost both his legs in World War II. His disability sentences him to forced passivity. From his wheelchair, the embittered protagonist observes those around him and comments on their continued moral degeneration with open cynicism. His narrative focuses on his parents who, although uneducated and crude, successfully rose through the ranks of the KPJ to wealth, power, and prestige. When not commenting on the flaws and

¹⁵⁴ Eckman, 268.

idiosyncrasies of his fellow men, the protagonist reminisces about his past involvement with the Partisans. He describes the heady excitement of the immediate post-war period when he was an active participant in the Communist youth movement in spite of his disability. Selenić does not shy away from open criticism of the way in which the victorious Partisans dispensed justice to their enemies. He describes acts of unnecessary cruelty and vanity committed by the new rulers in their misguided quest to cleanse society from the “class enemies”. Selenić’s morbid and depressing novel was among the first to openly question the myth of the “immaculate revolution”, a theme he continued to pursue with greater intensity in his later works, which will be discussed in the next section of this paper.

3) Cinema

The atmosphere of cultural liberalization allowed Yugoslav directors to re-examine the War of National Liberation. Their efforts resulted in a number of movies that provide a more complex and diverse filmic representation of the National Liberation Struggle, the Partisans, and their enemies.¹⁵⁵ This critical approach to cinematic expression was dubbed “new film” by its proponents. The movement produced a number of domestically and internationally respected films. The film scholar Dušan Stojanović summarized the “spirit of the new film” when he stated that “the most valued distinction of the new Yugoslav film is that on the philosophical, ideological, and stylistic plane it extends the possibility...of transforming a single collective mythology into a multitude of private mythologies.”¹⁵⁶ Film artists in the 1960s wanted to serve as the critical eye of

¹⁵⁵ Goulding, 62.

¹⁵⁶ Goulding, 66.

society. They wanted the freedom “to be a conscience – often an unavoidable somber one – of the land, the nation, the society, and the individuals that comprise it.”¹⁵⁷ The “new film” creators readjusted the Partisans and their struggle to fit the critical and subjectivist lenses of the “new film” creators.

Aleksandar Petrović was the *Wunderkind* of the “new film” movement.¹⁵⁸ In 1965, he directed Three [*Tri*], a film based on the stories of author Antonije Isaković who had also written Partisan Stories. The disjointed narrative relates three episodes in the life of the protagonist Miloš. Each story describes an encounter with the inevitability of death as experienced by Miloš during World War II. In the first story, members of the Royal Yugoslav Army execute an innocent stranger suspected of spying for the Germans at a train station in April of 1941. Miloš tries to speak up against the mob mentality but fails to stop the senseless execution. In the second story the protagonist meets a lonely Partisan soldier while he is on the run from the Germans. Caught in a German noose, the situation of the two men is hopeless. Nonetheless, they decide to make their way to the sea shore, hoping to meet a Partisan contingent on the way. As their situation exacerbates the young Partisans suggests that they split up because “one of us is enough for them”. German soldiers apprehend him shortly thereafter, and Miloš watches from a distance as he is being led to his death. The second story debunks the myth of the infallible Partisan engaged in a romantic struggle. Miloš and his companion are terrified in the face of a merciless enemy. The director captures the bleakness and desolation of the war and the desperation experienced by those who fought it. There are no false

¹⁵⁷ Goulding, 66.

¹⁵⁸ Baric, 43.

heroics, no set speeches, no attempts to minimize or restrict the full range of human emotion and reaction to such brutal circumstances.¹⁵⁹

The third narrative takes place at the end of the war as the victorious Partisans are rounding up collaborators. Miloš is now a commander in the Partisan army and has to decide the fate of a number of people accused of collaboration. Among them is a young woman who had a love affair with a German soldier during the war. Miloš finds her guilty of crimes against the people and she is immediately executed. This episode challenges the traditional portrayal of Partisan righteousness. The film implies that the morality of the Partisans was dubious at times and that their way of dispensing quick justice during the last phase of the war was sometimes haphazard and brutal.

In traditional Partisan films extraordinary events ensnare ordinary people who in the process discover heroism. In Three the protagonist is an ordinary person who wields no power or control over the events surrounding him:

The protagonist is not so much the author of his actions as he is carried along in the sweep and tide of historical events and concrete human dilemmas. His impulse is to intervene and to prevent the three senseless and cruel deaths in the film. He ends by being a reluctant, helpless, and despairing witness.¹⁶⁰

Three demonstrates the tendencies of the “new film” to adopt a subjectivist and individualistic approach to the events of World War II. Unlike Slavica or even Partisan Stories, Three does not provide the audience with universal truths or easy answers to the dilemmas faced by the protagonist. In Three, the war is not a noble endeavor with the brave Partisans rising to the occasion. Rather it is an intense, traumatic, and damaging experience for those who are caught up in it. Whereas, in Slavica people discovered their

¹⁵⁹ Goulding, 91.

¹⁶⁰ Goulding, 90.

greatness in the face of war, in Three, individuals, perpetrators and victims alike, lost their humanity. Petrović's approach to the war is not black and white. The portrayal of events and participants is ambiguous, crossing acceptable standards of morality and acceptability. While in early war films, Partisans fought a clearly defined enemy that was invariably foreign and inevitable brutal, in Three the conflict is internal, both within the individual and among Yugoslavs. Yugoslavs kill Yugoslavs, showing little compassion towards one another. In deconstructing the Partisan myth from heroic group behavior to an individual experience fraught with fear and indecision, Petrović raised a number of provocative questions. Three challenged the meaningfulness and coherence of the national discourse and transformed the celebration of the Partisan experience to an anti-war statement. The film achieved critical acclaim at home and abroad, capturing an Academy Award nomination in 1967. But the tendency of "new film" to deconstruct the past was met with opposition from the government.¹⁶¹

While Three is the most well-known of the 'new film' creations, a number of other productions "[...] offended the guardians of sanctioned traditions by...painting portraits of false heroes and of fallible Partisan warriors."¹⁶² Among them is the fascinating, psychologically complex, and utterly unusual film 'Man from the Oak Forest' [*Čovjek iz hrastove šume*, 1963]. Set in an obscure Serbian village, its protagonist is a lonely mountain shepherd who is a Četnik. During the war, he undertakes his own program of ritualistic executions. The movie's unorthodox approach to the national narrative caused a racket in the cadres of the ruling elite. The government criticized it

¹⁶¹ Baric, 53.

¹⁶² Goulding, 85.

passionately for its implied nationalistic overtones, which allowed a Četnik the honor of being the protagonist in a Yugoslav film.¹⁶³

Many public figures viewed the “new film” as a direct attack on all that was fundamental to the socialist revolution and the struggle against fascism.¹⁶⁴ They were indignant that film makers used a cultural sphere the government had been responsible for developing to question rather than affirm the heroic origins of Yugoslavia. The regime dismissed the “foreign tendencies” allegedly exhibited by a number of film makers as inapplicable to Yugoslavia and its distinctive cultural roots and contemporary conditions.¹⁶⁵

Although the “new film” was the creative driving force during the sixties, the influx of American culture also played a role in Yugoslavia’s movie scene. During the mid-sixties, Hollywood studios bankrolled large international productions, which strove toward the celluloid immortalization of the War of National Liberation. The increase in budget allowed Yugoslav film makers to direct a number of psychologically shallow but visually stunning war epics, which were very popular with the general public. According to Daniel Goulding, Hollywood studios ensured that “[...] every battle from the rich history of Yugoslavia’s World War II experience [received] a monument and a movie.”¹⁶⁶ Director Veljko Bulajić was the master of the genre. His 1963 epic Kozara attracted over 3 million people and in 1967, he directed the international production Battle on the Neretva [*Bitka na Neretvi*] which gained an Academy Award nomination in 1969.

¹⁶³ Goulding, 97.

¹⁶⁴ Baric, 54.

¹⁶⁵ Goulding, 68.

¹⁶⁶ The BFI Companion to Eastern European and Russian Cinema, ed. Richard Taylor, et al. [London : BFI Pub., 2000] 265.

The Battle on the Neretva is the romanticized filmic homage to the men and women who fought against Axis forces during the Fourth Offensive. The movie focuses on the two crucial points of the battle: the capture of the city of Prozor and the destruction of the bridge over the Neretva by the Partisans in order to confuse the enemy forces. The threat of a typhoid epidemic among the civilians forces the Partisans to build a replacement bridge and break through the encirclement. A few impressive battle scenes and the tragic death of a beautiful young woman bring the movie to its historic conclusion: the unlikely victory of the Partisans over their technologically and numerically superior enemy. The movie was a blockbuster by Yugoslav standards although critics dismissed it as light fare in comparison to Partisan Stories and Three. It is primarily a glorification of the Partisan struggle although it does include certain features of the “new film” such as the bleakness of the forbidding landscape and the specter of typhoid. Its main focus, however, is on individual and collective courage in the face of a formidable enemy and a raging epidemic.

By the late 1960s, the traditional Partisan war movie had lost much of the charm and immediacy which had distinguished early films such as Slavica. Script writers and directors effectively reduced the complexity and importance of the Partisan struggle to an overproduced Hollywood action adventure. At the same time, a more progressive group of directors working within the “new film” movement produced a few Partisan films such as Three, which abandoned the simplistic glorification of Tito’s forces and observed the war from a much more personal and less patriotic perspective¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ Baric, 60.

4) Dissidents

The climate of political liberalization not only inspired multifaceted portrayals of the War on National Liberation in the arts, but it also allowed for the expression of dissatisfaction and opposition in the public sphere. The first public protest against the policies of the regime occurred on May 11, 1959. About two thousand students from the University of Zagreb took to the streets of the Croatian capital. The pretext for the demonstration was lack of food. This sign of discontent, coming from the generation nurtured in the spirit of socialism and Yugoslavism seriously embarrassed the Yugoslav leadership. Most importantly, the student turmoil pointed to a number of deeper issues, namely economic, ideological, and social problems.¹⁶⁸ As students began to express their discontent and challenged the regime, so did individual members of the intellectual elite.

The first public discussion on the nature of the nationalities problem in Yugoslavia accidentally began in January 1961, when politician and author Dobrica Ćosić commented on the state of cultural collaboration between the Yugoslav republics in the Croatian weekly magazine Telegram. In response to a question regarding the nature of Yugoslavia's cultural collaboration, Ćosić remarked that the endeavor was still falling short and that a more fruitful cultural exchange between the republics was essential. He also implied that as long as republican units existed within Yugoslavia, no genuine Yugoslav culture could develop.¹⁶⁹ Ćosić's comments prompted an unexpected refutation by Dušan Pirjevec, a research associate at the Slovenian Academy of Sciences

¹⁶⁸ Ante Cuvalo, Croatian National Movement 1966 – 1972 [New York: Columbia University Press, 1990], 48.

¹⁶⁹ Jelena Milojkovic-Djuric, "Approaches to National Identities: Cosic's and Pirjevec's Debate on Ideological and Literary Issues," East European Quarterly 30 [1996]: 64.

and Arts. Both Ćosić and Pirjevec were well known members of the intellectual elite in Yugoslavia. Pirjevec explained that his reaction was due to “[Ćosić’s] wicked thought that everything will be solved, including the passivity in the inter-republic dealings, when these very republics cease to exist.”¹⁷⁰ While the discussion took place within the accepted political guidelines, it raised a number of questions concerning the role of ethnic nationalism in Yugoslav society and the validity of a Yugoslav identity. While Ćosić, who was an ethnic Serb, propagated a more unified Yugoslav culture unencumbered by republican pettiness, his opponents from other republics viewed his suggestions as a covert attempt to impose Serbian cultural hegemony on the rest of Yugoslavia.

At the time of his discussion with Pirjevec, Ćosić was still a committed Yugoslav who believed in the cultural integration of all constituent ethnicities into one common Yugoslav culture.¹⁷¹ However, Ćosić became disillusioned when cultural integration continued to fail during the 1960s and the government practically abandoned the project with the ratification of the 1963 Constitution. In the late 1950s, Ćosić had initiated the movement toward an aesthetic reorganization of the League of Yugoslav Writers, which had, since its inception, been organized along republican lines.¹⁷² In spite of solid support by a number of writers from different republics, the opposition defeated the initiative by those who wished to maintain republican distinctions. Ćosić viewed the failure of the internationalist movement as “a failure of Yugoslavism at the top, with Tito and Edvard Kardelj.”¹⁷³ In addition to his growing belief that Tito was uninterested in realizing the supranational vision of the new faith, Ćosić slowly became convinced that

¹⁷⁰ Dobrica Ćosić, “O savremenom nesavremenom nacionalizmu,” in *Delo*, [Ljubljana, 1961], 1402.

¹⁷¹ Miller, 518.

¹⁷² Miller, 518.

¹⁷³ Miller, 520.

the failure of integration heralded the end to the Serbian nation.¹⁷⁴ Ćosić subsequently concentrated his efforts, switching from a Yugoslav context to a Serbian one, claiming that “the true extent of the spiritual unity of the Serbian people, the historical and textual unity of Serbian culture, the unity that had existed ever since there had been a Serbian people with a national conscience has been called into question.”¹⁷⁵

The liberalization of the 1960s inspired a new generation of Croatian politicians to work towards greater autonomy from the federal centre. A number of young Croatian Communists perceived a worrying trend toward cultural and political domination by Serbia.¹⁷⁶ They found support among Croatian intellectuals, most notably Miroslav Krleža, who wanted to reinvigorate Croatian language, religion, and culture. In 1967, the Croatian Writer’s Club published a petition calling for the designation of Croatian as a distinct language, both for educational and publishing purposes. The Croatian cultural magazine Telegram published the “Declaration Concerning the Name and Position of the Croatian Language” on March 17, 1967.¹⁷⁷ Nineteen Croatian cultural institutions as well as one hundred and thirty leading Croatian intellectuals endorsed implementation of the “Declaration,” which called for an equal status of the Croatian language within the federation.¹⁷⁸ Although seventy of the one hundred and thirty intellectuals who had signed the proposal were members of the Communist Party, the federal leadership vehemently criticized the “Declaration” and its creators. The government accused

¹⁷⁴ Miller, 521.

¹⁷⁵ Miller, 523.

¹⁷⁶ MacDonald, 99.

¹⁷⁷ Cuvalo, 61.

¹⁷⁸ Cuvalo, 60.

Croatia's political and intellectual elite of "threatening the foundations of our society, for which the best sons of our people gave their lives."¹⁷⁹

In spite of official criticism, the Croatian National Movement quickly gained in momentum and transformed into a popular mass movement dubbed Maspok [*Masovni Pokret* (mass movement)]. To the perceived threat of linguistic domination, the activists added a number of contentious issues, such as the under-representation of Croats in the government, the continuous exaggerations of Croatia's war guilt, and the economic exploitation of Croatia. Maspok demanded greater autonomy within the federation which would allow the Croatian government to implement the recommended reforms. The current of nationalism that pervaded the movement perturbed Tito. Afraid of having the events of 1941 repeated, he ordered the purge of nationalist-oriented Croatian Communists, effectively removing nationalists as well as liberal reformers from Croatian Party ranks between 1971 and 1972. Many scholars see Tito's purge of the Croatian Communist Party in the early seventies as a turning point, which effectively ruined any chances for Yugoslavia to evolve into a liberal social democracy.¹⁸⁰ Croatia became known as the "Silent Republic," but the purge had convinced many that the republic's grievances would only be resolved if Croatia seceded, while in Serbia, the vehemence of the Croatian national movement pushed nonconformist intellectuals toward increasingly chauvinistic nationalist convictions.

While Tito's purges momentarily discouraged the open expression of nationalist sentiments in Croatia proper, the Croatian Diaspora continued to promote nationalist discourse, focusing largely on the revisionist approach to the NDH and the Ustaša. The

¹⁷⁹ Cuvalo, 61.

¹⁸⁰ Sabrina Ramat, Thinking about Yugoslavia: Scholarly Debates about the Yugoslav Breakup and the Wars in Bosnia and Kosovo [Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005], 152.

most notorious of the Diaspora Ustaša organizations was the Croatian Liberation Movement, which operated out of Argentina. The movement published a number of books during the 1970s.¹⁸¹ A majority of these publications focus on the revolutionary origin of the Ustaša movement. The authors describe Dr. Ante Pavelić as the “founder and representative of the revolutionary Liberation Movement of the Croatian people.”¹⁸² Pseudo-historians compare the Ustaša to French and American revolutionary movements, with their main goals consisting of “defending Croatia against Serbian aggression and international Communism.”¹⁸³ In The National and Religious Perversion of Serbs [*Srpska Naciojonalna i Vjerska Nastranost*], Matijas Hrvatinic states that “the spiritual poverty and inborn cowardice of the Serbian Četnik and [Communist] Partisan...could only be resolutely and fearlessly opposed by the Croatian Ustaša, the Croatian patriotic fighter who, at an opportune time in history grabbed the Serbian aggressors by the throat.”¹⁸⁴ Since the atrocious violence that the NDH had unleashed on the minorities on its territory could was undeniable, revisionist literature excused the persecution of ethnic groups and politically untenable individuals as the only way to respond to Serbian abuses against the Croatian people.¹⁸⁵ Ustaša actions emerged as justifiable self-defense, with “every Croatian patriot having waited for the moment when he can pick up his guns and direct it at the Serbs.”¹⁸⁶ The author of The National and Religious Perversion of Serbs states that “...any war, which brings freedom and independence, is a holy war, regardless

¹⁸¹ MacDonald, 135.

¹⁸² Stjepan Hefer, Croatian Struggle for Freedom and Statehood, trans. Andrija Ilic. [Buenos Aires: Croatian Information Service, 1959].

¹⁸³ MacDonald, 135.

¹⁸⁴ Matijas Hrvatinic, Srpska Nacionalna i Vjerska Nastranost: Hrvati u jugoslavenskoj tamnici, svojoj samostalnoj državi i srbokomunističkoj klaonici [Buenos Aires: [s.n.], 1973]: Introduction, iv.

¹⁸⁵ MacDonald, 136.

¹⁸⁶ Hrvatinic, 314.

of the reasons that caused the war.”¹⁸⁷

Ivo Omerčanin and Ante Beljo expound the theory of a pro-Allied “putsch.” In their books both authors claim that a number of high-ranking Ustaša officials and military officers in 1944 planned to overthrow the Ustaša government and save the NDH. Both authors attempted to whitewash the Ustaša regime by drawing a sharp distinction between support of the NDH and support for Nazism. Although Omerčanin and Beljo use the failed putsch as the ultimate proof of the pro-Allied tendencies in the NDH hierarchy, a closer look at the timing of the failed coup d’état reveals that it was a desperate attempt by the plotters to save their own necks by joining the Allies before they won the war.¹⁸⁸ Diaspora accounts promoted the Ustaša as a genuine nationalist and revolutionary movement, one that was pro-independence and anti-Nazi. Such views became rife when revisionists of dubious political beliefs moved back to Croatia during the late 1980s, but during the 1970s and early 1980s historical revisionism found in Diaspora circles caused little impact in Croatia.

CHAPTER 4: Ethnic Times

On May 4, 1980, the football players of Red Star Belgrade and Dinamo Zagreb spontaneously interrupted a crucial championship match and left the field in tears. The reason for the unprecedented event was the public announcement of Tito’s death. Although he was a mere four days short of his eighty-eighth birthday when he died, shock and grief overwhelmed Yugoslavia.¹⁸⁹ Nikica Janković, a veteran of the Second World War, expressed the common sentiment of the population during Tito’s terminal

¹⁸⁷ Hrvatinic, 314.

¹⁸⁸ MacDonald, 137.

¹⁸⁹ Lampe, 324.

illness in an interview with the New York Times: "We were all aware of his age, but somehow we thought that he would never die, like children who believe that their parents are eternal."¹⁹⁰ Shortly after Tito's death, political confusion on the federal level exacerbated the problems of economic stagnation. The lack of political coherence and unity combined with a precipitous decrease in the living standards of many Yugoslavs prompted the re-emergence of the nationality problem. The continuous crises shook Yugoslavia to the core and took their toll on public confidence in the system. Popular belief in Yugoslavia quickly eroded as the population became disillusioned with the government.¹⁹¹ Especially relevant was the progressive disenchantment of cultural elites with the founding myths of the socialist state, myths that many of them had helped to legitimize and re-enforce during the 1940s and 1950s. Questions of ethnicity and nationality monopolized political and cultural discourse in Yugoslavia, destroying the concept of supra-ethnic ideological unity in the process.

Beginning in the late 1970s, wide-ranging political and cultural expressions and debates, which sharply questioned accepted myths and critically addressed the malaise of contemporary life characterized Yugoslavia's cultural climate. With the steady reduction and virtual disappearance of the positive Partisan image from popular culture, the critical focus shifted to the first Yugoslavia, the re-evaluation of the National Liberation War, the Stalinist aftermath, and the dramatic period following Yugoslavia's break with the Soviet

¹⁹⁰ John Darnton, "As Tito Fades, Old Comrades Recall War," New York Times, 1 March 1980.

¹⁹¹ A poll conducted in September 1982 found that only 44% of workers felt positive about the system. In 1983 only 38% of respondents expressed faith in the Party. It was a steep decline from the 64% that had trusted the Party in 1974.

Pedro Ramat, "Apocalypse Culture and Social Change in Yugoslavia," in Yugoslavia in the 1980s, ed. Pedro Ramat, [Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985], 6.

Union on June 28, 1948.¹⁹² Within a year of Tito's death on May 4, 1980, a number of articles, novels, and plays began to appear in Yugoslavia, which reexamined the most controversial aspects of Yugoslavia's history. Initially, party members inveighed against individuals who specialized in unearthing controversial episodes from the past. A number of Yugoslav dramatists, novelists, poets, film-makers, and other intellectuals were criticized for "fomenting counter-revolution, the demystification of society, negativism toward socialism, and negative portrayals of Yugoslavia's revolutionary past [by portraying the Partisans as no better than the Ustaša or Četniks]."¹⁹³ The public as well as the artists ignored the admonishments of the party. By the late 1980s, critical discourse had degenerated into a nationalist pogrom, which infected every aspect of cultural life in Yugoslavia. On October 24, 1986 a Serbian writer lamented in an interview with the New York Times that "[...] people who otherwise would be sensible and rational, are becoming nationalist and irrational – the best writers and painters."¹⁹⁴ Goran Bregović, the singer of the popular Yugoslav rock band *Bjelo Dugme* [White Button] expressed a similar sentiment in an interview with historian Sabrina Ramat: "The Yugoslav idea is starting to become unpopular in Yugoslavia. No one wants to be Yugoslavian anymore. People want to be Serbian or Croatian or Slovenian. Yugoslavia doesn't mean anything anymore."¹⁹⁵

It was during the 1980s that the romantic idea of Yugoslavism withered and died, destroyed largely by those who had helped mold it during the early post-bellum period.

¹⁹² Daniel J. Goulding, Post New Wave Cinema in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, ed. Daniel J. Goulding, [Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 1989], 254.

¹⁹³ Goulding, Liberated Cinema, 159.

¹⁹⁴ David Binder, "Serbs Bewail their Lot in the Yugoslav Federation," New York Times, 24 October 1986, sec. A, final edition.

¹⁹⁵ Ramat, Balkan Babel, 39.

Erosion of political, economic, and social stability engaged the country in a process of self-destruction. Its leader was dead, and in spite of his flaws, he had been a beloved figure and was deeply mourned. Its revolutionary economic system of worker self-management had disintegrated amidst corruption scandals and a precipitous drop in the standards of living. Federal politics were therefore in a state of perpetual chaos, with politicians engaging in rhetorical games and power struggles, without paying much attention to the increasingly frenetic populace.

With the political situation becoming increasingly desolate, Yugoslavia became engulfed in the currents of apocalypse culture.¹⁹⁶ Apocalypse culture is symptomatic of deep social insecurity and is peculiar to developed societies in decay. It showed strains of pessimism, gloom, resignation, and escapism of various kinds. By nature, apocalypse culture is “inward looking, absorbed in a quest for meaning, and prepared to question the fundamental political and social values of the society.”¹⁹⁷ The Yugoslav population had lost confidence in the economy and the political system to solve the existing problems, and began to fear that the country might disintegrate. This lack of confidence combined with existential fears and the absence of a solution led to uncertainty.¹⁹⁸ Instability, doubt, and fear were the central aspects of societies. Popular cultural became the primary vehicle for the expression of despair and social criticism.¹⁹⁹

1) Literature

¹⁹⁶ Pedro Ramat, 3.

¹⁹⁷ Pedro Ramat, 3.

¹⁹⁸ Pedro Ramat, 4.

¹⁹⁹ Pedro Ramat, 4.

During a speech commemorating his inauguration into the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts in 1977, Dobrica Ćosić spoke of the importance of the novel in the shaping of historical truth and collective memory. During the 1980s, the historical novel in Serbia became the most common vehicle for nationalist expression and the revision of history. Novelists tackled a myriad of different subjects from Serbia's past. They reinvigorated and reinterpreted them to suit the needs of the present while raising the ghosts of the past. Critics have dismissed much of Serbian literature published during the 1980s as low-brow popular fare without much style and merit. This mostly occurred once the Wars of Secession had already erupted and the Serbs had become the general ogres of Europe. This scathing dismissal of Serbian literature during the 1980s is an inaccurate assessment. A number of nationalist novels published during the 1980s were innovative in style and subject. A less volatile political and cultural climate could have easily weathered the nationalist tone of a few works of fiction.

Low-brow Serbian literature focused on the revision of Serbia's World War II experience. A number of novels tackled subjects which had previously been taboo and frequently did so in a vulgar and simplistic manner. It resulted in a lower level of artistic achievement.²⁰⁰ The literary escapades of Vuk Drašković fall into the category of inflammatory, low-brow fare. Drašković wrote a number of novels during the 1980s dealing with the themes of Serbian history and containing a strong current of Serbian nationalism. His work manifests the regeneration of an archaic range of motifs, applied without innovation.²⁰¹ They exercised an old-fashioned, patriotic appeal and dealt mostly with the themes of "blood and land", "faith and nation", and the "golden age" found

²⁰⁰ Mirko Djordjevic, "Populist Wave Literature," in *The Road to War in Serbia: Trauma and Catharsis*, ed. Nebojsa Popov, [Budapest: Central European University Press, 2000], 362.

²⁰¹ MacDonald, 140.

somewhere in the glorious past.²⁰² In Drašković's novels, there was a strongly articulated need to express universal truths about people and life as they relate to Serbia's historic development. His stories embrace the collective hero, who serves as the "voice of the people" as well as their spiritual embodiment. Literary work of this kind exhausts itself through attempts to elevate an invented "*Volksgeist*" to the level of political, religious, and social dogma.²⁰³

Drašković's most famous and popular work is the novel Knife [*Nož*, 1982]. Shortly after its publication, the Communist Party condemned the book for its nationalist sentiments and subsequently banned its distribution.²⁰⁴ Official disapproval was not a detriment to its popularity and availability, however. The book became a bestseller.²⁰⁵ The intricate plot begins with a massacre of the Serbian Jugović family by their Muslim friends and neighbors, the Osmanović family, on the eve of World War II. Drašković describes the massacre in gruesome detail. The only survivor of the murderous rampage is a baby boy who was born the day before. The Osmanović clan adopts the infant and names him Alija. The child grows up with the conviction that Serbs killed his biological family. As a young medical student, Alija goes on a quest to discover the identity of his murdered birth-parents. Through a series of complicated events, Alija discovers his parents were Serbs from a neighboring village, which was destroyed by the Osmanović during the war. The clash between his love for those who raised him and his loyalty towards his ancestors further exacerbates Alija's confusion. In a parallel plot, the author introduces Milan Vilenjak, a young man whose purpose in life is to exact revenge on Atif

²⁰² Djordjevic, 362.

²⁰³ Djordjevic, 358.

²⁰⁴ The Serbian Classics Press, Knife, n.d., <<http://www.serbianclassics.com/html/knife.html>> [June 2006].

²⁰⁵ Branimir Anzulovic, Heavenly Serbia: From Myth to Genocide [New York: New York University Press, 1999] 134.

Tanović, a former member of the Ustaša who killed Milan's ancestors during World War II. Atif's genuine remorse confuses Milan who, when given the opportunity to end his enemy's life, does not do so. At the end of the book, the two protagonists meet and help each other deal with their recent discoveries and their past.

With the adoption and subsequent assimilation of the child Alija, the book raises a number of questions around the themes of primordial versus learned identity. It promotes Drašković's belief that Bosnian Muslims are merely Serbs whose ancestors had "forgotten the lessons of Kosovo" and betrayed their nation for material gains.²⁰⁶ In Drašković's interpretation, history is a continuous massacre of Serbs, with World War II simple being the last of many. In the first part of the book, Drašković introduces the readers to an alternate view of the Četnik movement by describing them as the legitimate and heroic defenders of Serbdom who had been maligned by the deceitful Communists.²⁰⁷ The rehabilitation of the Četniks was an endeavor Drašković would continue to pursue throughout his career.²⁰⁸

Another author who was important to the development of incendiary low-brow Serbian literature is Danko Popović. His bestseller A Book about Milutin [*Knjiga o Milutinu*, 1985] significantly contributed to the process of re-writing Serbian history into a narrative of perpetual victimization. The autobiographical monologue of the peasant Milutin reduces the history of the Serbian people to a series of grievances and

²⁰⁶ MacDonald, 233.

²⁰⁷ A conversation between Father Nicifor and the Cetnik commander Mitar is detailed on pages 23 – 29, in which Mitar elucidates his decision to transfer his allegiance from the Partisan to the Cetniks. According to Mitar it was the Partisans who 'started talking revolution, then they began executing the best of men without a trial...Instead of clobbering our mutual enemy,...in the middle of this slaughter house the Communists started drawing up new boundaries between people, inflicting even greater misfortunes on us.' Vuk Draskovic, *Knife*, trans. Milo Yelesiyevitch [New York : Serbian Classics Press, 2000], 25.

²⁰⁸ The Cetniks play only a minor role in 'Knife'. They play a more prominent part in Draskovic's novels 'Prayer' [Molitva] and 'The Night of the General' [Noc Đenerala].

persecutions.²⁰⁹ Milutin is the symbolic representative of Serbia's trials and tribulations in the course of the twentieth century. The influence of a novel such as A Book about Milutin did not depend on its artistic merit. Its importance resided in the appeal of a new and enticing version of history, which focused on the eternal victimization of Serbia and its people. Nationalist narratives such as Popović's positioned the chaos that had engulfed Yugoslavia during the 1980s within the currents of history and absolved Serbia from responsibility in the current situation. According to the sales figures, many wished to hear Popović's litany. His book became the most widely read novel of the period.²¹⁰ The work achieved such popular appeal that there are documented cases of groups who gathered together for the ritualized recitations of passages at public events, especially on the local level.²¹¹

Popović, Drašković, as well as a number of their contemporaries adopted certain themes and stylistic tools in their writing.²¹² They employed the concept of the collective hero who sermonizes about the collective past of the Serb people.²¹³ They indulge in the discourse of "Otherness", juxtaposing "Serbs" to "them." Many also chose to abandon the carefully developed and honed literary languages for obscure regionalized idioms, holding up the "language of the peasant" as the purest mode of expression.²¹⁴ Rather than treating them as fictional works invented and written by novelists, the public hailed the historical novel as the expression of universal truth that is only revealed during pivotal times in national history. Such truths can be analyzed and elaborated but in no

²⁰⁹ MacDonald, 186.

²¹⁰ Djordjevic, 356.

²¹¹ MacDonald, 186.

²¹² The works of Vojislav Lubrada and Jovan Radulovic address the same issues and appeal to the same sentiments.

²¹³ Djordjevic, 356.

²¹⁴ Djordjevic, 363.

way challenged.²¹⁵ Through their exalted and untouchable position, uninspired works of fiction written by mediocre authors became the new gospel of the Serbian people.

Nationalist discourse also infiltrated the higher circles of the literati. Among the most vociferous proponents of Serbian nationalism was Slobodan Selenić, Serbia's poet laureate. He was the author of a number of influential books about Serbia in World War II. Selenić had attracted attention with his first novel The Memoirs of Pera the Cripple [*Memoari Pere Bogalja*, 1968], a social critique of the new Communist society.

Selenić's later novels focus on the tragic destruction of Serbia's urban culture by the onslaught of Communism.²¹⁶ The microcosm of the Belgrade bourgeoisie serves as the symbolic representative of civilized and cultured mankind, which is destroyed by the whims of history. The barbarian hordes from the East again trample on the flower of Western civilization, as they have done throughout history. The novel Fathers and Forefathers [Očevi i Oci, 1985] epitomizes Selenić's approach to his preferred theme.

The novel recounts the tragic decline of the Medaković family. The story of the family begins as the union of two cultures when Stevan Medaković meets and marries the Englishwoman Elizabeth. The two young people happily navigate through cultural and religious differences as they set up their life together within the safe confines of the Belgrade bourgeoisie. They have a son, Mihajlo, whom they raise with love and care. The political currents of war, however, infiltrate their peaceful family life. While Stevan and Elizabeth remain uninterested in the rhetoric of revolution, their son Mihajlo becomes involved with the KPJ. The new foreign ideology brings into the bourgeois

²¹⁵ Djordjevic, 371.

²¹⁶ Predrag Palavestra, "Poetika Građanskog Poraza," Književnost - Kritika Ideologije, [Belgrade: SKZ, 1992], 1.

home a foreign world which slowly destroys it from within. Mihajlo's involvement with the KPJ deepens throughout the war until he violates the sanctity of the family home by allowing his comrades to invade and destroy it. Although the presence of unruly young individuals in their home disturbs Stevan and Elizabeth, they do not do anything to stop the invasion and destruction. Mihajlo's increasing radicalization turns him against his family until a heated argument between father and son drives Mihajlo further into the ranks of the KPJ. He joins the Partisans and dies on the battlefield.

Fathers and Forefathers provides a poignant description of the spiritual and physical disappearance of Serbia's cultured middleclass, whose failure to confront the Communist revolution brought about its demise. Selenić argues that their disinterest in political affairs prevented the introduction of a democratic ideal into the clash between the totalitarian ideologies from the left and the right.²¹⁷ The lethargy of the middle class allowed the cold, hungry, and uneducated masses to exact revenge on a society which had kept them downtrodden.²¹⁸ Out of the ranks of the *Lumpenproletariat* arose the Communist *petit bourgeoisie*, a new social class without spiritual needs or moral scruples. Aided by the ruling ideology, the vulgarity of the new class impeded cultural development. It replaced the refined culture of the Serbia's middle class with cheap Bolshevik kitsch. Selenić describes the interaction of the new rulers with their predecessors during a saint's day celebration at the house of a bourgeois Belgrade intellectual. Stevan Medaković narrates the episode:

Jaša's wife led me into the drawing room and a group of Tito's highest-ranking ministers, famous and untouchable for most people and infamous and dangerous for most of those gathered at the party. They had no respect for church rituals and Serbian customs but enjoyed the celebration because [they thought] "we are

²¹⁷ Palavestra, 7.

²¹⁸ Palavestra, 6.

above judgment, others do not dare, but we can be at a Saint's Day celebration and lose nothing of our Communist aura."²¹⁹

Selenic's book is a nostalgic reminiscence of a world that no longer exists and a scathing dismissal of the world that was erected in its stead. He describes the KPJ and the Partisans as rampaging hordes, which speak in vulgar jargons, mock every aspect of justice and morality, and laugh at the unfortunate people they defeated and replaced. In a final scathing critique, Stevan contemplates the difference between Serbia's "liberation" and its "occupation." He concludes that for Serbia they were essentially the same, replacing one vulgar ruler with another.²²⁰

The authors mentioned in this chapter not only raised a number of socially explosive issues, they also attacked the very legitimacy of the state they lived in. By resurrecting the ghosts of the NDH and indulging in a morbid remembrance of its crimes, they attacked the slogan of "Brotherhood and Unity". By denigrating and dismissing the Partisans as merely another vulgar anti-Serbian force, they assaulted the very foundation upon which Yugoslavia rested: the War of National Liberation and its heroes. By rehabilitating the Četniks, they questioned the validity of a multiethnic Yugoslavia and revealed their own ambitions in regards to Serbian hegemony.

Serbia was the hub of Yugoslav literary activity during the 1980s. After the events of 1971-72, Croatia's literary elite chose to remain silent on nationalist issues. Serbian authors monopolized the genre of nationalist literature, and they did so to great effect.²²¹ Serbia's literary assault on Yugoslavia quickly extended into political discourse. The erosion of borders between fiction and non-fiction resulted in the spilling

²¹⁹ Slobodan Selenic, *Fathers & Forefathers*, trans. Ellen Elias-Bursac [London: Harvill Press, 2003] 201.

²²⁰ Selenic, 240.

²²¹ Anzulovic, 140.

over of perceived and historically unjustified claims of victimization into reality.²²²

Nationalist politicians promoted the pseudo-historical concepts first introduced by intellectuals and artists until the believing public became frenzied. It proved to be a successful strategy for nationalists, as they were looking to recruit foot soldiers for the war on Yugoslavia.

2) Cinema

The Yugoslav movie industry manifested trends similar to the literary scene during the 1980s. It had experienced a creative comeback in the late 1970s, which continued well into the eighties. Renewed political relaxation combined with the emergence of a talented film elite resulted in the production of a number of remarkable films from the late 1970s on. The infusion of new talent was an instant success, and by 1978 Yugoslav films had surpassed foreign films in domestic revenue.²²³ Whereas during the sixties, “new film” had challenged the myths of the nation in order to improve the existing system by returning to the fundamental values of socialism, cinema in the 1980s challenged the legitimacy of socialism, seeking a change in the system.²²⁴

The group of talented film makers who had all been educated at the prestigious film school FEMU in Prague frequently investigated the malaise of contemporary society, focusing only occasionally on the more ambiguous aspects of the War of National Liberation. The Partisans, a continuous presence in the Yugoslav film industry

²²² Dubravka Ugresic, *A Culture of Lies: Antipolitical Essays*, trans. Celia Hawkesworth [London : Phoenix House, 1998].

²²³ Andrew Horton, “Yugoslavia: Multi-Faceted Cinema,” *World Cinema Since 1945*, ed. William Luhr, [New York: Ungar, 1987], 656.

²²⁴ Baric, 74.

since its inception, nearly disappeared as a cinematic theme.²²⁵ By the early 1980s, Partisan films had vanished as if the death of Tito had “symbolically closed the period of Partisan triumphs” on the film screen.²²⁶

One of the last compelling cinematic looks at the War of National Liberation was Lordan Zafranović compelling drama Occupation in 26 Pictures [*Okupacija u 26 slika*, 1978]. It is the first in a trilogy that deals with the course of World War II in Croatia. The movie is set in Dubrovnik, where the beauty and gentility of the medieval setting is destroyed through the brutality, vulgarity, and evil of the occupiers and collaborators. The three protagonists Toni, Niko, and Miho are symbolic representatives of the three ethnic groups that had inhabited Dubrovnik for generations. Toni is Italian, Niko is a Croat, and Miho is a Jew. All three are members of affluent families that belonged to the old bourgeoisie. Shortly after occupation, Toni decides to join the Fascists while his friend Miho and his family face intensifying discrimination and persecution. Disgusted with the posturing, vulgarity, and brutality of the occupiers, Niko decides to join the Partisans. In Zafranović’s film, the vulgarity of the occupiers infects all they come into contact with. Their greatest success, however, is the thorough manipulation of domestic rivalries. Families and communities engage in a process of vicious self-destruction. The brutality of the occupation culminates in the Ustaša’s massacre of undesirable minorities. The sadism of the killers and the sheer joy they exhibit during acts of gruesome murder reveal the depths of human degradation and evil. Zafranović’s approach to the war is controversial because it dismisses the Axis forces as the ultimate villains. It is the domestic collaborators who relish the sadistic massacre of their brethren, suggesting that

²²⁵ Goulding, Post New Wave Cinema in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, 254.

²²⁶ Taylor et al. 266.

in terms of brutality and evil domestic fascists surpassed foreign invaders. Official history had promoted the National Liberation War as an all-Yugoslav struggle against foreign occupiers, who had admittedly managed to attract a minimal number of morally inferior domestic supporters. The fratricidal war which had raged simultaneously was intentionally minimized so that “Brotherhood and Unity” could gain in resonance and strength. Zafranović’s film debunked the official narrative at a time when ethnic nationalists were searching for ways to represent co-existence and co-operation among the various ethnic groups as a political illusion which had resulted in an unnaturally born state.²²⁷

3) Pop Music

The prevalence of the apocalypse syndrome also spread to the music scene. Many bands and artists wrote and performed songs, which manifested the influence of apocalypse culture. Some artists followed the example of movie directors and focused on the dissatisfaction with contemporary existence. Among them was the band *Električni Orgazam* [Electric Orgasm], which avoided political themes and focused on the decadence of life. They released their self-titled first album in 1981 and included songs such as “Sex, Drugs, Violence, and Fear” [*Seks, Droga, Nasilje, i Strah*] and ‘Electric Orgasm’ [*Električni Orgazam*]. Occasionally, these bands antagonized the more conservative members of the party who found that their obsession with sex clashed with Communist purity, but generally they stayed off party radars.²²⁸ Other groups provoked the authorities by singing nationalist songs or by attacking Yugoslavia’s founding myth

²²⁷ Tomislav Slavica’s novel *Kunara* had broached a similar subject during the late 1960s but it did not have the same influence or carry the same implications as Zafranovic’s movie.

²²⁸ Pedro Ramat, 14.

with views that were “inimical to the peace of mind of our society.”²²⁹ Among them were the Belgrade rockers *Riblja Čorba* [Fish Stew]. Bora Djordjević, the perennially controversial lead singer of *Riblja Čorba* is a talented poet and a self-proclaimed opponent of the establishment.²³⁰ During the Tito era, Djordjević was circumspect about criticizing the regime openly and even chose to collaborate on the ideologically appropriate song “The World of Tito” [*Titov Svjet*, 1977]. Shortly after Tito’s death, he slipped on the garb of the counterculture rock rebel and sang a number of songs which criticized and mocked the regime. In 1985, the band released the album “Truth” [*Istina*], which included the song “Look at your Home my Angel” [*Pogledaj Dom Svoj Andjele*]. The song criticizes Tito’s failure to see Yugoslavia’s social problems. In the lines “look at your home angel / and take the spider webs off your eyes / you’ll see disturbing sights / you’ll see those who are unhappy and sick / you’ll see cold, death, and misery,” Djordjević criticizes the government’s abysmal response to the economic crises that shook Yugoslavia. The living standards of Yugoslavs had plummeted during the early 1980s and resulted in poverty and misery, especially among the urban poor.

While a majority of bands and singers responded to the uncertainties of political and economic stagnation with disillusionment and criticism, a small number of performers continued to pen and perform pro-Yugoslav music. Among them was the band *Bjelo Dugme* [White Button], whose talented and charismatic singer Goran Bregović ensured the band’s status as the “Yugoslav Beatles” and the popular bard Djordje Balašević, whose early work was mentioned in the previous section. The song “Spit and Sing my Yugoslavia” [*Pljuni I Zapjevaj moja Jugoslavijo*] begins with a verse

²²⁹ Pedro Ramat, 14.

²³⁰ Ramat, *Balkan Babel*, 269.

from one of the most popular Partisan tunes. The song “Down with Aggression and Injustice” [*Padaj Silo i Nepravdo*] was a KPJ favorite and played a prominent role in the movie Battle on the Neretva [*Bitka na Neretvi*]. The verse includes the lines “down with aggression and injustice / the people have been called to pass judgment / away with you, forces of darkness / our day has come.” The author of the lyrics compares Yugoslavia to “my mother, my home, my heart” and demands that it rise to its feet and fight for a better future. The song carried particular appeal with the younger generation, which identified with Yugoslavia as their nation state. The band’s message was for those young Yugoslavs to rise to their feet and restore Yugoslavia to its glory against the conservative party apparatus that was keeping it down. It is interesting to note that the band used an early KPJ favorite in an appeal against its later incarnation. The song is undoubtedly radical but it is neither pro-regime nor nationalist. It does not equate Yugoslavia with the Party or with Tito. Rather, in the song “Spit and Sing my Yugoslavia,” Yugoslavia and its people have become a separate entity, which demanded changes in the political hierarchy but not the destruction of the state.

Djordje Balašević adopts a more traditional approach in his song “I saw Tito Three Times” [*Triput Sam Video Tita*] from 1981. Balašević describes his three encounters with Tito during his life. The first time he was a little boy whose father took him to see Tito when he visited the protagonist’s hometown. Although he was a mere five years old, he remembers ‘the smiling and happy people and the happy city.’ As a young man he again encountered Tito and realized that the awe he had experienced as a child had not faded with age. The third time he saw Tito was as his coffin went on a procession through Yugoslavia. “And again I saw Marshal Tito / the legend, the giver of

freedom / that man who was a friend and a fighter.” Although the song is an elegy to Tito, it cannot be dismissed as mere hagiography. Rather it is the life experience of a man who was born and grew up in a country where Tito was the living reincarnation of the Yugoslav state. He describes the awe that the presence of the legend inspired in the population as well as the uncertainty of the future without him.

The band *Indexi* collaborated on the album Mostar Rain: Our Name is Tito [*Mostarske Kise: Nase Ime je Tito*] in 1980. It was the eulogy of the music industry to Tito and all he had accomplished. The song “After Tito, Tito!” [*Poslje Tita, Tito*] did not only promote the general glorification of Tito with lines such as “while he lived, he was / the sun above the planet / while he lived, he was / a wild hero in a tale.” The song also expressed the fear and uncertainty inspired by his death. Tito had not groomed a successor. There was no one in the government or the party who could compare to Tito in popularity or prestige. Yugoslav politicians in 1980 were a bland and unknown group of individuals who had lived in Tito’s overpowering shadow. Thus there was no replacement waiting in the wings and the musicians express those sentiments in the eulogy. “And what now, southern land / if anyone should ask us / we shall say, again Tito / Tito lives with us.” By 1984, *Indexi* had become much more subdued. Their album Those Who Are Betrayed Stop Believing [*Prevareni ne veruju vise*, 1984] included the song “Slavic Rhapsody” [*Slavenska rapsodija*]. The song expresses a sense of mourning for Yugoslavia. It includes the lyrics “In me there is a sorrow, in me there is a shadow / In me there is an unnamed secret / In me there are the tears of my fellow Slavs.” The fear for Yugoslavia’s future had become palpable even in the cultural sector that was its greatest promoter.

CONCLUSION

On May 13, 1990, Red Star Belgrade and Dinamo Zagreb interrupted an important match because of hooligan riots at Maksimir Stadium in Zagreb. Although incidents of nationalist hooliganism had increased in Yugoslavia during the 1980s, matches were rarely interrupted for that reason.²³¹ Yet on that fateful day, the players had no choice but to walk off the field. The bleachers were alight in flares as rabid fans, chanting offensive nationalist slogans, charged at each other. Although football culture is saturated with emotional tension and fans frequently exhibit warlike behavior, it is rarely taken outside the arena.²³² However, warlike behavior was not metaphorical in the case of Red Star and Dinamo. The game served as “a prelude and an ideological preparation for war.”²³³ Within a year, Dinamo’s “Bad Blue Boys” and Red Star’s “Valiants” would charge at each other on the battlefields of Croatia, their game of mutual goading having turned into the serious business of war. After the “Battle of Maksimir”, Yugoslavia’s sports press condemned those who had instigated the violence, and the police arrested and charged a number of individuals. Nonetheless, official condemnation of the events did not obscure the fact that Yugoslavia had disintegrated where it had mattered most: in the streets.

Cultural artifacts of the 1980s had effectively dismantled the founding myths upon which Yugoslavia rested. By the 1990s, the tales of brotherhood, unity and the

²³¹ Ivan Colovic, Politics of Symbol in Serbia: Essays in Political Anthropology, trans. Celia Hawkesworth, [London : Hurst & Company, 2002], 259.

²³² Srdjan Vrcan and Drazen Lalic, “From Ends to Trenches, and Back: Football in the Former Yugoslavia” in Football Culture: Local Contests, Global Visions, ed. Gerry P.T. Finn and Richard Giulianotti [Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2000], 177.

²³³ Vrcan and Lalic, 177.

brave Partisans who embodied them had evaporated amidst genocide, rape, and destruction, which were eerily reminiscent of the horrors of the Second World War. In a personal diary, which he composed during the war in his hometown of Pale, Serbian journalist Mladen Vuksanović describes his first encounter with a Serbian paramilitary soldier, attired in the traditional Četnik garb, "These are the images of people who I thought belonged only in films...now they are here, they have swum up from the murky depths...and risen from the grave to say they are not dead."²³⁴ From the moment that the Yugoslav Peoples' Army [*Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija, JNA*] intervened in Slovenia in 1991, the events of World War II appeared to receive almost as much attention as the crisis of the moment. It was almost as if in the carnage of World War II, there was an explanation for the atrocities of the 1990s. In popular perception, Yugoslavia's past and present merged into one continuous horror show. However, historical explanation of contemporary events often depended less on past events and more on contemporary perceptions and interpretations of those events. By 1990, what had actually happened between 1941 and 1945 was less important than what people believed or were made to believe had happened. Though some good histories of World War II in Yugoslavia had been written during the 1980s, people barely bothered to read them, preferring to rely on sensationalist pseudo-histories and artifacts of popular culture. Yugoslavia's ethno-nationalist adopted the policy of drenching artifacts of popular culture with historical meaning that had first been introduced by the KPJ.

In 1995, the warring parties of Yugoslavia signed the Dayton Peace Accords. Yugoslavia and all it had stood for had been destroyed in a horrific war. Five independent nations had risen from Yugoslavia's carnage, promoting their individual cultures and

²³⁴ Mladen Vuksanović, *From Enemy Territory: Pale Diary* [London: SAQI, 2004], 106.

versions of history. With independence also came lower standards of living, unemployment, and social marginalization, which in turn inspired many to muse wistfully about the benefits of daily life in the former Yugoslavia. A popular joke concisely expresses the prevalent nostalgia and the continuous dichotomy between a state-promoted, acceptable historical narrative and popular sentiments: “The teacher asked the students to write an essay on the following topic: “Forty-five years of darkness in Tito’s Yugoslavia.” After about five minutes, one of the students stands up, hands in his booklet, and leaves. On the first page he wrote: ‘Screw the idiot that turned on the light!’”

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