

FROM PARTISANS TO POLITICIANS TO PUNKS  
WORLD WAR II IN SLOVENIA, 1941-2013

BY

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DISSERTATION

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the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History  
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## Abstract

During the Second World War as many as 200,000 people lost their lives within the borders of present-day Slovenia. Most died as unarmed victims of executioners — and unlike in other areas of Europe, almost none were Jews. Of the many ideologies belligerents used to justify this killing (*lebensraum*, racial purity, Fascism, National Socialism, defense of national honor, anti-Judaeo-Bolshevism, State Socialism, Communism, militant Clericalism...), none matter in present-day Europe: most are taboo and some even illegal. However, rather than forget a period when people were willing to kill for the sake of faulty ideology, Europeans have been telling stories of World War II ever since. Such stories have been used as justifications for social, political, even economic policies for the past seventy years. The following examines how a collective tragedy has been reimagined into a largely triumphant national narrative in Slovenia. This Communist-era story has been so successfully constructed that many elements of the collective memory of the war remain dominant in present-day Slovenia. Part I of this dissertation describes the battle to direct mass discourses during the war itself, and shows that for Communist Partisans, directing discourse towards the goal of revolution was as important as gaining political control from the occupiers. Part II deals with the dialectic between Communist leaders' desires to create new socialist men and women, and these leaders' willingness to appease their citizens for the sake of maintaining political control. From this symbiosis, elites and masses constructed a collective story of the war that was broadly appealing. The story appealed most to veterans of the war, who used their role as

protagonists in it to demand progressively greater financial rewards from the state; these rewards played a major role in finally bankrupting the entire federation. Part III shows that as state institutions began to collapse, the story of the war became a prime target for those who had been opposed to Socialist Slovenia since its inception. In the years since independence, the story of the National Liberation War has become affiliated with a center-left view of Slovene political issues. As Slovenes deal with regional dissatisfaction with structures of European governance, the story of the war has taken on new meaning as a symbol of the struggle of a small nation against the impersonal forces of global capital.

## Acknowledgements

My wife Krisy first inspired my interest in mass discourses while she was completing her Masters degree in American folklore. Her academic interests cut against the grain of the then-dominant deconstructive ethic in most Liberal Arts programs. Krisy taught me to find interest in the normative, to appreciate that concepts such as national mentalities, collective values, and folkloric motifs offer analytical angles that complement focuses on boundaries, deviance, and subaltern ideologies. With her later work as a journalist she has developed a sharp ability to quickly analyze large amounts of data, discerning fascinating ideas that I would never notice without her. Her careful readings and criticisms of my thoughts, and long hours of discussion made this dissertation possible.

Numerous people have given me intellectual assistance and kind words of encouragement while completing this project. I am deeply grateful to Wulf Kansteiner for teaching me the skills of a historian. He has taught me to be self-reflective as I write, to understand that I as an author must recognize my own imbeddedness in the discourses I seek to understand. Wulf helped to shape this project from the very beginning, offering me both keen advice and much-needed patience as this project has slowly come together over several years. His own research interests have inspired much of this work.

Heather DeHaan has been an indispensable part of this project from the beginning as well. She has constantly encouraged me to reconsider my analytical angles, to broaden my historiographical approach, and to seriously consider the entailments of every term I use. She has also offered excellent advice on sources to consider. Her kind readings of drafts and earlier papers on this topic have helped to shape a research approach that was narrow enough to actually complete within a lifetime, but still interesting enough to (hopefully) have broader relevance.

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them. Danica in the Institute for Contemporary History took great interest in my project and gave me excellent advice on additional sources I needed to consider. She regularly let me work long after the official closing hours of the Institute. The library staff of the Slovanska library spent days finding the sources I requested, never giving up on me. In Kranj the staff at the Central Library also kindly let me stay after hours. The staff at the Center for Public Opinion Research gave me excellent statistical analyses of survey data that I did not even know existed before visiting them. Though the building of the National University Library in Ljubljana was among the scariest I have ever visited, the staff proved amazingly kind and helpful, helping me access books that had been censored during the Socialist regime, many of which were the only known copies in the world.

In the United States I have had many great research opportunities as well. At the library of Congress I have never waited more than an hour to access sources, though their staff have cautioned me that some sources can take up to a day to retrieve. At my home institution our library staff have made this project possible. The interlibrary loan office has done absolute miracles finding sources not even listed on WorldCat. The regular library staff have never made me pay the fines I actually incurred. I could not have completed this project without generous teaching Assistantships and Dissertation Year Funding from the Binghamton University History Department.

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Lastly and most importantly I would like to thank my three-year-old, Tom, for his unflinching efforts to prevent me from completing this project. Over the past three years whenever he sees me with a computer he insists that we instead watch YouTube videos. Many times when I have opened a small window to continue typing he has banged the keyboard, usually erasing my most poignant interpretations and sharpest analyses. During the past several months he has repeatedly stressed the importance of playtime over all other endeavors. This dissertation, as much as he hates it, is dedicated to Tom, because I love him.

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## Abbreviations

AFŽ	Antifašistična organizacija žensk (The organization of Anti-Fascist Women)
AGITPROP	Agitacija in propaganda (Agitation and Propaganda)
AVNOJ	Antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Jugoslavije (The Anti-Fascist Council of the National Liberation of Yugoslavia)
CK KPJ	Centralni komitet komunističke partije Jugoslavije (The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia)
CK KPS	Centralni komitet komunistične partije Slovenije (The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovenia)
CK SKJ	Centralni komitet saveza komunistov Jugoslavije (The Central Committee of the League of Yugoslavian Communists)
CK ZKS	Centralni komitet zveza komunistov Slovenije (The Central Committee of the League of Slovene Communists)
DEMOS	Demokratska opozicija Slovenije (The Democratic Opposition of Slovenia)
IU SD	Informativni urad slovenskega domobranstva (The Information Office of the Slovene Homeguard)
INZ	Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino (The Institute for Contemporary History)
IZDG	Inštitut za zgodovino delavskega gibanja (The Institute for the History of the Worker's Movement)
JLA	Jugoslovanska ljudska armija (Yugoslavian People's Army)
KPJ	Komunistička partija Jugoslavije (The Communist Party of Yugoslavia)
KPS	Komunistična partija Slovenije (The Communist Party of Slovenia)
MVAC	Militaria Volontaria anti-Communist (Volunteer anti-Communist Military)
NOB	Narodnoosvobodilni boj (National Liberation War)
NOV	Narodnoosvobodilna vojska (National Liberation Army)
OF	Osvobodilna fronta (Liberation Front)
PIF	Proti-imperialistična fronta (Anti-imperialist Front)
SDS	Slovenska demokratska stranka (The Slovene Democratic Party)
SKJ	Saveza komunistov Jugoslavije (The League of Yugoslavian Communists)
SLS	Slovenska ljudska stranka (Slovene Peoples' Party)
SNOO	Slovenski narodnoosvobodilni odbor (Slovene National Liberation Committee)
SNOS	Slovenski narodnoosvobodilni svet (Slovene National Liberation Council)
SPŽŽ	Slovenska proti-fašistična organizacija žensk (Slovene Anti-Fascist Women's organization)
UDBA	Uprava državne bezbednosti armije (The Military Administration of State Security)

VOS Varnostno obveščevalna služba (Security Intelligence Service)  
ZKS Zveza komunistov Slovenije (The League of Slovene Communists)  
ZZB-NOB Zveza združenih borcev narodnoosvobodilnega boja Slovenije  
(Association of Slovene Warriors of the National Liberation War)

## Introduction

For the past seventy years, the dominant interpretive framework for collective memories of World War II in Slovenia has cast the Communist-led Slovene Partisans as victorious protagonists and rightful founders of the Slovene nation. In the name of justice for this same nation, many who identify with the Partisans' domestic enemies have challenged the Partisan narrative template — especially since the late 1980's. Despite, and in many respects because of, these challenges, Partisans remain prominent in Slovene memories. Decades of institutional sponsorship have made the Partisans into an almost-unforgettable plot element in Slovene collective memory constructs. The tools of collective memory allow one to examine how identity discourses emerge and, in cases like Slovenia, why they endure. Stories of the Partisans negotiate a specific Slovene memory space within a continuum of local, national and transnational discourses.<sup>1</sup>

There is no simple definition for “memory,” and that fact has given the field refreshing theoretical flexibility. Maurice Halbwachs coined the term collective memory to describe the power of one's group affiliation over individual memories. People are

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<sup>1</sup> See Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, 26-28, for a discussion of how cosmopolitan memories reframe national memories. In their discussion of the Holocaust they describe the hegemonic power of transnational memories that force local and national memory makers to reconcile themselves to these extra-state discourses through appropriating the transnational, adapting it to local conditions, or rejecting it. See also Stephen Welch and Ruth Wittlinger, “The Resilience of the Nation State”, 40-42 for a rebuttal to the idea that a cosmopolitan perspective should overrule the national perspective, as the nation state in the case of recent German history has shown remarkable resilience in competition with broader transnational discourses. Many in the field of memory such as Jan Assman, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” and Astrid Erll, “Introduction” in *Cultural Memory Studies: an International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, argue that no institution has yet equaled the power of modern states to create memory discourses. While the following work draws primarily from governing councils that purported to speak exclusively for Slovenes, it does not ignore the hegemonic power of regional discourse makers.

socially conditioned to remember in certain ways based on a store of information collectively shared by the groups to which they belong.<sup>2</sup> Jan Assman defines two distinct levels of memory: communicative and cultural. Communicative memory consists of lived experiences that provided a function for group cohesion. These memories mediate an individual's personal recollections. Cultural memory, by contrast, represents those discourses which create meaning for large, constructed identities.<sup>3</sup> Astrid Erll uses the term cultural memory to describe a "symbolic order" by which social groups construct a shared past as a basis for a shared identity.<sup>4</sup> James Wertsch shows that such memories draw from narrative templates, or "deep-seated story lines" that endure especially when one group feels threatened by another.<sup>5</sup>

In Slovenia, the collective template that memories have drawn from since the 1940's includes a brutal occupation by foreigners intent on destroying Slovenes as a people. Then Slovenes were able to overcome their differences, whether based on class, gender, religion, or political persuasion, to throw off this foreign yoke, winning the right to determine their own national destiny. Finally, as part of broader world systems, the Slovene struggle has contributed to the cause of world peace, whether of the Communist, Western Democratic, or European Union variety. Such stability has made the Partisan narrative a welcome reference point for those seeking to promote their own agendas. Reasons to draw from stories of the Partisans have varied drastically over the past seventy years. Their war has been used to legitimize policies as disparate as the first

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<sup>2</sup> Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 80-81, 170.

<sup>3</sup> Assman, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity", 125-33.

<sup>4</sup> Erll and Nünning, *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, 5.

<sup>5</sup> Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering*, 13.

five-year plan to the abandonment of central planning, the founding of Yugoslavia to Slovenia's exit from this same federation, joining the European Union to marching against EU-suggested austerity measures. Memories associated with this victory work as reference points because of their broad interpretive frameworks, which draw from the relative inflexibility of the narrative template. The story of Slovenia's National Liberation War represents the victory of a normatively imagined national community against outside enemies, a narrative that can be used to justify virtually any policy. The Partisan memory lets Slovenes navigate the hegemony of transnational forces in a way that allows them to retain power over imagining their own national community.

A memory like the Slovene Partisan victory works because it effectively mediates enough discourses with enough frequency in Slovene and broader European life to maintain relevance. This means that successful memories work in numerous political and social contexts. Dora Kostakopoulou has suggested that identities like citizenship can be "nested," meaning a person can simultaneously feel that they belong to a community, province, state, and broad international organization like the EU. Individuals negotiate self within multiple levels of identification, choosing elements that meet variously intersecting social needs within complex webs of belonging.<sup>6</sup> Astrid Erll contributes that any level of identity or memory is necessarily fluid, but mediated by other levels of one's consciousness.<sup>7</sup> At first glance there appears to be tension between identities that exist within a comfortable nest and those that are constantly mediated from

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<sup>6</sup> Kostakopoulou, *Citizenship, Identity, and Immigration in the European Union: Between Past and Future*, 66-67.

<sup>7</sup> Erll and Nünning, *Cultural Memory Studies*, 5.

the outside. An essentialized, measurable identity can only exist at a given point in time; otherwise, discourses, as poststructuralists have adequately shown, are constantly in flux and therefore highly fluid. The nest is fleeting while identity politics are eternal.

Identities can be constructed at various nodal points within one's social consciousness. Halbwachs recognized that societies consist of numerous collective memories.<sup>8</sup> People can feel belonging or discontentment as they negotiate many competing discourses of social life. Understanding memory as layered helps in deconstructing the process of memory construction. Furthermore, collective memory offers an interpretive angle to analyze why certain discourses gain media dominance while others do not. When the Brothers Grimm, for example, sought data for their German nation, or Slovene revolutionaries sought discourses to mobilize Slovenes on the basis of a national identity, they did not start from scratch, but sought out those local, communicative discourses, identifications, and memories that were compatible with the broader identities they sought to construct. They formed their German national fully aware of the universalizing nationalism in neighboring France and the push to imagine nations across the Western world. Whenever nation builders have succeeded, it has been because they effectively collected enough clusters of such identities that appealed to enough of their targeted population to reach a necessary critical mass that appropriately conforms to the broader transnational discourses competing for the allegiance of their respective masses.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 83.

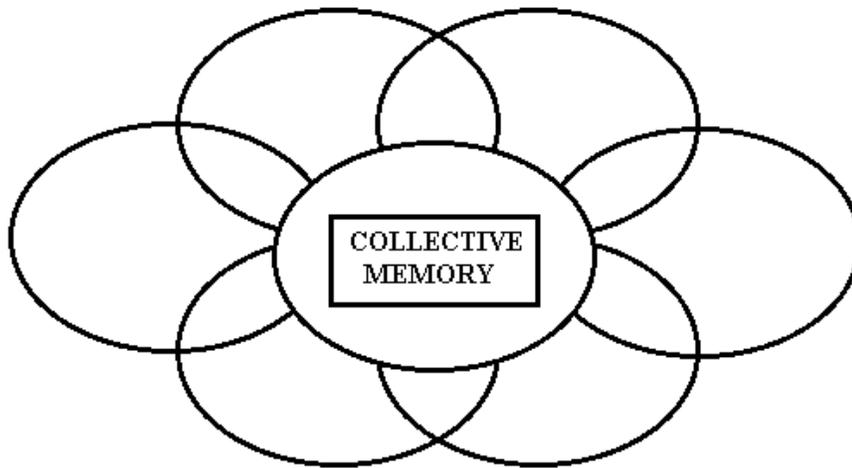
<sup>9</sup> See for example Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, 1991.

One of the problems in memory studies today is determining how best to gauge popular reception of elite-constructed memories.<sup>10</sup> While fully measuring public sentiments, ideas, and memory is of course impossible, such collectivities do nevertheless exist, and a researcher might benefit from the assumption that collectives exist, even if the tools to quantify them are imperfect. At any given point in time, across any selected sample size, there are definitive measures of sentiment, opinion, and memory narratives. They change constantly, of course, under virtually any stimulus, but at any one point in time, one could in theory measure in an individual the level to which their personal psyche is affected by a finite number of discourses to which they have been exposed. We might imagine these as a series of concentric circles. In a successful memory culture, these circles, representing memory's constituent discourses, are imbedded in each other to greater degrees than in unsuccessful memory cultures. Such memories might represent the average of communicative group memories, personal memories, corporate memories including broadly transnational discourses that exist within a nationally defined territorial space. A successful collective memory can draw elements from each of these memory building blocks. Group memories almost inevitably extend beyond the artificial borders that state builders try to impose, often forcing competition for loyalty from neighboring states and memory cultures. In figure 1.1 below, collective memory is imposed over the largely communicative memories from which it draws, showing that while many discourses converge as people naturally interact with one another, a memory structure at the level of a collective usually requires the power of something like a mobilizing state or the exigencies of wartime to be imposed over various other systems of identity. When

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<sup>10</sup> Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning in Memory," 180.

memories can be constructed broadly enough to incorporate multiple levels of a majority of people's social experience, yet specifically enough to influence individual



consciousness,  
such memories  
become powerful  
tools for  
mobilization.  
Ideal-typical

**Figure 1.1** Ideal typical collective memory

memory societies,

such as the one imagined in figure 1.1, hardly represent lived reality; rather, they show the ambition of state builders. The various concentric circles constantly expand, contract, and move in relation to other ideas constituting self, group, and broader social categories. In figure 1.1 each circle's axes are defined by the level of importance discourse makers ascribe to each memory structure and the number of people who identify with these structures. In the figures that follow, the circles will all be the same size, as the goal is not to measure every identity marker in Slovenia, but to show their relevance to collective memories of the war. In the course of recent Slovene history, the social segments that party leaders appeal to have varied widely. Political legitimacy has emerged on an ad-hoc basis, and the uses of memory in these situations has similarly been experimental. The Partisan memory works, however, because of its narrative stability, not the uniformity of its social functions.

Collective memory, according to Bill Niven and Stefan Berger, then, is only a “constantly shifting and fragile consensus ... dependent ... upon the relative power and interaction of a number of different memory contingents.”<sup>11</sup> The following study does not benefit from the tools to plot such shifts (not even the NSA has such power), but its methodology rests on the theoretical assumption that such movements do indeed occur.

Memory shifts can be perceived, if only through a glass darkly, by examining bundled discourses on nation, politics, and morality. Within the Slovenian discursive space, over the period covered in this dissertation, broadly consumed national media<sup>12</sup>, including literature, film, newsprint, art, music, and television are data sets which most consistently represent a civic sphere<sup>13</sup> from which collective memories draw their building blocks.<sup>14</sup> Though the Slovene memory space has always drawn from broader

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<sup>11</sup> Berger and Niven, *Writing the History of Memory*, 11.

<sup>12</sup> In the Socialist Republic of Slovenia, war discourses were most consistently presented in monographs and the national daily newspapers. In this dissertation I study individuals and organizations that produced such discourses, the media organizations that transmitted them, key individuals who contributed to public discourses, and their discontents. Those state and party organizations that were most responsible for producing war history include the Central Committee of the Communist parties of Slovenia and Yugoslavia, the Office of Agitation and Propaganda (Agitprop), the History Commission of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia, the Institute for the History of the Worker’s Movement, and the Organization of Fighters of the National Liberation War. Prominent media include the daily newspapers *Ljudska Pravica* and *Slovenski Poročevalec*, and the newspaper they combined to form in 1959, *Delo*; the Maribor newspaper *Večer*, the Ljubljana newspaper *Dnevne Novice*. By 1948, radio transmissions relayed stories that first appeared in the newspapers, not developing independent coverage for another decade. Television first appeared with the organization of RTV SLO in 1959 and would become significant by the early 1960’s. In addition to monographs, movies were an important vehicle for the transmission of war discourses, and were carefully monitored by the Central Committee until the early 1970’s. Discontents to dominant discourses emerged in the 1980’s and include historians like Boris Mlakar, increased publication for deceased philosopher poets like Edvard Kocbek, and philosophers like Spomenka Hribar. By the end of the 1980’s, all had access to popular presses and publishers.

<sup>13</sup> This is from Jürgen Habermas’ notion of a public sphere. I use the term civic to differentiate elite-produced mass media from the more informal, local, and everyday contributions to public discourse that Habermas studies. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, 27.

<sup>14</sup> Tammy Smith has outlined a useful system for analyzing the development of collective memories. In her study of competing memories of World War II in Istria, she shows that certain key plot elements are

Yugoslavian and European discourses, it nevertheless existed as a separate community, bounded by its own unique language and supported by its own national media. Stories of the National Liberation War were written as uniquely local, Slovene stories. Slovenia's long history of autonomy within broader European and global power structures is not unlike that of other small European nation states such as Denmark, Belgium, the Baltic States, or other former Yugoslav countries. While Slovene discourses draw from transnational ones, the inverse is seldom true. Slovene discourses rarely influence those of even their close neighbors, as the Slovene language is largely unintelligible even to speakers of closely related Slavic languages. But ideas like Socialism, Democracy, Human Rights, and European Integration have been powerful enough across the region to profoundly influence Slovene society. The narrative template of the Partisan war has served as a welcome shorthand for Slovenes to make sense of these discourses, among themselves, speaking and writing in Slovene, while jealously guarding their right to make their own political decisions while negotiating the governing counsels of Yugoslavia and the European Union.

Aleida Assman has described two transnational poles around which European memories of World War II have coalesced: the Holocaust and the Gulag. In Western Europe, the Holocaust has come to represent *the* crime against humanity against which all other crimes can be measured. The political and economic structures of the European Union have been built around the preservation of peace and the promotion of human

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arranged differently among Italian refugees in Italy, Croats in Istria, and the hybridized Croatian and Italian Istrian communities in New York City. Where the first group emphasizes victimization, the second stresses the magnanimity of the victors, while the third glosses over responsibility, and, as a means to keep interethnic peace, focuses on a shared story of general war suffering. Smith, "The development of narrative differences in Istria 1945-1995."

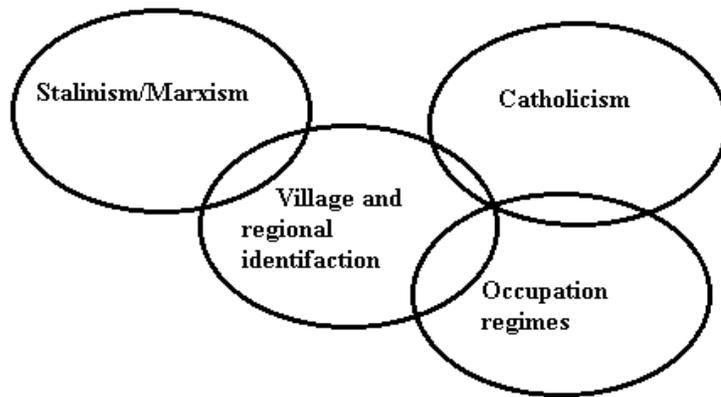
rights. These West European memories have not been able to fully include Eastern European memories, which have largely ignored the specificity of Jewish suffering and focused instead on memories of dual suffering under Nazism and Soviet occupations.<sup>15</sup> In academia, memory theorists and historians have built successful careers deconstructing the pitfalls and inconsistencies around both memory poles. As Slovenes have remembered their war experience and worked to construct and reconstruct collective memories, they find themselves uncomfortably between East and West but not really belonging to either. The Red Army helped to liberate Slovenia, but left after only three months. For most of their postwar history, a majority of Slovenes have believed that there was no Holocaust in Slovenia. Recent historiography has shown that the small Jewish community of Slovenia did in fact suffer the murderous effects of the European-wide genocide, though the possible role of Slovenes in either supporting or resisting these efforts has yet to be studied, let alone remembered.<sup>16</sup> Slovenes suffered under German occupation, though to a far lesser degree than other Eastern Europeans (though much more than most occupied Western Europeans). During World War II most Slovenes were killed at the hands of fellow Slovenes. Slovene memorists therefore have difficulty inserting themselves into broader European memories, and often awkwardly try to impose European memories on Slovenia such as the recent efforts to historicize the Holocaust in Slovenia or efforts to compare Slovene suffering under Communism to broader Eastern European suffering under Stalinism.

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<sup>15</sup> Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*, 27-29.

<sup>16</sup> Kranjc, "On the Periphery: Jews, Slovenes and the Memory of the Holocaust," 591-593. Gregor Kranjc suspects that a contingent of Slovene collaborators may have assisted in sending Ljubljana Jews to their deaths, but does not have access to sources that prove this.

If one could plot dominant discursive trends in Slovenia at the beginning of World War II they might look like figure 1.2 below. Despite the dominance of the Partisan memory in later years, at the beginning of the war the Slovene resistance seemed



**Figure 1.2 Slovene identity politics in 1941**

to contemporaries hardly remarkable nor worth remembering. In 1941, Slovene Communists did a miserable job of appealing to the society they sought to lead against the Italian,

German and Hungarian occupiers. Communists proclaimed a socialist identity construct that was almost completely incompatible with other discourses influencing people in Slovenia. The few hundred Slovene Communists were largely tools following vague directives from the Comintern, not feeling they had the authority to adapt their methods to local conditions on the ground. The first chapter of this dissertation examines the wartime archives of Liberation Front leaders and their opposition to show how various organizations learned to mobilize Slovenes by appealing to ideas of national identification. The circles in figure 1.2 are not completely separate. People across Slovenia identified with various competing ideologies. None of these ideologies represented either Slovenes as a whole or exclusively Slovenes. Partisan media workers contributed towards the imagination of a separate Slovene national space as they negotiated these competing regional discourses. Figure 1.2 thus looks little like the ideal typical in figure 1.1.

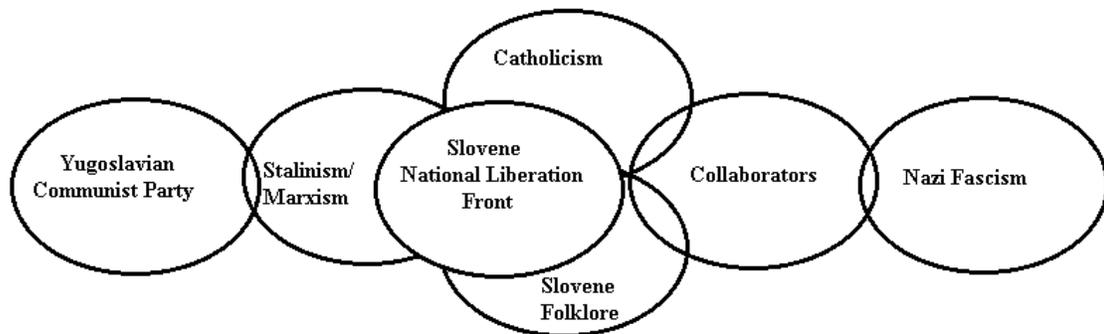
At the beginning of the war, Slovenia's small Communist party dominated the country's resistance movement, and therefore gained support from people who were opposed to the occupation regimes. However, as the party slowly gained power, its brutal methods alienated non-Communists who were otherwise willing to cooperate in the fight against Nazi-fascism. Over the course of the war, many of these disaffected, former Communist allies joined collaborating military formations, including: village guard militias (VS), the Italian volunteer anti-Communist militia (MVAC), the Slovene branch of the Serbian Četnik movement, and later, the German-controlled home guard, or Domobranstvo.<sup>17</sup> By the middle of 1942, the Slovene party leadership recognized that it could not bully people into supporting its cause and began to experiment with new mobilizing rhetorics. Communists transformed their movement into a national liberation war (NOB), opening their largely Soviet inspired rhetoric up to ancient Slovene folkloric traditions such as the peasant hero from the 1570's, Matija Gubanc, and the mythical king from old South Slavic folklore, Matjaž, who would one day rise again to redeem the Slavs. They curtailed anti-religious propaganda and successfully courted the favor of roughly half of the low-level, rural, Catholic clergy. They limited Communist propaganda to special educational seminars, held primarily among fighting units, and welcomed fellow travelers into their ranks. By the end of the war, Communist Party members made up less than 20 percent of the entire liberation front movement, and even lower percentages within the actual fighting units themselves, showing that Party leaders had in some respects created an appealing collective identity, as illustrated in figure 1.3, rather than the Communist revolution they also wanted. While collaborators drew from

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<sup>17</sup> Mlakar, *Slovensko Domobranstvo 1943-1945: Ustanovitev, organizacija, idejno ozadje* (Slovene Home Guard 1943-1945: Founding, organization, and ideological structure), 35-40.

some of the same communicative memories as the Partisans, anti-communists were unable to impose a compelling collective identity as they remained under firm Italian or German command.

Chapter two reexamines the Yugoslavian Party's efforts to subordinate the Slovene party, and argues that the conflict between parties during the war set a precedent



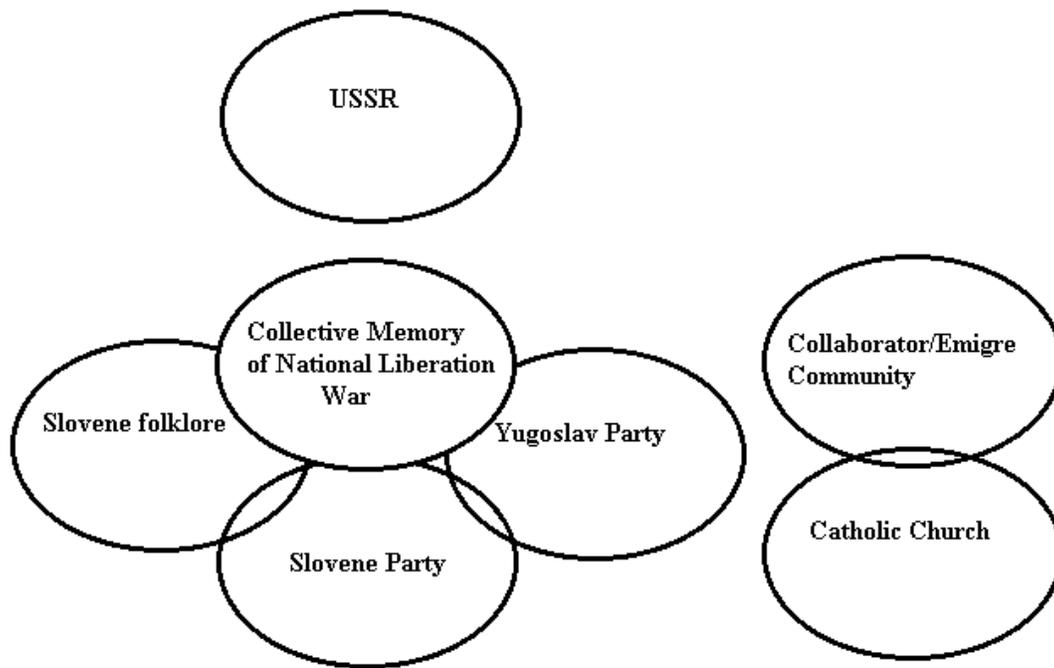
**Figure 1.3 Wartime Slovene identity politics**

for memory battles that would continue for another forty years. A combination of bureaucratic bullying and Slovene ineffectiveness against the German counterattack of 1943 allowed the Yugoslav party to gain control. By the end of 1944 the Central Committee of the KPJ controlled almost all Communist media through its Agitprop commission, but Axis powers controlled almost all Slovene territory. Slovene publishers on occupied territory endured pre-publication censorship, forcing them to narrate the war as a conflict against Communism. Agitprop-coordinated Yugoslav media, on the other hand, focused on the fight against Fascism, and the “common goal” of achieving national liberation and socialism. The competing media strategies created a virtual reality void of middle ground as Slovenes took up arms against one another to battle abstract notions of either Communism or Nazi Fascism. By March 1945, Partisan military and civil control in Slovenia was in shambles, popular support was low, and it was only through the

massive assistance of Yugoslav brigades, Soviet troops, the Bulgarian army and Anglo-American bombers that the Republic ever came into existence. But Slovenia's first official war narratives instead emphasized the isolation, independence, and total cooperation of Slovenes, in supposed brotherly unity with other Yugoslavs.<sup>18</sup> Slovenes did not have the political power to narrate an exclusive ethno-national space at the expense of the regional powers that guaranteed their political power. Over the next forty five years, however, Slovene-centered memories of the war would compete with memories that gave agency to Belgrade. Memory structures at the end of the war can be represented by figure 1.4, which shows a crudely imposed Yugoslav Communist identity that had little resonance among regular Slovenes. Ideologies like Marxism/Leninism might have inspired party members, but the Yugoslav party failed in this period to draw broadly from elements of local Slovene culture, as the Liberation Front had learned to do during the war. Trying to crudely impose an identification with Marxism had little mobilizing utility inside Slovenia.

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<sup>18</sup> Two collections of Partisan war memories from 1947 illustrate the motifs that would become dominant by the end of the decade in Slovenia. In both *Spomini na Partisanska Leta* and *Iz Partisanskih Let* all of the memories are those of Slovene soldiers. They cover all regions of Slovenia, especially those still under Italian and Austrian control. In their analyses of the importance of the war, veterans often discuss brotherhood with other Yugoslavs, but these other Yugoslavians are otherwise absent from their narratives, and certainly never have names. Vidmar, *Iz Partisanskih Let* (From the Partisan years), VI-IX.



**Figure 1.4 Memory structures in Slovenia at the end of World War II**

Chapter three begins at conflict's end, when legitimizing rhetorics from the prewar period had been largely discredited, and what remained was a grudging popular identification with Communism as the only governing ideology left.<sup>19</sup> Across Eastern Europe, Soviet armies looked on as National Fronts from Poland to Bulgaria gained political control, eliminated competition, and created Soviet-imposed Communist parties. In Slovenia, the Communist party had gained power early in the war, but it struggled with its Yugoslav minders, who in turn briefly contended with the Soviets for sovereignty over Yugoslavia. Despite the oppressive nature of party apparatuses cementing their control over the Republic's legislative, judicial, administrative, economic, and media organs, the new government quickly gained favor among the masses. People wanted to rebuild their

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<sup>19</sup> In addition to a lack of popular credibility, there were few left to oppose the new regime as the most egregious enemies of the party, former collaborators, had been murdered, exiled, or taught to keep very quiet.

broken infrastructure, which correlated well with party plans for industrialization and building socialism. Land redistribution in August 1945 proved wildly popular.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, Tito's bellicose irredentism over areas he hoped to annex to Slovenia from neighboring Italy and Austria appealed to the nascent national aspirations of many Slovenes.<sup>21</sup>

By comparison to later years, in the immediate aftermath of the conflict, the highest levels of the state and party paid little attention to the war, except, on rare occasion, to describe the struggle to build socialism as a continuation of the battle to defeat the occupiers. In other parts of Europe, Soviet authorities sponsored histories that whitewashed legacies of collaboration while promoting memories of resistance to Fascism and gratitude to the Soviet Union.<sup>22</sup> Such narratives proved particularly difficult in states that had closely collaborated, such as Estonia, Slovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria. In places like Poland, Croatia, Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania, memories of a common resistance simmered alongside memories of ethnic persecution. Additionally, in Poland, East Germany, and Serbia, the barbaric behavior of Soviet troops ensured that memories of "Soviet liberation" would never really take root. In Slovenia, by contrast, a native resistance movement had significant support with minimal, though critical, assistance from the outside only in the final months of the war. In addition, Slovenes did not need to whitewash a history of collaboration: murdered and exiled collaborators posed almost

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<sup>20</sup> Bokovoy, "Peasants and Partisans: The Politics of the Countryside, 1945-1953," 118.

<sup>21</sup> Štih, Simoniti, and Vodopivec, *Slovenska Zgodovina: družba, politika, kultura* (Slovene history, society, politics, and culture), 422-423.

<sup>22</sup> Karge, "Practices and Politics of Second World War Remembrance: (Trans-) National Perspectives from Eastern and South-Eastern Europe," 141.

no threat to new state structures. Thus in Slovenia, state builders felt there was really no need to remember the war; the state had won its right to authority and had virtually no competition. Nevertheless, these state builders worked under Yugoslav control, which had little resonance for ordinary Slovenes.

In late 1946 the federal leadership decided that Yugoslavia was failing across the board at building socialism, and sought new ways to mobilize people and resources. As part of the upcoming five-year plan, Tito approved measures to simultaneously increase industrial production, collectivize agriculture, improve primary and secondary education, and increase funding for the media.<sup>23</sup> There is no evidence from Agitprop meetings of any effort to include the war as a talking point in these mobilization efforts. However both popularly and within party meetings, many began to make use of the collective rhetorical power of wartime memories to justify the new campaigns of a thoroughly socialized state.<sup>24</sup> The same presses that published Slovenia's newspapers began printing series of war memoirs, and references to the war became far more ubiquitous in newspapers. Just before the split between Tito and Stalin became public, much of the Partisan mobilizing rhetoric had been incorporated into the official identification of the

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 19; Obradović, "Komunistička Modernizacija u Jugoslaviji, 1947-1953" (Communist Modernization in Yugoslavia, 1947-1953), 38, 41-42; Kardelj, "Zakaj nam je potrebna kontrola in kakšna naj bo: Ekspozé o predlogu zakona o šplošni državni kontroli dne 13. marca 1946" (Why we need control and what it should look like: An exposé on the draft law on General Social Control from March 13, 1946), 14-20.

<sup>24</sup> At the second SNOS meeting on September 9, 1946, Maks Šnuderl voiced a common sentiment "bodoča socialna filozofija bo imela lahko delo če bo iskala primer nastajanje pravne države. Treba ji bo samo prečitati zgodovino razvoja in nastanka slovenske državnosti v okviru Jugoslavije v času narodnoosvobodilno borbe 1941-1945" (the work of any future social philosophy will be made easy by seeking a case study in the formation of a real state, and such an example can be found in the history of the growth and development of Slovene statehood within the framework of Yugoslavia during the national liberation war, 1941-1945). Followed by applause. AS 218: Stenografske beležke drugo rednega zasedanja slovenskega narodnoosvobodilnega sveta, 9, 10 Oktobra, 1946, (Stenographic notes of the Second Regular Meeting of the Slovene National Liberation Council, 9, 10 October, 1946), 20.

Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ) with the victory of the war.<sup>25</sup> Figure 1.5 shows the emerging collective memory of the war. After 1948 the leaders of the Republic and federation tuned in to popular discourses on the war, and the myth of the Partisan war gained official blessing.

Chapter four begins in 1948 when a series of economic and foreign policy disputes between Yugoslav and Soviet leaders led Stalin to force Tito's party out of the world organization of Communist parties, the Cominform. Up until 1948 Yugoslavian party leaders had treated Stalin like a prophet, and his writings as scripture. For Yugoslav leaders, losing this core to their belief system caused temporary discomfort, but quickly proved to be profoundly liberating. Mateja Režek shows that between 1948 and 1953, Yugoslavia was in a period of experimentation, where the dogmas of Stalinist state socialism were discarded in favor of anything that would lend the new state legitimizing authority. The mythology of Slovenes' own National Liberation War would easily displace an official memory culture devoted to Stalin and International Communism.

War memory had popular appeal long before the state began to control these memories, however. In the five-year period before Yugoslavian leaders effectively defined their own path to socialism, a slight relaxation of party controls over publishing occurred. It was in this period that non-party-scripted narratives of the war began to appear, some of which portrayed the Partisans in a manner that leaders of the office for Agitation and Propaganda felt inappropriate to the leaders of the new Revolution. In *Strah in Pogum*, Edvard Kocbek, for example, attempted to humanize fictional Partisans

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<sup>25</sup> Sabrina Ramet argues that the war memory was one of Yugoslavia's only postwar legitimizing factors. *The Three Yugoslavias: State Building and Legitimation, 1918-2005*, 361-362.

by showing them to be flawed individuals. In response, Agitprop director Boris Zihel accused Kocbek of “spitting on everything that is good in the world.”<sup>26</sup> To combat such perceived excesses, the party retightened controls over the presses. Part of this reassertion of control included standardizing narratives of the war, a process which would continue throughout the 1950’s under the aegis of the Central Committee’s Commission for history, a Museum of the National Liberation War, and an Institute for the Study of the History of the Worker’s movement; all either first organized or proposed in this five-year period.

After Khrushchev’s 1956 “secret speech” denouncing Stalin’s cult of personality, Soviets too experienced a brief period of thaw when a few Soviet authors also portrayed Red Army soldiers as flawed human beings, who were nevertheless part of a great struggle. Instead of being punished, as in Slovenia, Soviet authorities celebrated these efforts as an appropriate way to remember their complicated heroes and delegitimize the Stalin cult, in which every war victory was a direct result of the great leader’s genius.<sup>27</sup> In Slovenia the war itself had gained a cult of personality. In the Soviet Union the Great Patriotic War would similarly replace a now defunct cult of personality surrounding Stalin.

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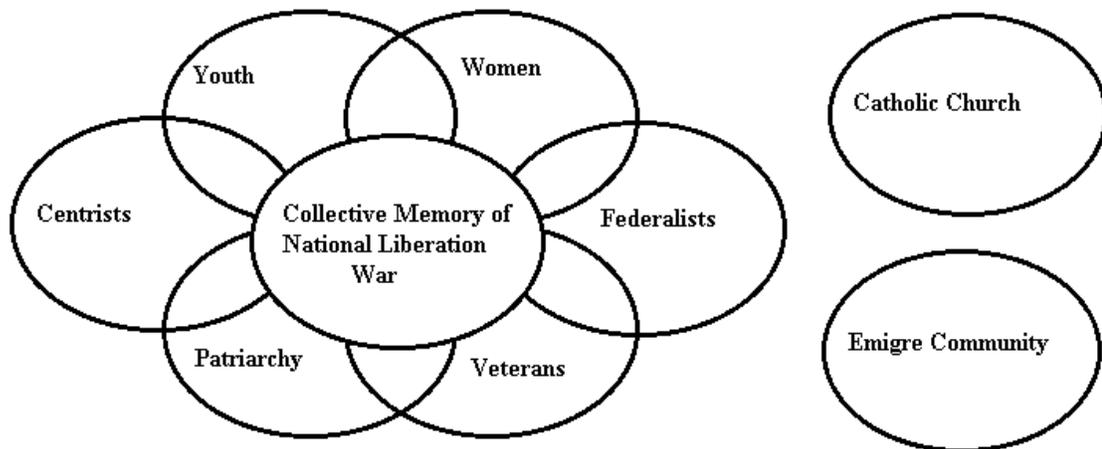
<sup>26</sup> AS 1589 III, AC 783 3.I.1952, 1 (pljunek na vse kar je pozitivnega v svetu).

<sup>27</sup> Pletushkov and Yakushevskiy, *Osobennosti istoriografii velikoi otechestvennoi voinuy* (Historiographical characteristics of the Great Patriotic War), 11-25. Pletushkov and Yakushevskiy use examples such as Yu. N. Ivanova’s memoir of Corporal Glushenko, who fails to carry out orders as one example of humanizing the Red Army. The edition referenced was published in 1979, though a version existed in the 1950’s as well. Pletushkov and Yakushevskiy also describe A.M. Nekrich’s 1965 publication of *1941: June 22* as an example of historiography that was deeply critical of Stalin and the level of military preparedness on the eve of invasion. The fact that the USSR nevertheless defeated the Axis powers was a testament, in Nekrich’s writing, to the strength of the Soviet people, not their leadership.

Chapter five covers the conflicts that emerged in the 1950's and 60's as war memory became functional and various interest groups competed to control its functions. These conflicts intensified after Yugoslavia removed pre-publication censorship in 1960, a decision taken at the federal and republic levels as a means to create more genuine support for state policies. The Yugoslav press in the 1960's was easily the freest and most diverse in Eastern Europe, followed distantly by Polish presses, which after 1956 could cautiously promote Polish national memories over the brotherhood of Socialist nations.<sup>28</sup> In Yugoslavia, criticisms against the state itself (rather than specific policies) could still be punished with slander and libel laws. In this period, members of the Yugoslav and Slovene party regularly fought over whether to narrate the war as a Slovene or Yugoslav victory. The war informed the conflict between Centrists, who wanted greater Yugoslav control over politics and economics, and Federalists, who desired greater authority at the Republic level. Whether to celebrate the heroes of Slovenia or Yugoslavia became highly politicized choices. Both the Yugoslav and

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<sup>28</sup> Řezník, Ciucea, Mannová, and Szpak, "Regional History and the Regional Agenda in Romania, the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia," 61-62.



**Figure 1.5 Slovene memory structures in the 1950's**

Slovene parties (Leagues after 1952) worked to establish institutions that would create, then safeguard, official interpretations of the war. The academics who staffed these institutions, however, proved difficult to control. They often rebelled against their orders to produce official Marxist histories, instead focusing on what they felt to be ideologically untainted and heavily empirical work. Some sought to broaden the collective appeal of the war by including women's perspectives of the conflict. The Slovene Central Committee opposed such efforts as divisive. Veterans sought to differentiate themselves from the upcoming generation, seeking a place of reverence in the memory culture that would eventually rile younger Slovenes. In particular, the conflicts between Centralists and Federalists, then between Youth and Veterans, would define memory politics in Slovenia over the next 40 years. None of these contestants challenged the hegemony of the narrative, only the limits of its social entailments. Thus the war had become a collective memory: it represented a shared signifier that could legitimize a person's corporate interests. In figure 1.5, the Catholic Church and Émigré community remain outside this public sphere dominated by war memory. Unlike in

figure 1.4, however, the Catholic Church inside Slovenia and the Émigré community no longer influence one another, as state persecution against the church had effectively curtailed its power to work with the former collaborators in exile. By contrast, in Poland in the 1960's, the Catholic Church had become a symbol of national resistance to Communist authorities, and the Church drew broad social support. The Slovene Catholic Church failed to recognize how much Slovenes genuinely identified with their state. Nor were Slovene Church officials able to reach a *modus vivendi* with the State, as the Russian Orthodox Church had done with the Soviet Union.<sup>29</sup> In Europe the Catholic Church had vied for authority with worldly powers for centuries, while in Orthodox lands like Russia, Church and State had a history of cooperation dating from the era of Byzantium.

Chapter six focuses exclusively on the year 1968, when several media events converged in a way that shook the faith of Slovenes in the institutions of their Republic and federation, and convinced many war-era hardliners within the League that market-oriented reforms had gone too far. First, students in the universities of Ljubljana and Maribor began protests over lack of stipends, poor housing conditions, and high fees. Student presses tied these complaints into global issues of inequality, questioning the philosophical bases of all modern industrial societies (including Yugoslavian self-management).<sup>30</sup> The protests ended soon after they began. Tito personally intervened in

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<sup>29</sup> Rousselet, "The Russian Orthodox Church and Reconciliation with the Soviet Past," 47-49.

<sup>30</sup> In an essay that ran on October 23, 1967 in the Ljubljana student paper *Tribuna*, for example, Rudi Rizman described the Vietnam war as merely one more manifestation of a world order that was founded upon oppression. He concluded his essay by writing that the right wing of American society justifies violence through reference to noble ideas such as the defense of democracy. He argued that such justifications were no different than those excuses for oppression under Austria Hungary or interwar Yugoslavia, then provocatively suggested that the legacy of the Liberation War continued to justify

the debate, siding with the students and generously meeting all of their demands. Slovene media portrayed Tito's magnanimity in stark contrast to the brutal police violence against student demonstrators in Western countries.<sup>31</sup> In September, the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia brought thousands of refugees into the country. These very visible reminders of oppression in the Communist East reinforced Yugoslavia's third, democratic way of governance in the minds of many media consumers. Against the backdrop of constant coverage of American atrocities in Vietnam, Slovenes felt that their system of government was among the most just in the world.<sup>32</sup> They had it seemed not only navigated between memory politics of East and West, but somehow come out ahead of both camps.

This overwhelming popular support for Yugoslavian traditions buoyed the old Revolutionary guard, who now considered themselves to be conservatives, in their battle against those who sought western-style market reforms (so-called liberals) throughout the federation. As centrists gained power at the end of the decade, guarding the history of the NOB became as high a priority as it had been in the late 1950's. For federalists and economic liberals, life in the decade of the 1970's would seem far more oppressive. Their

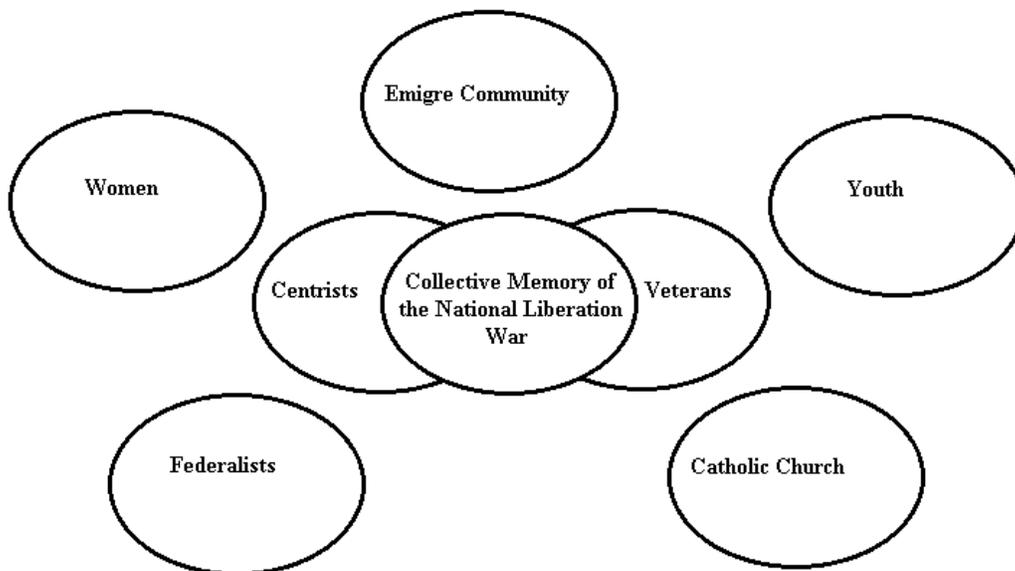
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oppression in the current Yugoslavia. Rizman suggested that a new world order should be built on a foundation that explicitly rejected any justification for violence.

<sup>31</sup> From a survey conducted by the Center for Public Opinion Research in 1972, it seems Tito's propaganda was effective. When asked for the cause of the student protests, having two choices among 13 different responses 30% of respondents chose "the students have it too good and don't know what they want." The next largest percentage, 22.5% chose "the poor material situation of students and unequal opportunities for study." In contrast, in a similar survey in 1969, respondents blamed "lack of job opportunities" and "the poor material situation of students" ahead of "the students have it too good." Toš, *Vrednote v prehodu I. Slovensko javno mnenje 1968-1990*, (Changing Values vol I. Slovene Public Opinion 1968-1990), 41,127.

<sup>32</sup> One question in a Center for Public Opinion survey from 1969 asked respondents to rank Yugoslavia among 13 other countries with regards to 12 different values. Notably, 75% of Slovenes ranked Yugoslavia first in terms of "peacefulness and image in the world." Toš, 1997, 133.

former press freedoms had been curtailed, as had social activity independent of the League of Communists. Yet for most Slovenes, at least for those who had jobs, their livelihoods and a high economic standard of living were tied to the power structures of the League, and support for the Yugoslavian federation remained quite high throughout the decade. Historians in that period filled Slovenia's literary marketplace with monographs of the National Liberation Struggle. The dominance of this memory remained, but its ability to incorporate certain segments of Slovene society had waned, as shown in figure 1.6; The National Liberation War was becoming a memory that served the interests of centrists and veterans.



**Figure 1.6 Slovene memory structures in the 1960's**

Chapter Seven begins after the tumults of 1968 had largely passed. Many historians argue that the time elapsed between the 1971 repression of nationalist organs in Yugoslavia and Tito's death in 1980 represents a period when Yugoslavia was held

together by the charisma and memory culture associated with Tito alone.<sup>33</sup> The thesis makes sense in light of the almost-immediate failure of the state after his death, but makes that demise seem inevitable, which few predicted at the time.<sup>34</sup> However, in the decade before Tito's death, many Yugoslavs began to seek alternative forms of cultural belonging, something foreign to a Communist revolution which had originally sought to remake every aspect of the new socialist person. Against this backdrop, state authorities, the press, and scholars continued to promote a Partisan war memory that almost no one challenged, but notably, no one cared to challenge either. As the state became unable to fulfill its promises of social welfare that had brought it to power in the first place, many of its citizens became disillusioned with mobilizing rhetoric that seemed to demand so much while offering so little. War memory became the exclusive domain of veterans and the issue that caused the most contestation among these memory guardians during the 1970's was deciding who could legitimately claim a Partisan pension. This issue mattered little to most Slovenes, who had been largely sidelined by a memory that had been rhetorically owned by self-interested veterans. Thus neither support for nor attacks against the Partisan mythology carried serious resonance in Slovenia in the 1970's and early 80's.

One attack did occur in 1975, when the poet Edvard Kocbek described the regime's postwar killings of captured collaborators in a nationally available interview. The regime reacted quickly to discredit him. Prominent historians wrote of the error of

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<sup>33</sup> Luthar, ed., *The Land Between: A History of Slovenia*, 482.

<sup>34</sup> Meier, *Yugoslavia: A History of its Demise*, 9.

his analyses.<sup>35</sup> Not for another 10 years would any other Slovene discuss the postwar killings or any other narrative contrary to the Partisan mythology of the NOB in public. However, in the next decade, as Yugoslavia's economic situation worsened, Slovenes began to question many of the fundamental structures of their society, including the collective memory of the War. Like the dissident Aleksandr Solzhenytsyn for Soviets, Kocbek's was a lone voice in the wilderness that gained volume as his state began to crumble. Kocbek's support among the broader European peace and human right's movement, notably through editorials by the German Heinrich Böll largely shielded him from the judicial power of the Yugoslav state. Few Yugoslavs wanted to offend Europe, especially when many hoped to join Yugoslavia to the emerging European Community.

The early 1980's were a period of hyperinflation, political uncertainty, and press freedom for Slovenes. The erstwhile power of the League faded as state institutions could no longer provide for the basic economic needs of Slovenes. Civic Society emerged to fill the void left by a crumbling regime. Some made light of the system and its values. In the late 1970's and early 80's punk bands like *Laibach* and *Pankrti* parodied the totalitarianism of the 1940's in a way that many felt undermined the legacy of the Liberation War. The art movement associated with *Neue Slowenische Kunst* (New Slovene Art) facetiously embraced Nazi propaganda, showing its similarities to the propaganda used by Yugoslav officials. It was also a time of burgeoning civil society. In this period Slovenes developed local variants of numerous transnational movements including: trade organizations, religious and spiritual movements, anti-conscription

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<sup>35</sup> Štih, Simoniti, Vodopivec, *Slovenska Zgodovina: družba, politika, kultura* (Slovene history, society, politics, and culture), 471.

movements, societies for environmental protection, and groups working to ensure human rights, including those of women, gays and lesbians, and immigrants.<sup>36</sup> *None* were dependent on the state. Severe economic failings, together with the state's moral failings (as evidenced by Slobodan Milošević's support of Serb violence against Albanians in Kosovo), led to Yugoslavia's collapse.<sup>37</sup> As the state lay in the throes of dissolution, however, World War II veterans continued to receive evermore generous benefits to compensate for their role in founding the federation. They remained an anchor of social stability, at least in their own minds, in a time of uncertainty.

Chapter eight covers the years of Slovene transition to independence. The total delegitimation of Yugoslav political authority by the late 1980's spawned the search for new unifying political discourses, and in effect opened the gate for suppressed discourses to once again enter the realms of public conversations. Tito was gone, self-management seemingly failed, and new historians were presenting more and more evidence that Slovenes were missing crucial elements in their histories of the Second World War. For the first time, people inside Slovenia could freely read the diverse histories written by the émigré community, including those who actively opposed the Communist regime and its official history of the war. Some tried to reconfigure histories of wartime collaborators to new cosmopolitan memory trends, notably the concern with victims that accompanied the globalization of the Holocaust. The collaborators in such histories were no longer valiant fighters against Communism, but above all, victims demanding political restitution from

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<sup>36</sup> Mastnak, "From Social Movements to National Sovereignty," 96-101.

<sup>37</sup> Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias: State Building and Legitimation, 1918-2005*, 334, 364-366, 391, 498.

the grave.<sup>38</sup> Others began to advocate “reconciling” competing histories of the war in an effort to incorporate all into the new national community. By 1994, the person who coined the term “reconciliation,” the philosopher Spomenka Hribar, wrote that such a goal was impossible given that each side in Slovenia’s new memory debates wanted political gain at the expense of the other; Hribar came to feel that “reconciliation” would only gloss over the diversity of Slovenia’s people. Unlike in the rest of Eastern Europe, Slovenes could not blame the Soviets, they could hardly blame the Serbs, nor could they outsource guilt for their crimes on ethnic neighbors such as Ukrainian SS, Polish nationalists, Lithuanians, or even Croatian Ustaše...Slovene crimes had been committed by Slovenes. Some Slovenes hoped for truth and reconciliation on the basis of what occurred in Chile and Argentina, and what was planned for South Africa. What they came up against, however, was a pact of silence similar to the post-Franco regime in Spain. This battle of memories can be seen in figure 1.7.

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<sup>38</sup> See for example the introduction to Boris Mlakar’s *Slovensko Domobranstvo: Organizacija, ustanovitev, in idejno ozadje*, pages 3-11. Mlakar argues that the memory of the Domobranstvo has undermined the legacy of their fight to defend an independent Slovenia against communism, implying that the last half century might have been better had Slovenia won its independence sooner. Also see Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, 76.

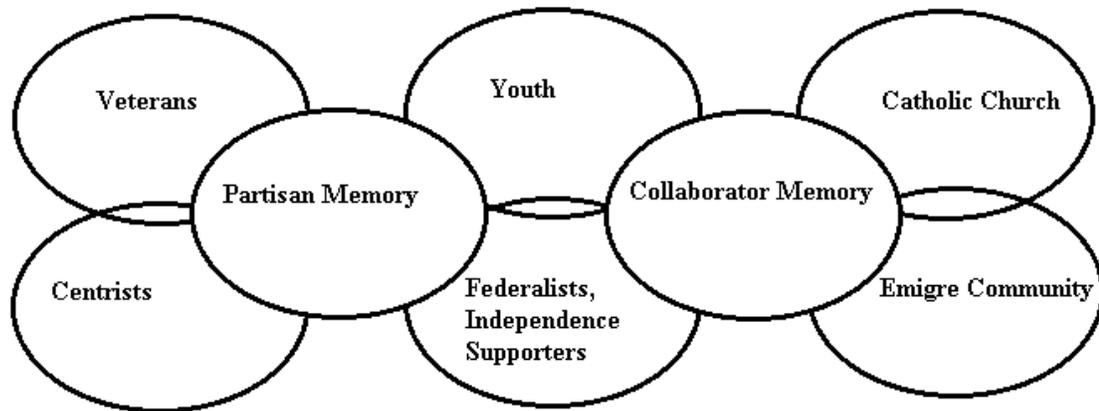


Figure 1.7 Slovene memories after 1968

For many Slovenes, the early 1990's was a period of intense political uncertainty. The world community was slow to offer recognition to the newly independent state and was seemingly oblivious to the bloody wars raging to the South.<sup>39</sup> Many Slovenes reacted by reexamining previously accepted truisms of World War II. A flood of popular literature in this period challenged the decades of histories which seemed to present only the Partisan side of World War II. But this concern with Slovenia's past was more than a domestic affair, as conservative politicians in neighboring Italy sought signs that newly independent Croats and Slovenes were willing to offer compensation for crimes against Italians by Yugoslav forces. Croats largely resisted such efforts, while Slovenes only complained about them, but acquiesced enough to appease the Council of Europe. Slovenia joined the EU in 2004. Croatia did not until July 2013.

The final chapter covers the period following European accession. Along with citizens across East/Central Europe, most Slovenes supported joining Europe and NATO. The security of these organizations eased debates on the legacy of the Second World War, until 2009, when it was revealed that Slovenia held 594 war-era mass graves. The

<sup>39</sup> Caplan, *Europeans and the Recognition of New States in Yugoslavia*, 98-104.

news caused an explosion in media polemics. The political right has taken rhetorical control over the issue of seeking justice for victims of postwar Communist terror, while the political left cautiously celebrates the positive legacies of the Liberation Front. By 2009 the military and economic security offered by regional organizations had also begun to suffer a crisis of legitimacy caused by numerous financial meltdowns. As most Slovenes blamed their economic hardships on vaguely defined “forces of global capital,” the idea of a Partisan state built on respect for social values and defiant resistance against foreign powers continues to resonate. Debates still rage, however, as protesters marched across Slovenia on an almost daily basis in 2013. Most Slovenes continue to believe that the Partisan Liberation Front fought in World War II for the best interests of the Slovene nation.<sup>40</sup> This dissertation examines the people who have managed that belief over the past seventy years. The power structures and institutions that were first legitimized by the National Liberation War have come and gone, but the story of that war is both too collectively powerful to forget and too politically useful to discard. It remains embedded in Slovene public discourses, as shown in figure 1.8.

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<sup>40</sup> In 2012, 72.5% of Slovenes surveyed by the Center for Public Opinion Research agreed that “the Partisans had fought for the interests of the Slovene nation” (da so Partizani tisti, ki so se borili za interese slovenskega naroda), while only 6.1% of respondents disagreed with this statement. From analysis of the survey by Mace Jogan, “Slovensko javno mnenje o NOB in socializmu” (Slovene Public Opinion about the National Liberation War and Socialism), available online at: <http://www.zzb-nob.si/zgodovina-nob/>.

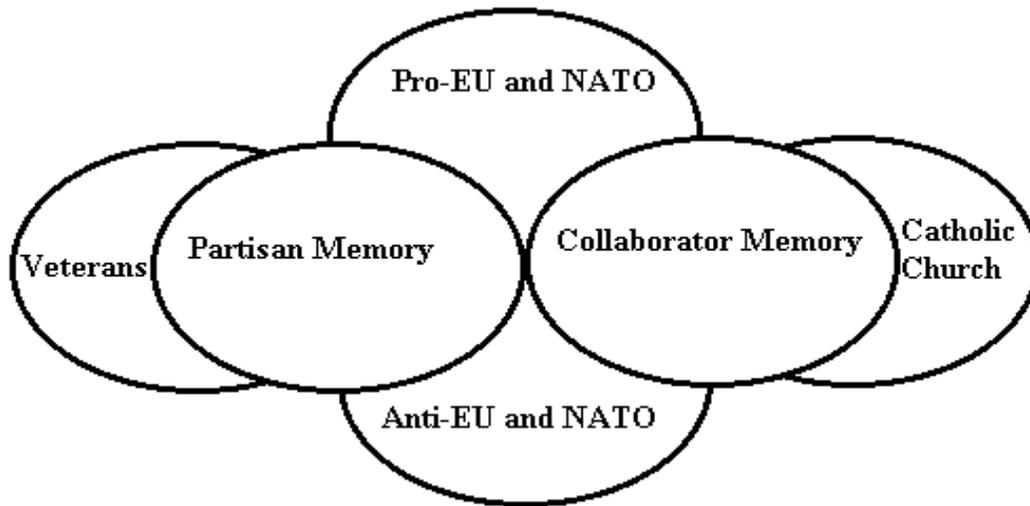


Figure 1.8 Slovene memory since 1989

## Conclusion

Dejan Jović proposes an interesting thesis on the collapse of Yugoslavia, that its demise should have been foreseen decades before it occurred, as the logical “withering away of the state” that its leaders had been using to justify decentralization of the federal structure for decades.<sup>41</sup> If, as Jović argues, the existence of seven independent former Yugoslavian states is the logical outcome of decades of devolution to the Republic level of government, then perhaps the entire notion of a Yugoslav collapse could be reconsidered. Maybe Yugoslavia still exists. It exists as long as people continue to use dominant discourses of the former socialist regime as they negotiate the complexity of their daily lives. The Partisan memory allowed Slovenes to negotiate the complexity of Yugoslavia just as it allows them to thrive inside the structures of Europe. For Slovenes, the real power of Yugoslavia, then, was not in its institutions. They collapsed.

<sup>41</sup> Jović, *Yugoslavia: A State that Withered Away*, 3-5.

Yugoslavia's enduring power, especially in the Republic of Slovenia, can be found in its stories. This dissertation focuses on stories of World War II in Slovenia, showing that a collective memory of the war emerged and persists because it has met the historical needs of a majority of both Slovene elites and masses for decades. Many have rightly claimed that a certain mythology of the Partisan war served to legitimate the postwar Yugoslavian state,<sup>42</sup> but this is the first study to historicize how that legitimizing function emerged and why it persists in Slovenia. It examines a lengthy chronology to show that although dominant narratives have transformed over the past seven decades, the basic contours of this collective memory have remained surprisingly static.

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<sup>42</sup> According to Peter Vodopivec the “three supporting pillars” of Yugoslavia were the League of Communists, Tito, and the Army. Vodopivec, “Seven Decades of Unconfronted Incongruities: The Slovenes and Yugoslavia,” 43. Sabrina Ramet argues that Yugoslav politicians began using the mythology of the Partisan war at the end of the 1940's to meet the seemingly impossible challenge of state legitimation. Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias: State Building and Legitimation, 1918-2005*, 185. Ralph Pervan points out that the legacy of interethnic cooperation during the war helped to hold the Yugoslavian federation together. Pervan, *Tito and the Students: The University and the University Student in Self-managing Yugoslavia*, 113.

## **Part I: Sorting the War**

The first three chapters show the Communist party's confused trajectory from operating first as an illegal organization to implementing its goals of "total revolution." In 1941 none but the most devoted party ideologues would have predicted that this organization with under 500 members could soon claim to control all aspects of public life. These ideologues, however, managed to gain enormous power as the war dragged on. Over the past seventy years, historians have seen Slovenia's war as a National Liberation War, a Communist Revolution, an anti-Bolshevik crusade, or a Civil War. It was all of these, as well as a struggle between the Communist parties of Slovenia and Yugoslavia. In addition, disputes with Western powers for control of postwar Slovene life sizzled just beneath the surface of the actual fighting. The complicated nature of World War II in Slovenia befuddled even the narrative prowess of the Party's press organs, which, in the conflict's immediate aftermath, instead focused their propaganda on the continuing Revolution, the drive to build socialism. Ordinary participants in the war found little inspiration in such rhetoric. Only when the party returned to the narrative of national liberation did they win the genuine support of ordinary Slovenes in rebuilding the new socialist federation of Yugoslavia.

## Chapter 1: Out of the Ashes, 1941-1943

*As only rarely happens in one's lifetime, in those days we continually saw a sort of life-like power in the work [of history]. A power which is beyond the individual, but nevertheless can work a sort of wonder in a person that can only be described as collective consciousness, collective morality, or collective will.*

Josip Vidmar, May 1947<sup>43</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

Throughout World War II, Communist operatives never found a consistent mobilization message for Slovenes. Some of their rhetorical strategies, such as appeals to a common Slovene nation and the need to build a republic founded upon social justice, proved successful. Others, such as the vanguard role of the Soviet Union and the need for the working class to rise up, made little sense to mostly rural Slovenes. It was only a few years after the war, through the act of remembering the conflict, that a collective memory emerged, which narrated the story of a small nation's victory against the most powerful armies on earth.

Immediately after the war, regime officials remained largely oblivious to the power of war memory, just as they failed to recognize the full potential of nationalist registers during the war; they saw each as simply tools in their varied bag of rhetorical strategies for carrying out a socialist revolution. Thus, throughout the war it was never

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<sup>43</sup> Vidmar ed., *Iz Partisanskih let* (From the Partisan years), ix. (Kakor le redko v življenju, nam je bilo v teh časih dano videti in trajno opazovati neko živo moč pri njenem delu. Moč, ki ni stvar posameznika, ki pa v posamezniku lahko izvršuje čuda in ki je ne morem označiti drugače kakor z besedo: kolektivna zavest, kolektivna morala, kolektivna volja.)

clear that the Communist Partisans would completely win political control, much less the hearts and minds of ordinary Slovenes.

The hearts and minds of Slovenes, were, however, desperate for a narrative framework to interpret their trauma. Aleida Assmann posits that the sheer psychic energy of trauma screams for memory structures that can articulate, tame, and then build from suffering.<sup>44</sup> During World War II, the per capita death rate for Slovenes was the third highest in Europe (following Poland and the Soviet Union). Roughly 94,000 Slovenes lost their lives either in the territory that would become the future Republic, or fighting abroad in Mussolini's and Hitler's armies.<sup>45</sup> Inside Slovenia, an additional 50,000 Serbs and Croats were murdered by Communist forces after the war was over, for suspicion of collaboration with Nazis during the war. Countless<sup>46</sup> other soldiers from all over the world died in Slovenia fighting under Italian, Hungarian, German, Bulgarian, American,

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<sup>44</sup> Assman, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization*, 9.

<sup>45</sup> Tadeja Tominšek Rihtar has distinguished ten categories of Slovene victims during the Second World War: civilians and those with unclear military status (32,397 deaths), Liberation Front Activists (3,248 deaths), Partisan fighters (31,721 deaths), Village Guards (865 deaths), Slovene Četniks (469 deaths), Domobranci (14,522 deaths), those enlisted in foreign armies (10,999 deaths), soldiers of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (331 deaths), those in European resistance movements (122 deaths), those fighting for allied armies (66 deaths), Tominšek Rihtar, "Žrtve druge svetovne vojne in povojnega nasilja (1941-1946)" (Victims of the Second World War and postwar persecution (1941-1946)), 319.

<sup>46</sup> While losses among Slovenes have been well documented, the author is unaware of any detailed study of losses among foreign troops in Slovenia during the war. German records contain casualty statistics for all of the Europe South Theater before 1943, then divide the territory of Slovenia between Yugoslavia and the East Alpine theaters of war after 1943. Italian sources cover all of Yugoslavia as well. Peter Štih, Vaško Simoniti and Peter Vodopivec nevertheless estimate that roughly 6,000 German and 1,500 Italian soldiers lost their lives in Slovenia (Štih, Simoniti and Vodopivec, *Slovenska Zgodovina: družba, politika, kultura* (Slovene history, society, politics, and culture), 418). American and British sources show minimal losses among airmen downed over Slovenia as well as a small number of OSS and British Special Operations troops who died in Slovenia. The majority of Bulgarian and Soviet losses occurred in other areas of Yugoslavia, though a Bulgarian occupation in Maribor and a Soviet invasion of Prekmurje were significant factors in turning the tide of war against the Axis powers in April 1945. Hungarian losses in Slovenia were minimal as the Communist Partisans had almost no presence in the Hungarian zone of occupation.

British, Soviet, and Yugoslav flags.<sup>47</sup> To an uninitiated observer, the search for perpetrators and victims defies easy categorization. German troops initially invaded the country with occupational support from Italian and Hungarian divisions. Later in the war, soldiers from Mongolia, Serbia, and the Soviet Union (Anti-Soviet volunteers from the Baltics, Ukraine, the Caucasus, and Central Asia, along with a large contingent of Russian White emigres) would also administer Slovenia under a Nazi flag. Occupying troops brutally violated the human rights and dignity of the local populations through hostage taking, deportations, rape, torture, and massive reprisal killings. A Liberation Front eventually dominated by the Communist Party of Slovenia, the Partisans, resisted these abuses. But this Front, according to its official policies during most of the war, gave no quarter to enemy troops, ethnically cleansed Italian and German populations through forced deportations and grisly murders, and conducted massive extrajudicial killings of suspected collaborators. Slovene military formations who collaborated with the Nazis killed civilians suspected of aiding the Partisans, gave no quarter to Partisan troops, and worked foremost to further the aims of the occupiers. Those who wished to remain unaffiliated often aided either the Communists or the occupiers by continuing to farm, manufacture, and operate necessary civil services.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> People from other areas of Yugoslavia lost their lives in Slovenia during the initial defeat of the Royal forces in 1941, serving with both Slovene Partisan and collaborator units during the war, as members of Yugoslavian Partisan brigades under the authority of the Yugoslavian party rather than the Slovene party, as members of Croatian Ustashi forces, and as Serbian Četnik and Croatian Ustaši forces murdered alongside Slovene collaborators at the end of the war. The postwar killings of other Yugoslavs added approximately 50,000 victims to the 14,000 Slovenes murdered during June of 1945.

<sup>48</sup> Kranjc, *Between the Swastika and the Star*, 69.

While guilt and tragedy are widely distributed in the archives of this war, in the first decades after the war, its histories and collective memories were largely reduced to an overly simplistic binary. Inside Slovenia, the Partisans were national liberators; among the postwar Slovene émigré community, the Partisans were totalitarian Communists.<sup>49</sup> During the war and for decades after it, both sides narrated the conflict within the framework of Marxist-Leninism — blinded either by their devotion to or hatred of Marxist ideology. Though historians on both sides of the Slovene border have been narrating the objective complexity of the conflict since at least the early 1960's, recent public opinion polls show that as late as 2006, 54.5% of Slovenes continued to see either Communists or anti-Communists as “fighting for the best interests of the Slovene nation.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Among the prewar émigré community, especially in Ohio and Australia, many supported the new regime, both rhetorically and financially. The prewar émigré community consisted of many industrial workers who identified with local labor movements while the postwar émigré community was made up largely of collaborators who left Slovenia out of fear for their lives.

<sup>50</sup> Toš, “Vrednotenje v preteklosti: pogledi na Partisanstvo in domobranstvo” (Evaluating the past: Opinions on the Partisans and Home Guard), 69.

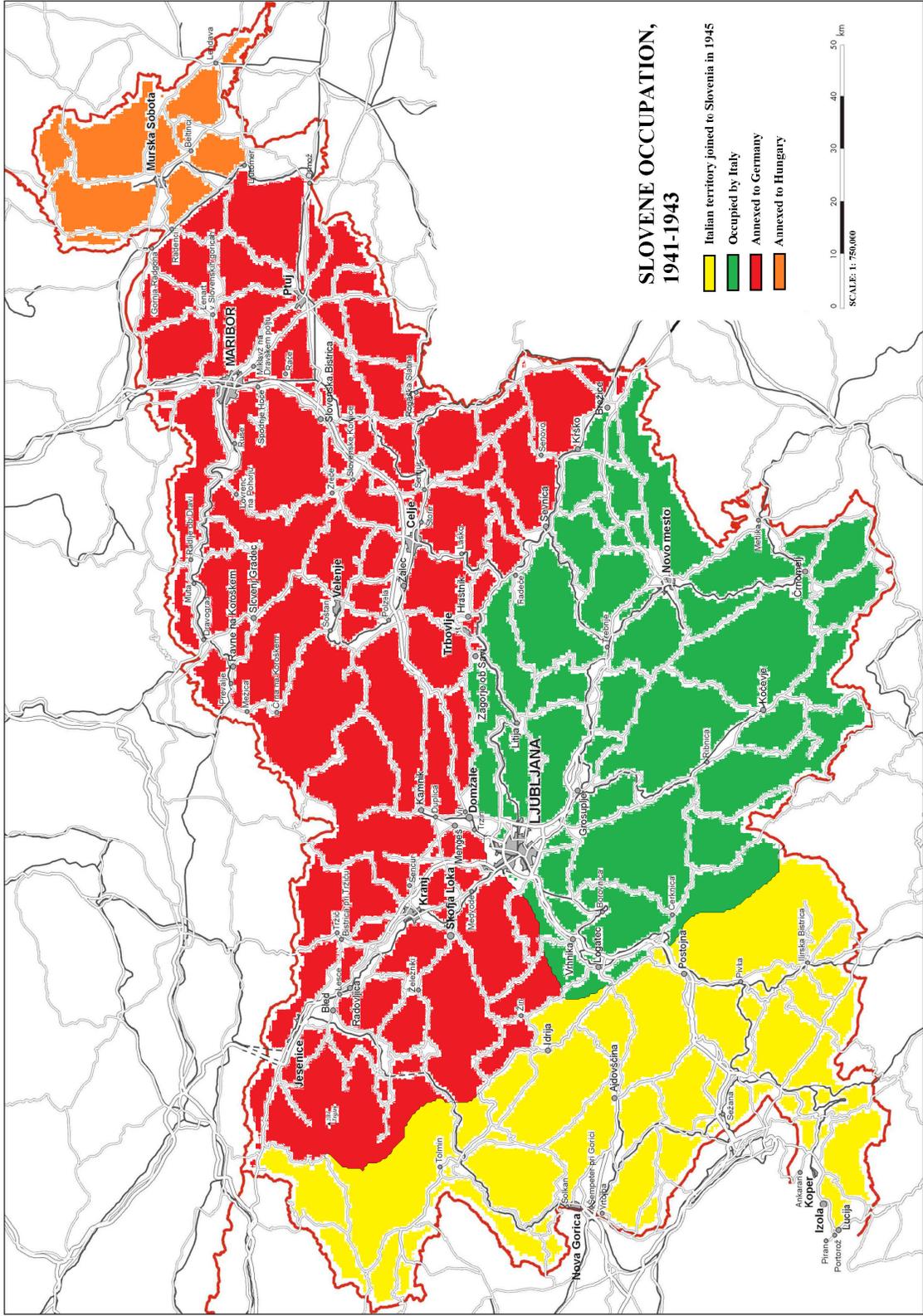


Figure 2.1 Slovene Occupation 1941-1943, adapted from Šehić, Šehić and Kladnik, *Geografski Atlas Slovenije*, 2010.

Apologists for the collaborator groups have argued for decades that individuals only collaborated when the Communists began putting the goals of revolution above the interests of Slovenia,<sup>51</sup> to the extent that Communist leaders murdered anyone suspected of opposing their postwar political goals.<sup>52</sup> Such an argument frames collaboration as a necessity to oppose an even more oppressive Communist revolution. Many of these same historians have argued that the goals of revolution were orchestrated from Moscow, and that the Communists were so beholden to Stalin's Comintern that they waited until after the invasion of the Soviet Union in June to begin effective military resistance.<sup>53</sup> The initial resistance, in such histories, was led by non-Communists<sup>54</sup>, and the fight of the Partisans was not resistance at all, but rather a foreign-dominated revolution.

On the other hand, in her history of the Communist Party of Slovenia (KPS), Vida Deželak-Barič shows that Communists resisted from the very beginning of the German invasion, suffering losses so heavy that Tito called on Slovene party members to rethink their strategy.<sup>55</sup> This rethinking involved an end to armed resistance, and a return to agitation for revolution. This early resistance would prove problematic to later Yugoslav memories of the war, showing Slovenes to have been in the vanguard rather than following the directives of the central party.

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<sup>51</sup> Tomaž Kovač argues in *V rogu ležimo pobiti* that before the invasion of the Soviet Union “everyone had united against Hitler *except* for the Communists” (vsi so se družili proti Hitlerju *razen* komunistov) (5).

<sup>52</sup> Stanič, *Kočevski process: največja medvojna drama Slovencev* (The Kočevje Trials as the Slovene's Largest Wartime Drama), 15-16.

<sup>53</sup> Mlakar, *Slovensko Domobranstvo 1943-1945: Ustanovitev, organizacija, idejno ozadje* (Slovene Home Guard 1943-1945: Founding, organization, and ideological structure), 17-19.

<sup>54</sup> Ljubo Sirc, who was a wartime member of the Yugoslavian Četnik movement in Slovenia, makes such an argument in *Med Hitlerjem in Titom* (Between Hitler and Tito), 1992.

<sup>55</sup> Deželak-Barič, *Komunistična partija Slovenije in revolucionarno gibanje 1941-1943* (The Communist Party of Slovenia and Revolutionary Movement 1941-1943), 34, 37.

The party members described by Deželak-Barič constantly vacillated between emphasizing national liberation versus socialist revolution, making it difficult to win sincere support among Slovenes who remained largely suspicious of Communism. Due to the pressures of a total war, however, between the Axis invasion on April 6, 1941 and the first meeting of a Partisan parliament on October 3, 1943, virtually all Slovenes came to identify themselves as either supporters of the Liberation Front or sympathetic to anti-Communist forces.

### **Kočevje, 1941**

Part of the Italian occupation zone included the region of Kočevje. This region would become a shorthand in Partisan war memory for the birth of Slovene political independence. In anti-Communist, émigré war memory, it would signify Partisan terror, as this is the area where Partisans murdered around 12,000 of the 14,400 collaborators they captured at the end of the war. On April 6, 1941 Kočevje was not even a Slovene place; rather, it was home to a German minority, numbering around 12,000, who had been living in what they called “Gotschee” since the Middle Ages. For centuries, members of this predominantly peasant population lived intensely local lives, developing a Germanic dialect known as ‘Gottschalk’ that was virtually unintelligible to outside German speakers. In 1919 this area was so deep within the territory of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes that it was not even claimed by Austrians at the Paris Peace Conference, who otherwise fought a brief war with the new Kingdom over the mixed ethnicity area of Koroška/Karantania.<sup>56</sup> In Kočevje, mixed ethnicity had been the norm for centuries. Bilingualism was widespread among both the Gottscheers and neighboring

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<sup>56</sup> Lederer, *Yugoslavia at the Paris Peace Conference: A Study of Frontiersmaking*, 101-103.

Slovenes, all of whom shared common religious observances and a common economy. During the interwar period officials of the new state began to care far more about imposing ethnic boundaries on these peoples than building from the community they shared.

The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes had signed a treaty with the victorious allies in 1919 ensuring minority rights such as: equality before the law, civil and political rights, free use of any language in private intercourse, the press, religion, or commerce, and the right to establish schools where minority languages could be used in addition to the mother tongue. In practice, few such rights existed for German minorities, or any minority not explicitly mentioned in the name of the new state.<sup>57</sup> The League of Nations had no enforcement mechanism to ensure minority rights in any of the new European states.<sup>58</sup> Though culturally and socially oppressed by the Royal government in Yugoslavia, the Gottschalk had a powerful ally in Nazi Germany. The plight of ethnic Germans living outside the Reich provided powerful mobilizing rhetoric not only for Adolf Hitler's far-right political base, but for mainstream moderates as well, who unsurprisingly sympathized with the oppressed. The sympathy of so many millions proved seductive to ethnic Germans across the continent. In Kočevje, most of the economically oppressed Gottscheers had joined the Nazi-party-sponsored Kulturbund by

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<sup>57</sup> Buxton and Conwil-Evans, *Oppressed Peoples and the League of Nations*, 86, 220-224.

<sup>58</sup> Mazower, *The Balkans*, 108-109.

1941 (despite the fact that most Slovene branches of this organization had been banned between 1936 and 1939)<sup>59</sup>.

The overwhelming majority of Gotscheers welcomed the German invasion of Slovenia. Many were already Nazi party members and some later volunteered for military service in Germany. Many were shocked when the director of the Reich's main security office, Reinhard Heydrich, included deporting the Gotscheers in his plans for purifying the newly occupied ethnic space. Under Hitler's direct orders, Heydrich hoped to implement a policy of "Germanization" in those areas of Slovenia annexed to the Reich. The Gotscheers homeland, however, was just beyond the area of Slovenia that Hitler wanted to annex (it was in the Italian occupation zone). Hitler believed that ethnic boundaries could be precisely drawn, supposedly eliminating conflict in Eastern Europe. So in German Slovenia, the occupation authorities planned to deport up to 280,000 people, including political leaders, intellectuals, and "unredeemable Slavs" (meaning authorities in the local bureaucracies, certain nationalist political leaders, various intellectuals and the Catholic clergy) to Serbia, replace them with ethnic Germans, then linguistically and culturally "reclaim" the remaining people through forbidding the use of the Slovene language.<sup>60</sup> Slovenes, in a popular German theory of the era, were actually

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<sup>59</sup> Štih, Simoniti, Vodopivec, *Slovenska Zgodovina: družba, politika, kultura* (Slovene history, society, politics, and culture, 376.

<sup>60</sup> Pirjevec, "Genocidna strategija okupaterjev na slovenskem" (The genocidal strategy of the occupiers in Slovenia, 93-96. Jože Pirjevec, the author cited in this footnote, calls the policy to Germanize Slovenes "genocide," which should not be confused with mass murder. Germans hoped to eradicate Slovene language and culture, not to exterminate the actual people who considered themselves Slovenes. The categorical mistake made by Pirjevec among other Slovene historians illustrates the cooptation of transnational Holocaust discourses, without an appreciation for the Holocaust's actual victims. For a discussion of the slow emergence of Holocaust history in Slovenia see Gregor Kranjc, "On the Periphery: Jews, Slovenes and the Memory of the Holocaust."

ethnically German “Windischen” who had been corrupted through contact with Slavs. The Nazis began their deportations of supposedly unredeemable Windischen in June, but widespread Slovene resistance quickly forced the Germans to discontinue these attempts. After successfully removing several thousand Slovenes, Heydrich’s forces then deported Gotscheer from the Italian zone into the Štajerska region to occupy farmsteads vacated by Slovenes sent to Serbia. Many Gotscheer accepted their duty willingly, but coercion of the Gotscheer was widespread, and after deportation, many found themselves farming inferior lands in an environment full of hostile, oppressed Slovenes.<sup>61</sup>

While the Nazis quickly abandoned the deportation of Slovenes from their occupation zone, the expulsion of Gotscheer from Kočevje was total. By August 1941 there were no more native Gottschalk speakers in Kočevje.<sup>62</sup> Without crediting the Nazi occupation force, Liberation Front president Josip Vidmar would celebrate in his opening speech on the first day of the Conference of Delegates at Kočevje two years later that “we must recognize that we are assembled in Kočevje, in a town which for 600 long years was a German island in a sea of Sloveneness, which today is free and ours, only ours.”<sup>63</sup> At the end of the war these Gotscheer would join the roughly 600,000 German, Hungarian and Italian minorities that the new Communist government forcibly expelled

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<sup>61</sup> Hutton, *Linguistics and the Third Reich: Mother-Tongue Fascism, Race and the Science of Language*, 147-152.

<sup>62</sup> Mlakar, “Repression over the Slovene People by the German Nazism,” 120-121.

<sup>63</sup> Vidmar, “Zaključni govor Josipa Vidmarja, predsednika IOOF” (The closing speech by Josip Vidmar, president of the Executive Council of the Liberation Front), 11. “toda zavedajmo se, da zborujemo v Kočevju, v mestu, ki je bilo dolgih 600 let nemški otok sredi slovenstva, ki je danes svobodno in naše, samo naše.”

from Yugoslavia<sup>64</sup>; and in line with Hitler's erstwhile dream, some Slovenes would spend the next seventy years erroneously lauding the Republic's ethnic homogeneity.<sup>65</sup>

### **Resistance, 1941**

But on March 24, 1941 there was no territory legally defined as Slovene. There had been no such entity since 1929, when King Alexander created new administrative units: "Banovinas;" which crudely gerrymandered ethnicities together as a means to weaken the position of the dominant, titular nationality in each unit. None of these administrative units carried names identifiable with the dominant nationality of the respective regions. Slovenes found themselves primarily in a Banovina named after a river, "Drava."<sup>66</sup> Few complained, and few politicians appealed to a barely imaginable Slovene nationalism during the 1930s. The under-nurtured national sentiments among the Drava people by March 24, 1941 make the events later in the week seem surprising.

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<sup>64</sup> Suppan, "Yugoslavism versus Serbian, Croatian, and Slovene Nationalism: Political, Ideological, and Cultural Causes of the Rise and Fall of Yugoslavia.," 130.

<sup>65</sup> A common reason given by post-independence authors for Slovenia's "success" is its ethnic homogeneity. In 1994 Jill Benderly and Evan Kraft, for example, point out that such homogeneity allowed the new state to avoid many of the conflicts then raging to the South. They recognized, however, that guest workers in the state endured severe discrimination (*Independent Slovenia: Origins, Movements, Prospects*, ix). Janusz Bugajski cites the same homogeneity for the lack of nationalist conflicts during the Yugoslavian period (Bugajski, *Political Parties of Eastern Europe: A Guide to Politics in the Post-Communist Era*, 77). Mieczysław Boduszyński credits Slovenia's lack of minorities with its ability to peacefully exit Yugoslavia and gives lack of ethnic diversity partial credit for the state's democratic transition (recognizing the problem of discrimination against guest workers) by allowing political elites to juxtapose western values against socialist norms rather than nationalities against each other (Boduszyński, *Regime Change in the Yugoslav Successor States: Divergent Paths toward a New Europe*, 19-20, 132-133). Nina Bandelj simply credits ethnic unity for causing political and military unity in the face of the 1991 Yugoslavian Army invasion of Slovenia. (Bandelj, *From Communists to Foreign Capitalists: The Social Foundations of Foreign Direct Investment in Postsocialist Europe*, 40).

<sup>66</sup> "Drava" was the only province with a clear ethnic majority, which was a reward that the king gave to the leader of the Slovene People's Party (SLS), Anton Korošec, for his loyalty to the crown and willingness to work with Serb majorities as a politician (Stiplovšek, "Razvoj delavskega in ljudskofrontskega gibanja na Domžalskem območju, 1935-1941" (Development of the workers' and people's front movements in the Domžale region, 1935-1941), 316). Slovenes represented 95% of the population in the *Drava* banovina (Štih, Simoniti, and Vodopivec, *Slovenska Zgodovina: družba, politika, kultura* (Slovene history, society, politics, and culture), 365-366).

On March 25, 1941 regent prince Paul of Yugoslavia signed a tripartite agreement with Hitler and Mussolini, promising to allow German troops free access to Yugoslavian transportation as a means to relieve Italian troops bogged down in Greece. By allowing such a privilege, Yugoslavs had effectively joined the Axis powers in their 19-month-long war. On March 27, Serbian air force General, Dušan Simović led a coup which abolished the parliament, exiled Prince Paul, and proclaimed himself interim prime minister. As his first official act, Simović annulled the tripartite agreement. Thousands of anti-Fascist Slovenes immediately marched in favor of this bold and reckless act of defiance in the heart of Ljubljana. People of all political persuasions, including many Communists, who were otherwise obligated as party members to honor Hitler's pact with Stalin, publicly demonstrated their support for Yugoslavia's new rebellious stance. Ten days later, 18 German divisions invaded Yugoslavia, and after a short, catastrophic fight, Yugoslavia officially surrendered on April 22.

During the brief period between the ousting of Prince Paul on March 27 and the invasion on April 6, Simović set up a coalition government of nationalist opposition parties. This government failed to attract Croatian leaders, who, under Ante Pavelić's Fascist Ustaša party, declared the Independent State of Croatia only four days after the Germans invaded.<sup>67</sup> The result was that by the time of the invasion, there was no unified movement among Yugoslavs to resist the invaders, and no one had effective control over the Yugoslavian army. Thus official resistance lasted only eleven days until April 17<sup>th</sup>, when Yugoslavia had become completely occupied by German forces, who then immediately divided the country into Hungarian, Bulgarian, Italian, and German zones of

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<sup>67</sup> Littlefield, *Germany and Yugoslavia, 1933-1941: The German Conquest of Yugoslavia*, 125-130.

occupation, with official recognition for the independent state of Croatia.<sup>68</sup> By April 22, 1941 there was no longer any organized resistance in Slovenia.

Only five days later, left-leaning Slovene political parties, including the formerly illegal Communist party, secretly met and formed an Anti-imperialist Front (PIF). Importantly, the Communist Party of Slovenia joined the Front independent from the Yugoslavian party, setting the stage for many more conflicts of ultimate authority over Slovenes between the Republic level and Federal parties. Initially, party members like Josip Vidmar embraced the goal of resistance, but the more powerful Edvard Kardelj moved to change the explicit mention of “resistance” in the PIF’s declaration to “defense,” because he thought resistance was foolish when the Front had neither weapons nor any other means of resistance.<sup>69</sup> Kardelj’s concerns were part of a larger debate within the Yugoslavian party on the proper behavior of Communists in an imperialist war. Should Communists fight against Fascism, or stay on the sidelines (as the Soviet Union had done with the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact) while the great imperialist powers destroyed themselves?

For decades, Socialists in Slovene lands had argued that in the case of imperialist war, it was the duty of Communists to defend the nation by agitating against belligerence.<sup>70</sup> Delegates to the fourth Congress of Yugoslavian Communists in 1935

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<sup>68</sup> Clissold, *Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union 1939-1973: A Documentary Survey*, 138.

<sup>69</sup> Rus, “Pomen temeljnih točk Osvobodilne fronte” (The meaning of the Liberation Front’s foundational principles), 103-104.

<sup>70</sup> As early as the Fifth Congress of Serbian Social Democrats, in 1910, delegates passed a resolution calling on Socialists to resist imperial conscription as a means to save nations; that “nations should only be armed if needed for the defense of national independence” (Narod sam neka bude naoružan, da ako treba ustati na odbranu nacionalne samostojnosti [promeni na kirilicu]) Istorijski Arhiv Komunističke Partije Jugoslavije vol 6, 185-187.

began to argue against this old policy in favor of working to co-opt national defense as a means to further revolution. They were under strong Comintern pressure to speed up revolutionary efforts in Yugoslavia.<sup>71</sup> The increasing directives from Moscow led to tensions within Yugoslavia, ultimately prompting Slovenes to form their own Party in 1937,<sup>72</sup> with a tenuous relationship to the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ).<sup>73</sup> Though officially part of the Yugoslavian umbrella organization, the Communist Party of Slovenia (KPS) made efforts before the war to gain membership status in the Comintern, much as the separate Catalanian Communist Party had gained membership independent of Spain.<sup>74</sup> An increasing number of young party members had been addressing Slovene national issues since the early 1930's, but their otherwise blind devotion to Moscow awarded their ideas little support among the general population.<sup>75</sup> In 1939 Edvard Kardelj (on his way to becoming one of the three most powerful Communists in Yugoslavia) published *Razvoj Slovenskega Narodnega Vprašanja* (The Development of the Slovene National Question), in which he argued that Slovenia was ripe for a Socialist

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<sup>71</sup> Avakumović, *History of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia: Volume 1*, 113.

<sup>72</sup> Deželak-Barič, "Protiimperialistična in osvobodilna fronta slovenskega naroda" (The anti-Imperialist and Liberation Fronts of the Slovene Nation), 27. In 1934 the Comintern actually advised the KPJ to form separate Montenegrin and Slovene parties. It would not be until 1937, however, that individual Slovenes, loyal to Tito, would take the initiative to form a separate party.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 118-121. Starting in 1935 the KPJ began conducting mass demonstrations in favor of Soviet Russia. Their sloppiness led to the arrest of most of Slovenia's leading Communist figures, decimating KPJ authority in the region and prompting a strong desire for local responsibility in Slovene affairs.

<sup>74</sup> Štih, Simoniti, and Vodopivec, *Slovenska Zgodovina: družba, politika, kultura* (Slovene history, society, politics, and culture), 370-372.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 364.

revolution as the logical outcome of centuries of national development.<sup>76</sup> Kardelj sought to develop national consciousness as a means to both win popular support, and jumpstart the evolutionary process towards socialism, when national distinctions would wither away. Austrian Marxists had emphasized the importance of nationalism for decades. Their insistence on taking this stage of development seriously seemed justified by the nation building policies that were ongoing in the Soviet Union.<sup>77</sup> In Kardelj's world view, largely feudal Yugoslavia required nationalism to move the state into the capitalist level of development, which must precede the arrival of socialism. While for many Yugoslav party members such rhetoric was a tool used to establish state authority, for Kardelj this rhetoric was a personal gospel.<sup>78</sup> The ambivalence between party member's devotion to a Marxism that preached nationalism as merely a tool to divide the working class and party members who saw nationalism as a means to speed the development of

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<sup>76</sup> Kardelj, *Razvoj slovenskega narodnega vprašanja* (The development of the Slovene national question), 14; Enciklopedija Jugoslavije, 1958, 236-242.

<sup>77</sup> For recent discussions of these Soviet policies see Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*. When the Yugoslavs began to experiment with nation building, particularly among the Slovenes and Macedonians, who had no tradition of independent statehood, they drew from the extensive experience of their Soviet counterparts in Ukraine, Belarus, Central Asia and the Caucasus.

<sup>78</sup> The debates of the 1960's over whether Yugoslavia should be a loose confederation of self-managing Republics or a strongly centralist state were carried out primarily between the Centralist Serb Dobrica Čosić and the Kardelj-supported Slovene federalist, Dušan Pirjevec. During the war itself, Yugoslavian accusations of Slovene separatism, leveled in the utmost of secrecy, sound strikingly familiar to those leveled by Serbian leaders in the 1960's and again in the 1980's. Kardelj would work behind the scenes to support Pirjevec in the early 1960's just as he would work to advocate federal rights for republics from the very beginning of Yugoslavia's governing conventions. In 1977 the Yugoslavian embassy in Washington obtained "through intelligence work" (po obveščevalni poti) a series of letters between Edvard Kardelj and Josip Tito from 1943 where each spoke openly about Slovene separatism and the need to rein Slovenes in, through appeasing their desires. This information was so divergent from official interpretations of "brotherhood and unity" during the war that the files were labeled "state secret" (državna tajnost) and kept in the Central Committee's archives (AS 1589 Republiški sekretariat za notranje zadeve, 1.a-Z-35/ 58-77, 20.10.1977, 1).

Socialism persisted throughout the war and in large part explains the inconsistency in the party's use of nationalism as part of its propaganda efforts.

Discussions over whether Communists should even fight the occupiers ended once the Axis powers invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. Now Communists could justify both revolution and national liberation as the real goal was to help defend the Soviet Union. Josip Vidmar, Communist member and president of the Anti-Imperialist Front, quickly renamed it the Liberation Front (OF), as a recognition that all Communist leaders accepted the idea of armed struggle. Under Comintern orders to defend the Soviet Union, Tito began organizing an active resistance movement and ordered Slovene Communists to do everything in their power to take control of the Liberation Front. Many Slovenes within the Front of course had already been resisting for two months. The Slovenes' early defiant resistance would later cause tensions with Tito and provide Stalin with evidence of Yugoslavs who did not know how to fall into line with Soviet leadership.

Though the resistance had a common front, there was little consensus on how to carry out attacks against the occupiers. During the early months of the occupation, no group had sufficient weapons and few had the organizational structure or will to resist. Under the leadership of the OF, prewar Sokol clubs<sup>79</sup> were the first to offer sporadic, uncoordinated resistance in the German occupation zone. Their primary goal was to prevent the seizure of Sokol weapons caches. By November the Sokol organization feared a Communist revolution more than the actual occupation forces. By early 1942, many Sokol organizations in the Italian occupation zone formally agreed to join the

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<sup>79</sup> Meaning "hawks," an international gymnastic organization that dabbled in politics, active in Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia.

Village Guards, which were Italian-approved defense units, defending against Communist aggression in the countryside. As early as April 11, 1942 Sokol clubs near Ljubljana gave their allegiance to Italy.<sup>80</sup>

Without accepting Communist leadership, other groups within the OF began uncoordinated acts of sabotage and isolated attacks on occupying troops. The German response was harsh, killing anyone suspected of resistance, and often burning whole villages based on the suspicion of harboring fighters.<sup>81</sup> The Sokol, National, and Slovene Legions did not have the resources to effectively resist, and the Communists did not provide them with any. Only the Communist Partisans had the organizational structure needed to run a military apparatus, and from the very beginning their leadership hoped to take total control of the Liberation Front. Early detractors from the OF, like Ljubo Sirc, however, argued that the Communists' organizational structure was founded on unyielding, absolutist dogma which inevitably brought the liberation alliance apart.<sup>82</sup>

Slovenia was the only South Slavic Republic with an independently organized Liberation Front.<sup>83</sup> In the other regions, Partisan groups were organized by the Yugoslav Party. Like the Slovenes, other Partisans operating in other territories emphasized the liberation of titular nationalities within their regions.<sup>84</sup> In Croatia and Serbia, party

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<sup>80</sup> Sirc, *Between Hitler and Tito*, 11-23.

<sup>81</sup> Deželak-Barič, "Protiimperialistična in osvobodilna fronta slovenskega naroda" (The anti-Imperialist and Liberation Fronts of the Slovene Nation), 109-110. Vida Deželak-Barič argues that the non-communist groups within the OF had no hope of success because they had no experience in illegal activities, and no party organization to direct their activities.

<sup>82</sup> Sirc, *Between Hitler and Tito*, 29.

<sup>83</sup> Dedijer, *Tito Speaks: His Self Portrait and Struggle with Stalin*, 141.

leaders feared the growth of nationalism, especially Serbian nationalism, which they felt had led to an unequal federal structure in prewar Yugoslavia. In Croatia, the dangers of chauvinistic nationalism were ever-present, with the ongoing excesses of the Nazi-allied Croatian Ustaši.

The weak structure of the Communist Party in Croatia, as well as Croatia's control by Italian and Ustaši forces, forced the Slovenes into geographic isolation from the other Yugoslav Partisans for most of the war. This isolation forced Slovenes to rely almost entirely on their own efforts, thus achieving a far greater level of organization than their counterparts to the South. The level of organization among Slovene Partisans quickly became an example to the rest of the country. Only in Bosnia and parts of Serbia was there anything approaching the level of independence and initiative of the Slovene Partisans. At first, KPJ leadership feared Slovene separatism far less than that of the Serbs or Croats. Slovenes, after all, had no historical precedent for the dangerous, chauvinistic style of nationalism feared by party leaders. In public, Tito and his inner

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<sup>84</sup> During the first meeting of AVNOJ, where the Republican structure of the postwar federation was worked out, there was considerable disagreement over how to treat Muslims in Bosnia, Serb minorities in Croatia, and the Albanians in Kosovo. Such national tensions would remain unresolved in Socialist Yugoslavia and contribute to the bloody conflicts of the 1990's.

circle praised the resourcefulness and success of the Slovenes.<sup>85</sup> In private, they found Slovenes to be annoyingly insubordinate.<sup>86</sup>

The Partisans, under the leadership of the OF, had several hundred men and women under arms by August of 1941 when disputes broke out over how to pursue resistance within the Liberation Front. Many of the former conservatives felt that it was not worth risking Slovene life in a conflict that would take years to end; that it was better to collect weapons, train, and wait for an opportune time to begin actively fighting the occupiers.<sup>87</sup> The Communists considered such attitudes illogical and even treasonous. They felt that the war would be over quickly now that the powerful Red Army was involved.<sup>88</sup>

On September 20, 1941, the Slovene Communists further alienated their allies by organizing the Slovene National Liberation Committee (Slovensko Narodnoosvobodilni Odbor, SNOO) whose 120 elected delegates took full political control on Slovene

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<sup>85</sup> Slovenia was the only one of the future Republics where individuals organized their own Liberation Front, and the only Resistance organization to include non-Communist parties. Articles in *Borba* frequently held up the Slovenes as examples to the rest of Yugoslavia in the period before the capitulation of Italy. The September 30, 1942 edition of *Borba*, for example, claimed that the Partisan movement was “strongest in Slovenia . . . due to the unity of all true patriots, without regard for political or religious differences” (Narodno jedinstvo u borbi doslo je najjaci do izrazaja u Sloveniji . . . zato sto u Narodnoosvobodilačkoj borbi . . . [su] svi iskreni rodoljubi bez obzira na političke i vjerske razlike). Istoriski Arhiv Komunističke Partije Jugoslavije, vol 2, 1949, 21-22. Later, the Central Committee of the CPY would work to rein in the independence of the Slovene Partisans.

<sup>86</sup> For instance, in the run up to the first AVNOJ conference, where the legal framework for the postwar ruling of Yugoslavia was drafted, Edvard Kardelj repeatedly reproached Boris Kidrič for failing to send delegates, or even to respond to his correspondences. Kidrič, for his part, claimed that Kardelj (who spent the first three years of the war with the Yugoslavian Central Committee in Bosnia) was oblivious to the realities of the war in Slovenia, unwilling to send aid to Slovene Partisans, and unaware of the difficulty of correspondence between Slovenia and Jajce, Bosnia with hostile Croatia in between.

<sup>87</sup> Sirc, *Med Hitlerjem in Titom* (Between Hitler and Tito), 18-23.

<sup>88</sup> Repe, “The Liberation Front of the Slovene Nation,” 41-42.

liberated territory.<sup>89</sup> Within SNOO, non-party members received only superficial titles and responsibilities.<sup>90</sup> The President of its executive council, Boris Kidrič, gave a speech that day declaring that Slovenes had created a state within a state, with a declaration of the rights and responsibilities of the Slovene People, which was equal to all great declarations of rights in time of revolution.

In an effort to unify the OF, Communists began arguing that anyone opposing their own vision of how the resistance should be run was guilty of defeatism. In August 1941, the Slovene Communists organized the Security Intelligence Agency (VOS), and charged it with assassinating Slovenes guilty of collaboration. These extra-legal killings were decided upon by Boris Kidrič personally, the victims certainly had no process through which to defend or even explain themselves, and by the end of the year the dead numbered in the hundreds. The Communists also held many trials, which inevitably found the defendants guilty, and shot them immediately thereafter. There was a strong perception among non-Communist members of the OF that the Partisans were not shooting just collaborators, but were also targeting anyone who opposed the ultimate Communist leadership of the OF, and the end mission of establishing a Bolshevik revolutionary government. This violence against fellow Slovenes has been a source of memory tension ever since. While Communist led the resistance against the Axis powers they also unleashed horrendous violence against the nation they purported to liberate. Those who collaborated with the occupying forces cited such violence as justification for

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<sup>89</sup> AS 1115 I/10 Drugo redno zasedanje SNOS-a (The second regular meeting of the Slovene National Liberation Council); 9, Sep, 1946, 6-7.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 3.

their choice. Those who joined the Partisan resistance movement were subjected to an intense propaganda effort to make these killings appear to be legitimate. For instance, killings of suspected collaborators almost always followed the judgment of a Partisan court. At one point Kardelj complained that some of the extrajudicial killings were being carried out in an unprofessional manner, such as by bludgeoning victims to death. For the sake of propriety, he insisted that killings be carried out more appropriately, with firearms.<sup>91</sup>

### **Collaboration, 1941**

Like Communism, Nationalist and Fascist ideologies had a relatively weak interwar history in Slovenia.<sup>92</sup> Each represented a third way for those who rejected both Western liberalism and Eastern Communism, but none of these ideologies took root in Slovenia the way they did in countries across the region. In Slovenia, or Drava, the largest interwar party was the centrist and pragmatic SLS. It was the only Slovene party with political power at the federal level, and as such, SLS comprised a wide variety of political orientations, akin to the later diversity of the Communist party during the period of one-party rule in Slovenia.<sup>93</sup> The closest approximation of fascists within this party

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<sup>91</sup> Adamič, *My Native Land*, 157-158; Dedijer, *The War Diaries of Vladimir Dedijer: Volume 3 from September 11, 1943 to November 7, 1944*, 28-30. Adamič describes with pride the execution of a collaborating priest in Ljubljana in 1942. For Adamič, it is the will of the people as expressed by an order from a Partisan court. Dedijer describes the appropriate court proceedings carried out in August of 1943 for the 34 collaborationist leaders captured at the Turjak castle. He does not mention that a few days later almost 400 people captured under the command of these leaders were murdered by the Partisans.

<sup>92</sup> Weak in comparison to so many other East-Central European countries, where far-right governments were in control on the eve of World War II.

<sup>93</sup> Pattee, *The Case of Cardinal Aloysius Stepinac*, 20-30. In the interwar period the SLS was incredibly ideologically diverse. Its leader, Anton Korošec used the party as a forum to ensure Slovene political representation within the Yugoslavian assembly. Thus the party encompassed liberals, nationalists, clericals, and even fascist-inclined nationalists like Rupnik. All of these diverse interests generally aligned themselves with ruling Serbian coalitions, as long as the Yugoslavian assembly was functioning.

were self-identified clericals<sup>94</sup> under the leadership of Leo Rupnik, who wished for, at best, increased Slovenian self-governance on the model of the Sporazum of 1938, which granted Croatia almost complete autonomy in internal affairs. At minimum, they hoped for greater cooperation on religious/social issues between Croatia, Slovenia, and Catholic central Europe. The fascist-inclined clericals echoed the leader of the SLS, Anton Korošec, who in the early years of the twentieth century had called for Slovenia to be a bridge to share Western (Austrian) Christianity with the less developed Orthodox Christian and Islamic areas of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Of course, politicians in every province within the Austro-Hungarian Empire fancied their territories as bridges, emphasizing that their own people lived on the side of “civilization,” so the numerically and politically weak Slovenes won little respect for their hopes. In practice, the SLS spent almost the entire interwar period cooperating with the dominant Serbian Radikalna party. In the tenuous parliamentary system of the time, any appeal to Slovene nationalism, when Slovenes made up less than 10 percent of the population of the kingdom, made little practical sense.

Extreme nationalism, however, is rarely motivated by practicality or sense, and there was certainly support for far-right policies in the Drava province. Nevertheless, Slovene nationalists had developed little administrative structure by the time of the invasion. Most members of the SLS, which provided political voice to the Slovene nationalists, had remained pro-Belgrade during the 1930’s. The party officially

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<sup>94</sup> The term clericals was used in Slovene lands since the 1890’s to describe those seeking a greater role for the Roman Catholic Church in politics and society. After the Second World War it would become a term of derision used by Communists to describe those who sought to use the Church to undermine the new social order.

condemned the assassination of King Alexander in 1934 and opposed the extreme secessionist policies of the Croatian nationalists.<sup>95</sup> Rupnik and his Clericals remained the only advocates of Slovene independence.<sup>96</sup> Many within the SLS rejected the deleterious effects of Western-style, “plutocratic democracy,” as was common to all far-right, generally Hitler-aligned movements in Europe at the time. However the main organization had neither a concerted program for collaboration nor any serious plans for resisting Nazi power in 1941. The far right in Slovene politics was made up of clericals who seemed like a quaint relic of a previous century, amid regional far-right parties that were increasingly adopting the social policies of racial anti-semitism so prevalent in Nazi Germany.

After the invasion, Leo Rupnik in particular quickly moved to collaborate with the Italian occupiers, and would later lead the Slovensko Domobranstvo, under firm German leadership. But before the war, Rupnik’s was a minority voice. The only mainstream statement of national policy came when the SLS leadership signed a document in 1940 vowing to protect Slovenia’s independence by refusing to collaborate with any potential invader, yet doing everything they could to retain the territorial integrity of the Slovene national space.<sup>97</sup> The SLS had no power to prevent the Slovene ethnic space’s division between three occupying armies.

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<sup>95</sup> Pattee, *The Case of Cardinal Aloysius Stepinac*, 23-28.

<sup>96</sup> Mlakar, *Slovensko Domobranstvo 1943-1945: Ustanovitev, organizacija, idejno ozadje* (Slovene Home Guard 1943-1945: Founding, organization, and ideological structure), 126-129.

<sup>97</sup> Štih, Simoniti, Vodopivec, *Slovenska Zgodovina: družba, politika, kultura* (Slovene history, society, politics, and culture), 396-397.

Defining ideal typical collaborators and resisters proves difficult in the early months of the war.<sup>98</sup> Yet between 1945 and the late 1980's, dominant historiographical interpretations in Slovenia would argue that clerical and bourgeois elements sought out collaboration from the very beginning, because they either shared the goals of the occupiers or sought to maintain their prewar positions of power. For Communist propagandists, the ideal typical collaborator was one who put his<sup>99</sup> interests above those of the people because he shared the Fascist ideology of the occupiers. Such an interpretation left no room for nuance.<sup>100</sup>

One such rhetorically flattened collaborator, a member of the SLS, was Marko Natlačen. The Communists would later blame him, along with all other prewar ruling parties, for the failure of Slovenia's defense against Nazi Germany. On April 6, after being cut off from contact with Belgrade, the SLS appointed Natlačen who was

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<sup>98</sup> Kranjc, *Between the Swastika and the Star: Slovene Collaboration and National Identity, 1941-1945*, ii-iii.

<sup>99</sup> Communist propaganda did not construct collaborators as women. Transnationally there was little discussion of far-right discourses in Europe as anything but male. Instead OF propagandists described women as agentless victims of a previous feudal/capitalist system who might gain emancipation through the progressive, socialist ideals of the Communist party. Slovene communists followed the precedent outlined in Stalin's short course: that in order to win support from essentially egalitarian peasants, one must appeal to the oppressed element among such societies, which are women. Wartime propaganda extolled the sexual equality of Partisan units, with men and women, shoulder to shoulder fighting for national liberation. In Partisan literature, however, these women are rarely named as individuals; rather women are an abstract representation of a Communist ideal. The women who are named in period partisan literature generally fall into the same gendered roles they filled in the anti-Communist religious and nationalist press. Women are kind grandmothers providing food for soldiers, grieving widows, or brave wives and sisters who suffer death rather than reveal information that might harm the fighters (men). See Gregor Kranjc "Long Live our Honest Girls: The Image of Women in Slovene anti-Communist Propaganda, 1942-1945," 58, for an example of how anti-Communist literature gendered Slovene women as loyal mothers concerned with the domestic sphere as the core of support for the nation *in opposition* to the liberated *Partisanika* who undermined established gender roles, and by implication all values held by conservative, Catholic Slovenes.

<sup>100</sup> Kranjc, *Between the Swastika and the Star: Slovene Collaboration and National Identity, 1941-1945*, 65-66.

previously Ban (leader) of the Dravska Banovina, to head the National Council. The goal of this council was to ensure that Slovenia be occupied by one state's military in the event of war. Such geographic contiguity would, in the opinion of the council, ensure the survival of the Slovene people. On April 11, after Italians had already occupied Ljubljana, Natlačen attempted to meet with German authorities in Celje to petition them to occupy all of Slovenia and give the National Council a degree of autonomy, as enjoyed both by Monsignor Tiso's government in Slovakia and the newly proclaimed Independent State of Croatia. The Germans, who planned to annex the Nazi-occupied Lower Styrian and Upper Carinolian provinces to the Reich, refused to even meet with Natlačen.<sup>101</sup>

The very next day, Natlačen published a message to all Slovenes and Ljubljana residents, on behalf of the Ban and National Council of Slovenia, in the conservative, Catholic-oriented newspaper *Slovenec*. It is worth quoting to illustrate the logic of the SLS in the early days of occupation:

Ljubljana: the capital of Slovenia will be occupied shortly.<sup>102</sup>

On this occasion let us maintain the order and peace for which we are known. Through our discipline and purposefulness let us be faithful descendants of our ancestors! Through peaceful means let us manifest our renowned dignity.

The two most damning sins of a nation hang over us in times like these. In our current situation, when our military has left, the most horrible sin against the people would be civilians using arms either against foreign military powers or domestic national minorities, or to agitate against either of these groups by any other combative means. Such actions could possibly condemn dozens of our countrymen to the greatest possible danger.

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 397.

<sup>102</sup> Ljubljana had in fact already been occupied for one day when this was published.

The second greatest sin would be denunciation, which is incompatible with human dignity. Denunciation is such a heavy sin that no people can ever tolerate it. So let there be no denunciations among us!

State and local authorities will remain at their posts until further notice is received. All laws remain in effect until changed. All changes to laws will be published.

Laws must be unconditionally obeyed!

Peace and order shall remain unsullied. We will show at this time and at this hour that we know how to be disciplined, especially in such fateful times.

Let us not flee, but remain and endure! (*Slovenec*, April 12, 1941)

The same paper published a notice by the National Council calling on all people to give up military weapons unless they were authorized to carry such weapons as keepers of the peace, in which case they must wear insignia identifying themselves as such publicly.<sup>103</sup> Natlačen's dignified acquiescence was well received by much of the population, as well as the Italian occupying authorities. While many Slovenes deemed resistance a futile waste of an already small population (as shown above, even Communist leaders like Edvard Kardelj briefly shared such an opinion), Italians were relieved by the reduced forces needed to occupy a "disciplined and purposeful" people.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> *Slovenec*, April 12, 1941, 1. (Ljubljana, prestolnica Slovenije, bo v kratkem zasedana. Ohranimo pri tej priliki tisti red in mir, ki je pri nas tradicionalen! Bodimo v prisebnosti, zbranosti in discipline verni potomci svojih prednikov! Na miren način pokažimo svojo dostojanstvo! Dva največja greha nad narodom sta v tem času mogoča. Zdaj, ko je naša vojska odšla, bi bil največji greh nad narodom, če bi civilni ljudje uporabili orožje proti tuji vojaški sili ali proti domači narodni manjšini al če bi kakor koli drugače sovražno nastopili proti njima. S tem bi spravili morda desetine naših sorojakov v največjo nevarnost in nesrečo. Drugi največji greh pa bi bil denucianstvo, ki je nedružljivo s človeškim dostojanstvom. Denucianstvo je tako težek greh, da ga narod ne more nikoli odpustiti. Zato naj med name ne bo denucianstva! Državna in samoupravna oblastva ostanejo na svojih mestih in bodo do nadaljnje odredbe naprej poslovala. Vsi zakoni ostanejo v veljavi, dokler se ne spremenijo. Vsaka sprememba pa bo objavljena. Zakoni se morajo brezpogojno spoštovati! Red in mir naj bosta nikjer kaljena. Pokažimo v tej uri in v the dneih, da znamo biti disciplinirani tudi v usodni uri. Ne bežimo, vzdržimo, vztrajamo!)

<sup>104</sup> Kranjc, "Long Live our Honest Girls: The Image of Women in Slovene anti-Communist Propaganda, 1942-1945," 67-68.

Though the Germans refused to even meet with Natlačen, the Italian military welcomed his cooperation. As a reward for his efforts at maintaining peace, on May 26 the Italian authorities appointed Natlačen mayor of Ljubljana. The occupiers gave Slovene residents a limited amount of cultural and administrative autonomy through establishing a fourteen-member governing “consulto,” made up of loyal, prewar politicians, and even gave Italian citizenship rights to people living within the “Lubliana” province.<sup>105</sup> The Partisan intelligence service executed Natlačen in September 1942 for his supposed leadership of the White Guard. Because of Natlačen’s prewar position of power in the SLS, this execution officially ended any connection between legal governance in Slovenia and the Yugoslav London Government in exile.<sup>106</sup> Communist Partisans believed that war requires absolute binaries, and that Natlačen was a collaborator who deserved death. The Slovene emigrant and anti-Communist Ciril Žebot would later argue that Natlačen’s execution, with no trial, extinguished a viable option for compromise, which might have saved thousands of lives and thereby avoided a civil war.<sup>107</sup>

Taking their cues from Natlačen, for weeks the editors of *Slovenec* published only occupation decrees, Italian news, and non-controversial religious stories. The only exception to this rule was a comic strip version of Franc Saleški Finžgar’s *Under a Free*

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<sup>105</sup> Štih, Simoniti, Vodopivec, *Slovenska Zgodovina: družba, politika, kultura* (Slovene history, society, politics, and culture), 395-400.

<sup>106</sup> Čepič, “Nekaj stopinj revolucije v pluralni dobi osvobodilne fronte” (Some stages of revolution during the pluralistic period of the Liberation Front), 104.

<sup>107</sup> Žebot, *Neminljiva Slovenija: Spomini in spoznanja iz razdobja sedemdesetih let od Majniške deklaracij*, (Everlasting Slovenia: Memories and insights from the seventy year period since the May declaration), 20-25.

*Sun: The Tale of our Ancient Ancestors*, which was first published in novel form in 1906. The supposedly compliant paper began printing the comic version in March. It featured stories about the heroic early Slavs' resistance to Byzantine tyranny on the Balkan Peninsula. The comic ran from March until May, uninterrupted by the German invasion and Italian occupation. The nationalistic tone of the strip remained the same, and in the end its hero, Iztok leads a successful military campaign against the Byzantines. Italian occupiers never seemed to notice the irony of this comic's publication in the early days of their occupation, content to be in control of a "disciplined" population.<sup>108</sup>

By the end of the year, *Slovenec* had again reached its prewar paper size of 5-6 pages per day, containing local, regional, and international news. The paper seemed fully Italian but for its Slovenian language content. Each paper contained military news, and referred to Italian and German victories as "ours." Before the occupation, the paper contained a section called "news from around Slovenia." In 1942 the section reappeared but was called "news from our neighbors." These "neighbors" were Trieste, Štajerska, Gorenjska, and Gorizia; all areas that the Communists would consider rightfully Slovene. *Slovenec* editors, however, did not have the press-freedom to claim areas of Italy outside the Lubiana province or areas annexed to Germany as "Slovene."

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<sup>108</sup> *Slovenec*, March 11, 1941- May 22, 1941.

F. S. Finžgar:

# Pod svobodnim soncem

## Povest davnih dedov

222.

Po zmagi Slovencev je Iztok poslal Radovana k Epafroditu, sam pa je z Radom čakal pred Toperom. Čez teden je priplula ladja in iz nje so stopili Epafrodit in Radovan z Ireno in Ljubinico. »Pax eirene!« je izpregovoril Epafrodit in izpustil deklici. In zlata diadema sta se sklonila na zlata oklepa — Iztoku in Radu.



225.



223.

Epafrodit pa je blagoslovil Iztoka in Ireno, rekoč: »Moj konec je vajuin začetek. Nebo naj priliva olja vajini ljubezni. Mir, mir na veke. Amen.« Potem pa je še posebej objel Iztoka in rekel: »Blagoslovljen, sin treh očetov: Svarunov, ki te je rodil, Epafroditov, ki te je učil, in Radovanov, ki ti je tkal nit usode! Blagoslovljen svobodni sin svobodnega naroda!« Ko se je poslavljaj, je še zaklical: »Iztok! Bodi zmagovalc, bodi slaven in bodi meč maščevanja!»



224.



225.

224.

Iztok in Irena sta se vrnila v gradišče, ki je živelo zopet mirne in srečne dni.

Starosta Svarun ni dočakal, da bi dvignil v naročje vnuka junačka, ki ga je podarila Irena Iztoku. Prej je umrl v sreči, da ima vrednega naslednika.

Irena je rodila sedem dečkov, Iztokov duh pa je rodil tisoče in tisoče, ki so živeli v bratski slogi z drugimi slovenskimi rodovi in uživali slavo pod svobodnim soncem.

Konec.

Figure 2.2 Final edition of "Under a Free Sun," published in *Slovenec* on May 22, 1941

At first, Italian occupation authorities treated the newly acquired Slovene lands reasonably well. Public school education remained in Slovene, newspapers continued to be published, though now enduring pre-publication censorship, and people carried on with their livelihoods. For the most part, life continued as normal. There were few shortages. The Italians made no efforts to Italianize their newly conquered territories and the common Catholicism between the occupiers and the conservative leadership of Ljubljana served as a bridge of trust. This is in marked contrast to the harsh Italianization policies the Fascist authorities had been enacting since 1922 in Istria, Gorizia, and Trieste, where large Slovene populations were not allowed to use Slovene in public, had

financial assets confiscated, and were forced off their land in favor of Italian settlers. Nor were the occupation policies of Italians in the Notranjska, Dolenjska, and Ljubljana provinces anywhere near as harsh as those of the Germans or Hungarians in other Slovene lands.

In much of rural Slovenia, the Catholic Church served as an ideological identity marker, filling the void left by a destroyed or co-opted bureaucracy. Local priests often acted as representatives for villages and themselves served as key figures in the organization of resistance to oppression, whether of the occupier, Partisan or collaborator variety. In later stages of what would become a Slovene civil war, these same priests were critical in motivating recruits to either openly collaborate with the occupying forces or join the Liberation Front.<sup>109</sup> Many priests, however, were able to either remain neutral, or actively fight against whichever military force seemed most harmful to their parish. The Partisans quickly learned that alienating the clergy hurt their battle for the hearts and minds of Slovenes, while collaborators failed to understand that many clergy actually supported the Partisans.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Lukež and Kos, “Sv. Urh” (Saint Ulrich), 343-344.

<sup>110</sup> Between the end of the war and the late 1950’s, the Slovene authorities would consider the Catholic church its primary internal enemy. During the war, however, OF leaders made sincere attempts to coopt Christian Socialist fellow travellers, and progressive clergy into the movement; their strategy achieved limited success. This policy was part of a larger KPJ move to reach out to peasants by not alienating the clergy. The policy was supported by stories like the following from the October 1942 edition of *Borba* on the unity of the Slovene people, which argues that the OF includes all true Slovene patriots from Communists to SLS to Christian Socialist, and implies that only a small minority of the clergy has collaborated with the enemy (22). Further in that same issue under a heading of “dali znate?” (did you know?) the author writes “—da uprkos četničkim kletvama protiv Partisana kao rušilaca vjere, pravoslavne crkve služe slobodno jedino na teritoriju koji su olobodili Partisani? – da svaka Partisanska i proletarska brigade ima sveštenike svih vjera kao svoje vjerske referente, koji služe službu i krštavaju djecu tamo gdje su sveštenici ubijeni ili odbjegli?\*” (In spite of Četnik slander against the Partisans as destroyers of religion, the only place in Yugoslavia where the Orthodox church freely operates is on Partisan liberated territory? – That every Partisans and Proletariat brigade has priests of all faiths as religious advisors, who perform church services and baptize children in areas where the local priests have either been killed or

Though the Italians revoked most of their Slovene consultos' autonomy by November, reasoning that only Italians could end the ongoing resistance in the countryside, much of the Slovene leadership continued to seek ways to cooperate with the Italians, as they also hoped to preserve the prewar political order against increasing threats from the Communist-led Partisans. Alongside these elites there were vast cadres of Slovene postal workers, police officers, teachers, and other public workers who continued to perform their prewar functions.

All three occupation armies retained local civil authorities. In the Italian zone, bureaucrats functioned much as they did before occupation, while in the German and Hungarian zones, the efforts of the occupiers to Germanize and Magyarize their respective areas allowed little room for independent action, and local police and municipal officials were soon replaced by loyal German and Hungarian minorities from Slovenia. Most of these minorities kindly welcomed the invaders, served in their administrative and military apparatuses, and were exiled from the country at the end of the war for their collaboration. Because of the harsh occupation policies against Slovenes in the German and Hungarian zones, few Slovenes collaborated in the early months of occupation. People who retained their prewar public service functions, especially within the Italian zone of occupation, hardly considered themselves collaborators. But, as Gregor Kranjc argues, these low-level officials certainly made the jobs of the occupiers

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fled?) (31) \*This article was available at the time in Slovene, but during the 1950's the standard in Yugoslav archives sent abroad was to publish collections of *Borba* with equal percentages of issues in Macedonian, Serbian, Croatian, and Slovene. The above article happens to be recorded in Croatian.

easier.<sup>111</sup> As the later conflict between Slovenes intensified, many within the OF had no qualms over killing such people for the aid they had given the enemy.

Occupation leaders quickly recognized that they needed more than just compliance and passive collaboration from the populations they governed. General Robotti knew that certain groups within Slovenia would support his goal to eliminate the increasingly troublesome Partisan resistance, though much of the Italian occupation regime still failed to distinguish Slovene allies from the insurgents who were attacking their troops with increasing boldness. From the perspectives of the collaborators, it was easy to rationalize a degree of cooperation as being in the best interests of the nation.<sup>112</sup> Both collaborators and Partisans were using such national registers with increasing frequency by the end of 1941. The mission of the collaborators was to preserve a remnant of the Slovene people from Communist annihilation. Indeed, as early as September 16, 1941, the leadership of the OF had publicly threatened all who opposed its leadership of the resistance with liquidation.<sup>113</sup> By the end of 1941, the Communists within the Front had already carried out 120 such liquidations.<sup>114</sup> In response to these provocations, a Ljubljana-based organization known before the war as “Guards” independently sought weapons from the Italians. They united under the slogan “only one

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<sup>111</sup> Kranjc, *Between the Swastika and the Star*, 69.

<sup>112</sup> Mlakar, *Slovensko Domobranstvo 1943-1945: Ustanovitev, organizacija, idejno ozadje* (Slovene Home Guard 1943-1945: Founding, organization, and ideological structure), 11.

<sup>113</sup> Golob, Vodopivec, Hribar, Prunk and Basta, eds, *Zbornik: žrtve vojne in revolucije* (A Collection: victims of the war and revolution), 3.

<sup>114</sup> Mlakar, “Krogi nasilja med Slovenci v vojnih letih, 1941-1945” (Levels of oppression among Slovenes during the war years, 1941-1945), 23.

liberation actually matters . . . the immediate liberation from the Communist Liberation Front!”<sup>115</sup>

The Village Guards were another group that Communists viewed as collaborators, though many in the Guards took great pains during the early stages of the war to avoid such a label. The Village Guards took their inspiration both from the Ljubljana-based Guards and from the spontaneous resistance groups that emerged in the German zone of occupation to oppose the deportation of ethnic Slovenes. Most of their personnel, however, came from Sokol members leaving the OF, who had the goal of defending against *all* aggressors, whether Nazi Fascist or Communist.<sup>116</sup> Goals did not match reality, however, as they only fought against Communists. In early 1942, the Partisans began derisively calling these fighters “White Guards,” a reference to the Whites who fought the Bolsheviks during the Russian Revolution. Italian leaders quickly recognized that these units could aid the occupation, if properly managed, so by the summer of 1942 General Robotti agreed to provide the Village Guards with weapons, Italian commanders, and an organizational structure, under the auspices of *Militaria Volontaria Anti-Communist* (Anti-Communist Volunteer Army [MVAC]), which administered similar

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>116</sup> Mlakar, *Slovensko Domobranstvo 1943-1945: Ustanovitev, organizacija, idejno ozadje* (Slovene Home Guard 1943-1945: Founding, organization, and ideological structure), 35-40.

collaborator groups in Montenegro.<sup>117</sup> Under Italian leadership this group swelled to a membership of approximately 6,000 troops by 1943.<sup>118</sup>

For many in the Italian zone of occupation, Communist OF units were a far greater day-to-day threat than Italian forces. In addition to the previously mentioned assassinations, Communists also engaged in food requisition, which harmed a population already cut off from traditional Yugoslav markets.<sup>119</sup> Given the negative impressions caused by such brutality, Tito would later insist that requisitions only be undertaken against those wealthier peasants who could afford the loss, and that peasants be paid a fair price for their goods.<sup>120</sup>

When the Village Guards became MVAC, the Partisans were left as the only group in Slovenia resisting the invaders. One group that did not engage in anti-Partisan warfare, nor anti-occupier attacks was the Slovene branch of the Serbian Četnik movement. This group was waiting for an opportune time to strike against the invaders and reestablish what they felt to be the legitimate prewar monarchy. The Slovenian Četnik movement that was associated with Mihajlović and the government of Yugoslavia in exile never numbered more than 400 soldiers.<sup>121</sup> The Slovene Četnik movement's relationship to its Serbian leaders was as tenuous as that of the Slovene Communist Party

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid, 25-30.

<sup>118</sup> Dassovich, *Fronte Jugoslavo 1941-'42: Aspetti e momenti della presenza militare italiana sull'opposta sponda adriatica durante la seconda guerra mondiale* (The Yugoslavian Front: Aspects of Italian military events on the other side of the Adriatic during the Second World War), 189.

<sup>119</sup> Čepič, "Nekaj stopinj revolucije v pluralni dobi osvobodilne fronte" (Stages of Revolution during the Pluralistic period of the Liberation Front), 102-103.

<sup>120</sup> Dedijer, *The War Diaries of Vladimir Dedijer: Volume 3 from September 11, 1943 to November 7, 1944*, 29-33.

<sup>121</sup> Mlakar, *Slovensko Domobranstvo 1943-1945: Ustanovitev, organizacija, idejno ozadje* (Slovene Home Guard 1943-1945: Founding, organization, and ideological structure), 46.

to the Yugoslav. The prewar Yugoslavian political order that this movement represented appealed to few Slovenes.<sup>122</sup> For many who did not accept Communist leadership of the OF, a far more appealing option was to join explicitly anti-Communist groups, which the Slovene Četniks were not.

Thus by the middle of 1942, Slovenes were engaged in a war against each other. The Communists were almost completely in control of the OF, and Italian forces had primary control over anti-Communist forces through MVAC. Despite Italian leadership, few fighters within MVAC identified with the goals of Mussolini's regime. The only common denominator in anti-Communist militias throughout Yugoslavia was anti-Communism. Certainly anti-Bolshevism worked well as a rhetorical device for the dictators who led the occupiers. But this rhetoric also appealed to common European far-right sentiments, allowing for fruitful practical collaboration against a supposedly common enemy across the continent.

The diversity of opinion motivating the rank and file of collaborator groups has been amply documented. Gregor Kranjc shows that while only the most extreme views were given ink in the occupier-controlled presses of the 1940's, actual reasons for collaboration were far more diverse.<sup>123</sup> A belief in Germany's new order and awe for Italian Fascism actually appealed to only a small minority of readers. Anti-Semitism was

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<sup>122</sup> Union of the Journalists Association FPRY, *The Trial of Dragoljub-Dražo Mihailović*, 535-552. Until the fall of 1943, General Draža Mihajlović's Serbian Četnik movement had recognition and military support from the United States and Britain. Partisan propagandists had been accusing him of collaboration since the fall of 1941, but it was not until 1943 that the Western allies became convinced that Mihajlović was indeed working with the Germans and hindering the war effort. Until 1943, however, Slovene Četnici knew that theirs was the only legitimate force in the eyes of the Western allies.

<sup>123</sup> Kranjc, *Between the Swastika and the Star*, 196-198.

used far more frequently and successfully in appeals to the Slovene people by Italian, German, and Slovene collaborator leaders.<sup>124</sup> Anti-semitism meshed well with a fear of Judeo-Bolshevism, and the Eastern European media constructed “Jew” as root of all evil both from the East and West. Most Slovenes, of course, had probably never even met a member of their prewar Jewish community of under 1,000 persons, but such a technicality mattered little in the throes of an alleged war for survival against world Jewry. Similarly, Catholicism as the single most important signifier of Slovene nationality and its seeming irreconcilability with Bolshevism served as a common belief for almost anyone who joined collaborator groups. Such religious devotion figures prominently in postwar memoirs by members of Slovene anti-Communist forces. But for many, a simple desire for survival and disgust at Communist brutality motivated their functional collaboration with occupying armies.

Just as the ideology of foreign occupation armies did not motivate most anti-Communist Slovenes, neither was Communism the primary ideological motivation for resistance within the OF. In the early months of 1941, Communists made up 25% of all Partisan personnel. This percentage would fall over the next year as more and more non-Communists joined their ranks.<sup>125</sup> By the middle of 1942, the fact that Communist representation among Partisan fighting forces was so low caused frequent embarrassment, as noted in internal communications between KPJ military leaders.<sup>126</sup> As

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<sup>124</sup> Kos, “Kako so prisegli slovenski domobranci” (How the Home Guardsmen took their oaths), 167.

<sup>125</sup> Deželak-Barič, “Organiziranost Komunistične partije Slovenije v partizanskih enotah 1941-1943” (The organization of the Slovene Communist Party within Partisan Units 1941-1943), 63.

<sup>126</sup> Dokumenti ljudske revolucije (Documents of the people’s revolution), book 7, doc. 61. In this letter to the Central Committee of the KPS for Ljubljana, Boris Kidrič laments that without more members, the party will lose its leading role in the OF.

part of Tito's orders to take control of the Liberation Front, Boris Kidrič enacted policies to increase party membership among the fighting ranks. As a political move, Kidrič worked to isolate non-KPS members from the leadership of the OF, culminating in the Dolomite declaration of March 1943. In this declaration the Sokols and Christian Socialists agreed to accept the "vanguard role of the Communist Party of Slovenia in the national liberation movement" and promised "not to organize political activity independent of the OF."<sup>127</sup> On a social level, the desire for increased control led to more training of political operatives and commissars to serve within individual Partisan units. In 1942, mandatory "political hours" led by party-trained commissars became regular events among all units in Slovenia.<sup>128</sup> Party leaders may have been able to control a portion of Partisans' time each day, but their inability to convince them to join the party shows how poorly the regime controlled souls. All the while, however, the Party maintained the fiction of a broad coalition willingly joining the fight against Nazi-Fascism. As late as early 1943, for example, Kardelj insisted that Slovene Partisans not adopt the hammer and sickle insignia, as that would alienate non-Communists, but rather have Triglav mountain with the initials OF in the middle of red stars serve as their official mark.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> ZZB NOB Slovenije, *Narodnoosvobodilni Boj v Slovenskem Narodovem Spominu: Slovenski Zbornik 2007* (The Alliance of United Fighters of the National Liberation War of Slovenia, the National Liberation War in Slovene national memory: Slovene almanac), 2007, 371, 373. (KPS je kot stranka prevzela avantgardno vlogo v slovenskem narodnem osvobodilnem gibanju. . .[Slovensko sokolstvo] ne čutijo in ne vidijo nobene potrebe za posebne lastne stranke ali politične organizacije . . .krščansko socialistična skupina ne organizira in ne bo organizirala posebne lastne politične organizacije).

<sup>128</sup> Dežman, 2011, 24.

<sup>129</sup> Čepič, "Nekaj stopinj revolucije v pluralni dobi osvobodilne fronte" (Stages of Revolution during the Pluralistic period of the Liberation Front), 100.

The surrender of Italy in August 1943 would buoy KPS ambitions for political control by allowing Partisan forces to seize territory and weapons from retreating Italians. For months the Slovene high command knew that such a surrender was on the horizon. They had worked out an arrangement with General Cerutti to offer safe passage for all Italian units through Slovene territory, provided they surrendered their weapons to appropriate Partisan units.<sup>130</sup> Almost all forces complied. Many Anti-Fascist or Communist-inclined Italian troops even joined the Partisans. Some joined Slovene Partisan units and others joined the “Italia” and “Garibaldi” brigades made up of soldiers whose allegiance was to Italy but who considered themselves allied with and under the command of the Yugoslav Partisans.<sup>131</sup> The windfall of personnel and weapons provided by Italy’s surrender made both the war and revolution seem as if they were almost over. Much of southern Slovenia came under OF control by the end of September, and Partisan forces were not only fully equipped with leftover Italian weapons, but they were in a strong enough political position to carry out mass mobilizations of the native population into their forces.<sup>132</sup>

The only obstacle in the way of total Partisan control within the former Italian zone of occupation remained the collaborators. Approximately 6,000 troops formerly supplied and administered by Italy wandered about Dolenjska masterless and confused. They received almost none of the weapons from their former allies and were faced with

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<sup>130</sup> Deželak-Barič, “Protiimperialistična in osvobodilna fronta slovenskega naroda” (The anti-Imperialist and Liberation Fronts of the Slovene Nation), 325-326; Štih, Simoniti, Vodopivec, *Slovenska Zgodovina: družba, politika, kultura* (Slovene history, society, politics, and culture), 411.

<sup>131</sup> O’Reilly, *Forgotten battles: Italy's war of liberation, 1943–1945*, 96-98

<sup>132</sup> Guštin, “Predigra kolaboracije” (The pregame of Collaboration), 52-54.

the wrath of a numerically and provisionally superior Partisan force.<sup>133</sup> The Partisans offered a general amnesty to all “White Guards” who would surrender, offering them either the chance to join their forces or the opportunity to give up their weapons and return home.<sup>134</sup> Virtually no one accepted this offer, and later events would show that former MVAC personnel were justified in their suspicions towards supposed Partisan amnesty.

In late September most of these former MVAC troops simply went home. More than one thousand of these soliders, however, joined the 400-strong Slovene Četniks in the Lower Carinolian region of Slovenia and fortified themselves in a medieval castle in Turjak and another makeshift fortress a few kilometers to the south in Grčarice. They declared themselves to be the Slovene National Army under the leadership of the Yugoslavian Army in exile.<sup>135</sup> In a hopeless situation, surrounded by vastly superior Partisan forces, the MVAC troops believed rumors of a coming allied invasion that the Četniks fed them. The Četniks, for their part, based such rumors off hints received from British intelligence officers that they were indeed planning an invasion of the Balkan Peninsula as a means to open up a third front against Nazi Germany. The Četniks in Slovenia hoped that they could wait out an allied invasion in Turjak, then make their way to the Slovene coast to join allied forces and win their approval to govern liberated Yugoslavia. At the time, it did not seem a far-fetched idea, as Mihajlović was still a general of the Yugoslavian government in exile in London, and he was still officially an

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<sup>133</sup> Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945: Occupation and Collaboration*, 117-118.

<sup>134</sup> Stanič, *Kočevski process: največja medvojna drama Slovencev* (The Kočevje trials as the Slovene’s largest wartime drama), 29.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 32-34.

ally of the British and Americans.<sup>136</sup> By September, the American Chiefs of Staff were firmly against any Balkan invasion, though British intelligence operatives continued to leak misinformation about such plans in the hopes of tying down German forces away from other fronts.<sup>137</sup>

In a matter of days, the Slovene Četniks and collaborators were surrounded by Partisans in southern Slovenia at Turjak who used Italian artillery to destroy its ancient walls and quickly capture everyone inside. Only a few hundred escaped the initial Partisan victory. The roughly 1,200 captured POW's had their hands bound together, and were marched 37 kilometers south to the capital of Partisan-liberated territory, Kočevje.<sup>138</sup> The trial of the 34 leaders of this group at "the Kočevje Proceedings" would signal the culmination of the collaborator's defeat. Partisans murdered as many as 600 of the other captured people without any pretense of judicial process. The remaining captives only managed to survive because the quickly advancing German front (overtaking Kočevje on the 9<sup>th</sup>) halted the Partisan's ability to kill freely.<sup>139</sup>

By the first week of October, the Partisans controlled more territory than they would until the very last day of the war. In his opening speech on the first night of the Kočevje conference that preceded the trials, the president of the OF, Josip Vidmar, said this control was a testament to the fact that "we were not incorrect in assuming that the nation, the Slovene people, would support and agree with our efforts . . . that we chose

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<sup>136</sup> Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945: Occupation and Collaboration*, 117.

<sup>137</sup> Thompson, *Winston Churchill's World View: Statesmanship and Power*, 143-145.

<sup>138</sup> Stanič, *Kočevski process: največja medvojna drama Slovencev* (The Kočevje trials as the Slovene's largest wartime drama), 34.

<sup>139</sup> Djilas, *Wartime*, 338.

the path of honor.”<sup>140</sup> Partisan general Jaka Avšič added during the same round of opening speeches that “if it were not for our party, the Slovene people would be scattered and the Slovene people would be bleeding on the Eastern front against the Russians, causing the destruction of our people. From day one we have felt that we are on the right path, fighting for better days and the freedom of our people.”<sup>141</sup>

In October 1943, liberation seemed to many as if it had almost been achieved. Even within the German and Hungarian occupied zones of Slovenia, Partisan forces were beginning to engage in meaningful attacks against the enemy. With the rapid victories of the Soviet Union and increasing isolation of Germany among Axis powers, it seemed as if it would be only a matter of weeks until the war was over and Slovenia achieved its historic independence. Such celebrations would be put on hold, however, due to a massive Nazi counteroffensive into the Adriatic operation zone, assisted by a new Slovene anti-Communist force, the Home Guard. In the following months, the Slovene Communist Party would also lose much of its hard-won independence from the Yugoslavian party. While the war seemed almost over in October 1943, survivors of the next 19 months would witness the bulk of bloodshed that occurred in Slovenia during the Second World War. Communist propaganda had already borne the fruit of widespread support for their movement, while their violent tactics had sown tares of discontent that German forces would harvest with ease once they overran most of Slovenia. One vision

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<sup>140</sup> Vidmar, “Zaključni govor Josipa Vidmarja, predsednika IOOF” (The closing speech by Josip Vidmar, president of the Executive Council of the Liberation Front), 14-15. (In bili smo prepričani da nam bo narod, da nam bo Slovensko ljudstvo potrdilo in nam dalo prav. Nismo se motili . . . Izbrali smo pot časti).

<sup>141</sup> Avšič, “Govor Jaka Avšiča predstavnika Glavnega štaba NOV in POS,” (A speech by Jaka Avšič, a representative of the headquarters of the National Liberation Army and Partisan Units of Slovenia), 26. (če ne bi bilo Partije, bi bil naš narod razkosan in bi Slovenci krvaveli na vzhodni fronti proti Rusom ter doživeli svoj pogin. Od prvega dneva smo počutili, da smo na pravi poti, da se borimo za boljše dni in za svobodo našega naroda).

for Slovene nationhood was tainted by violence against Slovenes while the other had no hope for legitimacy because of its open support for the goals of Nazi-Fascism. Memorists associated with the Partisans have had far more success at whitewashing unsavory elements of their pasts than have collaborator historians.

## Chapter 2: Yugoslavia Strikes Back, with Nazi Helpers, 1943-1945

*The Slovenes, and their struggle against the invader, were something special. Yet there would have been no struggle if the leaders hadn't been convinced that they were bringing about a turning point in the national destiny, such as leaders before them had only dreamed of. In no other Yugoslav land, among no other Yugoslav people, was there such keen awareness, such enthusiasm over the creation of one's own state.*

*Milovan Djilas, Wartime, 340.*

### INTRODUCTION

The Slovene Communist Party stood at the height of its wartime power in the first week of October 1943. But during the final two years of the war, a powerful Nazi counteroffensive in the Adriatic zone of operation, supported by highly trained Slovene collaborators, almost destroyed the Liberation Front. Communist power survived not because of the effectiveness of their propaganda or military capabilities, but because of a massive Soviet invasion of their territory, the military might of Yugoslav Partisan brigades, comprised primarily of non-Slovenes, Anglo-American bombing, and the retreat of troops loyal to a defeated Germany. For fifty years historians operating in the Socialist regime would consistently argue almost the exact opposite: that (all) the people supported and joined the Partisans because of their belief in the goals of the Liberation Front.<sup>142</sup> They argued that this national sacrifice of Slovenes alone was sufficient to

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<sup>142</sup> In the first comprehensive history of World War II in Slovenia, *Narodnoosvobodilna vojna na Slovenskem, 1941-1945*, written in 1977, Zdravko Klanjšek admits the assistance of four Yugoslav brigades, but emphasizes that Slovene units did not give up any territory to Nazi forces during the massive counterattacks of 1944-45, implying that the real victory was Slovene. He then writes, "We can certainly deduce that in every step, even at the end of the war, the Liberation Front showed incomparable strength, unity between the population and their military and political leadership, and deep identification with the revolutionary program of the Communist Party and Liberation Front," 1009-1010 (Upravičeno lahko ugotovimo, da so se tudi ob koncu vojne na vsakem koraku kazale neizmerna moč osvobodilne fronte,

achieve liberation and only a minor clique of bourgeoisie clericals blinded some ignorant peasants to oppose a national liberation movement that the people otherwise so obviously wanted.<sup>143</sup>

With allied help, the Slovene Communists quickly regained political control, enough to implement one of the most faithful copies of socio-economic Stalinism in all of Eastern Europe.<sup>144</sup> At the end of the war, National Liberation front authorities were able to maintain political control because of the total delegitimation of prewar political parties; parties that had been tainted by collaboration and defeated through wholesale military destruction.<sup>145</sup> Communism was the only socio-economic governing ideology left, or at least the only one with access to an army. But during the war, anti-Bolshevik/collaborator movements also mobilized thousands of supporters. While Communist leaders like Edvard Kardelj and Boris Kidrič successfully defined the resistance in terms of salvation for a Slovene national community<sup>146</sup>, they alienated many of the actual people within that imagined community by repeatedly condoning mass

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enotnost ljudskih množic z njegovo vojsko in političnim vodstvom ter globoko privrženost revolucionarnemu program komunistične partije in osvobodilne fronte).

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 1009.

<sup>144</sup> Geoffrey Swain in "Tito and the Twilight of the Comintern" argues that between 1937 and the early 1940's, Yugoslavia's Communist Party was *primus inter pares* among world Communist movement; that Tito's successful interpretation of mixed signals coming from Moscow made his party the standard against which all other parties were measured.

<sup>145</sup> Berend, *Central and Eastern Europe, 1944-1993: Detour from the Periphery to the Periphery*, 4

<sup>146</sup> Josip Vidmar began his speech on October 1, 1943 at the Kočevje Conference of Representatives by quoting the motto of the conference, taken from the title of the poet Ivan Cankar's 1911 poem, "The People, Alone, shall Write their own Destiny" (Narod si bo pisal sodbo sam).

murder.<sup>147</sup> Later anti-Communist forces cautiously adopted a nationally informed register in their propaganda, but under the watchful eyes of their German and Italian sponsors. By the end of the war both Communist and anti-Communist forces fought for notions of a Slovene nation. Neither, however, won the genuine support of a majority of the population. From 1943 until the end of the war, Slovene Communists in particular had neither political nor rhetorical power to define a nation – they did however continuously work to mobilize people, which created many personal memories of sacrifice that would later easily incorporate themselves into a collective memory of national liberation.

### **Kočevje, 1943**

Many of the seeds for Slovenia's later collective war memory can be seen germinating in the rhetoric used by participants at the *Conference of Ministers* held in Kočevje between October 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1943. Milovan Djilas remembered the event in 1977, writing that though Kardelj and Kidrič were clearly the leaders of the OF, there was no personality cult surrounding them. At the Kočevje conference, "The cult was Slovenia itself, a unanimous surge toward statehood as the crowning fulfillment of nationalism and the beginning of socialism."<sup>148</sup> Tito and Yugoslav leaders were distraught about Slovene's discussing the creation of their own state, independent of Yugoslavia, but at that time there was little they could do to stop the Communist Slovenes from holding their meeting. In a letter to Tito in early 1943, Edvard Kardelj

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<sup>147</sup> Štih, Simoniti, Vodopivec, *Slovenska Zgodovina: družba, politika, kultura* (Slovene history, society, politics, and culture), 396-402.

<sup>148</sup> Djilas, *Wartime*, 340.

argued that a meeting like Kočevje would be necessary to give the new Slovene state structure a semblance of formality, he then joked “for as you know, Slovenes love such formality, especially now when representatives of the Slovene people are engaging in ‘state relations’ with other nations of Yugoslavia.”<sup>149</sup> The real joke was on Tito, who was powerless to prevent the Slovenes from holding such a meeting.

The 640 delegates who attended the convention portrayed themselves as members of the first freely elected government in the history of Slovenia.<sup>150</sup> Between September 20 and 25, local OF councils held elections for these representatives throughout the territory that the executive council considered to be the Slovene national space: Primorska, Štajerska, Gorenjska, and Ljubljana.<sup>151</sup> Men and women over the age of 17 were allowed to vote in secret ballots.<sup>152</sup> However, in these “free” elections, only one

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<sup>149</sup> (Ti znaš, da Slovenci vole takve formalnosti, naročito danas, kada oni kao pretstavnici slovenačkog naroda stupaju u “državne odnose” sa drugim narodima Jugoslavije), AS 1589 Republiški sekretariat za notranje zadeve (The republican secretariat for internal affairs), 1.a-Z-35/ 58-77, 20.10.1977, letter from 16.1.1943, 4. In much of this letter, Kardelj used humor to describe Slovene separatist tendencies, even appealing to the fact that Tito’s own mother was a Slovene, all the while trying to make the point that institutional measures should not weaken the power of the Yugoslavian party as a whole. From Kardelj’s previous and later writings, however, like *Razvoj Slovenskega Narodnestnega Vprašanja (The development of the Slovene national question)*, from 1937, and the fact that he fell out of favor with the central party in the 1960’s for advocating too much decentralization, it seems that Kardelj did not fear Slovene separatism as much as his superiors in the Yugoslavian party did.

<sup>150</sup> In an October 17, 1943 article in *Slovenski Poročevalec*, Boris Kidric would write that “For the first time in our national history, in the midst of fierce battles fought with the cursed enemy of our people, the National Liberation Army has gathered freely chosen and elected emissaries of the Slovene people and representatives of the national liberation movement from all Slovene lands” (Prvič v naši narodni zgodovini so se sredi ogorčenih bojev, ki jih bje z zakletim sovražnikom našega naroda Narodnoosvobodilna vojska, zbrali svobodno izbrani, izvoljeni odposlanci slovenskega ljudstva in zastopniki narodnega osvobodilnega gibanja iz vseh slovenskih dežel).

<sup>151</sup> Megušar-Borut ed., *Zbor odposlancev slovenskega naroda v Kočevju od 1. do 3. Oktobra 1943: dokumenti*, (The Council of Delegates of the Slovene People in Kočevje from October 1 to 3, 1943: documents), 1953, 37.

<sup>152</sup> Dedijer, *The War Diaries of Vladimir Dedijer: Volume 3 from September 11, 1943 to November 7, 1944*, 8. This was the first time in Slovene history that women were allowed to vote for representatives at any level of government.

candidate appeared on the ballot in each council.<sup>153</sup> Even though Gorenjska and Štajerska were under German control at that time, voters from this region still elected representatives for the meeting at Kočevje. The council even sent special greetings to areas with Slovene minorities that were left outside of Yugoslavia by the Treaty of Paris and would remain Austrian and Italian after the war: Karantania and Trieste (these two regions did not send delegates to the meeting at Kočevje).<sup>154</sup>

At the convention the representatives elected 120 people to serve in the Slovene National Liberation Council (SNOO), which became an official assembly, giving itself all legislative, military and judicial powers in Slovenia, occupied and liberated. In his speech before the vote, Boris Kidrič justified the need for a Slovene government in a new Yugoslavia by referring to the “anti-national,” “bourgeoisie,” “corrupt,” “chauvinist Serbian,” “fifth-column riddled” military of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, which was completely unable to defend against Fascist invaders.<sup>155</sup> The delegates also elected a ten-person executive council for SNOO that would serve as a parallel structure to the executive council of the OF. They then appointed 42 people to serve as a Slovene delegation to the second meeting of the Anti-Fascist Council of the People’s Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) scheduled for November in Jajce, Bosnia, where the structure of the postwar Yugoslavian socialist government would be arranged by delegates from all

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<sup>153</sup> Franklin A. Lindsay’s *Report of Operations: Military Sub-Mission Fourth Operational Zone Jugoslav [sic] Army of National Liberation 14 May to 7 December 1944*, in Barker, *Social Revolutionaries and Secret Agents: The Carinthian Slovene Partisans and Britain’s Special Operations Executive*, 124.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 34-35.

<sup>155</sup> Kidrič, “Poročilo sekretarja IOOF Borisa Kidriča o delu Izvršnega odbora Osvobodilne fronte” (The report of the secretary of the executive council of the liberation front, Boris Kidrič on the work of the executive council of the liberation front), 45-47.

over the federation.<sup>156</sup> The fact that no Slovenes attended the first meeting of AVNOJ in 1942 annoyed KPJ leaders, prompting Kardelj to loudly protest their insinuation of Slovene separatism.<sup>157</sup> At the Kočevje Council, representatives adopted both the original declaration of the OF from June 22, 1941, which emphasized Slovenia's right of secession from any union with other nations, and they fully ratified all points from the first meeting of AVNOJ, pledging to work in unity with other South Slavs for liberation and a new postwar Socialist federation.<sup>158</sup> This was the first meeting of representatives and was designed to be the first of many meetings of a newly independent Slovenian Socialist Republic. Kidrič would later laud the elections to SNOO as the establishment of a "state within a state."<sup>159</sup>

Although Yugoslavian leaders were not willing to forbid the Slovenes from holding their meeting at Kočevje, they sent several delegates to support/spy on the

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<sup>156</sup> Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945: Occupation and Collaboration*, 113-114.

<sup>157</sup> The first AVNOJ conference was held November 26, 1942. In a December 7, 1942 letter to Tito, Edvard Kardelj cites the lack of clear communication channels and the difficulty of travel through Croatia as reasons for the lack of Slovene attendance. In a December 2, 1942 letter to France Leskosek, Kardelj wrote that "we were strongly noted for not having one of our representatives there" (*silno je šteta sto tam nije bilo nasih predstavnika*).<sup>\*</sup> He goes on to recommend that the resolutions of AVNOJ be publicly accepted by the OF in *Slovenski Poročevalec*. In a December 14, 1942 letter to Tito, Kardelj reports that AVNOJ has been published in *Slovenski Poročevalec*, again apologizes for the lack of Slovene delegates at the conference, then complains, "The longstanding bias against us has been that we are anti-Yugoslavian and want to form some sort of central European Soviet republic. . . . What a stupid lie that is, but it has had its effect on the masses" (*glavni adut reakcije protiv nas je stalno bio da smo mi protiv Jugoslavije, a za neku, srednjo evropsku sovjetsku republiku . . . . Ma kako glupa bila ta kleveta, ipak je imala svoj uticaj u masama*). He then claims that AVNOJ has eliminated such biases. His writing is ambiguous and can reference either the bias against the OF from Slovene masses or fellow Yugoslavian Communists. (*Bihačka Republika, druga knjiga zbornik dokumenata* (The Bihać Republic, book two, collection of documents), 1965, 284-300).<sup>\*</sup>This document is a translation of a Slovene original into Serbo-Croatian.

<sup>158</sup> AS 1115/I10, 5-8.

<sup>159</sup> *Bihačka Republika, Druga Knjiga Zbornik Dokumenta*, (The Bihać Republic, book two, collection of documents), "Report of the Secretary of the Executive Council, Boris Kidric, of December 14, 1942 to the Central Committee of the KPJ on the status of the Liberation Front of the Slovene People," 304.

Slovenes. Seven months earlier, the Central Party insisted that the Slovene party take greater control over their Liberation Front.<sup>160</sup> In response, Slovene Communist leaders forced non-Communists in the OF to sign the Dolomite Declaration, which proclaimed that the Communist Party was fully in charge of the Liberation Front.<sup>161</sup> The KPS adopted the Dolomite declaration under pressure from the KPJ, even though they recognized that such a move would likely alienate fellow travellers within the Liberation Front. Nevertheless, none of these moves to placate the KPJ had the desired effect of keeping the central authorities out of Slovenia's political affairs.<sup>162</sup>

Control over the Slovene military caused years of tension between the KPJ and KPS and many decades of memory tension as Slovenes and primarily Serbs in Belgrade competed for the position of protagonist in the narrative of the Partisan victory. As early as February 1943 the KPJ insisted that the OF create Partisan brigades, similar to the organizational structure of units in Bosnia,<sup>163</sup> to facilitate a more aggressive fighting policy.<sup>164</sup> By October four such Brigades were operating in Slovenia. They consisted primarily of Slovenes, mobilized within the Dolenjska and Ljubljana regions, but had significant minorities from other areas of Yugoslavia. By 1944, with the addition of Primorska volunteers from what had been Italian territory since 1918, OF forces swelled

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<sup>160</sup> Djilas, *Wartime*, 338-340.

<sup>161</sup> Štih, Simoniti, Vodopivec, 2008, pp. 409-410. The Dolomite Declaration was signed by Sokols, Christian Socialists, and the Communist Party of Slovenia on March 1, 1943.

<sup>162</sup> Štih, Simoniti, Vodopivec, *Slovenska Zgodovina: družba, politika, kultura* (Slovene history, society, politics, and culture), 404-408.

<sup>163</sup> Dedijer, *Tito Speaks*, 171-172.

<sup>164</sup> Guštin, "Predigra kolaboracije" (The pregame of collaboration), 53.

to 19 brigades, of about 600 fighters each.<sup>165</sup> The KPS maintained control over the Partisan units fighting in Slovenia until March 1945, at which point they joined the same military command structure which prevailed in the rest of Yugoslavia.<sup>166</sup> For most of the war, however, complete control over the OF's military apparatus was in the hands of Slovene Boris Kidrič, president of SNOO, SNOS, and the KPS.

After the convention at AVNOJ in November 1942, the Central Committee of the KPJ intensified its effort to rein in the KPS.<sup>167</sup> Kidrič was temporarily even suspended of all functions due to a report that he had said all commitments entered into by AVNOJ were empty promises.<sup>168</sup> By early 1944, when the Nazi counterattack and successes of the newly organized Home Guard collaborators left Partisan control of Slovenia in shambles, a KPS power vacuum allowed for easier KPJ influence. Earlier, in September 1943, Vladimir Dedijer and Milovan Djilas accompanied Edvard Kardelj and a newly formed proletarian brigade first to Novo Mesto then to the convention at Kočevje, where all three would work to bring central authority to an almost completely independent Slovenian army.<sup>169</sup>

Part of the shift in control was intended to rein in the Slovenes, but the biggest motivator was the strategic importance of Western Slovenia in preventing Hitler from

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>166</sup> Čepič ed., *Ključne značilnosti slovenske politike v letih 1929-1955 : znanstveno poročilo* (Key characteristics of Slovene politics from the years 1929-1955: a research report), 101.

<sup>167</sup> Štih, Simoniti, Vodopivec, *Slovenska Zgodovina: družba, politika, kultura* (Slovene history, society, politics, and culture), 409-410.

<sup>168</sup> Gow and Carmichael, *Slovenia and the Slovenes: A Small State and the New Europe*, 50.

<sup>169</sup> Djilas, *Wartime*, 328-333.

resupplying his forces in Italy, and thereby hastening the end of the war.<sup>170</sup> To Tito and his inner circle, it seemed that to win the war, the Slovene army needed to be under Yugoslav control, which itself needed to coordinate operations with the other Allies. Slovenia's Liberation Front could not continue fighting only for the interests of Slovenia. As part of the shift, Vladimir Dedijer worked to ensure that Slovene military leaders would coordinate their activities with orders from Tito. He and other KPJ representatives, like Ivo Lola-Ribar,<sup>171</sup> also made sure that political materials were more readily available, and frequently upbraided Slovene commanders for their lack of success in convincing their fighters to join the Communist Party. They were particularly concerned with the disorganized nature of Slovene media and propaganda efforts.<sup>172</sup>

Slovenes had a long history of print and voice media production, with the first Slovene newspaper, *Lublanske Novice* being printed in 1797.<sup>173</sup> During the war, collaborators, non-aligned media, and the OF continued to produce roughly half as many books and serial publications as had been available before the war, though press freedoms were severely restricted by all authorities.<sup>174</sup> Thus, for the KPJ, controlling Slovene

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<sup>170</sup> Dedijer, *The War Diaries of Vladimir Dedijer: Volume 3 from September 11, 1943 to November 7, 1944*, 50-52.

<sup>171</sup> Ivo Lola-Ribar was a member of Tito's inner circle. He had been the prewar president of the Communist Youth organization. He was killed by a German air raid on Drvar shortly before the second meeting of AVNOJ in November 1943. Djilas, *Wartime*, 358-363.

<sup>172</sup> Kardelj, 1942, pp. 293-295

<sup>173</sup> Rogel, *The Slovenes and Yugoslavism: 1890-1914*, 7.

<sup>174</sup> Aleš Gabrič shows that in 1939, 759 titles were published in Slovene, 614 in 1940; then within the Italian zone of occupation 473 in 1941, 312 in 1942, and 360 in 1943 (Gabrič, 1989, p. 390). Colonel P.A. Wilkinson writes that in 1944, the OF published 50-60 specialty journals throughout Slovenia, Peter Wilkinson, *Memorandum on the Revolt in Slovenia*, in Barker, *Social Revolutionaries and Secret Agents: The Carinthian Slovene Partisans and Britain's Special Operations Executive*, 1990, 103.

media was less a problem of its poor organization as it was a problem of its sheer volume. There was too much of it to effectively read and censor.<sup>175</sup>

Propaganda efforts among the KPS were more organized than the KPJ assumed. As early as September 11, 1941, “Cultural Workers” were formally organized within the OF, and OF headquarters used this organization to oversee its daily paper, *Slovenski Poročevalec*.<sup>176</sup> But initially, neither the central organs of the party nor OF had control over the many locally produced forms of media among Partisan units.<sup>177</sup> Until Italy’s collapse, the Partisan press had access to far more source material and a greater variety of authors than either the occupiers or collaborators, but did not have widespread distribution due to lack of printing resources.<sup>178</sup> Some early editions of even *Slovenski Poročevalec*, the official mouthpiece of the Liberation Front, did not survive the war due to limited production.<sup>179</sup> Despite the paucity of available media, the local nature of Partisan-produced press allowed much greater editorial freedom than would be available to writers later in the war when Slovenia’s press came under central Yugoslavian, Agitprop control. Not until December 1943, well after the fall of Italy, would Slovene

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<sup>175</sup> Gabrič, “Kulturni Molk” (Cultural Silence), 388.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 386.

<sup>177</sup> For a discussion of the wartime Partisan press, see Matjaž Kmecl, “Culture and the Arts during the Resistance.”

<sup>178</sup> Deželak-Barič, “Protiimperialistična in osvobodilna fronta slovenskega naroda” (The anti-Imperialist and Liberation Fronts of the Slovene Nation), 43.

<sup>179</sup> Due to the difficulty of mass production, *Slovenski Poročevalec* editions from 1941 carried a reminder at the top of the front page to “Pass this on once you have finished reading.”

Partisans have control of regularly functioning, professional press equipment, which they operated in the forests of the Dolenjska and Gorenjska regions.<sup>180</sup>

Though there was no pre-publication censorship, the wartime Partisans certainly did not have a free press. In 1942, the Liberation Front's intelligence agency, the VOS, began to monitor publications and advise local leaders on correct interpretations of events. But the VOS looked for deviations, it did not issue directives on what was to be published.<sup>181</sup> As early as 1942, the KPS had already realized that their media production efforts needed to be expanded and improved if they were to be effective at winning over the population—and even their own troops—to the goal of revolution, not just national liberation.<sup>182</sup> Kardelj and Kidrič were frequently reminded by the KPJ hierarchy that the press as a whole was not reaching the potential for social transformation that party leaders expected of it.<sup>183</sup> The sheer diversity of Slovene Partisan discourse worried the Politburo of the KPJ. As part of its efforts to rein in the KPS, in 1943 Yugoslavian Communists began organizing an Agitprop commission in Slovenia, which by the end of 1944 not only controlled, but *produced* most material published in Slovene liberated territory. The first press organ to come under its control was a central office for

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<sup>180</sup> Krall, “Ilegalne tiskarne grafičnega oddelka »B« Pokrajinske tehnike KPS za Gorenjsko” (Illegal printing press ‘B’ regional technicians of the Slovene Communist Party for Gorenjsko), 53.

<sup>181</sup> It was also worrisome to Yugoslavian officials that the VOS was controlled by Slovenes, rather than by the Yugoslavian secret police. As part of the effort to subordinate the KPS, VOS was disbanded in the spring of 1944, as well, and secret policing functions were subsumed by the Yugoslavian organization, OZNA (Štih, Simoniti, Vodopivec, *Slovenska Zgodovina: družba, politika, kultura* (Slovene history, society, politics, and culture), 413-414).

<sup>182</sup> Križnar, “Boris Kidrič o vodilni vlogi Komunistične partije Slovenije v NOB,” (Boris Kidrič on the guiding role of the Communist Party of Slovenia in the National Liberation War), 212-214.

<sup>183</sup> Šentjerc-Joža, *Jesen 1942: korespondenca Edvarda Kardelja in Borisa Kidriča*, (Fall 1942: The correspondence of Edvard Kardelj and Boris Kidrič ), 282-285.

producing photo journalism, in August 1943. By late 1943, Ivo Lola-Ribar would oversee the establishment of a central Agitprop commission in Slovenia which engaged in pre-publication censorship and was under the control of Milovan Djilas' organization for all of Yugoslavia. One of its early activities was to organize courses to professionally train journalists, which taught both the mechanics of reporting and the art of propaganda.<sup>184</sup> All forms of media would come under the jurisdiction of Agitprop in January 1944. By the middle of 1944, the tension between Slovene and Yugoslav authorities over press production was largely over, but so too was the versatility of a diverse press.

The OF primarily produced print media during the war, but it also organized plays, concerts, and dabbled in radio broadcasts. All of these productions were available to the general public, and in entertainment-deprived war zones the theatre especially proved quite popular.<sup>185</sup> The most common plays were by Shakespeare or Gogol. Many Partisans also wrote plays. Radio was more difficult for Partisan media workers. Between 1941 and 1943 students affiliated with SKOJ operated a radio station that broadcasted official OF news from various locations inside Ljubljana. This radio station played Partisan marching songs, Slovene folk music, gave press summaries from foreign sources, and gave updates on Partisan successes in Slovene free territory. German forces

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<sup>184</sup> Osolnik, "Ob odkritju spominske plošče v Črnomlju," (On the unveiling of a commemorative plaque in Črnomelj), 112-113.

<sup>185</sup> Barker, *Social Revolutionaries and Secret Agents: The Carinthian Slovene Partisans and Britain's Special Operations Executive 1944*, 102-103.

eventually found the operators of this mobile broadcasting station by shutting off power to certain parts of the city to see if the broadcasts would stop.<sup>186</sup>

Print media by far received the most attention from propagandists. KPS Cultural workers and Agitprop operatives had a special concern for images, especially with regard to photography. Partisan photojournalists often complained that they had far more



**Figure 3.1** *The Thunder Sounded from the Forests into the Valleys, and the Heroes Stormed into Battle*, Nikolaj Pirnat, 1944.

photographs than they were capable of publishing with their limited facilities.<sup>187</sup> This deficiency was largely remedied through other forms of visual art that were easier to mass produce. Much of the drawing and painting that

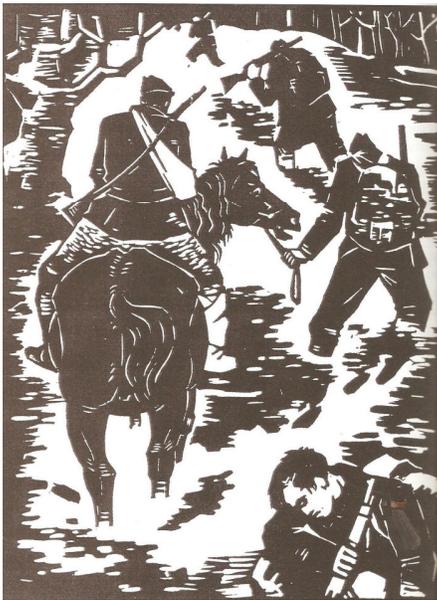
appeared in Slovene Partisan presses was amateurish, but by the end of the war a distinctive style of lithographic stamps had developed, which would dominate postwar visual memory of the war. These cuttings were produced by several different artists, and appeared in broadsides, posters, and newspapers. They are a common element of postwar literature on the war as well. The style which developed rather uniformly combines the

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<sup>186</sup> Reisp, *Kričič: radio Osvobodilne fronte, 1941-1942* (Screamer: Liberation Front radio station, 1941-1942), 3-10, 107-112.

<sup>187</sup> Fabec, Vončina and Pirjevec, *Slovenska odporniška fotografija, 1941-1945* (Slovene resistance photography, 1941-1945), 96.

stark lines of Socialist Realist depictions of the human form with darker shading than was the norm in Soviet productions from the 1930's. Slovene lithographs often portray the strength of socialist forms without hiding the vulnerability of such figures. These pictures also portray themes such as love/loss, victory/defeat, taking life/nurturing it. Nikolaj Pirnat's *The Thunder Sounded from the Forests into the Valleys, and Heroes Stormed into Battle* appeared in 1944.<sup>188</sup> Its bold lines and minimalist style emphasize the anger of the grenade thrower and the steadiness of the rifleman in a manner that focuses the attention of the viewer on the passion of the moment rather than the strength of the heroes. Either man could be dead in an instant, but the passion that led to their willing deaths is immortalized. Ive Subič's *Column in the Snow* shows none of the heroism, only Partisan suffering, though his characters are formed in a socialist-realist



manner very similar Pirnat's.<sup>189</sup> The viewer's attention is drawn to the only visible face in the bottom right hand corner. His dejected, mourning look emphasizes the continuing struggle of the forward marching men (whose faces cannot be seen), with only one horse available for someone who is clearly wounded.

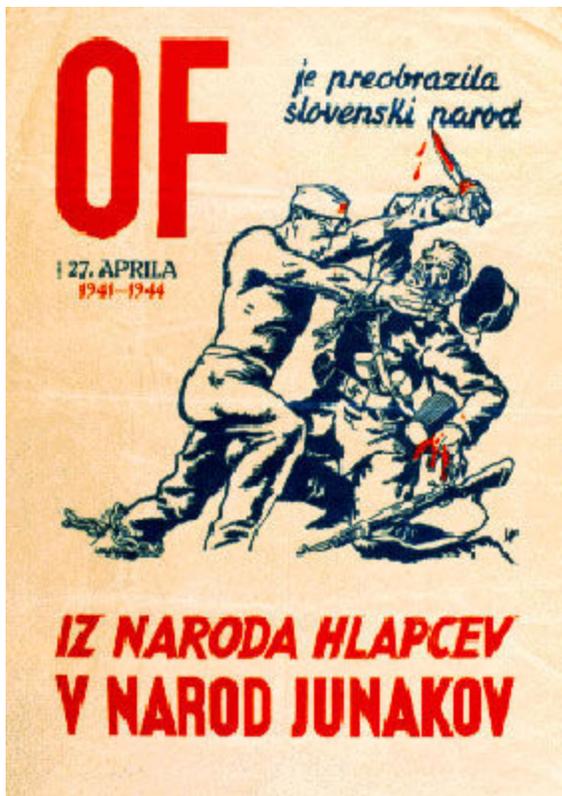
**Figure 3.2** *Column in the Snow*, Ive Subič, 1944.

<sup>188</sup> Pirnat, 1944 "Grom je planil iz gozdov v doline, junaki so zavihrali v boj," image appeared in ZZB NOB, 2007, 44.

<sup>189</sup> Subič, 1944 "Kolona v snegu," image appeared in ZZB NOB, 2007, 206.

Certainly not all wartime images followed the style used in the lithographs. Many, like the following image drawn by Vlado Jordan for the three-year anniversary of the founding of the OF, combine typical socialist realist depictions of the human form with a dehumanized enemy, a device common to many war propaganda cultures.<sup>190</sup>

By the later years of the war, Slovene and Yugoslavian Agitprop publications would reflect a more monolithic understanding of Slovenes and their revolutionary path. Much of the centrally controlled Partisan literature, both before and after the Agitprop



**Figure 3.3** *The OF has Transformed a Nation of Serfs into a Nation of Heroes, Liberation Front poster from April 27, 1944.*

takeover, was universalist in nature, seeking to incorporate as many Slovenes as possible into what was otherwise a very narrowly defined, dogmatic worldview.<sup>191</sup> As early as September 20, 1941, the declaration on the founding of SNOO, published in *Slovenski Poročevalec*, illustrates this positive construction of Slovene identity: “The Founding of the Slovene National Liberation Council (SNOO) signifies a new step towards freedom, a new step towards the liberation and uniting of all Slovenians, a new step

<sup>190</sup> Image appeared in Stanovnik, “Slovenia’s Road to Sovereignty,” 8.

<sup>191</sup> Guštin, “Vloga in pomen oboroženje sile v narodnoosvobodilnem boju v Sloveniji, 1941-1945” (The role and meaning of armed forces in the National Liberation War in Slovenia, 1941 – 1945), 462.

towards the time when Slovenes shall be their own masters on their own land.”

Propagandists constructed SNOO and OF as representative of all Slovenes. Rather than explicitly defining “others” against which a Slovene identity can be contrasted, this same declaration simply reads “every organization outside the framework of the Liberation Front of the Slovene people harms the fight for national liberation in a time of foreign occupation.”

While the KPS functioned with little KPJ oversight during the first years of the war, both parties were intellectually indebted to the Stalinism learned from years of Comintern tutelage. The prewar Communist members of the KPS were of course all members of the KPJ as well, and most had spent some amount of time in Moscow. Thus both before and after Agitprop took over the Slovene media, its pages contained constant praise for the USSR, and often Russia in particular. Stalin’s rather lengthy *Short Course*<sup>192</sup> provided the guide that leaders of both parties used to understand how to carry out a revolution and how to build a postwar socialist state.<sup>193</sup> The *Short Course* was the most prominent of the many writings of Stalin which advocated the use of national sentiments as a means to the revolutionary seizure of power.<sup>194</sup> In reference to the

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<sup>192</sup> Stalin, *A History of the all-union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) Short Course*.

<sup>193</sup> According to Jože Potrc, Stalin’s *Short Course* immediately became obligatory reading for all progressive party members. Potrc, “Speech for Second Congress of Slovene Communist Party, November 11, 1948,” 339.

<sup>194</sup> To be clear, by 1931 Stalin had retreated from many of the “affirmative action” policies he once advocated as a means to win the support of Russia’s many nationalities for the goals of socialism. He instead began to focus on building a strong socialist state, and viewed many of the same nations his policies had helped to construct as potential enemies. Nevertheless, Slovene party leaders read his support for nationalist policies in the *Short Course* through the lens of their own Austrian Marxist heritage of using the national question to further the collapse of oppressive, imperialist orders. They could reference many writings of Stalin which supported this previous view. See for example “The Social Democrat view on the National Question,” 1904; “On the Road to nationalism,” 1913; “Marxism and the National Question,” 1913; “The October Revolution and the National Question,” 1918; “The Government’s Policy on the

Bolshevik seizure of power in 1917, for example, he wrote that “only such a party could so skillfully merge into one common revolutionary torrent such diverse revolutionary movements as the general democratic movement for peace, the peasant democratic movement for the seizure of the landed estates, the movement of the oppressed nationalities for national liberation and national equality, and the Socialist movement of the proletariat for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.”<sup>195</sup> National liberation, in his text, is just one element of the revolutionary process.

In the Slovene case, the power of Sokols and Christian Socialists within the OF as late as 1943 would occasionally temper the explicit mention of revolutionary over national liberation goals. But internally, KPS members never denied the goals of total revolution, with the purpose of establishing a postwar Socialist state.<sup>196</sup> Nevertheless, a certain amount of literary Russophilism in Slovene lands was as old as the first stirrings of national consciousness,<sup>197</sup> so it was easy to rhetorically tie ambitions for independent

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National Question,” 1919; “The Policy of the Soviet Government on the National Question in Russia,” 1920; “The Immediate Task of the Party in the National Question,” 1921; “Concerning the Presentation of the National Question,” 1921; “The October Revolution and the National Policy of the Russian Communists,” 1921; “National Factors in Party and State Affairs,” 1923; “Concerning the National Question in Yugoslavia,” 1925; “The National Question once again,” 1925; and “The National Question and Leninism,” 1929 (Josef Stalin Internet Archive, <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/>).

<sup>195</sup> Stalin, *A History of the all-union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) Short Course*, 72.

<sup>196</sup> Peter N.M. Moore, *Report on Slovenia*, in Barker, *Social Revolutionaries and Secret Agents: The Carinthian Slovene Partisans and Britain's Special Operations Executive*, 154-156; In May 1943, Edvard Kardelj wrote that “deeper changes in the social framework, especially regarding the understanding of property within the National Liberation Movement, have not been published and are not part of the program . . . but that does not mean that Communists have denied their end goal” (globljih sprememb v socialnem oziru, a zlasti v lastninskem pogledu NOG ne izjava a tudi niso v njegovem programu . . . a to ne pomeni da se komunisti odrekajo svojemu končnemu cilju). Quoted in Čepič and Nedok, *Agrarna reforma in kolonizacija v Sloveniji : (1945-1948)* (The agrarian reform and colonization in Slovenia : (1945-1948)), 83.

<sup>197</sup> Rogel, *The Slovenes and Yugoslavism: 1890-1914*, 45-48.

statehood to the great Soviet protector of small nations. The accomplishments of the Soviet Union were presented as nothing short of miraculous and reading publications like *Borba*, one is left with the impression that the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia were the only states fighting against Fascism in the Second World War.<sup>198</sup>

The Partisan press would make use of Soviet-inspired tactics to win support for a Slovene nation. By 1944 the central press of the OF began producing media directed at various segments of the Slovene population (divided according to Marxist ideology): *Naša Žena*, for women; *Mladina*, for youth; and *Kmečki Glas* for peasants.<sup>199</sup> The normative Slovene Communist, who was a man, mature, and either a worker or an intellectual, apparently required no special media. All women automatically became members of the *Slovene Anti-Fascist Women's League* upon joining the party. By 1944, as many as two million women had been mobilized across Yugoslavia by the umbrella Anti-Fascist Women's organization (AFŽ) to support troops.<sup>200</sup>

The Slovene League was first formed in 1943 to “find a means to lift all women out of disinterestedness.”<sup>201</sup> During the war years this league presented a well-known socialist vision of empowerment, absent from the previous monarchy, including equality in the workplace and voting rights as a means to win the participation of women in the

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 307-315.

<sup>199</sup> Barker, *Social Revolutionaries and Secret Agents: The Carinthian Slovene Partisans and Britain's Special Operations Executive*, 103.

<sup>200</sup> Jančar-Webster, *Women and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945*, 205.

<sup>201</sup> Vida Tomšičič quoted in Jeraj, “Komunistična Partija, Antifascistična Fronta Žensk in uresničevanje zenske pravice v Sloveniji (1943-1953)” (The Communist Party, Antifascist Women's Front and the realization of women's rights in Slovenia, (1943-1953)), 163

struggle for national liberation.<sup>202</sup> In Soviet practice, especially in central Asia, women had been seen as “surrogate proletariats” who by virtue of their oppressed status might serve as ready allies of the party.<sup>203</sup> As early as 1921 Stalin said in an address to women in the Caucasus that “there has not been a single important movement for emancipation in the history of mankind in which women have not closely participated.”<sup>204</sup>

While promising liberation on the basis of both sex and nationality, the women’s organization focused far more on the latter. One of the most widely circulated wartime



Figure 3.4 *Wounded*, Ive Subič, 1944.

lithographs, by Ive Subič, “Wounded,” shows a powerful man being supported by a woman who is oblivious to the fierce battle raging just beyond her maternal gaze.<sup>205</sup> The picture works with common European nationalist archetypes, in which a woman’s role is to protect, heal, and support a male-gendered nation. It foreshadows prominent postwar memory discourses in which the OF gave women equality, which they then

willingly subordinated to the goals of building a (male) Slovene nation. A frequent press strategy was to distinguish socialist women’s rights from a notion of rights that

<sup>202</sup> Repe, “The Liberation Front of the Slovene Nation,” 47.

<sup>203</sup> Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia*, 11-12.

<sup>204</sup> Stalin, June 17, 1921, “Greetings to the First Congress of Highland Women,” in *The Joseph Stalin Archive*, <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1921/06/17.htm>.

<sup>205</sup> (ranjenec), Image taken from: <http://piranacafe.com/2009/03/30/drawings-from-revolution-and-art/>.

undermined the goals of the state and party, labeling the latter “bourgeoisies feminism”; or, as leading party official Lidija Šentjarc would say, “reactionaries seek to subvert our women in order to cause confusion among the people.”<sup>206</sup>

Katja Mihurko Poniž makes the interesting argument that the earlier subordination of feminist goals to the goals of nationalism in late-19<sup>th</sup>-century Slovenia should not be seen as a failure to the cause because it created a framework for understanding issues specific to women.<sup>207</sup> Her argument could be applied to the rhetorical empowerment of women in Socialist Slovenia as well. Later chapters will show that not all Slovene women accepted the inequality of their roles as supporting actors in National Liberation War narratives. Not all women were content to be cogs in state machinery, for whom individual needs were bourgeoisies’ relics. By the late 1980’s, historians began to write women as protagonists in war histories. These histories generally accompanied demands for equality in the Republic; demands by women for women. During the war, however, the party was keenly aware of the value of propaganda directed at women; or rather, demands for women by men.

Following women, the next group of non-normative Communists was represented by the *League of Slovene Communist Youth* (SKOJ), which predated the onset of war by only two years. It functioned separately from the KPS but was intended as a preparation for party membership.<sup>208</sup> In the early years of the war it was the largest source of

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<sup>206</sup> *Ljudska Pravica*, Dec 12, 1948, 1; AS 1589, 870, 1.2.1947, 19. (preko žena skuša reakcija prodirati med ljudmi).

<sup>207</sup> Mihurko-Poniž, “Slovenke in narodno gibanje v slovenski publicistiki 19. stoletja” (Slovene women and the national movement in Slovene journalism of the 19th century), 194.

<sup>208</sup> Avakumović, *History of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia: Volume 1*, 155-158, 163-170.

volunteers for Partisan units.<sup>209</sup> During the war itself, when most fighters were in their teens or early twenties, this organization was an effective tool for increasing the political awareness of potential party members. It was not until the 1960's that the organization, briefly, represented youth concerns over employment prospects, an issue that caused tension with older party members, that will be discussed in chapter six. By the 60's, youth had come to represent a distinct population segment who did not share privileges of the ruling (non-youth) class. During the war, when the overwhelming majority of party members were also SKOJ members, no such practical distinctions existed.

There was no corresponding mass organization for farmers, but in order to fight the national liberation war, KPJ and KPS leaders across Yugoslavia made an unprecedented effort to mimic Lenin's union of peasants and workers, in what was also a predominantly rural state.<sup>210</sup> It was in the small villages of Dolenjska, Primorska, and Notranjska that the OF had its support base. And people from these villages formed the bulk of its recruits, though few of these smallholders and tenant farmers shared or even comprehended the goals of socialist transformation.<sup>211</sup> For the most part, the KPS limited its wartime goals to defeating the occupiers/collaborators and setting up political control within Slovenia. They made few public pronouncements of plans for social and economic transformation.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Denitch, *The Legitimation of a Revolution: The Yugoslav Case*, 90.

<sup>210</sup> Bokovoy. "Peasants and Partisans: The Politics of the Countryside, 1945-1953," 115-117.

<sup>211</sup> Barker, *Social Revolutionaries and Secret Agents: The Carinthian Slovene Partisans and Britain's Special Operations Executive*, 85.

<sup>212</sup> Čepič, "Agrarna reforma in politika" (Politics and the agrarian reform), 81.

Even so, one of the most important attempts at winning rural support was a rather vague postwar promise of an agrarian reform that would distribute the holdings of “Kulaks” and the Catholic church to those who would work the land; in the words of Kidrič, “to guarantee for the first time in the history of the Slovene people, that the Slovene farmer will be his own lord on his own land.”<sup>213</sup> Seizing land was similarly a method to punish those who had opposed the goals of the OF; even during the war Partisan forces would on occasion redistribute land from those accused of helping the enemy.<sup>214</sup> This wager on the peasants, however, would not last, as postwar party leaders could not resist the urge to reform such seemingly backward people. In fact, even during the war, leaders of the KPJ disagreed on whether to implement a Yugoslavian version of Soviet collectivization, or to simply redistribute land,<sup>215</sup> leaving the federation with a mixed private and state economy similar to the New Economic Period of Soviet history. Though a land redistribution program would be carried out after the war, it was followed by a drive to collectivize agriculture. This massively unpopular move would be one of the first casualties of Tito’s economic and social shift away from Stalinism, to be discussed further in chapters three and four.

In addition to positively constructing a Slovene nation, by reaching out to its Marxist imagined constituent parts, media workers also negatively constructed a nation in opposition to quintessentially non-Slovenes. The process of “othering” would occur

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<sup>213</sup> Quoted in Čepič, “Nekaj stopinj revolucije v pluralni dobi osvobodilne fronte” (Stages of Revolution during the Pluralistic period of the Liberation Front), 98. (ki bo prvič v zgodovini slovenskega naroda zajamčila, da bo slovenski kmet na svoji zemlji res svoj gospod)

<sup>214</sup> Čepič, “Agrarna reforma in politika” (Politics and the agrarian reform), 83.

<sup>215</sup> Bokovoy, “Peasants and Partisans: The Politics of the Countryside, 1945-1953,” 116-118.

frequently in the Partisan press against the inhuman deeds of the occupation armies;<sup>216</sup> but such tactics would usually target ideologies. There were few explicitly German or Italian crimes, but many crimes that reflected the depravity of Nazi-Fascism.<sup>217</sup> Within the framework of a Stalinist-Marxist worldview, Yugoslav communist literature created others out of collaborators, fascists, and western imperialists.<sup>218</sup> But much more prominent in Yugoslavian writing was a desire to know what the collaborators, Fascists, and western imperialists think about the new men and women being created by the socialist states.<sup>219</sup> Much has been written about the mass-mobilization efforts of states like the Soviet Union in this period.<sup>220</sup> Official rhetoric from such states describes the potentials of individuals of any race, nationality, or gender as limitless, and invites all to be a part of their movement (unless they were of the wrong class or political persuasion).<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Blatnik and Burnik, *Analiza sovražnika v vizualnih propagandnih materialnih NOB* (An analysis of the enemy as depicted in the propaganda images of the National Liberation War), 10.

<sup>217</sup> The wartime and postwar massacres of thousands of ethnically Italian civilians in the foibe of Western Slovenia, as well as forced expulsions, rapes, and murders of German- and Italian-speaking Yugoslavs after the war, shows that the universalist rhetoric of the main newspapers by no means prevented the most savage of crimes from occurring.

<sup>218</sup> Istorijiski arhiv komunističke partiye Jugoslaviye, (Historical archive of the Communist party of Yugoslavia), 1949, 28-30.

<sup>219</sup> Istorijiski Arhiv Komunističke Partije Jugoslavije, 1949, 154-160.

<sup>220</sup> Adeb Khalid, "Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization: Early Soviet Central Asia in Comparative Perspective," describes the Soviet Union as a "mass mobilization state," arguing that the Soviet Union was unique among modern empires in that it desired to mobilize the resources of all of its people, by equally empowering both colonial and metropole Soviet citizens. Francine Hirsch offers an insightful nuance to the mobilization idea by suggesting that the Soviet Union borrowed ideas of "nation" and "empire" from Europe to encourage "mass participation." Hirsch, *Empire Of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*, 4-5.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 271-286; Stanovnik, "Slovenski Zbornik 2007: NOB v slovenskem narodovem spominu" (Slovene Almanac 2007: The National Liberation War in the Slovene National Memory), 13-20

For class and military enemies, there was little public or media empathy in later years of the war. Partisan units took no prisoners in fights with either occupying armies or their Slovenian quislings, and unlike in earlier stages of the war, undertook few propaganda efforts to win these people over in the last year of fighting. The monolithic, dogmatic nature of the Communist vision for Slovenia, and the ferocity with which its disciples propagated it, created a common denominator against which Slovene non-Communist forces could rally. While their previous visions of Slovene nationalism were highly diverse, resistance to Communism allowed them to distill their many ideologies into an identity of Slovene nationhood as Catholic, rural, anti-materialist, and anti-Bolshevik. The anti-Semitism of Germany served as a means to unite all of these discourses of Slovene nationalism, and to build a bridge to the anti-Judeo-Bolshevism of the German occupiers.<sup>222</sup>

While Slovene Communists alienated their Yugoslav comrades with separatist rhetoric and the creation of locally functioning governing bodies at the Kočevje conference in the first days of October, later in that week they would give anti-Communist forces in Slovenia a massacre to remember. As described in the previous chapter, with Nazi forces quickly approaching Kočevje, Boris Kidrič ordered the immediate liquidation of as many captured collaborators as possible.<sup>223</sup> It was the murder of as many as 600 of these men, in forested areas in small towns all around Kočevje,

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<sup>222</sup> Kranjc, *Between the Swastika and the Star: Slovene Collaboration and National Identity, 1941-1945*, 137-148. Gregor Kranjc stresses that the collaborator press in Slovenia was under the almost total supervision of occupying armies. Therefore the admiration for Fascism and Nazi Germany as well as virulent anti-Semitism represented only the most extreme factions of the collaborators. Most soldiers in this camp were motivated above all by a fear and hatred of Communism.

<sup>223</sup> Dedijer, *The War Diaries of Vladimir Dedijer: Volume 3 from September 11, 1943 to November 7, 1944*, 8.

without any judicial proceedings, that would provide the strongest rallying cry for anti-Communist forces. For much of this history of Socialist Slovenia, October 3<sup>rd</sup> was remembered as the anniversary of the formation of a Slovene government. On the first anniversary, however, the region around Kočevje was occupied by the Slovene Home Guard.

On October 12, 1944 the official newspaper of the Slovene Home Guard, *Slovensko Domobranstvo*, carried an article about the discovery of mass graves throughout Kočevje province. The paper showed numerous pictures of soldiers exhuming bodies and of a funeral procession and attempts to give these men Christian burials. The article began with a clear vision of their martyrdom, using it as a rallying cry against the Communists, on behalf of a Slovene nation<sup>224</sup>:

Slovene heroes are rising from the graves of Grčarice, Mozelj, Buck Valley, Buck Hill, Birčna Village, and Crimea Cave, where one year ago Slovene communists killed thousands of upright Slovenes on account of their national and religious convictions, providing the small Slovene nation with its own Katyn. Here, as in Spain, Poland, and throughout Europe, international Communist and Masonic criminals have tried to rule by force, through murdering the best sons of our people. Their blood has given birth to a national uprising which together with the resurrection of fallen heroes from their dark forest graves has, in the heart of every Slovene, sparked new determination for the victory against the destroyers of our nation.

*Slovensko Domobranstvo*, Dec 12, 1944

Germans formed the Domobranstvo only a few weeks after the Kočevje massacre. Though the Partisans had enjoyed a major victory after Italy's capitulation in 1943, they

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<sup>224</sup> (Slovenski junaki vstajajo iz grobov Grčarice, Mozelj, Jelendol, Jelenov Hrib, Birčna vas, Mačkovec, Krimška Jama, v katerih so pred letom dni slovenski komunisti pobili na tisoče poštenih Slovencev zaradi njihovega narodnega in verskega prepričanja, pomenijo malemu slovenskemu narodu slovenski Katyn. Kakor v Španiji, na Poljskem in drugod v Evropi, so mednarodni komunistični in masonski zločinci hoteli tudi pri nas zavladati z nasiljem in poboji najboljših sinov našega naroda. Njihova kri je rodila narodni odpor in z vstajanjem padlih Junakov iz temnih gozdnih grobov vžgala v srcih vseh Slovencev novo pobudo na poti v zmago nad uničevalci našega naroda.

were unable to defend their gains.<sup>225</sup> The progress of Allied troops on the Italian peninsula made defending the Adriatic corridor through Slovenia a top priority for Nazi planners.<sup>226</sup> When invited to do so by the Nazis, almost all of the disbanded MVAC soldiers joined the Domobranstvo. Collaboration seemed to many a necessary tactic to defeat what they felt to be a far greater evil. The Domobranstvo was able to gain an additional 7,000 troops from the Ljubljana province through volunteers and conscription, rising to a total force of around 13,500 by the end of the war.<sup>227</sup>

The Nazis appointed Leo Rupnik, the former Slovene nationalist of the SLS, who had also been the Italian-appointed mayor of Ljubljana to lead the Domobranci. Germans gave Rupnik his orders, however.<sup>228</sup> Rupnik's forces were only allowed to operate within the Ljubljana province, but in 1944 the Germans organized a similar Domobranci group in Primorska, with approximately 2,000 troops, then another in Gorenjska with around 2,500 troops.<sup>229</sup> In Gorenjska, the Partisans had almost no presence. The core of the collaborator movement was in the Ljubljana province, under the leadership of the SS,

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<sup>225</sup>Dedijer, *The War Diaries of Vladimir Dedijer: Volume 3 from September 11, 1943 to November 7, 1944*, 22-26; Jarman, *Yugoslavia Political Diaries: Volume 2, 1938-1965*, 448-523. Between the end of 1943 to the end of 1944, British intelligence reports show that the majority of the fighting in Slovenia occurred in the Ljubljana, Dolenjska, and Notrjanska provinces, where Domobranci forces allied with German troops were attempting to gain control of the area from which the Italians had retreated..

<sup>226</sup> Štih, Simoniti, Vodopivec, *Slovenska Zgodovina: družba, politika, kultura* (Slovene history, society, politics, and culture), 412.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 529.

<sup>228</sup> Mlakar, *Slovensko Domobranstvo 1943-1945: Ustanovitev, organizacija, idejno ozadje* (Slovene Home Guard 1943-1945: Founding, organization, and ideological structure), 43-48.

<sup>229</sup> Štih, Simoniti, Vodopivec, *Slovenska Zgodovina: družba, politika, kultura* (Slovene history, society, politics, and culture), 412-413.

with Rupnik slowly increasing his power and prestige among these forces at the expense of German influence.

In November 1944 Friedrich Rainer, Gauleiter of Gorenjska, had transformed the Slovene Home Guard into an elite anti-artillery unit, under the leadership of the SS. As part of this transformation, the Home Guard was ordered to swear an oath of allegiance to Hitler.<sup>230</sup> The immediate implication was that the Domobranci became far more effective in promoting Germany's war aims in Slovenia. By December 1944, almost all of the once-Communist-occupied territory of Slovenia was under German control. Much of the Partisan leadership was still in this area, but once again they were operating "in illegality." Partisan morale was at an all-time low. Two British liaison officers with the Slovene Partisans at this time commented that the Domobranci were better organized, had better discipline, equipment, and, paradoxically, morale than the Partisans in the final months of the war.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 167-168.

<sup>231</sup> Lt. Col. PNM Moore noted in his *Report on Slovenia* covering October 1944 to February 1945 that "The morale of the White Guard has risen remarkably in spite of their position as 100% collaborationist. The personnel of at any rate the POKRETNE [mobile] battalions who are all volunteers are man for man of higher morale than the Pzns. Reasons are bad Pzn food, Pzns resigning the initiative, and the high standard of training in Pzn warfare which the Germans have taught them, including the use of strong ski patrols. The POKRETNE battalions have definitely established an ascendancy over the Pzns in large areas of wooded country previously considered Pzn preserves. The amnesty of 15 Jan did not secure a single desertion and the SLOVENE Pzns admit that the White Guard are as tough a proposition or even tougher than the Ustashi. White Guard troops fought stubbornly in defence of RIBNICA and KOČEVJE and are capable of bold offensive action as shown by this raid on CRNOMELJ in November." He continues that "75% of the population in liberated territory and the Army in SLOVENIA are war weary. The remaining 25% can think of little but the jobs they are going to get after the war." (emphases in original, in Barker, 1990, pp. 152, 157). Major Franklin A. Lindsay noted in his *Report of Operations Military Sub-Mission to Fourth Operational Zone Yugoslav Army of National Liberation* from May 14 to Dec 7, 1944 that "the Partisans have lost the offensive and the collaborationist troops, chiefly the White Guard, have become more aggressive. It is quite possible that after the failure of the amnesty offer the Partisan high command realized that it did not have the upper hand completely and that there would be strong opposition from the right-wing parties and troops when the Germans withdrew. In light of this the Partisans, thinking the Germans would be gone soon, may have decided to conserve their men and supplies to defeat all opposition when that day came." (in Barker, *Social Revolutionaries and Secret Agents: The Carinthian Slovene*

For the duration of the war, the majority of the fighting that took place on the territory of the present-day Republic of Slovenia was between Slovenes. While in 1943 many Partisans assumed that the war would be over in a matter of months, by 1945, soldiers on both sides seemed locked in an unending, internecine struggle. After March 1945 OF units were no longer in charge of the military operations, rather Partisan brigades under the command of the Yugoslavian People's Army, made up of multi-ethnic troops, primarily from Bosnia and Serbia, were conducting the overwhelming majority of military operations in Slovenia. They were not, however, turning the tide against the occupation forces until receiving the assistance of the Soviet Red Army in April and May.<sup>232</sup> While Soviet assistance was key to liberating all of Yugoslavia, by 1948 most Partisans preferred to remember their own four year struggle rather than the foreign heroes of the eleventh hour.

As the war was coming to an end the printed discourse of both the Home Guards and Partisans was congruent to the extent that each proclaimed visions of a Slovene nation: one was constructed as vaguely socialist in a manner that appealed to as many people as possible, the other an amalgamation of strongly religious, conservative and agrarian views simultaneously against both Communism and Western Plutocracy. Though the ideologies of collaboration were diverse, by the last year of the war the Home Guard's press organs were under the narrow control of the German occupation authority through the Propaganda Branch of the Home Guard's Information Office (IU); and

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*Partisans and Britain's Special Operations Executive*, 133).

<sup>232</sup> Štih, Simoniti, Vodopivec, *Slovenska Zgodovina: družba, politika, kultura* (Slovene history, society, politics, and culture), 416-417.

producing rather uniform messages.<sup>233</sup> Where the OF subdivided the nation according to women, youth, and peasants; the IU produced messages specific to soldiers, the general public, and Partisans.<sup>234</sup> Where Agitprop had the ambition to *produce* all media; the German occupiers, after 1943, were content to exercise censorship over a prewar Slovenian press. Thus the Home Guard produced only publications intended for troops, such as *Slovensko Domobranstvo*, wrote limited press releases, published two books, produced a small amount of radio and film productions, and conducted some public lectures and special school presentations.<sup>235</sup> The OF, on the other hand, produced scores of periodicals, dozens of books, radio programs, plays, and concerts. Where the OF frequently disputed the KPJ's control of Agitprop, the Home Guard propaganda organs were far more beholden to their German masters. Many supporters of the OF would be critical of postwar Home Guard claims, for instance, to have wanted the western democracies to be victorious in the war, as there was no evidence of this in their presses. But as Gregor Kranjc has shown, such discourses were completely impossible in the printed press of the time. He therefore distinguishes between the ideology of the Home

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<sup>233</sup> Kranjc, *Between the Swastika and the Star: Slovene Collaboration and National Identity, 1941-1945*, 199-200.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, 201-203.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, 205-210. Because of their willingness to serve as mouth pieces for occupation armies, Gregor Kranjc includes the mainstream papers: *Slovenec*, *Slovenski Dom*, *Jutro*, *Slovenski Narod*, *Družinski Tednik*, and *Zlato Rog* in the category of the collaborator press, as well as the Catholic publications: *Goreči Plamen*, *Junaki*, and *Živi Viri*. He is certainly correct to note their collaboration, but for my purposes I distinguish them from the only publication produced by the Home Guard. These publications do not represent a unified political program like that of the OF, merely opposition to Communism and various degrees of support for the occupation.

Guard and their propaganda. When coupled with the fear of Communist atrocities, their propaganda and non-printed ideology formed powerful mobilizing rhetoric.<sup>236</sup>

Battles with the collaborators in Slovenia continued up until one week after the end of the war in Europe. In other parts of Yugoslavia Četnik forces would fight government troops until 1946 in rural areas of Bosnia and Serbia; Ustaši terrorists would attack Yugoslavian targets abroad until the 1970's. Except for an isolated report of a Četnik band harassing government forces near the Austrian border in October 1945, the physical battles were over for Slovenes in May 1945.<sup>237</sup> Slovene Partisans had certainly born the brunt of the fighting for the majority of the war. They were helpless without Yugoslav assistance at the end of the war, and neither was able to defeat the Axis forces without enormous Red Army assistance in the final months. From 1943 on, the Partisans were able to coordinate many of their attacks with British and American bombers as well. Even Bulgaria's government, having switched to the allied side in the last months of the war, sent troops to liberate parts of Western Slovenia. Dividing credit for the victory among the various forces involved would constitute most of the memory debates in the Communist Bloc, Yugoslavia, and Slovenia over the next two decades.

On May 20, 1945 around 3,000 captured men, a few women, and some children filled the narrow, medieval streets of Kranj, Slovenia. The Partisan Matija Gubanc brigade was herding these prisoners on a forced march from the train station in Kranj to

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<sup>236</sup> Ibid., 200-202, 145.

<sup>237</sup> A report from the Ljubljana Regional Committee of the KPJ describes a band of armed men identifying themselves as Četniks in the Jezero, Prešerje, Kamnik, and Rakitna area during the fall of 1945. These men allegedly were circulating propaganda in favor of the King before the upcoming elections and even threatened Partisan gendarmes with rifles. The gendarmes were forced to flee as they were armed only with pistols. AS 1589, 549, 5.10.1945, 1.

the recently liberated German prison camp in Kočevje. Partisan soldiers encouraged the residents of Kranj to hurl epithets, garbage, physical abuse, and bodily fluids at these people. Few complied. The residents of Kranj had come under Partisan control only 11 days previous, and most were far more familiar with accounts of Communist brutality than they were with Communist propaganda.<sup>238</sup> The people of Kranj had been under German control since April 6, 1941. Kranj was void of a Partisan political presence for the duration of the war. Two weeks earlier as many as 100,000 people from all over Yugoslavia made their way through Kranj on their way to hoped-for refuge as British POW's in the Bleiburg region of Austria. Unfortunately, these people who had fought on the side of the Axis powers were unaware of the Yalta agreement's stipulation that prisoners of war would be returned to the territories against which they had fought. At the end of May, British soldiers forcibly put these people onto trains bound for Yugoslavia, with little resistance as the British commanders promised these people that they were being relocated to camps in Italy. These trains took them to Kranj and Celje, where they were then marched to places like Teharje, Kočevski Rog, Sveti Urh, and, according to the Commission on Concealed Mass Graves in Slovenia, as many as 591 other places, where they were subsequently tried, in some cases, but in general simply murdered.<sup>239</sup> Since the breakup of Yugoslavia, those studying these massacres on Slovene territory have generally divided the victims according to nationality. Jozo

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<sup>238</sup> Kovač, *V rogu ležimo pobiti* (We lie dead in a ravine), 30

<sup>239</sup> As of January 2011 the Commission on Concealed Mass Graves in Slovenia has identified 594 sites of mass murder from the Second World War; from many different perpetrators.  
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Commission-on-Concealed-Mass-Graves-in-Slovenia/140594939301098>.

Tomasevich estimates that 60,000 Croats lost their lives along with 10,000 Serbs.<sup>240</sup>

Tadeja Tominšek Rihtar has estimated that 14,447 Slovenes were murdered in these postwar killings.<sup>241</sup>

Some of the prisoners were held for several weeks at a labor camp in Kočevje. However, by the end of June, all had been murdered except at most a few dozen who escaped and whose memoirs began to inform immigrant Slovene literature as early as 1948. The primary perpetrator of these murders was the Gubčeva Brigade. The previously mentioned Edvard Kocbek witnessed many of these crimes as a member of the brigade. These crimes influenced his disillusionment with the party, and his increasingly harsh criticisms of it led to his purging in 1952. Even Kocbek, however, did not publicly speak out about the murders until 1975. Commemorating these victims continues to be a contentious topic within present-day Slovenia, in part because those who want to commemorate these killings often have ties with fascism and a far-right political agenda. On the other hand, there are few larger towns in Slovenia today that do not contain a “Gubčeva street.” “Gubčeva” can signify either the brigade or the person for whom the brigade was named; the 16<sup>th</sup> century leader of a peasant revolt, Matej Gubec who Communist theorists felt to be an early manifestation of class struggle in Slovene and Croatian lands<sup>242</sup>. The double meaning of Gubec causes little controversy in twenty-first century Slovenia, while commemorating the Gubec brigades’ victims remains highly divisive.

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<sup>240</sup> Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945: Occupation and Collaboration*, 764-765.

<sup>241</sup> Tominšek-Rihtar, “Žrtve druge svetovne vojne in povojnega nasilja (1941-1946)” (Victims of the Second World War and postwar persecution (1941-1946)), 328.

<sup>242</sup> Kovač, *V rogu ležimo pobiti* (We lie dead in a ravine), 80.

In the early months of Communist power, local leaders felt that an overwhelming show of force and the liquidation of collaborators was the only means to secure the gains of the revolution in the Štajerska and Gorenjska regions of Slovenia (those areas that had been under German occupation for the duration of the war). The news publications available in Kranj during this period emphasized the leadership of Tito, the alliance with Stalin, the strength of the Red Army, and the unity of the Partisans; all with the purpose of legitimizing the revolution. For the first year, little news was printed about the just-completed war. Communist control of Slovenia was far too tenuous.

While Tito had ordered that no such reprisal killings should occur, recent historiography has shown that he was not kept out of the loop, as historians had previously asserted. Nevertheless, Tito did absolutely nothing to punish the perpetrators of these crimes, which in effect gave his passive approval of them.<sup>243</sup> Certainly his own prejudices and hatreds were similar to those of the men who had spent three years fighting these collaborators. That the murder of these people occurred from a grass roots level indicates that popular rage against the collaborators was so great that such a decision could be widely supported by the men and women on the ground.

## CONCLUSION

Political control over Slovenia had been won with massive outside help and at the end of the war Slovene Communists lacked the memory confidence necessary to appeal to the genuine support that many Slovenes felt for their movement. Partisan forces instead focused on removing real and potential enemies. The Slovene party had not enjoyed success through their own efforts since 1943, when the capitulation of Italy gave

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<sup>243</sup> Simić, *Tito: Skrivnost Stoletja, Jugoslovanski predsednik v novi luči* (Tito: Mystery of the century, the Yugoslavian president from a new perspective), 209-213.

Partisans a windfall in equipment and territory. In celebration of this victory, Partisans organized a council of 640 ministers at Kočevje in October, 1943 that sowed seeds of discord with both the Yugoslav party and defeated anti-Communists. Even though delegates at Kočevje accepted the Yugoslavian government of AVNOJ they stressed the goals of Slovene national liberation and the right of Slovenia to secede from any federation. In addition, one week after the conference, captured anti-Communist military leaders were put on trial for collaboration in the Kočevje Process. Most of the captured rank and file soldiers were simply murdered.

The conference and trial at Kočevje became contentious memory elements for Slovene, Yugoslav and Slovene émigré memories of the war. For pro-Partisan Slovene memories the conference became evidence of popular support for the Liberation Front's creation of Slovene statehood. For Yugoslav memories it showed the insubordination of Slovenes, whose chauvinistic nationalism weakened the federation from its inception. For the émigré community the trials after the conference became one more example of Communist oppression that forced them to flee Yugoslavia at the end of the war.

Immediately after the conference, the Yugoslav party took legislative measures to rein in the OF's independent media, military and political decision-making. At the same time that the Yugoslavs were working to subdue the Slovenes, Nazi forces were overwhelming the territory vacated by Italians. They were aided in their assault by the Slovene Home Guard, formed out of the remnants of those who had collaborated with the Italians. The Home Guard was better funded and trained than the Partisans and had a powerful sponsor in Germany. They were, however, completely subordinated to German war aims. While many among the Home Guards thought collaboration with Germany

was an alliance of convenience, hoping to throw off their masters' yoke and join the Western allies at an opportune time, with historical reflection these hopes seem fantastical. The US, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union were fully behind Tito's Partisans, and the Germans were aware that the loyalty of many Home Guard leaders was superficial; thus preventing them from independent activity. Furthermore, the Home Guard lacked a unified vision for constructing a Slovene nation, like that shared by most Communist leaders. They did not represent all Slovene anti-Communists, and unified primarily in opposition to Communism. Imagining a Slovene nation, alas, would take a far more disciplined approach than that of the ideologically diverse anti-Communist camp.

Memory discourses in the postwar period would become as important as the military successes of 1943 in winning the support of the Slovene population. But in the immediate aftermath of the war, Slovene Communist propagandists fared quite poorly in their attempts to legitimize their authority. It would take another year before Slovenes would rejoice in their own victory. In 1945, local leaders knew that it was only through the assistance of the Red Army and Yugoslav brigades that Slovenia had been liberated. It was not until propagandists narrated the Partisan victory as a Slovene national victory that they were able to create a pillar of regime legitimacy that would outlive the Yugoslavian Socialist Republic of Slovenia.

### Chapter 3: Stalinist Slovenia, 1945-1948

*“Fool neither yourself nor others with promises of a coming golden age . . . the gold of this age still lies deeply buried and will take many bloody blisters to exhume.”*

*- Fran Saleški Finžgar, Ljubljana, May 9, 1945<sup>244</sup>*

*“Victory is behind us, hard work lies ahead.”*

*- Boris Kidrič, President of the National Government of Slovenia, May 11, 1945<sup>245</sup>*

#### INTRODUCTION

One night, at the height of the Second World War, a man from the Gorenjska village of Srednje Bitnje awoke to the sound of trucks driven by soldiers he referred to as “White Guards.” As Ivan Majc related to the author in April 2011, these soldiers seized all the men in the village between the ages of seventeen and sixty, and took them approximately eleven kilometers, to the grounds of an ancient castle in the city of Škofja Loka. There the men were lined up and forced to swear an oath to fight for the White Guard. Ivan says that the man refused to take the oath, saying to the woman administering it that he would only do so if he could first have a machine gun. When she asked why he wanted a machine gun, he replied, “I want to take the gun, go home, and shoot my family first. Then I will return and swear an oath.”

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<sup>244</sup> (Ne slepimo ne sebe ne drugih z zlato dobo, ki nam jo obetajo . . . Zlato te dobe je še sila globoko zakopano in bo treba krvavih žuljev da ga izgrebemo) cited in: Štih, Simoniti, and Vodopivec, *Slovenska Zgodovina: družba, politika, kultura* (Slovene history, society, politics, and culture), 420

<sup>245</sup> (Za nami zmaga, pred nami trdo delo) *Slovenski Poročevalec*, May 11, 1945, 1.

The oath giver replied that he was crazy to which he responded, “If I don’t shoot my family, the Partisans will come in a week and shoot them for their affiliation with the White Guard, so I would feel much better if I could be the one to shoot them.”

Somehow out of this exchange the oath giver decided that the man was not mentally fit for combat, and released him to walk back home to Srednje Bitnje. As he had expected, not long thereafter a Partisan detachment arrived in his village, and again took him to a nearby forest to await forced conscription into the Communist forces. During his first night in captivity he attempted to escape by telling a guard that he needed to relieve himself. The guard responded that there were no restrooms and that he would have to relieve himself in the camp. So Ivan’s neighbor dropped his trousers and began to defecate directly in front of the guard, which disgusted the guard so much that he told the man to go relieve himself in the woods. Ivan’s neighbor went into the woods and continued all the way home.

Ivan Majc told this story with a great amount of admiration for his neighbor. He contrasted this man’s long and happy life, based upon his ability to avoid the depredations of war, with his other neighbor, rumored to have been a Partisan executioner during the war, and who ended his life by hanging himself in his barn. Such a story likely acquired its basic narrative features in the immediate postwar years, a point in time where many Slovenes felt tremendous uncertainty about their future, and desperately needed narratives to help them make sense of the horrors they had so recently witnessed. It shows plot elements central to many Slovene war narratives: the protection of hearth and home, individual resourcefulness and cunning on the part of a “trickster” peasant, and the unforgiving pressure of impersonal, foreign totalitarianisms. It also

includes sexist tropes like the moral danger of a woman who does not know her place, and the ease with which that same dull-witted woman could be fooled. It is a personal memory mediated by collective motifs. In this story the antagonists are Slovene, either collaborators or Communists; and the man relishes his local identity, rather than one which is pan-Slovene. Nation builders in Socialist Slovenia worked furiously against such “localism.”<sup>246</sup> Ivan’s neighbor would have none of it.

The previous chapter shows that though Partisan publications appealed to broad segments of the Slovene population, many people also identified with a loosely defined anti-Communist resistance. At the end of the war, a significant percentage of Slovenes were directly involved in the Partisan movement, with roughly 80,000 bearing arms under its leadership, though the Domobranci managed to mobilize roughly 15,000 troops as well.<sup>247</sup> Between 1942 and 1947 the primary goal of the Slovene state and party was to complete a Soviet-style socialist revolution as quickly as possible. As soon as the war was over, however, many, even among the Partisan forces, became much more apprehensive about the direction of the new state than they were when a clear enemy presented a mortal danger. Once unrealistic personal sacrifices became necessary to build a Communist future, a future that few but the most zealous party ideologues even understood, the vast rural majority of Slovenia became apathetic towards the goals of the

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<sup>246</sup> In 1961 the League of United Warriors of the National Liberation War counted roughly 100,000 people as members. To be a member of this organization required one to have supported the National Liberation Effort in some manner during the war. Of these members, the organization recognized 44,000 as former members of military units. Repe, *Slovene History – 20th Century: Selected Articles written by Dr. Božo Repe*, 38. Sejni zapiski ljudske skupščine Ljudske republike Slovenije (četrti sklic) seje of 1. marca do 31. avgusta 1961 (Minutes of the people’s assembly of the republic of Slovenia (fourth edition) meetings from March 1 to August 31, 1961), p. 328, available online at: <http://www.sistory.si/publikacije/prenos/?urn=SISTORY:ID:1097>.

<sup>247</sup> Jarman, *Yugoslavia Political Diaries: Volume 2, 1938-1965*, 447.

regime. It would take the split with Stalin and creation of a federal mythology surrounding Tito, the cult of the military, the policy of worker self-management, and the story of the Liberation War to re-inspire Slovenes. A booming economy well-supplied with Western loans did not hurt either.

While postwar party leaders bemoaned their inability to mobilize Slovenes in support of the new government's goals, the Yugoslavian Communist Party (KPJ) nevertheless had almost total control over the production of public discourse. Such control allowed a small core of state and party leaders to radically experiment with different modes and types of mobilizing rhetoric. Their experiments are described in Central Committee and Agitprop meetings. New mobilization approaches were also often discussed in the popular front meetings. The manner in which these media experiments were carried out can be seen from examining mass media and media targeted towards members of specific front organizations. One of the best tools for increasing state legitimacy, which developed across Yugoslavia in the late 1940's and early 1950's, was a mythology of the National Liberation War. In Slovenia, the appeal of this mythology grew in positive relation to the popularity of government policies, but the collective memory worked because it allowed Slovenes to identify with their government. Stories of the war showed that the Communist Party of Slovenia was the only organization exclusively resisting the occupiers from the beginning of the war. The Party succeeded because it had the total support of the people. The role of collaborators was minimized as few of them remained in Slovenia. The relationship of the Slovene party to the Yugoslav immediately caused contention as memory control paralleled political control. Narratives that pleased both the Slovene and Central party needed to stress the

sacrifice of Slovenes under the leadership of their own party in total cooperation with the Yugoslav party.

### **Gaining Political and Social Control**

Before leaders of the newly imagined Slovenes could do anything, they needed more power. They aimed to completely revolutionize state, economy, and society – giving them an unrealistic ambition for total control. In 1945, remembering the war mattered very little to revolutionaries who now felt they had a mandate to govern. On May 5, 1945 the Slovene National Liberation Council announced the formation of the National Government of Slovenia (NVS) as a constituent part of the Yugoslav federation.<sup>248</sup> In both the federal and national governments, Communist party members held all important posts, but key fellow travelers from the OF had certain positions in Slovenia and some members of the London government in exile were temporarily incorporated into the Yugoslavian government.<sup>249</sup> Over the next eight months, prewar political parties were allowed to function in Yugoslavia, while Communists worked to cement their control over the federation. Through the use of the Liberation Front and People's Front, Communists created the illusion — first for Western audiences, then in domestic propaganda — that the people were united behind the leadership of their party. In a scenario similar to what played out across the Eastern Bloc, the Communists retained

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<sup>248</sup> *Slovenski Poročevalec*, May 10, 1945, 2.

<sup>249</sup> On May 9, 1945 the Christian Socialist OF member Edvard Kocbek became minister for Slovenia within Tito's cabinet and vice president within the Slovene people's assembly; Josip Vidmar, an OF member and independent, became president of SNOO; the Christian Socialist Tone Fajfar became minister of forestry within the NVS; and the Christian Socialist Marjan Brecej became vice president of the NVS. (Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias: State Building and Legitimation, 1918-2005*, 158; Barker, *Social Revolutionaries and Secret Agents: The Carinthian Slovene Partisans and Britain's Special Operations Executive*, 115-116; *Slovenski Poročevalec*, May 10, 1945, 1).

all power.<sup>250</sup> After the November, 1945 elections, opposition parties became illegal, and Yugoslav leaders would abandon all pretense of forming a multi-party system. The Central Committee began to develop comprehensive plans for rebuilding, industrializing, and laying the foundations for socialism in Yugoslavia. Until November, however, the primary goal was to consolidate the power of the Party.<sup>251</sup>

In Slovenia, the National Government effectively controlled all aspects of judicial governance and legislation. While recognizing the suzerainty of the Federal Government, Slovenes were unsure of how to divide powers between the two. Tensions between those who wanted more centralized government and those who wanted more Republic-level control persisted until the final days of the Yugoslav federation. Unlike at the federal level, no opposition parties formed in Slovenia during the brief period when they were legally allowed. Some Slovenes were involved in Yugoslav opposition parties, but they lived and worked in Belgrade, assuming that was a more logical place to make their voices heard. Behind the National Government, the Slovene Communist Party worked to consolidate its power in the months before November. Through the secret police organ, OZNA, the party continued to terrorize real and imagined enemies of the state.

Always fearful of new fifth column elements, authorities in Slovenia spent as much effort promoting their goals in building a new socialist country as they did trying to eliminate those who did not belong in the coming utopia. This concern was rather

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<sup>250</sup> Režek, *Med Resničnostjo in iluzijo: Slovenska in Jugoslovanska politika v desetletju po sporu z Informbirojem* (Between truth and illusion: Slovene and Yugoslavian politics in the decade following the dispute with the Cominform), 55-57.

<sup>251</sup> Štih, Simoniti, Vodopivec, *Slovenska Zgodovina: družba, politika, kultura* (Slovene history, society, politics, and culture), 422-424.

fanciful in Slovenia in 1945, and led to a massive amount of unjustified human suffering, but in other republics significant Ustaši and Četnik forces remained armed, in the mountains, and viciously opposed to Tito's Yugoslavia.<sup>252</sup> Slovenes opposed to the regime lived in neighboring Austria and Italy or were slowly emigrating to the US, Britain, Canada, and Argentina. Despite the lack of real opposition to the new authorities, military tribunals used a June, 1945 law on the protection of Slovene national honor to sentence hundreds of vaguely defined enemies to lengthy prison sentences. In that same month, the National Government began the slow process of creating courts of national honor to replace the military tribunals.<sup>253</sup> By August 26<sup>th</sup>, those convicted of sullyng national honor would have their citizenship revoked.<sup>254</sup> In total, besides the over 14,000 people murdered without trial between May and June, hundreds more were arrested and imprisoned, with several dozen being executed before November 1945.<sup>255</sup>

While the search for enemies and construction of a judicial system was chaotic in the early months of the Republic, firm, central control over media had already been accomplished during the war. All presses were in the hands of the party under the direction of the Agitprop committee which reported directly to the Politburo.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> Režek, *Med Resničnostjo in iluzijo: Slovenska in Jugoslovanska politika v desetletju po sporu z Informbirojem* (Between truth and illusion: Slovene and Yugoslavian politics in the decade following the dispute with the Cominform), 12-14.

<sup>253</sup> Uradni List RS I/II 30, st. 13, Jun, 1945, 1.

<sup>254</sup> *Ljudska Pravica*, August 26, 1945, 4.

<sup>255</sup> Režek, *Med Resničnostjo in iluzijo: Slovenska in Jugoslovanska politika v desetletju po sporu z Informbirojem* (Between truth and illusion: Slovene and Yugoslavian politics in the decade following the dispute with the Cominform), 14.

<sup>256</sup> Repe, "Liberalizem" v Sloveniji ("Liberalism" in Slovenija), 689; and Dimić, *Agitprop kultura : agitpropovska faza kulturne politike u Srbiji 1945-1952* (Agitprop culture: the agitprop phase of cultural politics in Serbia 1945-1952), 21-25.

Publishers deemed hostile to the revolution ceased printing on May 8, 1945 when Ljubljana fell to Partisan forces, though they had the meaningless legal right to print until 1947.<sup>257</sup> Between 1944 and 1950 Agitprop controlled Slovene discourse to the extent that its press releases dominated mass media. News stories came from either the KPJ's tightly controlled wire service Tanjug, the Soviet wire service TASS, or western wire service stories only made available through Agitprop. Independent and local reporting was minimal and generally lacking in narrative content, as authorities were waiting until reporters could be (re)trained with proper Socialist consciousness.<sup>258</sup>

Efforts to train Slovene journalists had begun already during the war. On October 22, 1944 SNOS had convened the first meeting of Partisan journalists in Črnomelj. After this meeting, the previous diversity of Partisan presses was squelched as SNOS subsumed itself to the authority of the Central Committee for Yugoslavia. Slovene journalists became members of the *Slovene Journalists Association* organized that same day.<sup>259</sup> Over the next several years, Communist lip service to freedom of speech fell victim to Kidrič's desire to turn the "pen into the last remaining weapon of revolution."<sup>260</sup> Only

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<sup>257</sup> Ibid. Non-communist presses included those tainted through actual collaboration (*Slovenec*, *Slovensko Domobranstvo*), as well as Catholic-oriented publishers who authorities assumed to be tainted by collaboration (*Dom in Svet*, *Mohorjeva Družba*).

<sup>258</sup> Šmicberger, "Partizanski novinarski tečaj" (The Partisan course in journalism), 115-118.

<sup>259</sup> *Društvo Novinarjev Slovenije* (The Society of Slovene Journalists), [http://www.novinar.com/info/zgodovina\\_drustva.php](http://www.novinar.com/info/zgodovina_drustva.php).

<sup>260</sup> ". . .so bile programatske besede Borisa Kidriča, Vide Tomšiča in drugih predvsem opomin, da bodo novinarji kmalu ali prav kmalu puško odložili in **jim bo tisto prislovnično >>pero<< potem zares edino orožje.**" (the speeches of Boris Kidrič and Vide Tomšič were primarily a reminder that journalists would soon, very soon lay down their rifles, **whence the metaphorical "pen" would become their only weapon** [emphasis in original]). Quoted in Bohanec, "Štirideset let prvega zborovanja partizanskih novinarjev" (Forty years since the first meeting of Partisan journalists), 104.

those writers with impeccable political resumes, whose work was censored before publication, could be heard. With only few exceptions, those authors who had published under occupation were now forbidden from publishing.<sup>261</sup> In practice this meant that the vast bulk of newsprint consisted of speeches by members of the Central Committee of the KPJ, or Executive Council of the Slovenen National Liberation Council, the very people in charge of producing and approving mass discourse.

Such tight control over media was aided by the fact that there was little of it to control. Paper shortages caused from the wartime destruction of paper mills, lack of funds for reporting, and little access to radio sets were serious systemic problems until the early 1950's.<sup>262</sup> Presses were often only semi-functional, working with newly/poorly trained professionals. Such presses frequently had problems with critical tasks like laying out sheets in proper order before book binding.<sup>263</sup> In addition to news media, books, plays, musical compositions, and artwork were all heavily censored and only politically reliable artists, following the socialist realist goal to be “engineers of the soul,” had access to publishers.<sup>264</sup>

## **Regime Goals**

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<sup>261</sup> Gabrič, “Lov na čarovnice” (Witch hunt), July 25, 1990, 28.

<sup>262</sup> Robinson, *Tito's Maverick Media: The Politics of Mass Communications in Yugoslavia*, 18-22.

<sup>263</sup> In November 2011, I ordered from UCLA a copy of the fourth Congress of the Yugoslavian Communist Party, published in Belgrade in 1948. The book had never been checked out. When I tried to open it, I could only read every 16 pages because a worker had forgotten to cut the folds at the top of the book where the sheets are bound together. Someone in Binghamton University's Interlibrary Loan Office kindly cut the pages for me.

<sup>264</sup> Robinson, *Tito's Maverick Media: The Politics of Mass Communications in Yugoslavia*, 36.

In the immediate aftermath of the war, regime leaders rarely mentioned the recent conflict. After gaining political control, as well as the total control of media, as outlined above, the the Party's first postwar goal was to use their newfound power to mobilize the population in a battle to build socialism. Immediately after the end of the war the new government of Yugoslavia undertook a massive effort to construct heavy industry that would enable the growth of socialism, following the Soviet model. In Slovenia this translated into rebuilding broken infrastructure, nationalizing the few remaining assets held by private individuals, and building factories. The other significant economic policy was to take large agricultural estates, including lands seized from the church as well as ethnically cleansed Germans and Italians, and give these lands to loyal peasants.<sup>265</sup> By themselves, these policies were quite popular, especially agricultural redistribution.<sup>266</sup>

In the immediate postwar period, the Yugoslav Central Committee publicly followed Stalin's formula for building socialism, down to the smallest of details.<sup>267</sup> In Stalin's ideal world, the USSR was the leader of the Communist camp, and to have a Communist party making decisions on its own, without the approval of Moscow, was tantamount to treason, as it weakened the unity of the global communist movement. From a Yugoslav perspective, the leaders of the KPJ proclaimed to be doing everything right. Of course, they did not blindly ignore the unique situation of their own federation. For example, heavy industrialization was never pursued exclusively of the development

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<sup>265</sup> Lazarević, "Economic History of Twentieth-Century Slovenia," 54-55.

<sup>266</sup> A *Ljudska Pravica* article from November 9, 1945 describes early agricultural redistribution policies as a fulfillment of promises made during the war to farmers.

<sup>267</sup> Lazarević, "Economic History of Twentieth-Century Slovenia," 54. Žarko Lazarević describes the Yugoslavs as "more Catholic than the Pope" in their emulation of the Soviet system.

of light industry. By 1947, party leaders would justify aberrations from Soviet policy with references to the uniqueness of the Yugoslavian war.<sup>268</sup> Thus, though the 1946 constitution of Yugoslavia was an almost identical copy of the Soviet constitution of 1937, one area of disagreement with the Soviet model involved the level of federalism within the state. Edvard Kardelj argued passionately that the war had been won with promises of independence, and anything less than autonomy and right of secession for the Republics would be a betrayal of the message used to rally Yugoslavia's constituent nationalities.<sup>269</sup> The final version emphasized the federal nature of the state, with the right of secession legally codified, but in practice one-party rule meant that the central committee of the Communist party outweighed the power of any governing body that might consider secession.

As early as 1946, party leaders at the highest level felt that the drive to build socialism was failing. Their initial response was Stalinist in nature: to increase the tempo of reforms and find more enemies to persecute. Kardelj made his frustrations clear in a speech to the Slovene Assembly in November. He described the will of the Slovene people as perfectly represented by the goals of the party. The problem, in his view, was the lack of an administrative apparatus for social supervision (*družbeno nadzorstvo*). He

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<sup>268</sup> (AS 1589 III 30, 915 May 19, 1947, 6) Yugoslavian party leaders had a difficult time confronting disparities between their own policies and Stalinist orthodoxy. In a May 19, 1947 meeting of Agitprop leaders in Belgrade, Comrade Djide suggested that the differences in development levels between the USSR and Yugoslavia were very real, justifying Yugoslavia's simultaneous emphasis on developing light industries with heavy industry. He argued that the differences stemmed from Yugoslavia's unique National Liberation War heritage, and that the first five-year plan had to be framed as a continuation of that struggle to build socialism.

<sup>269</sup> Štih, Simoniti, Vodopivec, *Slovenska Zgodovina: družba, politika, kultura* (Slovene history, society, politics, and culture), 429

had been working much of that year to organize such an agency.<sup>270</sup> Without explicitly mentioning a five-year plan, he outlined the need for further heavy industry, electrification, and total nationalization. More ominously he continued:

It would appear that after liberation, we in Slovenia have found ourselves in some sort of unprincipled consensus, with a mutual toleration for shortcomings, in a state of unhealthy tolerance for mistakes, far too ready to grant others amnesty for such mistakes. I get the feeling that some comrades think ‘thank God the storm of war is over, we’ve achieved our freedom and now we can enjoy a pleasant state of relaxation.’ I think such a state of relaxation to be as putrid as filthy standing water. Such calmness would be the death of every accomplishment and the cause of so many damaging and adversarial effects. The spirit of a free, active people cannot be permitted to remain like stagnant water, but must be continuously alive, alert, and endlessly agitated . . . On the other hand, the enemy is still active, and will be all the more active insomuch as we descend into self-confidence and self-satisfaction.<sup>271</sup>

The most spectacular Slovene judicial activity against supposed enemies occurred in the year before other Yugoslavs began searching for Cominformists (those who supported Stalin’s decision to remove Yugoslavia from the Cominform). With the

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<sup>270</sup> Kardelj, “Zakaj nam je potrebna kontrola in kakšna naj bo: Ekspozé o predlogu zakona o šplohni državní kontroli dne 13. marca 1946” (Why we need control and what it should look like: An exposé on the draft law on General Social Control from March 13, 1946), 47-55.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid., 57 (Zdi se mi da smo se v Sloveniji po osvoboditvi znašli v nekakem breznačelnem sloglaštvu, v medsebojnem toleriranju napak, v nezdravem liberalnem odnosu do nepravilnosti, v medsebojnem dajanju amnestije za take nepravilnosti. Imam vtis da nekateri naši tovariši mislijo takole: Hvala bogu, vojna vihra je končana, dosegli smo svobodo in sedaj lahko počivamo v prijetnem zatišju. Mislim, da bi bilo tako zatišje podobno smrdljivi, umazani postani vodi. Tako zatišje pomeni smrt za vsak napredek in leglo vseh mogočih nepravilnosti, škodljivih in sovražnih akcij. Duh svobodnih, aktivnih ljudi ne sme biti kot postana voda ampak mora biti neprestano živ, buden, in nenehoma vzburkan. . . Nasprotno, sovražnik je še aktiven in bo toliko aktivnejši, kolikor bolj se bomo mi pogrezali v samouverjenost in v samodovoljstvo).

exception of the Mihajlović trial, Slovene show trials were thus among the first in Yugoslavia. In 1946 the capture and trial of the former Serbian Četnik leader Dragoljub Mihajlović sparked a series of similar trials against supposed collaborators and enemies in Slovenia. First Črtomir Nagode, along with a group of former political leaders, was put on trial for alleged contacts with British agents, thereby forming a supposed imperialist spy ring. Some of these people were members of the London government in exile, and certainly had contacts with members of the British government, but as for Nagode, his real crime was trying to form an opposition party. One among the group, Angela Vode, was only guilty of advocating for women's rights beyond what the party wanted. Of the 15 people put on trial, all were found guilty, and three given death sentences. One of the death sentences was carried out, the other two commuted to twenty years imprisonment.<sup>272</sup> Later in 1946 the Slovene judiciary held the "Dachau trials": 38 prewar Communists who had spent much of the war imprisoned in Dachau and Buchenwald were accused of becoming agents for the Gestapo, and continuing to serve as Western spies. Fifteen people were sentenced to death, twenty received lengthy prison sentences, and three died in prison.<sup>273</sup> By the time of the split with Stalin, show trials had ceased in the Republic, but the search for supporters of the Cominform revolution, so called 'IB'ovci' (IB is an abbreviation for the Yugoslav term for the Cominform, "Informbjuro") would continue until the early 1950's, though their trials were local affairs rather than the media spectacles of Nagode and Dachau.

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<sup>272</sup> Vodopivec, "Seven Decades of Unconfronted Incongruities: The Slovenes and Yugoslavia," 44.

<sup>273</sup> Štih, Simoniti, Vodopivec, *Slovenska Zgodovina: družba, politika, kultura* (Slovene history, society, politics, and culture), 436.

While Slovenia's terror campaign yielded many new enemies, it was the propaganda campaign that would lay the foundations for a lasting National Liberation War mythology. In early 1946 the KPS began a new effort to spend more money on strategic propaganda. Funding for newspapers and radio increased. Loudspeakers were installed in factories and public areas of towns throughout the country, and local KLOJ authorities were required to play daily radio transmissions of official news, policies relating to the building of socialism, and a limited amount of popular music.<sup>274</sup> It was in this period that leaders realized the value of propaganda that built upon the National Liberation War. In other Republics, publishing houses focused their efforts on National Liberation War texts, especially in producing material for "post-illiterate"<sup>275</sup> readers. Yet in highly literate Slovenia, publishing houses were instead focusing on Marxist theoretical texts in the immediate aftermath of the war.<sup>276</sup> After the first anniversary of the victory, references to the war began to appear much more frequently in the national presses.

The war very quickly transformed from a metaphor to understand the struggle to build socialism into a form of synecdoche entailing all positive benefits of the state and party: because the party had won the war in the name of the people, they alone knew what was best for these people. Given the preponderance of war references as legitimizing discourses in the period of Socialist Yugoslavia, the only surprising fact is that it took Slovene propagandists so long to make use of this rhetoric. In the

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<sup>274</sup> Robinson, *Tito's Maverick Media: The Politics of Mass Communications in Yugoslavia*, 24-25.

<sup>275</sup> (postanalfabetne), AS 1589, AC 771, 11, 12. April, 1947, 5

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

introduction to the first published collection of Partisan memoirs in May 1947, the president of the national government, Josip Vidmar, would argue that “the historical reality of the liberation war needs to become a fact of our spirituality, of our consciousness, and therefore also our literature and art. In that regard we need clarity on what happened during those years, on the kind of inner consequences which accompanied our liberation and social revolution.”<sup>277</sup>

Though war references began to increase by the middle of 1946, it was not until the period following the split with Stalin that the myth of the National Liberation War would become one of the pillars of Yugoslavian legitimacy. The war would come to serve as a metaphor for the need to struggle in building something new, as well as the need to viciously seek out those enemies who would destroy the new country. For the first two years of the regime, however, leading politicians seemed curiously oblivious to the rhetorical power that references to this shared collective struggle could carry. To be certain, allusions to the late conflict were everywhere, but official pronouncements spoke as if the fight was not yet over; the battle to build socialism, for example, was a continuation of the battle to defeat the occupiers. Not until late 1946, when official discourses on the war began to mimic popular sentiments, would the narrative of the National Liberation War become a reference point for regime legitimacy. The disconnect between popular sentiment and party propaganda is best represented by the differing strategies used in reference to the war by Slovenia’s two main daily papers: the party mouthpiece, *Ljudska Pravica*, and the popular press organ, *Slovenski Poročevalec*. To be

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<sup>277</sup> Vidmar ed., *Iz Partisanskih let* (From the Partisan years), V. (potrebno je, da zgodovinsko dejstvo osvobodilnega boja postane tudi dejstvo naše duševnosti, naše zavesti, se pravi naše umetnosti in književnosti. V ta namen je predvsem potrebna jasnost o tem, kaj se je v the letih med name dovršilo in kakšne notranje posledice spremljajo našo osvoboditev in našo družbeno revolucijo.)

sure, both were coordinated through Slovenia's Agitprop division for the press, but the former was written primarily by party members, while the latter was a product of the Liberation Front, staffed by professional journalists, the majority of whom had prewar training.

When references to the war appeared in *Ljudska Pravica*, they were constructed to show the continuation of a wartime struggle, such as the second sentence of a May 1, 1946 article on the success of the working class in rebuilding industry: "The consciousness, comaraderie, and sacrifice of our worker, already in the first weeks [after the war] showed he would accomplish everything his liberated homeland expected of him."<sup>278</sup> In the above article, the recent war appeared as the first stage of a revolution that had now entered its constructive phase. A May 26, 1945 editorial in *Ljudska Pravica* concluded: "With heroism in battle against the occupiers and domestic traitors we have earned a new democratic, federally structured Yugoslavia. Now with heroism in labor we must renew and fully rebuild it."<sup>279</sup> The overall emphasis from party leaders in this period was on renewal and rebuilding, then creating the industry needed for socialism.<sup>280</sup>

To be clear, though the content of state- and party-produced propaganda in the immediate postwar years was vastly different from what it was during the war, the form was similar. Though the war was of course over, "battles" continued to appear in this newspaper, but they were now "battles" for things like the production of coal<sup>281</sup>:

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<sup>278</sup> *Ljudska Pravica*, May 1, 1945, 11. (Zavednost, podjetnost, in požrtvovalnost našega delavca, ki je že v prvih tednih [po vojni] dokazoval, da bo izpolneval vse, kar od njega pričakuje osvobojena domovina.)

<sup>279</sup> *Ljudska Pravica*, May 26, 1945, 1. (Z junaštvom v borbi smo si priborili novo, demokratično, federativno Jugoslavijo. Sedaj jo moramo z junaštvom pri delu obnoviti in zgraditi do kraja.)

<sup>280</sup> *Ljudska Pravica*, May 15, 1945, 2. (Boj za obnovo.)

“Trbovlje miners are heroes in the battle for the renewal of Yugoslavia,” wrote an editor on December 30<sup>th</sup>.<sup>282</sup> In a similar war metaphor, youth volunteers were organized into “brigades.” “Oh how simple the work seems when undertaken by a worker battalion of young, healthy people,” wrote an editor on August 5, 1945.<sup>283</sup> The shock workers of industry, a tradition borrowed from the Soviets, also “fought” for the renewal of industry. An article on such workers in Slovenia from September 30, 1945 alludes directly to a war-based ethos with the bolded phrase “only the spirit of sacrifice among the entire population made possible the victory over the occupier.”<sup>284</sup> Though the metaphor of war and battle was ubiquitous in the early drive for renewal, few such references were explicitly grounded in the battles of World War II. Rather the militaristic metaphors were part of a long State Socialist tradition of combat-related rhetoric in the service of Revolutionary goals. The second stage of Slovenia’s Revolution was in full swing by the summer of 1945, and any history of the war remained subservient to revolution in the party-run press.

While Slovenia’s own war was rarely mentioned, other conflicts received significant coverage. According to a July 14, 1945 article by Mirko Košir, the French Revolution was a model for the Slovene people to follow in building their new

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<sup>281</sup> *Ljudska Pravica*, September 12, 1945, 3. An article titled “The Battle for Coal” (Borba za Premog) describes Bosnian workers who overcame enormous obstacles to increase coal production beyond prewar levels.

<sup>282</sup> *Ljudska Pravica*, December 30, 1945, 1. (Trbovelski rudarji – junaki bitke za obnovo Jugoslavijo.)

<sup>283</sup> *Ljudska Pravica*, December 5, 1945, 6. (Kako gre delo od rok ko so spravi nadenj delovni bataljon mladih, zdravih ljudi.)

<sup>284</sup> *Ljudska Pravica*, September 30, 1945, 10. (Samo požrtvovalnost vsega ljudstva je omogočila zmago nad okupatorjem.)

Republic.<sup>285</sup> For *Ljudska Pravica* editors, by far, the most important revolutionary movement in this period was the Russian. An article on August 14, 1945 reporting on the opening of a monument of “eternal brotherhood” between the USSR and Slovenia declared that “the vast majority of the peoples of Slovenia manifest their respect to the fallen fighters of and love towards the Soviet Union.”<sup>286</sup> By 1946, dates from the Bolshevik’s struggle and key turning points in the lives of Lenin and Stalin eclipsed commemoration of Slovenia’s own recent victory in the coverage of the papers.

Apart from sparse references to the war, classified advertisements throughout much of 1945 are the only other part of the paper where one finds any indication of a war having just been fought. Until the late summer of 1945, about half of the notices in the back of both *Ljudska Pravica* and *Slovenski Poročevalec* consisted of notes searching for missing loved ones. The remaining classifieds were job notices, with factories generally looking to hire people in the dozens at a time.

Through much of 1945, exposés on the crimes of collaborators appeared frequently, often accompanied by graphic photographs of victims. The focus of these articles was less on celebrating the triumph over these perpetrators than on remembering their crimes, and insisting on justice. The emphasis on the extent of collaborators’ crimes against fellow Slovenes would diminish by 1947, as the party began to stress the memory of the unity of all Slovenes behind the Liberation Front in defeating a foreign aggressor. In 1945, however, party officials continued to fear the presence of collaborators,

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<sup>285</sup> *Ljudska Pravica*, July 14, 1945, 3.

<sup>286</sup> *Ljudska Pravica*, August 14, 1945, 1. (Velika množice ljudstva Slovenije manifestirajo svoje spoštovanje do padlih borcev in ljubezen do Sovjetske Zveze.)

especially in the seemingly foreign places that were Slovenia's villages.<sup>287</sup> "Bloody oppressors, we will find you!" read the headline of Ignac Koprivec's May 24, 1945 article on Domobranci reprisal killings, which was accompanied by a close-up photograph of Comrade Major Mrtič's mutilated corpse.<sup>288</sup>

While the party newspaper neglected to actually write about the war in the first year after victory, war-related coverage appeared quite frequently in the Liberation Front paper, *Slovenski Poročevalec*. In both papers the drive to build Socialism remained a continuation of the struggle to defeat the occupiers. While *Ljudska Pravica* was a party mouthpiece that followed the party line as interpreted from Stalin's Short Course with little room for imaginative metaphors based on Slovenia's own experiences, reporters from *Slovenski Poročevalec* frequently commemorated Slovenia's major battles from the recent war as well as dates of the formation of Slovene Partisan brigades. Wood cuttings of partisans frequently graced their pages. Anniversaries of the formation of brigades were noted. Reporters covered commemorations of key battles that were almost always held by private individuals. Images of Partisan mothers, doctors, and brave soldiers also appeared regularly, often in the form of poems at the end of the paper.

Though war-related coverage in *Slovenski Poročevalec* was not officially commissioned by the organs of state media, none in the state or party leadership voiced concerns that these unofficial commemorations threatened the state's monopoly of power. There is no evidence of *Slovenski Poročevalec's* editors receiving either

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<sup>287</sup> The next chapter will discuss party leader's fear of rural Slovenia as a harbinger of reactionary, clerical, anti-revolutionary sentiments. Much of their internal rhetoric painted Slovene villages as an almost foreign land.

<sup>288</sup> *Ljudska Pravica*, May 24, 1945, 3. (Krvniki, našli vas bomo!)

commendation or censure for their depictions of the recent war. Rather by 1947 those in charge of Slovenia's press lamented that neither of the main newspapers was effectively mobilizing the population to rebuild. As stated earlier, Edvard Kardelj thought the answer was to strengthen the party's Control Commission apparatus.<sup>289</sup> His attitude was certainly in line with the repressive measures advocated by federal and republican organs at the time. But until 1948, Agitprop leaders favored the carrot over any sort of stick, believing that if press organs could do a better job presenting policies like the five-year plan, that the state would have more success in mobilizing Slovenes.

After 1946, the minutes of Press Committee and Agitprop meetings show a much



Figure 4.1 Medvode Textile Factory, from *Ljudska Pravica*, January 1, 1948, p. 13.

more constructive approach towards achieving the goals of socialist transformation than do the policies adopted by the state's oppressive organs. Yet, the highest leaders of Slovenia's media were blinded by their belief

that if only Slovenes could hear and understand their message, they would accept it.

<sup>289</sup> Kardelj, "Zakaj nam je potrebna kontrola in kakšna naj bo: Ekspozé o predlogu zakona o šplošni državni kontroli dne 13. marca 1946" (Why we need control and what it should look like: An exposé on the draft law on General Social Control from March 13, 1946), 44-46. This document is a reprint of an article he wrote titled "Our State Apparatus and Control" (Naša državna uprava in kontrola) in *Narodna Država* on July 1, 1946.

They seemed oblivious to the idea that some people might not share the Communist Party's hopes and dreams. In a Beograd Press Coordination meeting on May 17, 1947 Boris Kidrič argued that the recent five-year plan had been sufficiently publicized throughout Yugoslavia, but an “illustrated, graphical representation of the plan with charts” was missing from the papers.<sup>290</sup> Kidrič echoed Janez Gradišnik, who at a publishing conference in Zagreb the previous month complained that Slovene printers were not meeting the population's desire for “books illustrated with beautiful graphics.”<sup>291</sup> These propagandists sought to mobilize Slovenes with images that lacked narrative imagination. The above figure indeed shows production levels achieved in 1947. There is no analysis accompanying the graph whose caption merely states the “Medvode Textile Factory: First Victory in the Five Year Plan for the Benefit of the Working People”.<sup>292</sup> Later propagandists would find stories of the National Liberation war to be far more powerful than images of smokestacks.<sup>293</sup>

While the highest officials of state and party propaganda stressed the production of aesthetically pleasing graphical representations of the plan, lower officials seemed far more in tune with emerging collective discourses on the war. During a SNOS meeting on September 9, 1946, for example, almost every speaker began his/her speech with a

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<sup>290</sup> AS 1589 AC 772, Poročilo iz propagandne konference v Beogradu 17. V. 1947, (Report from the propaganda conference in Belgrade on May 17, 1947), (da se ga tudi ilustrativno grafično predstavi z grafikoni, itd)

<sup>291</sup> AC 1589 AC 771, 5. Poročilo o delovni konferenci založniških podjetij Jugoslavije ki je bila 11. in 12. Aprila, 1947 v Zagrebu, (Report on the working conference of publishing companies in Yugoslavia which was held in Zagreb from April 11 to 12, 1947), (ki hoče imeti grafično lepo opremljeno knjigo).

<sup>292</sup> *Ljudska Pravica*, January 1, 1948, 13.

<sup>293</sup> AS 1589, AC 772, 19.5.1947, 5, To be sure, some officials at press conferences in 1947, like Milovan Djilas, argued that the drive to fulfill the plan should be presented as a war to build socialism, but even he still failed to draw on the obvious collective memory created by the war that had just ended.

recounting of the victories of the recent war and development of state power in the months since its end.<sup>294</sup> In contrast, at an Agitprop meeting on November 30, 1948, one Comrade Dimec would complain about lower-level officials who he thought were “appointed due to debts incurred during the National Liberation War, rather than based on ability.”<sup>295</sup> The memory differences between state officials and the masses could not be more stark.

Certainly, at a lower level, such war-based favoritism led to abuses as well. In May 1953 a worker from a Velenje mine, Franc Lihtenger complained to the party’s control commission that shortly after the war he was accused of serving in the German military, and as a result lost his job. Certainly his German surname did not help his cause. With the thaw in social controls of 1953, however, he felt safe enough to argue that the previous charges were completely false, serving to mask the director’s unwillingness to hear Lihtenger’s complaints about inefficiency and mismanagement of funds. From Lihtenger’s perspective, the misuse of war rhetoric in 1945 had allowed the director to ignore real issues pertinent to building socialism.<sup>296</sup>

While Agitprop worked to coordinate the mass media, party discourses were also disseminated through the KPS’ tight control of mass organizations. In the early postwar years there was a remarkable amount of coordination in the discourses disseminated to people through the mass media and the party’s front organizations. The previous chapter shows how such organizations as the Slovene Anti-Fascist Women’s League (SPZZ) and

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<sup>294</sup> AS 218. 9.9.1946.

<sup>295</sup> AS 1589, AC 782, 30.11.1948, 1 (ne radi svoje delavnosti na vasi, ampak radi zaslug ki so jih imeli v narodno-osvobodilni borbi)

<sup>296</sup> Letter to editors of newspaper *Delavske Enotnosti* forwarded to Control Commission of the ZKS on May 28, 1953 AS 1589, 780/53, 28. V. 1953.

the League of Slovene Communist Youth (ZKMS) served to mobilize people in support of the war effort. By 1945, these organizations became tools for transforming Slovenes into reliable socialist citizens. Apart from these two movements, the only other organizations available to Slovenes were the KPS, the Association of Slovene Trade Unions (ZSS) and the Catholic Church. Only the Catholic Church was not under firm state control, and it would remain a target of persecution into the late 1960's. The front organizations provided forums for party leaders to cater their messages according to the Marxist-informed divisions that they imagined to exist among Slovenes.

The first of these divisions, gender, would figure prominently into the official writing of war memory. Many have written about the ineffectiveness of Yugoslavia's official womens' organizations in addressing the actual needs of Slovene women. As in other Eastern bloc states, because socialism had effectively "resolved the woman question," primarily male officials believed that gendered analyses of everyday life were meaningless. In this early period, however, the effectiveness of the SPZŽ should not be underestimated. It was organized on October 18, 1943 — not to address women's concerns, but to mobilize women for the revolution and national liberation war. With over 100,000 women recruits serving in the Partisan armed forces throughout Yugoslavia (25,000 of whom lost their lives in combat operations), during the first postwar years there was an enormous amount of genuine personal association with the aims of the SPZŽ.<sup>297</sup> Immediately after the war, local organs of the SPZŽ took care of orphans, mobilized women in work brigades, helped women gain employment, and aimed to help

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<sup>297</sup> Jancar-Webster, *Women and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945*, 201-207.

women “raise their children in a spirit of patriotism.”<sup>298</sup> While participation by women was significant in this organization, their actual stories were minimized in the official histories except to illustrate the “advanced” socialist mentality of Communist fighters. “The woman question has been fully resolved by our constitution; their rights and equality have been specifically supported and defined” wrote Miško Kranjec in the January 1, 1948 edition of *Ljudska Pravica*.<sup>299</sup>

Even in states with a free media, voices that undermine powerfully gendered templates for understanding everyday life take enormous effort to gain resonance. In addition, in a society where the “woman question” was supposedly solved, alternate voices were next to mute. Women had little impact on dominant war memories until the 1980’s when they used traditional gender roles such as mothers and grandmothers to undermine state control by advocating on behalf of peace movements. They also insisted that the tragedy of murdered sons, husbands, and fathers in the postwar massacres be recognized.

In the late 1940’s, however, “women” remained a monolithically imagined segment of society that had to be shaped through a mass organization. Ljubica Božič, the head of the SPZZ committee in Suha Krajina, exclaimed with great pride in 1949 that

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<sup>298</sup> (Ter vzgoja otrok v duhu patriotizma), Megušar-Borut, Milan, ed. *Zbor odposlancev slovenskega naroda v Kočevju od 1. do 3. Oktobra 1943: dokumenti*, (The Council of Delegates of the Slovene People in Kočevje from October 1 to 3, 1943: documents)1949, 404-405.

<sup>299</sup> (Vprašanje ženske je po ustavi popolnoma rešeno, njihove pravice, njihova enakopravnost je po zakonih posebej utrujena in opredeljena.) He continues to tell the story of a man he met at a council meeting who had agreed that his wife could attend meetings, provided she still cooked him dinner. Kranjec then shows how he taught the members of that council to avoid giving women increased workloads. He showed that the men and women of that council learned that equality must extend to all places within society (na terenu), from the workplace to the coffee house to the movie theater; even to all rooms of the house, including the kitchen and bedroom. Kranjec certainly anticipates much of the rhetoric that would accompany the second wave of socialist feminism in the 1970’s, but he is utopian in his assertion that the “woman question” has been resolved.

“The women who under the influence of the clergy prayed for the victory of the enemy of the people during the National Liberation War now have fallen into line giving glory through song and verse to Tito and a new life in Yugoslavia.”<sup>300</sup> Like Božič, Vida Tomšič, editor of *Naša Žena* frequently worried that without proper nurturing, women would easily fall under the sway of the clergy.<sup>301</sup> Though women SPZZ leaders and editors of *Naša Žena* followed the dictates of the party in the immediate postwar period, chapter five will show that many of these same women were receptive to concerns of the real women they represented. Tomšič would write articles about concerns specific to women factory workers. People like Lidija Šentjunc, Helena Puhar, and Nika Arko were prewar Communist Party members who sincerely believed in the world they were trying to build, and recognized the need for flexibility (though only a small amount) in creating Socialist women.<sup>302</sup>

By the end of the 1940's nothing featuring Partisan women as protagonists had been published. The popular series of memoirs, first published in 1947, *Spomini na Partisanska Leta*, contained a few memoirs written by women.<sup>303</sup> The women who appeared in these collections were usually portrayed exclusively as mothers, grandmothers, sisters, or wives in supporting yet subordinate roles to the male partisans.

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<sup>300</sup> Božič, II. *Kongres Komunistične Partije Slovenije* (The Second Congress of the Communist Party of Slovenia), 284. (Žena, ki je med narodnoosvobodilno borbo pod vplivom duhovnika molila za zmago nasprotnikov ljudstva, proslavlja danes na odru s pesmijo in besedo Tita in novo življenje v Jugoslaviji.)

<sup>301</sup> Vodipivec, “Podoba zenske v listu *Nasa Zena med leti 1945 in 1951*” (The representation of women in the magazine *Nasa Zena* between 1941 and 1951), 159.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, 153-155.

<sup>303</sup> Three collections of Partisan memoirs had been published in Slovenia by the end of 1949. The first *Iz Partisanskih Let* in 1947, contained twenty authors, one of whom was female, Mira Pucova. Her memoirs were not of her own experiences, but a compilation from people in her village, one of whom was a young woman. The second, *Spomini na Partisanska Leta II* in 1948 had no women authors. The third *Spomini na Partisanska Leta III* also published in 1948 had 11 authors, three of whom were women.

In the first edition Josip Vidmar describes the patriotic sacrifice of an unnamed woman, who, when her husband was arrested by the Gestapo, told him, “it is better that you not return than to return a traitor.” He did not return, and Vidmar describes both the woman and her husband as worthy heroes for Slovene literature.<sup>304</sup> The same volume shares the story of Terenka Tinca, who gave aid to a wounded Partisan and refused to succumb to the brutal beatings of White Guard soldiers trying to find him. Terenka similarly refused the sexual advances of the White Guard, remaining true to her lover Jože, who was fighting for the Partisans elsewhere in Slovenia. In the second volume of memoirs, published in 1948, Vinko Šumrada mentions a woman simply as the wife of the butcher Babič, who lived in Trieste, and was always willing to give shelter to Partisans.<sup>305</sup> The last version published in 1948, however, contained three memoirs written by women out of a total of twenty featured veterans. All of these women served in fighting units, one as a nurse and two as soldiers. In their memoirs these women do not explicitly use gendered constructions to distinguish their experience of the war from that of their male counterparts.<sup>306</sup>

The press organ for women *Naša Žena* had been in existence since 1941. During the war, this paper’s editorship dispersed, and several editions of the paper were produced with no central coordination, and few copies of the paper have survived. By 1943, however, the paper came under the leadership of the SPZŽ and, at the conclusion

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<sup>304</sup> Vidmar ed., *Iz Partisanskih let* (From the Partisan years), x.

<sup>305</sup> Godina ed., *Spomini na Partisanska leta* (Memories of the Partisan Years). 150-151. This story is also important for showing the efforts of Slovenes in Trieste to help the Partisan war effort. In 1948 the KPJ remained bellicose in its demands for Trieste to join the Slovenian Republic.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*, 197-245.

of the war, primarily male Agitprop officials projected a very narrow understanding of who Partisan women were, and what their sacrifices meant to the new country.

A far more powerful conception of citizens would be in the division between youth and normative citizens (there were no organizations specifically for the elderly or middle-aged, and subsequently no definite guidelines of who was too old to be in the youth organization). Age would be just as important a plot element as gender in narrating the war, but its effectiveness in winning genuine popular support for the state had a built-in, though not always clear, expiration date. The Youth organization was only a legitimizing factor for the state when it could work in tandem with war memory. And war memory would only prove effective for the organization as long as veterans were still youths. By the 1960's when the youth organization was filled with non-veterans, war memory became a source of tension that seemed to justify economic benefits for middle-aged veterans at the expense of university-trained youth.

The KPS organized the Slovene League of Communist Youth in 1939 as a branch of the Yugoslav Communist Youth Union. By 1939, under Tito's leadership, the organization became completely subordinated to the Yugoslavian Communist Party. During the war the leader of the Yugoslav Youth organization, Ivo Lola Ribar, joined Tito's inner-circle. Slovene members of the Communist Youth overwhelmingly enlisted in the Partisan movement; approximately half were bearing arms by July 1941.<sup>307</sup> By the

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<sup>307</sup> Avakumović, *History of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia: Volume 1*, 155-158, 163-170. Denitch, *The Legitimation of a Revolution: The Yugoslav Case*, 90. SKOJ was affiliated with KPS in the prewar days but was an entirely separate institution. In 1941, for example, Bogdan Denitch points out that SKOJ had 20,000 members in Yugoslavia, while the KPJ had only 12,000.

end of the war, the Slovene branch of the organization, in the words of Edvard Kardelj, worked to:

“help young people become socially active and responsible . . . to shape the socialist consciousness of the young person, as a means to help him become ready as soon as possible to join the fight against established negative manifestations in our society . . . of course none of this is undertaken outside the framework of the guiding role of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia.”<sup>308</sup>

At the end of the war, the majority of Partisans were very young, even many of the leaders were under 30.<sup>309</sup> What had been purely a student organization had become one of the few mass organizations intended for young people. And, as the above quote illustrates, KPS leaders felt themselves to be firmly in control of the youth organization. In contrast to women, male youth featured prominently in narratives of the war. The many memoirs written in the 1950's frequently emphasize (often with nostalgia) the youthful vigor of veterans. By the 1960's veterans would contrast this image of youth who sacrificed everything for their country to the supposedly self-absorbed students of the 1960's who organized protest marches over bad cafeteria food. Such tensions with youth were the fruit of policies in the immediate postwar period, when the state constructed youth as a specific subset of the Slovene nation.

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<sup>308</sup> “Ni boljše vzgoje mladih ljudi in ne hitrejšega pridobivanja zavesti in znanja, kakor da mladi ljudje čimprej prevzamejo družbene odgovornosti in naloge . . . oblikovati socialistično zavest mladega človeka, pomagamo mu, da se hitreje razvija in aktivno vključuje v boj proti spremnim negativnim pojavom v naši družbi . . . Seveda pripada tu vodilna in usmerjajoča vloga KPJ” Kardelj, “Naša družba in mladina: iz pozdravnega govora ob sprejemu za delegate IV. Kongresa Ljudske mladine Srbije dne 31. Marca 1962,” (Our society and youth: from a welcome speech on the arrival of delegates to the fourth congress of People's youth of Serbia from March 31, 1962), 238.

<sup>309</sup> Lešnik and Tomc, *Rdeče in črno: Slovensko Partisanstvo in domobranstvo* (Red and black: Slovene Partisans and Home Guards), 113-115.

While discourses for women and youth catered to specific divisions within the nation (divisions defined by the regime), revanchism proved a powerful tool for addressing the national community as a whole. The desire by a majority of people within the Republic of Slovenia to annex neighboring Trieste, Istria, and Koroška worked congruently with memories of the war. These were the battles not yet won. In the first year after the war, the injustice of foreign occupation over rightfully Slovene lands appeared again and again in the daily newspapers. Tito's bellicosity angered Stalin, which caused such rhetoric in the presses to slightly diminish after 1946. But given the popular appeal of irredentism and Stalin's vastly decreasing role in Slovene media, such bellicosity would remain a feature of the Slovene press well into the 1950's.

The second edition of the memoir collection *Partisanska Leta* emphasizes the unity of Slovene fighters inside Slovenia with those from ethnic Slovene enclaves in Austria and Italy. Several memoirs include fighters from the disputed territories outside the 1945 borders of Slovenia. Martin Greif-Rudi, for instance, describes his mission far behind enemy lines to organize a Partisan unit in Austrian Koroška in 1944.<sup>310</sup> It did not matter whether the people he came into contact with were ethnic Germans or Slovenes, all were simple peasants and workers who supported the Communists. In his escape across the Sava river back into occupied Yugoslavia, Greif-Rudi writes with admiration about a simple Koroška German farmer who spent all night building a boat for him and his travelling companions to use to avoid Nazi sentries. Šumrada-Radoš, who was separated from his unit in Istria, describes a similar story of massive popular support in Italy for unification with Yugoslavian Slovenia. In his account, however, reactionary

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<sup>310</sup> Greif-Rudi, "Čez karnske alpe na Koroško," (Across the Karnic Alps into Koroška), 1948, 129-137.

elements among both Slovenes and Italians were blinded by clericals against the better interests of their respective national communities.<sup>311</sup>

The only other state-controlled “masses” of this period were explicitly political in nature. Through the use of the Liberation Front and People’s Front, the KPS created the illusion first for Western audiences, then in domestic propaganda, that the people were united behind the leadership of the Communist Party. The Communists retained all power, as they did across the Eastern Bloc. Unlike in other Yugoslav Republics, in Slovenia no opposition party even registered before the first elections in 1946.<sup>312</sup>

In 1945 the Control Commission of the KPS worked feverishly to eliminate local variation in the mass organizations. Anton Zaplotnik, a member of the regional council and committee which governed the sanatorium in Golnik, was censured by the party Control Commission in July for arguing that “there’s no real need for the OF to organize a committee in the Sanatorium, the Village committee should be sufficient to govern everything.<sup>313</sup>” Another member of the Golnik committee, with the surname Grad, responded that such an organization was necessary because Zaplotnik had failed to organize either an Anti Fascist Women’s organization or a League of Socialist Youth branch in Golnik. The most serious charge against Zaplotnik, however, was his lapse in party discipline manifested by questioning the need for a second OF organization in public. The Control Commission argued in their official report of the situation that the

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<sup>311</sup> Šumrada-Rados, 1948, 137-160.

<sup>312</sup> Režek, *Med Resničnostjo in iluzijo: Slovenska in Jugoslovanska politika v desetletju po sporu z Informbirojem* (Between truth and illusion: Slovene and Yugoslavian politics in the decade following the dispute with the Cominform), 55-57.

<sup>313</sup> AS 1115, 14h, 17/7, 13.7.1945, 1 (Ali je sploh potreben OF odbor v sanatoriju, da bi bilo bolje, da bi ostajal samo vaški odbor OF za vse.)

likely reason for the anomalies was the continuing influence of a village official who had served as a functionary under the German occupation. It seemed to investigators that he previously managed to shield himself from suspicion by claiming to have worked for the OF during the war as well.<sup>314</sup> As the commission delved into these peoples' war records, however, they were more concerned with the need to fill vacancies than they were about the potential danger of someone who could not fit into a Partisan centered war memory.

Much has been written about the only postwar institution not under the control of the Communist Party, the Catholic Church. As Mateja Režek has pointed out, the Catholic churches in Slovenia were organizations whose ultimate aims were the same as the Communist party, the nurture of the human soul. The two powers, therefore, came into conflict in many similar realms such as primary education, politics, media production, and the best means available to fund any of these endeavors -- agricultural and forest lands. Throughout the period of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia, many within the regime saw the Church as the most serious internal enemy.<sup>315</sup> In this early period, religious rights to run schools, hospitals, and gain income were effectively curtailed. Pressure on believers was so high that attendance at services plummeted. Yet the Catholic Church had a powerful outside supporter, the Vatican, which would repeatedly petition the Slovene authorities to ease pressure on the Church. Despite international condemnation of Yugoslavia's anti-religious policies, in the period covered in this chapter, the Church had very little discursive power. But, faithful Catholics

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<sup>314</sup> Ibid., 1-2.

<sup>315</sup> Režek, "Jugoslavija, Vatikan in katoliška cerkev (1949-1953)" (Yugoslavia, the Vatican and the Catholic church), 104-119.

maintained a subculture that has helped many to remember and identify with persecution in the early years of Communist rule.

## **CONCLUSION**

The immediate memory of the war could have been a powerful mobilizing factor in Slovenia. Sabrina Ramet argues that it was among the only sources of legitimacy available to Yugoslav leaders in this period, dismissing it as a poor source of legitimacy.<sup>316</sup> Her argument is based on the notion that few supported the regime, and that its power was based primarily on Stalinist terror. She is certainly correct, but underestimates the power of war memory as a source of legitimacy. In the immediate postwar period, the war served as a complicated yet comprehensive signifier that appealed to most people and indeed helped to create support for the new regime before the regime even knew the value of capitalizing on this sentiment. By 1947, official propagandists began using war memory to justify almost every political and social goal of the regime. The Communist party even retained the wartime mass structure of the National Liberation Front, so that every time a new building, infrastructural project, or agricultural endeavor was undertaken with government funds, anywhere in Yugoslavia, it was directed by fighters from the Liberation Front.

The first postwar goal of the Communist Parties in Slovenia was to seize political control. The institutions for assuming such control had already perfected their functions during the war, thus eliminating opposition was far quicker in Yugoslavia than anywhere else in the Eastern bloc. The next step was to implement a total socialist transformation in society, economy, and government. This entailed following Stalin's model for

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<sup>316</sup> Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias: State Building and Legitimation, 1918-2005*, 183-185.

building state socialism, including five-year plans and an emphasis on heavy industry. By 1947 Slovenes in particular deviated from Stalin's model by using the unique heritage of the National Liberation War as a justification for building socialism. At about the same time that party leaders began to justify policies with reference to war memory, a shift occurred in the overall propaganda messages in Slovenia. In the immediate aftermath of the war, national presses rarely wrote about the conflict. Very soon, however, authorities began to frame the drive to build socialism as a continuation of the national liberation struggle.

As outlined above, the regime was quite successful at times in using war memory to tailor specific political messages to its domestic audiences. The tools for this were many. In addition to the increase in books, plays, and partisan songs, newspapers began to frequently carry both commemorative coverage and references to the war as a means to legitimize current state and party goals. While still under the control of Agitprop, the Central Committee began increasingly to supervise the production of war history, especially in the press. Several sub-committees within the People's Assembly that started functioning after 1948 would also coordinate media controls and censorship in the republic. The many ongoing show trials and genuine fear of enemies helped to make the work of these committees all the more timely. Both publishers and their party member supervisors were extremely diligent in following party directives on war history production. But, these local actors still had the responsibility to interpret Agitprop and subcommittee controls, with ultimate decision making on the ground falling into the hands of newly trained media cadres. By the time of the Tito-Stalin split, Agitprop, the KPS, KPJ and both federal and republic-level governing institutions had realized the

value of war memory. The foundation for war memory as one of the prime legitimizing rhetorics in both Slovenia and the rest of Yugoslavia had been laid.

## **Part II: Controlling the Canon**

In 1948 the story of the War was one among many legitimizing rhetorics used by the new Republic. During the twenty-year period between Tito's dismissal from the Communist camp and the mini-revolution of 1968, Republic leaders vacillated between policies that repressed and increased social freedoms. Because Communist mass-mobilization goals were dependent on an active society, Slovene Communists frequently encouraged greater press activity. However, whenever these periods of thaw occurred, some people would inevitably cross lines of socialist propriety, and leaders would again clamp down. As social freedoms fluctuated over the next two decades, war memory would always be a site of contestation. In 1953 Edvard Kocbek's literary criticisms of Partisans provided the main justification for increasing censorship. By the late 1950's, when the Party slowly began to make the press more open, they also created institutions to make the history of the war more uniform. Through these disputes the canon of official war history continuously expanded, allowing those in control to vastly broaden the official morals of the war. Nevertheless authorities continued to harshly punish those who questioned the place of the Party within that mythology. By 1968, students' failed attempt to use war memory as one of their justifications for greater privileges reinforced the rhetorical power of the war generation's legacy. As the masses of Slovenes who overwhelmingly approved of the new Republic began to understand their own experiences according to the official war story, this story became a powerful marker of collective identity.

## Chapter 4: Searching for a Memory, 1948-1953

*We will cultivate that spirit of heroism, sacrifice, proper comradeship, and alertness among the working masses of our city, of which you, Comrade Marshall [Tito], have been an example to us through your words and deeds. We will firmly defend and develop the fruits of our National Liberation War. We will strive to maintain awareness among our people of the brotherhood and unity of our nations.*

Ljubljana League of United Warriors of the National Liberation War, January 19, 1948<sup>317</sup>

*My conscience screams for me to remain human, independant, and free; to avoid becoming used and exploited by history...the more a person conforms to the flow of history, the farther he alienates himself from truth.*

Edvard Kocbek, 1951<sup>318</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

On June 30, 1948 papers throughout Yugoslavia published the full text of the Cominform resolution condemning Tito and his party.<sup>319</sup> A series of differences between the foreign policy and economic goals of the USSR and Yugoslavia had led to the first serious rift in the international community of Communist parties. Yugoslavia was also the only country in the Eastern bloc with a large enough wartime Communist movement to share credit for liberation with the Soviets. Stalinist/Titoist memory politics, however,

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<sup>317</sup> *Ljudska Pravica*, January 19, 1948, 1 (Med delovnimi množicami našega mesta bomo gojili tisti duh junaštva, požrtvovalnosti, pravega tovarištva in budnosti, ki ste ga nam s svojim zgledom in s svojo besedo dali Vi, Tovariš Maršal. Trdno bomo branili in razvijali pridobitve Narodno osvobodilne borbe, skrbeli bomo, da bo v našem ljudstvu stalno ostala zavest bratstva in enotnosti naših narodov.)

<sup>318</sup> From a review of Edvard Kocbek's *Strah in Pogum (Fear and Courage)*, written by Josip Vidmar, AS 1589 AC 783, Agitprop conference with reporters, 24 VI 1952, (Agitprop conference with reporters, June 24, 1952), 80-81. (Moja notranjost mi silovito govori da moram ostati človeško neodvisen in svoboden, ne pa zgodovinsko uporabljen in koristen...Čimbolj se človek isti z zgodovinsko stvarnostjo, tem bolj se oddaljuje od resnice).

<sup>319</sup> See for example Ljubljana's *Ljudska Pravica* from June 30, 1948; 1-2.

were hardly amenable to sharing. Going into the conflict with Stalin's Cominform, Yugoslavian party leaders were outwardly confident that they had earned the trust of their people during the war and brief postwar period. Referring to the situation at the Fifth Party Congress in July, Edvard Kardelj explained: "We have overcome such problems in the past and will continue to do so in the future based on one stipulation alone: that we continue to be able to mobilize the wide masses of people in the battle for socialism..."<sup>320</sup> At the same congress Tito expressed confidence in the party, "if only we maintain profound vigilance, unity, and firmness in our Party, if only we do not lose our nerve, our victory will be certain."<sup>321</sup> As the crisis deepened, party leaders realized that false bravado would not suffice, and they would need to win the support of the people as never before. By late 1947 the party began to add inspiration to their mobilization efforts, as they began to take ownership of the already-powerful mythology of the National Liberation War. This collective memory played a key role in winning popular support as the Yugoslav party navigated its way between the capitalist West and Socialist East.

Despite seemingly insurmountable obstacles, during the five-year period between the Cominform resolution and Stalin's death, Yugoslavia transformed from a state on the brink of failure into a country securely situated between the United States and the Soviet Union. A variety of factors, notably American aid and the new theory of worker self-

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<sup>320</sup> Kardelj, "Zakaj nam je potrebna kontrola in kakšna naj bo: Ekspoze o predlogu zakona o šplošni državni kontroli dne 13. marca 1946" (Why we need control and what it should look like: An exposé on the draft law on General Social Control from March 13, 1946), 310. (Vse te težave smo v preteklosti lahko premagali in jih bomo tudi v prihodnje samo pod enim pogojem: če bomo znali še nadalje mobilizirati široke ljudske množice v boju za socializem . . .).

<sup>321</sup> Dedijer, *Tito Speaks: His Self Portrait and Struggle with Stalin*, 381 (English translation from Serbo-Croatian by Vladimir Dedijer).

management, allowed the Yugoslavian Communist Party/League<sup>322</sup> to enjoy significant economic growth, firm political control, and international legitimacy. War memory made the new state something worth fighting for.

Political legitimacy and popular support in this period should not, however, be confused for ideological uniformity. Mateja Režek calls this period a “time of searching,” when, in a desperate attempt to save the Revolution and maintain political power, Slovene politicians and party leaders relaxed social controls and allowed for an unprecedented outpouring of ideas.<sup>323</sup> Carol Lilly describes an inverse relationship between maintaining political control and pushing the goals of revolution during this same period. In her assessment, pressures from below forced Yugoslav leaders to constantly retaylor their messages.<sup>324</sup> As the pendulum swung between political control and ideological flexibility, theorists like Edvard Kardelj proposed novel solutions to the federation’s economic and political troubles, while memory makers paradoxically began to formalize a canon of literature that would underpin a remarkably uniform collective memory of the war. Diversity of opinion and a relaxation of press controls helped the stories of the Second World War to suddenly become a national marker of identity for Slovenes. On a federal level, leaders turned the army into a symbol of Yugoslav unity:

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<sup>322</sup> In 1952 the name of the Yugoslavian Communist Party (KPJ) changed to the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (ZKJ). The name change implied that the Communists of Yugoslavia did not want to emulate the Bureaucratization of the USSR, and hoped, one day, for the withering away of the party and state as real Communism (worker control) emerged. The Slovene party also changed into a league, thus KPS became ZKS.

<sup>323</sup> Režek, *Med Resničnostjo in iluzijo: Slovenska in Jugoslovanska politika v desetletju po sporu z Informbirojem* (Between truth and illusion: Slovene and Yugoslavian politics in the decade following the dispute with the Cominform). 27.

<sup>324</sup> Lilly, *Power and Persuasion: Ideology and Rhetoric in Communist Yugoslavia, 1944-1953*, 3-4.

Tito renamed the national army “the Yugoslavian People’s Army” on December 22, 1951 to show, among other things, its “granite, monolithicness” and faithfulness “to the the freedom, independence and socialist destiny of our peoples.”<sup>325</sup> For Tito this new Army now carried the memory of liberating Yugoslavia, not regional organizations such as Slovenia’s liberation front.

State leaders’ attempts to canonize a collective mythology of the war were extremely effective during this period, but, as with all collective memories, there were dissidents. The most notable was Edvard Kocbek, a Partisan fighter who was present at Kočevje during the postwar killings. Kocbek pushed the boundaries of acceptable war memory first in 1949 with his memoir *Comradeship* then again in 1953 with a series of fictional accounts of the war, then most forcefully in a 1975 interview, when he mentioned the postwar killings of captured collaborators. By 1953, as control over the civic sphere of Slovenia tightened — partially in response to Edvard Kocbek’s timid contentions in his memoirs and fiction that Partisan violence was at times excessive — so too did the attempts of the League of Communists to exert even greater control over discourses surrounding the Liberation War. Regime leaders wanted to encourage genuine identification with the story of the war, but people like Kocbek constantly showed them the limits of too much freedom of expression.

### **Tito-Stalin Split**

That a mythology of the Partisan Liberation war would emerge from the Tito-Stalin split as a major source of legitimacy for the fledging regime should not be

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<sup>325</sup> *Dolenjski List*, Dec 28, 1951, 1 (granitno monoliten . . . [zvesta] svobode in neodvisnosti naših narodov in socialistične graditve naše države). Slovene translation by editors of *Dolenjski List* from Serbo-Croatian order made by Josip Broz Tito on December 22, 1951.

surprising. After all, military disputes and insults against the Partisan army's war record precipitated much of the animosity between the Soviet and Yugoslav parties. A strong element of Stalin's distrust of Tito centered on an official Yugoslavian war memory that was not sufficiently grateful/subservient to the Soviet Red Army. In a May 4, 1948 letter to the Yugoslav Central Committee, Vyacheslav Molotov condemned the Yugoslav Party for, among other things: denying the role of the Red Army in liberating Yugoslavia, acting as if the Partisans alone had fought the Fascists while ignoring the contributions of other Communist parties, and showing disrespect towards the Red Army and its advisors to the Yugoslav Army.<sup>326</sup> While Yugoslav writers did frequently give credit to the role of the Red Army in liberating Yugoslavia,<sup>327</sup> Stalin felt that the Yugoslavs overemphasized their own efforts in the struggle.

As shown previously, the Red Army was pivotal in breaking Nazi control over Yugoslavia in the beginning of 1945, at a time when collaborators and occupiers were in firm military control of Slovenia and expanding their power across other Republics. Though by 1945 the Partisans had all but been defeated in Slovenia, and welcomed Soviet military assistance, in the newspapers of the late 1940's, the victory was uniquely

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<sup>326</sup> Summarized in Bokovoy, *Peasants and Communists: Politics and Ideology in the Yugoslav Countryside, 1941-1953*, 85.

<sup>327</sup> On the front page of the July 4, 1948 edition of *Ljudska Pravica* B.H. summarized the relationship between the Partisans and Red Army in light of the recent Cominform decision by writing: "The leadership of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia has answered all of the mistaken claims and slanders with conviction and self-respect . . . this being the firm belief of especially those who, under the leadership of the Communist Party during the years of the war, stood on the front lines of the armed battle for the victory of progress and democracy, on the same front as the fighters of the glorious Red Armada, alongside all freedom-loving forces throughout the world" (Vodstvo Komunistične Partije Jugoslavije je odgovorilo na vse krivične očitke in klevete prepričevalno in samozavestno . . . v to so trdno prepričeni le posebno vsi tisti ki so pod vodstvom Komunistične Partije že v letih vojne stali v prvih vrstah oborožene borbe za zmago napredka in demokracije, na isti fronti z boric slavne Rdeče Armade in z vsemi svobodoljubnimi silami sveta).

Slovene.<sup>328</sup> Postwar Soviet military advisors were frequently incensed at what they deemed a lack of gratitude and respect on the part of Yugoslavs.<sup>329</sup> Having endured “colossal sacrifices and losses”<sup>330</sup> throughout Yugoslavia during the final months of World War II, the Soviets demanded both political and historical deference from those they felt they had liberated. Such deference seemed to last only as long as Yugoslav party leaders were dependent on Soviet military intervention.<sup>331</sup>

Instead many Yugoslavs, especially Serbs, remembered the rather open secret of Soviet mass rapes, looting, and arrogance on their soil. Party leaders remembered the lack of material assistance during most of the war,<sup>332</sup> as well as Stalin’s insistence on continuing to recognize the dubious resistance movement of Draža Mihajlović, despite

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<sup>328</sup> See for example Josip Vidmar’s introduction to the 1947 collection of memoirs *Iz Partizanskih Let*: “a consciousness of these events needs to be part of our new literature . . . From such a perspective, the years of the Liberation War, now behind us, show the human capacity and bravery of our Slovene people, which must deeply surprise those who saw us as we once were. Before, even we felt that we were a people without history, without men who make history, basically a people without heroes who have never done anything of significance” (zavest o tem dogajanju mora biti v naši novi literaturi prisotna . . . Leta osvobodilnih bojev, ki so za nami, so v tem pogledu, v pogledu človeške zmogljivosti in poguma za vsakogar, ki je gledal na slovensko ljudstvo in na našega človeka s starimi očmi, leta globokega presenečenja. Med nami samimi se je bilo utrdilo mnenje, da smo narod brez zgodovine, brez mož ki delajo zgodovino, torej narod brez junakov in brez velikih značajev).

<sup>329</sup> Bokovoy, *Peasants and Communists: Politics and Ideology in the Yugoslav Countryside, 1941-1953*, 85.

<sup>330</sup> Clissold, *Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union 1939-1973: A Documentary Survey*, 165. This is an excerpt from a “Soviet protest at alleged slanders against the Red Army” from late 1944 or early 1945, translated from Russian by Stephen Clissold.

<sup>331</sup> While Soviet operations in Yugoslavia were ongoing, the Central Committee of the KPJ sent the following apology, among a litany of other confessions, to V.M. Molotov: “Our biggest mistake in the text has been neglecting to proclaim the enormous liberating assistance shown to our country by the Soviet Union” (Samoy Bolshoy nashey oshibkoy yavlyayet’sya umalchivanie v tekste deklaratsii ob ogromnoy osvoboditel’noy pomoshyi nashey strane, okazannoy Sovyetskim Soyuzom). IBT. KMYu. I -3 – b/592, 15. March. 1945 in Ministerstvo Inostrannykh del Rossiyskoy Federatsii – Ministerstvo Inostrannykh del Soyuznoy Respubliki Yugoslavii, 1998, 423.

<sup>332</sup> Clissold, *Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union 1939-1973: A Documentary Survey*, 160. Not until December 13, 1943 did the Soviets even establish a military mission among the Yugoslav Partisans, even though the Yugoslavian party was a member of the Soviet-led Comintern. Through the Comintern, the Yugoslav Partisans had been receiving orders from Moscow since 1941, but not military aid.

the almost exclusive role of the Yugoslav Communist Party in organizing and leading the resistance to Nazi-Fascism.<sup>333</sup> In his biography from 1953, Tito claims that as early as November 1941, Stalin resented the fact that the Yugoslavs were trying to establish a struggle against Fascism that was not dependent on the Soviet Union. Tito hints that Stalin's resentment factored into the Soviet leader's unwillingness to send aid.<sup>334</sup> That dependence on the Soviet Union nevertheless became critical to victory in 1945 was difficult for Yugoslav party leaders to admit.<sup>335</sup>

Lack of deference to the USSR in war memory was only a small part of the conflict between Tito and Stalin. Another was Tito's insistence that areas with ethnic Slovene populations in Italy and Austria be joined to Yugoslavia. For the Yugoslav party, the National Liberation War would not be over until all South Slavs were joined to the national body. While such irredentism was wildly popular among the Slovene masses, it became increasingly problematic for Soviet leaders in the postwar years.<sup>336</sup> Stalin felt obligated to support Yugoslavian territorial demands, if only to show the unity of the Communist camp in negotiations with the West. When the West was not looking,

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<sup>333</sup> Djilas, *Wartime*, 419-421, Dedijer, *Tito Speaks: His Self Portrait and Struggle with Stalin*, 177.

<sup>334</sup> Dedijer, *Tito Speaks: His Self Portrait and Struggle with Stalin*, 170.

<sup>335</sup> For example, on VE Day in 1945, Tito gave a speech in Zagreb where he cited the major campaigns of the Partisan armies, then without specifically mentioning the Soviet contribution to ending the war in Yugoslavia merely expressed that "the thoughts of all the peoples of Yugoslavia are turned with thanks towards the glorious and undefeatable Red Army. With gratitude towards the heroic peoples of the Soviet Union, who in this superhuman battle endured the greatest sacrifice [sic]." (muisli vseh narodov Yugoslavii s blagodarnost'yu obrashyenuy k slavnoy i nepobedimoy Krasnoy Armii. S blagodarnost'yu obrashyenuy k geroicheskim narodam Sovyetskovo Soyuza, kotoruye v etoy sverhchelovecheskoy bor'be ponesli samuye bol'shie zhertvuy [Russian translation from Serbo-Croatian original]). He then continues to recognize the other allied armies in a single sentence. Ministerstvo Inostrannykh del Rossiyskoy Federatsii – Ministerstvo Inostrannykh del Soyuznoy Respubliki Yugoslavii, 1998, 450-451.

<sup>336</sup> Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias: State Building and Legitimation, 1918-2005*, 172-173.

however, he resented being forced into possible conflict at the behest of a supposedly subordinate Communist party.<sup>337</sup>

On top of Tito's troubling irredentism, his party also cultivated relations with Bulgarian, Albanian, and Greek Communists, which Stalin felt undermined each party's direct subservience to him. With the Albanians, Yugoslav officials began speaking about confederation as early as 1946, and Tito exerted significant control over the Albanian currency and military.<sup>338</sup> With the Greeks, Yugoslavs actively supported their revolution with personnel and equipment, despite Stalin's insistence that Greece fall within Great Britain's sphere of influence, per his Yalta agreement with Churchill. Yugoslavia continued to support the Greeks after the split with Stalin, though by 1949 such assistance ended when the Greek Communist Party sided with Stalin in the Cominform resolution to remove Yugoslavia from the community of Communist states.<sup>339</sup>

Immediately after the war, Bulgarian Communists and Yugoslav leaders spoke openly about forming a closer federation, with the hopes of realizing a century-old dream to unite all Balkan Slavs in a single state. Such a union would certainly possess enough political strength to counteract both Soviet and Anglo-American strategic interests on the peninsula. Between 1946 and 1948 Tito and Bulgaria's president, Georgey Dimitrov, frequently discussed the nature of such a union. Stalin alternated between support and opposition to the merger, in Ramet's opinion, to keep the two states uncertain and

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<sup>337</sup> Rothschild and Wingfield, *Return to Diversity: A Political History of East-Central Europe since World War II*, 125-126.

<sup>338</sup> Girenko, *Stalin-Tito*, 327-329.

<sup>339</sup> Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias: State Building and Legitimation, 1918-2005*, 173-174.

therefore subservient to the USSR.<sup>340</sup> In February 1948 during one of Stalin's final attempts to catch the Yugoslavs in a rhetorical trap, he encouraged Bulgaria's Dimitrov to pursue such a union right before using plans for this union as evidence for Tito's chauvinistic, megalomaniac intentions in the Balkans.<sup>341</sup>

The final straw that Stalin believed proved Yugoslavia's insubordination, however, was Yugoslavian military units moving into Albania in 1947. Though the units were requested by Albanian defense minister Koçi Xoxe, due to his fear of the Greek Civil war spilling over into his country, the move was unilateral on the part of the Yugoslavs. Tito informed Stalin of his decision, but did not even make a pretense of asking Stalin for his permission. Tito, after all, was the leader of a military that was pivotal in defeating Nazi-Fascism; he needed no one's permission to use that military, and resented Stalin's violation of Yugoslav control over its own foreign policy.<sup>342</sup> Thus, Yugoslavian independence from Moscow in all of its foreign affairs was one of Molotov's complaints against the KPJ in his May 4, 1948 letter.<sup>343</sup>

Party members learned about the tensions between Yugoslavia and the USSR on June 28, 1948. During a meeting of the newly formed Communist Information Bureau in Bucharest, Stalin reprimanded Yugoslavs for, among other mistakes: "defaming the Red Army," having an "anti-Soviet attitude," advocating a transition to Socialism as taught by

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<sup>340</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>341</sup> Dedijer, *Tito Speaks: His Self Portrait and Struggle with Stalin*, 324-329.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid., 328-331.

<sup>343</sup> Bokovoy, *Peasants and Communists: Politics and Ideology in the Yugoslav Countryside, 1941-1953*, 85.

“the opportunist Bukharin<sup>344</sup> types,” and functioning as a “disgraceful, purely Turkish<sup>345</sup> regime” that needed to be overthrown for the well-being of the “family of the fraternal Communist parties.”<sup>346</sup> Across Eastern Europe, “Titoism” would quickly become a shorthand for the heresy of “National Communism”; in other words, the idea that there could be paths to Socialism that did not recognize the leadership of Moscow. After 1948, anti-Titoist purges became common within Communist parties across the Soviet bloc.<sup>347</sup>

While Communist parties in the People’s Democracies were searching for Titoists, Tito’s regime began searching for Stalinists. These enemies were generally real, and authorities referred to them as “Informbjurovci” (often shortened to IB’ovci), or those who supported the Communist Information Bureau’s decision. As early as 1945 Stalin had recruited hundreds of Yugoslavs into the NKVD, and these loyal Stalinists who remained in Yugoslavia after 1948 became a powerful clandestine army that Tito’s government did everything it could to oppose.<sup>348</sup> Thousands were arrested; many more

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<sup>344</sup> Nikolai Bukharin was one of Stalin’s competitors for leadership of the Soviet party in the 1920’s. He advocated a gradual transition to Socialism that Molotov here compares to Yugoslavian worker self-management.

<sup>345</sup> Seemingly unbeknownst to Vyacheslav Molotov, an actual Turkish regime, the Ottoman Empire, has also been described as a “multi-ethnic, multi-religious enterprise that relied on inclusion for its success.” See: Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922*, 2.

<sup>346</sup> English translation from Russian by Royal Institute of International Affairs, taken from *Modern History Sourcebook*, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1948cominform-yugo1.html>.

<sup>347</sup> Rothschild and Wingfield, *Return to Diversity: A Political History of East-Central Europe since World War II*, 131-138.

<sup>348</sup> In April 2011, while searching for news articles in *Slovenski Poročevalec* and *Ljudska Pravica* on the Cominform decision in the Central Library of Kranj, Slovenia, I noticed that articles from key dates in 1948, such as the June 30<sup>th</sup> publication of the Cominform decision against Yugoslavia, had been crudely torn out of the bound volumes. Perhaps this was the work of members of the Informbureau organization which the Control Commission of the Central Committee was investigating in Kranj in April 1950. According to a report sent to Belgrade, a new group had been circulating handbills showing support for the USSR throughout Kranj (AS 1115, AC 916, 4768/50. 12. IV. 1950).

fled Tito's repression or were forcibly exiled from the country. Between 1948 and 1952 over 200,000 people were expelled from the KPJ for real or suspected support of the Cominform decision.<sup>349</sup> At purge's end, 2,275 Slovenes had been arrested on charges of supporting the Cominform, far less than in areas to the South. By contrast, in the border regions of Bosnia and Montenegro, gun battles even occurred in late 1948 between a security police division and guerilla supporters of the Cominform decision.<sup>350</sup> For Slovenes the Liberation War had been most visibly a local struggle, securing local political control with ingredients for uniquely Slovene memories. Subservience in memory to either the Soviet Union or Yugoslavia never had significant popular appeal and only the most ardent Communists ever genuinely ascribed to a worldview that placed Stalin at the vanguard of Communist states. In other republics, however, stronger more disciplined prewar Communist parties as well as greater amounts of historic Russophilism motivated greater sympathy for the Cominform resolution than in Slovenia.

### **Accelerating Stalinization**

At the same time that battles were raging between state security forces and pro-Stalinists in the South of Yugoslavia, the central party did everything it could to accelerate Stalinist-inspired economic and social reforms for the federation as a whole. Stevan Pavlowitch calls this resisting Stalin with an even "harsher Stalinist line."<sup>351</sup> The collectivization of agriculture, already being implemented since late 1947, became accelerated after June 1948. Part of this effort was a direct response to the Cominform

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<sup>349</sup> Banac, *With Tito against Stalin: Cominformist Splits in Yugoslav Communism*, 147.

<sup>350</sup> Pavlowitch, *Serbia: The History of an Idea*, 166.

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

decision's accusation that the Yugoslavs were "pursuing an incorrect policy in the countryside . . . contrary to the well-known Lenin thesis that small individual farming gives birth to capitalism and the bourgeoisie continually, daily, hourly, spontaneously and on a mass scale..."<sup>352</sup> The last vestiges of private capital holdings were also nationalized (as called for in the five-year plan begun in 1947 and the Law on Nationalization from December 1, 1946) after the split with Stalin.<sup>353</sup>

Official economic policy continued to focus on the building of large industry; however, the financial and technical resources for constructing such industry were now nowhere to be found. The first five-year plan would prove a total failure.<sup>354</sup> Without Soviet assistance, access to the gold reserves of the Royal Yugoslavian government, or assistance from the West, Yugoslavia's leaders began to realize just how dire their situation was. The highest leaders of the federation, republics, and parties plodded on for roughly 18 months. Not until the end of 1949 would tentative economic relations with the United States coincide with a new theory on worker self-management and a retreat from Stalinist economic planning. Of course, widespread resistance to collective agriculture, and significant support for the Cominform decision in other republics also played a role in forcing Yugoslav leaders to recognize just how untenable Stalinism was in a country on the brink of war with Stalin's international Communist armies.

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<sup>352</sup> English translation from Russian by Royal Institute of International Affairs, taken from *Modern History Sourcebook*, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1948cominform-yugo1.html>.

<sup>353</sup> Kardelj, "Zakaj nam je potrebna kontrola in kakšna naj bo: Ekspozé o predlogu zakona o šplošni državni kontroli dne 13. marca 1946" (Why we need control and what it should look like: An exposé on the draft law on General Social Control from March 13, 1946), 298, 300.

<sup>354</sup> Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice there was a Country*, 242.

Before this realization sunk in, however, Slovene authorities worked feverishly to accelerate building Socialism in their own Republic. Party leaders tried marketing policies like collective agriculture to the population through establishing greater control over the mass organizations, and enforcing these same policies by strengthening the power of the security police apparatus (UDBA) in the Republic. Contemporary Agitprop leaders tried to use their reliable metaphor to narrate the period as an exciting new war for building socialism. Official press policy still deemphasized the recent actual war. During a 1949 speech given to the Slovene Central Committee's Agitprop commission on the status of Literature in the Republic, Boris Zihelr would even lament that "it's trendy to write about the National Liberation War nowadays. But there's no writing about postwar issues, with the exception of one or two things I've followed..."<sup>355</sup> While Slovene presses churned out actual war memoirs, state-approved newsmedia and officials like Zihelr preferred to emphasize the metaphorical war...to build socialism.

Implementing this new war, however, paradoxically required Slovene officials to make enemies out of many of the heroes of the actual war. While the search for Cominformists raged in the rest of the federation, only a few hundred Soviet sympathizers were to be found in Slovenia. Instead authorities targeted rural inhabitants and clericals, those groups which party theorists understood to be hardly distinguishable. These were of course the same groups who propagandists had worked so hard to court during the National Liberation War.<sup>356</sup> Without the support of so many thousands of

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<sup>355</sup> AS 1589 III AC 781, 1117/68, 15 (Pri nas je moda da se piše o narodnoosvobodilni borbi. Ne piše pa se o problematiki po vojni in sem jo zasledel v dveh ali treh stvareh . . .)

<sup>356</sup> Bokovoy, *Peasants and Communists: Politics and Ideology in the Yugoslav Countryside, 1941-1953*, 1-2.

peasants across the federation, Yugoslav Partisans would have had neither operational capacity nor personnel during the war. Yet it was this same countryside that party leaders frequently viewed as an almost foreign country, one that was “at its core an enemy of socialism.” In a 1952 Agitprop meeting, Comrade Drenovec continued, “The farmer is our enemy and a hardheaded one at that, because of how tied he is to the land. Of course we would never say such a thing in a public meeting; but here we need to discuss what tactics we will use to make the countryside begin developing along the path towards socialism. The relationship of the farmer [to the land] will change only once we are able to make him dependent on us.”<sup>357</sup>

Regime leaders invested heavily in agricultural collectivization as one strategy to conquer Slovenia’s countryside. In 1944 and 1945 farmers<sup>358</sup> benefitted greatly from the redistribution of land seized from collaborators, large holders, and, most importantly, the

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<sup>357</sup> AS 1589 III AC 789, 3.XII.1952, 12 (Zavedati se moramo da je naša vas sovražnik socializma v svojem bistvu. Kmet je nas sovražnik in v to trdoživ sovražnik, ker je zelo navezan na svojo zemljo. /Tega ne bomo na javnem sestanku razglašali, obravnavali pa bomo s kakšno taktiko bomo dosegli da bo šel razvoj na vasi v smeri socializacije/. Ta odnos kmeta se bo izpreminil šele takrat kadar ga bomo napravili odvisnega od nas).

<sup>358</sup> In the 1940’s, Slovene officials used the term “kmet” to describe farmers. Many historians writing in English translate this word as “peasant,” which I find inaccurate (see Melissa Bokovoy, John Lampe, Sabrina Ramet, Joseph Rothschild, Nancy Wingfield, etc.). In the Slovene context, “kmet” failed to acquire the perjorative connotation that words translated as peasant acquired in other Slavic linguacultures, such as the Russian (krest’ian) or Serbo-Croatian and Macedonian (seljak). Though informed by a similar Communist desire to modernize peasants, Slovenes in the 1940’s did not use a feudal-era term (such as “hlapec” [serf]) to describe those whose livelihoods derived from agricultural production. The quick retreat of the KPS from collectivization might also factor into the failure of the regime to define the majority rural population of 1940’s Slovenia as backwards and inferior to urbanites. In present-day Slovenia “kmet” carries implications of self-sufficiency, ingenuity, and individualism, similar to the term “farmer” in English. To be sure, an increasingly archaic use of the term (used more by urban than rural dwellers) does still entail “stupidity.” However, unlike in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian-speaking areas, where present-day farmers describe themselves with the term “poljoprivrednik” (field cultivator) (Macedonian is “polodelec”), or with the English borrowing “farmer,” in Slovenia “kmet” remains the primary designation for agriculturalists. With the sole exception of Slovene, borrowings of the English/French “farmer/fermer” can be used to describe agriculturalists across the modern-day Slavic languages. Unlike in Slovenia, farmers in these other linguacultures do not describe themselves with the same word that Communist authorities used for the profession during their respective collectivization campaigns.

Church.<sup>359</sup> After the Law on Agrarian Reform and Colonization was implemented at the end of 1945, for the first time in the history of Slavic settlement in Slovene lands, the region was made up of smallholders. Naturally, as people like the above-quoted Drenovec understood well, these same farmers resented being forced to surrender their land and resources to collective farms after 1948. Yet to achieve the goals of socializing the countryside, establishing smallholders was nothing more than a temporary, strategic reward for support during the Liberation War. Janez Hribar would summarize the transformative nature of the state's intentions towards the countryside in 1952: "In the villages we frequently hear the assertion that the farmer is the main pillar of the country. That was perhaps once true, when industry was not yet developed . . . but the industrial worker today produces a far greater percentage of the national revenue than his counterpart in agriculture." He continued to argue that if the state hoped to make economic progress, it needed to turn near-subsistence-level farmers into productive agricultural workers, since Slovenia, in his view, did not have the land resources necessary to build an economy off of export agriculture.<sup>360</sup>

Few farmers wanted to give their land to collectives. Officials responded by trying to "educate" these people. Their education efforts included a condescending campaign in 1948 to teach farmers not to be afraid of tractors;<sup>361</sup> writing press articles

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<sup>359</sup> Cepič, "Agrarna reforma in politika" (Politics and the agrarian reform), 83.

<sup>360</sup> AS 1589 III, 789, 3. XII. 1952, 5 (Na vasi pogosto srečujemo tridtev da je kmet glavni steber v državi. To je sicer nekaj bilo res, ko industrija še ni bila razvita . . . se bo videlo da delavec v industriji vstvarja mnogo več narodnega dohodka kot pa v kmetijstvu).

<sup>361</sup> AS 1589 III, AC 782, 30. XI. 1948, 7. At an Agitprop meeting at the end of 1948, Comrade Berkopec summarized his efforts in anticipation of building Machine Tractor Stations by saying: "The technicians of the Bureau for Mechanization (within the Ministry of Agriculture) have conducted an ongoing propaganda

and setting up educational presentations where party activists, who often lacked personal agricultural backgrounds, tried to teach farmers how to improve their skills,<sup>362</sup> and desperately tried to convince farmers that their personal lives would improve if they gave up individual control over their enterprises.<sup>363</sup> After 1948 authorities began to add coercive measures to their persuasive tool kits, such as mandatory crop requisitions and higher taxes on agricultural commodities. As had been the case during the NEP period of Soviet history, Slovene agricultural surpluses became one of the few sources of revenue to finance industrialization, causing an extreme discrepancy between prices for agricultural and industrial products. Farmers simply could not afford the industrial products that their price-controlled commodities were financing. When such coercive pricing measures failed to push people into collective farms, the state attempted to use direct military and police force against recalcitrant farmers. Widespread resistance by lower-level officials forced the state to abandon forced collectivization in early 1949.<sup>364</sup> In February of that year, Veljko Vlahović would even criticize those few officials who had used force for “violating the principle of volunteerism with the goal of seeding

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campaign through print and radio. Because of our continuing propaganda, farmers are no longer afraid of tractors but surprisingly, more and more they actually are starting to want them” (Uprava za mehanizacijo je po svojih strokovnjakih vršila stalno pismeno propagando in propaganda po radiu. Prav tako se vrši vse propaganda in sedaj kmetje nimajo več strahu pred traktorjem marveč se ga vedno bolj želijo).

<sup>362</sup> AS 1589 III AC 773, Leto 1949, 11. II. 1949, 1. At an Agitprop meeting with the Yugoslavian Central Committee in February 1949, Veljko Vlahović complained that across Yugoslavia, those writing articles for farmers (summary of his remarks written in Slovene, so word “kmet” is used by person taking minutes) had a poor understanding of agricultural principles themselves. He argued that such poor writing was hindering efforts to gain control over the countryside.

<sup>363</sup> A September 27, 1948 article in *Ljudska Pravica* (p. 3) describes how collective farms allow for better agricultural planning and larger fields, thus greatly multiplying yields. It concludes with a description of how collective homes in such collective farms significantly reduce women’s work by allowing common cooking and washing to free up their time, allowing them to become “healthy and conscientious fighters for socialism” (zdrave in zavesne borce za socializem).

<sup>364</sup> Bokovoy, *Peasants and Communists: Politics and Ideology in the Yugoslav Countryside, 1941-1953*, 146-152.

mistrust among farmers and sabotaging the whole idea of collective farms.”<sup>365</sup> Another factor ensuring the relatively quick relaxation of forced collectivization was a drought in 1949, which made officials wary of tampering with agriculture. However, by the end of the year the period of experimentation that would replace dogmatic Stalinism was already underway. Melissa Bokovoy argues that more prudent Yugoslavian officials had no desire to wage a Soviet-style collectivization campaign, for “To declare war on the countryside, as the Soviets had done, would demystify the Yugoslavian Partisan experience and be an admission of the error of the party’s ways in the countryside.”<sup>366</sup> Yugoslav leaders already seemed to know that war memory was far more powerful than the appeal of state socialism. However, not until March 1953 would the ZKJ officially repudiate its policy of agricultural collectivization.<sup>367</sup>

### **Catholic Church**

Party/State campaigns against the Church would endure long after the end of collectivization. Though the new state guaranteed the free expression of religious belief, it justified measures against the Church as a battle against “clericalism,” rather than an anti-religious campaign. At the Second Party Congress of the KPS Edvard Kardelj used a common rhetorical strategy of the period to claim that clericalism was behind collaboration during the war and resistance to socialism after the war. Though individual clergy were split during the war between those who supported the occupation as

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<sup>365</sup> AS 1589 III AC 773, Leto 1949, 11. II. 1949, 4 (...kršili princip prostovoljnosti z namenom, ustvarjati med kmeti nerazpoloženje in minirati zadruga).

<sup>366</sup> Bokovoy, *Peasants and Communists: Politics and Ideology in the Yugoslav Countryside, 1941-1953*, 158.

<sup>367</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

favorable to what they considered “Godless Bolshevism,” and those priests who felt that resistance offered the best hope for the preservation of their parishioners, the Communist regime’s accusation of “clericalism” applied to the entire Catholic Church. At the Second Party Congress, Kardelj then defined clericalism as “the most prominent example of international reactionary forces in the new Yugoslavia. We must keep this in mind when considering that the broad masses of agricultural people have been kept under the control of clerical leaders and a reactionary priesthood, who use such religiosity for their anti-national purposes in order to maintain their own positions as class exploiters in the countryside.”<sup>368</sup> He then emphasized the importance of freedom of religion in the new Yugoslavia, arguing that the battle against clericalism should not be confused with a war on religion.<sup>369</sup>

During and immediately after the war, rhetoric against the supposed clerical elements of the church was strong. Indeed the Church was the last vestige of a mass organization not under the direct leadership of the Liberation Front. Prior to 1945, the Catholic Church exerted enormous control over Slovene social, economic, and political life. Long before the Communist Party was able to effectively dominate discourses on Slovene national liberation, it was the clergy of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that had led efforts for a

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<sup>368</sup> Marinko, “Politično poročilo centralnega komiteja KPS” (Political report of the central committee of the Communist party of Slovenia), 1949, 119-120. (Klerikalizem je tudi v novi Jugoslaviji glavna ekspozitura mednarodne reakcije. Vse to moramo imeti pred očmi ob dejstvu da so bile široke, zlasti kmečke množice zaradi svoje religioznosti pod močnim vplivom svojih klerikalnih voditeljev in reakcionarne duhovščine ki to religioznost izkorišča v svoje protiljudske namene za ohranitev svojih razrednih izkoriščivalskih pozicij na vasi).

<sup>369</sup> Ibid., 120.

Slovene national awakening.<sup>370</sup> In their postwar desperation to monopolize nationalist discourses in the Republic, regime authorities saw the Church as their most serious competitor. After the split with Stalin, regime authorities increased the tempo of anti-Church measures, fearing any domestic threat to their monopoly of political power.

A whole range of measures against “clericalism” began after 1948. Local officials increased their efforts to enforce anti-clericalism against party members by removing those people who were secretly affiliating with the Church in any way, such as having their children baptized or having Church weddings.<sup>371</sup> Up until 1948, state authorities had seized land and resources from those clergy with proven collaboration records.<sup>372</sup> In 1946 the Archbishop of Slovenia, Gregorij Rožman, was tried and convicted in absentia (he lived the rest of his life in Cleveland) of crimes against the Slovene people, receiving the death sentence.<sup>373</sup> But, the actual practice of non-party-member believers was seldom interfered with.

After the split with Stalin concluded in Yugoslavia’s favor, however, the fledgling Slovene regime felt secure enough in their own power to combat the power and influence of the Church as a whole. In 1952 Yugoslavia severed diplomatic relations with the Vatican, and attempted to force the Slovene and Croatian clergy into a national church organization. Though few yielded to Yugoslav authorities, this investiture crisis would

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<sup>370</sup> Štih, Simoniti, Vodopivec, *Slovenska Zgodovina: družba, politika, kultura* (Slovene history, society, politics, and culture), 265-266.

<sup>371</sup> AS 1589 III AC 900, 3. (Control Commission Summary of Party Members Removed in past 2 years)

<sup>372</sup> Cepič, “Agrarna reforma in politika.” (Politics and the agrarian reform), 83.

<sup>373</sup> Štih, Simoniti, Vodopivec, *Slovenska Zgodovina: družba, politika, kultura* (Slovene history, society, politics, and culture), 431.

last until 1958, with no formal diplomatic recognition again for the Vatican until 1966.<sup>374</sup> In 1953 1,015 Slovene party members were purged for having clandestine affiliations with the Catholic Church.<sup>375</sup> The Church lost almost all of its landholdings in this period. Its ability to conduct education in schools was curtailed. Church hospitals were nationalized.<sup>376</sup> Agitprop made efforts to take over the publications of the Church's press, *Mohorjeva Družba*, but eventually decided simply to continue closely monitoring what it made clear to define as a private press.<sup>377</sup>

Speaking to Slovenia's Agitprop commission in 1952, Vlado Majhen described the struggle against the Church as one between systems of values, where socialist values avoided what he saw as the overbearing dogmas of the Catholicism.

The signs of this are visible in the field where people have begun to speak of our values as if they are a socialist catechism. In the field we're seeing opposition to our systems of morality, sometimes even fooling Communists. Our morality is deeply disconcerting to the clerical reactionaries, who would prefer that we had no values at all. But our common man wants such systems. Thus we must discuss our moral values with the people. And if we're aware of the danger ahead of time, we can make sure that our values don't turn into some sort of catechism of socialist society.<sup>378</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> Režek, *Med Resničnostjo in iluzijo: Slovenska in Jugoslovanska politika v desetletju po sporu z Informbirojem* (Between truth and illusion: Slovene and Yugoslavian politics in the decade following the dispute with the Cominform), 121-122.

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>376</sup> Štih, Simoniti, Vodopivec, *Slovenska Zgodovina: družba, politika, kultura* (Slovene history, society, politics, and culture), 431.

<sup>377</sup> AS 1589 III AC 741 25. XI. 1952, 1

<sup>378</sup> AS 1589 III, AC 787, 16.X.1952, 8 (Znaki o tem se že kažejo na terenu, kjer so se začeli govoriti o naši moralki, češ da je to socialistični katekizem. Na terenu se kaže odpor proti moralki in temu nasedajo celo komunisti. Silno pa se je zaradi tega vzemirila klerikalna reakcija, ki bi bila zadovoljna če mi ne bi imeli nobenih nacej. Naš preprost clovek pa hoče to imeti. Zato je važno, da ljudem govorimo o naših moralnih vrednostih. Če nevarnost naprej vidimo se lahko že danes borimo proti njej/ da moralka ne postane katekizem socialistične družbe).

What was in effect a battle against religion became an effort to win the support of the Slovene masses. In January 1951 the Central Committee of the KPS showed the importance of the anti-clerical campaign by advising the Lower Party School to discontinue “boring” lectures on topics like “dialectical materialism” and replace them with ones the masses could understand, like the “religion of the Vatican,” and the “relationship of the party to faith and the clergy.”<sup>379</sup>

In a June 1952 Agitprop meeting, Boris Zihlerl further argued that the anti-clerical battle needed to be tied into the everyday concerns of readers, especially farmers. He felt that better historicization of the Church’s exploitations of peasants, from the period of the Gubec revolts in the 1570’s to the present would be helpful.<sup>380</sup> The Church needed to become an antagonist in a narrative where the Party was the fulfillment of centuries of progressive movements in Slovene lands, culminating with the Partisan victory in World War II. He expanded on his ideas in October of 1952, referencing primary education, Vlado Majhen would argue that “Our primary attack needs to be directed against clericalism. Part of the reason for this is that clericalism is the most serious force the enemy has in our public life. This is a factor not only in schools, but the entire class conflict in Slovenia is directed against clericalism.”<sup>381</sup> Majhen would later write Slovenia’s law on primary education.<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>379</sup> AS 1589 III, AC 744, 30. I. 1951, 1.

<sup>380</sup> AS 1589 III, AC 784, 24. VI. 1952, 2-5.

<sup>381</sup> AS 1589 III, AC 787. 16.X.1952, 2 (Naš glavni udarec pa mora biti usmerjen proti klerikalnim vplivom. Tu gre tudi za to, da je klerikalizem danes nam najmočnejša sovražna sila v našem javnem življenju. To se ne čuti samo v šoli ampak je ves rezredni [sic] boj v Sloveniji usmerjen proti klerikalizmu).

As early as 1952, however, Agitprop criticized the Slovene press for crossing the line between anti-clerical and anti-religious writing.<sup>383</sup> Though outright persecution of church members and clergy would all but disappear by the 1960's,<sup>384</sup> antagonism between state, party, and church would remain a feature of Slovene life until the end of the Socialist Republic. Tensions between many religiously and non-religiously inclined people continue to be a feature of the present-day Slovene civic sphere. In general those who accept a Domobranci-centered narrative of the Second World War identify as staunch Catholics, while those who accept a Partisan-centered narrative of the war identify themselves along the entire spectrum of Slovene religious (dis)belief. Since the late 1980's, *Mohorjeva Družba* has been a center of anti-Partisan publishing activity.

### **A Yugoslav Thaw**

By the end of 1949 it was clear to policy makers that oppressive Stalinization measures were undermining the regime's political power over its people, without improving the economy. In 1950 Milovan Djilas argued that the creative will of the people was being stifled by the monopoly of power held by the party. This statement signaled a period of greater openness and less press oversight.<sup>385</sup> Though the regime did not abandon its sticks, carrots began to appear as well. As early as July 1949, Edvard Kardelj began publicly speaking about the idea of worker self-management. "Without

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<sup>382</sup> Majhen, *Zakon o osnovni šoli: zbirka predpisov* (The law on elementary education: collection of proposals).

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.*, 97-98.

<sup>384</sup> The charter of the State Security Service from 1969, however, makes clear that the Catholic Church remained (in the Service's opinion) the single greatest threat to Slovene security (AS 1589, Republiški sekretariat za notranje zadeve, Državna Varnost, 30.9.1969, 4-6).

<sup>385</sup> Lilly, *Power and Persuasion: Ideology and Rhetoric in Communist Yugoslavia, 1944-1953*, 200-201.

the self-management of the people, our democracy would no longer be democratic, and would become bureaucratic, damaging to centralism,” he emphasized, as a means to contrast Social democracy in Yugoslavia to the People’s Democracies of the Eastern bloc.<sup>386</sup> For Kardelj, worker self-management was a tool to achieve real Communism by allowing workers to take control of the means of production, reducing the role of the party to that of a vanguard advisor. Worker self-management would remain one of the pillars of Yugoslav political identity until the violent dismemberment of the federation in 1991. Partially as a result of the new thinking inherent to self-management, after 1949 a series of social, media, and political policies would broaden the means for transmitting war memory, along with the uses of such memory for a national community in flux. By the 1960’s self-management would inform a memory of the war that emphasized Slovene initiative over central party leadership in the fight against Nazi-Fascism.

While economic problems forced much of Yugoslav leaders’ ideological flexibility in this period, many leaders worried about the lack of zeal among the people for the otherwise correct revolutionary path of the Communist party. Djilas reasoned that the failure of the five- year plan might be due to insufficient propaganda: if only Yugoslavs could understand the plan, they would fulfill it. In the Slovene context, Agitprop needed to “ensure that agitation and propaganda efforts stop being divorced from broader economic concerns, or the struggles of the working class; which similarly means that foreign affairs ... questions concerning the completion of the five-year plan

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<sup>386</sup> Kardelj, “Zakaj nam je potrebna kontrola in kakšna naj bo: Ekspoze o predlogu zakona o šplošni državni kontroli dne 13. marca 1946” (Why we need control and what it should look like: An exposé on the draft law on General Social Control from March 13, 1946), 449. (...in brez katere demokratični centralizem ne bi bil več demokratičen temveč bi postal birokratičen, škodljiv centralizmu – je načelo samoupravnosti ljudstva.)

and so forth, need to be presented more concretely among the working masses, they need to become general knowledge, rather than the affairs of a small clique of agitators or specialists in those fields.”<sup>387</sup> The potential of the people, if properly cultivated, it seemed, could overcome whatever obstacles Yugoslavs still faced.

Unshackling the strength of the people involved a brief, tenuous, and completely uncoordinated thaw in media controls over the Slovene press. No single event or law marked the beginning of this thaw. But the restructuring of the presses was one of the most important signals of loosening social controls that affected war memory. Since 1944 Agitprop had emphasized the need to train journalists.<sup>388</sup> By 1950 many young journalists, who seemed sympathetic to the goals of the state, were working in Slovenia. These workers had been trained in Slovene universities since the end of the war, and, it seemed, understood their Socialist duty to inform and enlighten the masses. Party leaders believed so sincerely in the popular appeal of their Socialist utopia that it seems they thought the means to such an end would be self-evident to the population. Denison Rusinow describes the bureaucracies of Yugoslavia in this period as “staffed by revolutionaries, many of whom had not yet had time to lose their idealism and revolutionary élan.”<sup>389</sup> Thus, in 1950 Yugoslav legislators took the unprecedented step for a State Socialist country of eliminating pre-publication censorship for youth and

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<sup>387</sup> AS 1589 III AC 775, Plani deli Agitprop uprave CK KPS (Plans and activities of the Agitprop commission of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovenia), 1 (...je v tem, da se na primer problemi agitacije in propagande postavljajo ločeno od širše gospodarske problematike, ločeno iz borbe delovnih množic, kar pomeni da se zunajne politična vprašanja ... vprašanje borbe za doseg petletnega plana itd. ne postavijo dovolj konkretno med delovnimi množicami, ne postajajo splošno ljudsko znanje, temveč ostanejo znanje manjšega števila agitatorjev ali ljudi, ki so že na delu sličnega značaja).

<sup>388</sup> Šmicberger, “Partizanski novinarski tečaj” (The Partisan course in journalism), 115-118.

<sup>389</sup> Rusinow, *The Yugoslav Experiment: 1948-1974*, 44.

educational materials.<sup>390</sup> To be sure, like other Eastern bloc countries, in 1945 the federation had officially proclaimed protection for freedom of speech.<sup>391</sup> However, since February 1944, anything published in Slovene liberated territory first had to gain approval from the central Agitprop office, which by that time followed directives from the KPJ.

In the early 1950's, however, Tito's trusted confidant and Agitprop leader Milovan Djilas argued that further relaxations in press control were necessary to make materials in Yugoslavia more appealing to readers, as well as to differentiate the Yugoslav press from the Soviet press. In that same year, Djilas pushed a law that forced publishers to support themselves by their own revenues.<sup>392</sup> Thus in theory, publishers now needed to care as much about their readership as they worried about their party leaders. In Slovenia, these leaders trusted publishers to self-censor (with the knowledge that party members were part of the self-managing publishing collectives); and felt that centralized censorship was unnecessarily bogging down the process of providing people with the media they needed in order to fall into line with party directives. Strict anti-libel and slander laws seemed to ensure that state leaders could keep potentially subversive media in check. But to truly achieve socialism, Yugoslav leaders decided to make a wager on the society they hoped to transform.

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<sup>390</sup> Lilly, *Power and Persuasion: Ideology and Rhetoric in Communist Yugoslavia, 1944-1953*, 208.

<sup>391</sup> Paraščić, *Cenzura u Jugoslaviji od 1945. do 1990, Godine* (Censorship in Yugoslavia from 1945 to 1990), 2

<sup>392</sup> Robinson, *Tito's Maverick Media: The Politics of Mass Communications in Yugoslavia*, 28.

Agitprop's transformation from a producer of media to an organ that sought to "inspire" it illustrates the party's tenuous new attitude towards the press. In 1950, Vlado Kozak described how newer subcommittees within Agitprop, such as the one for foreign affairs, would function in a post-censorship Yugoslavia: "the subcommittee [of Agitprop] for foreign affairs is not an administrative or directive organ. Its purpose is to provide neither commentary nor direction on the most important political affairs. In short, its goal is not to conquer public opinion."<sup>393</sup> He then reassured his Agitprop-employed audience that he was not oblivious to the pitfalls of having so little control: "Because of our increasing democratization, discussions are emerging which we need to take control of."<sup>394</sup> This led him to describe how "the subcommittee will offer advice on every emerging foreign political problem, study the issues, organize an informative service, study the best possible means of response, then implement that response, in a manner that will allow for the successful answering of enemy voices."<sup>395</sup> Agitprop leaders hoped that loosening control over the press would provide diversity, not subversity. "Democratization" was a tactic to make people better performers in a tightly choreographed, party-directed play.

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<sup>393</sup> AS 1589 III, AC 742, 11.XII.1950, 1. (Tov. Kozjak poudarja da podkomisija za zunajne politična vprasanja ni administrivni ali direktivni organ ki mu bo naloga sproti in nenehno komentirati ter takoj reagirati na najvzajnejše zunajne politične dogodke, skratka obvladovati javno mnenje.)

<sup>394</sup> Ibid., 1. ( Zaradi vedno širše demokracije se pri nas vedno bolj razvijajo tudi diskusije ki jih bo treba obvladovati.)

<sup>395</sup> Ibid., 1. (Zato se bo podkomisija posvetovala o vsakem večjem novonastalnem zunanje političnem problem, študirala to problematiko, si organizirala učesno informativno službo, raziskovala najprimernejše oblike dela ter si ustvarila tak sistem dela, ki bo omogočil takajšnje [sic] in uspešno reagiranje na sovražne glasove.)

The poet and Christian Socialist member of the Liberation Front, Edvard Kocbek, tested the limits of the relaxed press controls, first in 1949 then again in 1951. His first collection of diary entries from 1942 to 1943 were published by Mladinska Knjiga in a volume titled *Comradeship (Tovarišija)* in 1949. During the period covered by his diary Kocbek had been attached to the Matija Gubec brigade, experiencing the massive Italian counteroffensive during spring, 1943, but not including the Partisan victory following the surrender of Italy in September. It was thus a collection of grim war stories, with no overarching moral triumph to make sense of it all. Kocbek's candid descriptions of the confusion and violence of battle drew scoffs from the masters of Slovenia's media, but it was not until 1951, when he published *Fear and Courage (Strah in Pogum)*, that Boris Zihlerl would accuse him of "writing not only poor literature but spitting on everything that is good in the world."<sup>396</sup> For Zihlerl, Kocbek was an illustration of anti-party elements that had either taken control of the presses or been allowed access to them by party members. Because of the potential for more people like Kocbek to publish, Zihlerl stressed that party members needed to meet more frequently with publishers, and encourage reliable authors to publish more.<sup>397</sup>

*Strah in Pogum* was a collection of four short stories featuring wartime accounts of fictional Partisans. It drew a lengthy rebuke from none other than Josip Vidmar, former president of the Liberation Front, former president of the Republic, and current president of the Slovene Literary Society. Vidmar summarized many reasons that party

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<sup>396</sup> AS 1589 III, AC 783 3.I.1952, 1. (je po formi literarno slaba, po vsebini pa pljunek na vse kar je pozitivnega v svetu.)

<sup>397</sup> Ibid., 1.

leaders found Kocbek's work to "spit on everything good in the world" in a 1952 review for *Novi Svet*. He first accused Kocbek of poorly imitating Sartre's existentialism by writing a book void of heroes.<sup>398</sup> Vidmar, as shown in previous chapters, felt that the National Liberation War represented a turning point where Slovenes had transformed from a nation without history to one of heroes.<sup>399</sup> By writing about characters who sought self actualization, Vidmar felt Kocbek had ignored the collective meaning of the war. He found Kocbek's description of war as morally ambiguous to be especially offensive. For Vidmar, the recent victory was nothing less than the triumph of good over evil, a teleological victory for Marxist progressive history — victories that he felt needed to become a cornerstone of Slovene consciousness.<sup>400</sup> That Kocbek would write a Partisan commander saying, "Man alone must define the boundaries of good and evil for himself. For when a man follows the current of history too closely, he becomes a slave of history," especially offended Vidmar's understanding of the meaning of the war.<sup>401</sup> Vidmar argued that "as Kocbek puts it, Nazis and Communists are just 'prisoners of history,' and such history can be 'overcome' not by those who are building a future and destroying the old world, but only by Christians who understand the secrets of history,

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<sup>398</sup> From a review of Edvard Kocbek's *Strah in Pogum*, written by Josip Vidmar, AS 1589 AC 783, Agitpropaska konferenca z novinarjami, 24 VI 1952 (Agitprop conference with reporters, June 24, 1952), 79.

<sup>399</sup> Vidmar, *Iz Partisanskih let* (From the Partisan years), 1.

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid.*, v.

<sup>401</sup> From a review of Edvard Kocbek's *Strah in Pogum (Fear and Courage)*, written by Josip Vidmar, AS 1589 AC 783, Agitpropaska konferenca z novinarjami, 24 VI 1952, (Agitprop conference with reporters, June 24, 1952), 81.

and engage in historical 'evil' with the understanding that even evil is a sign of something that enlivens and cleanses us."<sup>402</sup>

Vidmar further accused Kocbek of "total moral anarchy; worse, a negation of the very existence of morality."<sup>403</sup> The most damning part of Kocbek's supposed moral relativity was the assertion of his Partisan commander character that, "It was right for us to unite against evil, but it was wrong for us to be so eager in our fight against it."<sup>404</sup> Kocbek's suggestion that the new government's hands were not entirely free from the blood of the previous war caused him to endure a media, then judicial, trial for slander in 1952. The Slovene Central Committee dismissed him from his positions in the Republic, then removed him from public life by banning his books and forbidding him from publishing until 1964.<sup>405</sup> Kocbek's rhetorical defeat showed that the party would take care to prune excesses in the emerging collective memory. Most importantly, if Partisans were to appear in literature, they needed to serve the interests of the state.

The very occurrence of the Kocbek affair, however, deeply troubled regime officials and seemed representative of the power that press relaxations gave to reactionaries. During the post-Kocbek months, Central Committee and Agitprop officials, still uncertain in their censorship roles, searched for evidence of other writers crossing the boundaries of Socialist propriety, especially as related to the hagiography of the war. For example, in 1952 a literary journal, *Beseda*, came under scrutiny by

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<sup>402</sup> Ibid., 84

<sup>403</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>405</sup> Gabrič, "Censorship in Slovenia after World War II: From the Communist Index Liborum Prohibitorum to Abolition of the 'Verbal Offence,'" 227-228.

Agitprop for letters to the editor, signed by three anonymous readers, which seemed to advocate “White Guard” positions from the war.<sup>406</sup> Authorities began to more closely monitor the Catholic Church’s publishing house, *Mohorjeva Družba*, and the newly formed Ljubljana University student newspaper *Tribuna*. Neither had party members coordinating their work, thus the Central Committee reasoned that both might come under the control of clericals and reactionaries.<sup>407</sup>

Following the Kocbek affair, the brief thaw in publishing restrictions soon ended. By 1952 Slovene state and party leaders were negotiating their own place within a federation that was becoming increasingly centralized. Now that the crisis with Stalin had been resolved through obtaining aid from the West, party leaders felt the need to assert greater political control over Yugoslavia. At both the Republic and Federal levels, the party attempted to take control of war memory as a means to legitimize their own power. Whether the story of the National Liberation War represented a Slovene or Yugoslavian victory now became a key question. An uneasy memory compromise between the Republic and Federal levels would emerge largely through commemorations of the war. From a Slovene perspective, it was a Slovene victory in support of Yugoslavia. From the Belgrade perspective, it was a Yugoslav victory with equal participation by all nationalities, under the leadership of the central Party.

### **Self-Managing War Commemorations**

An early signal of the Yugoslav Party’s desire to assert greater control over the Slovene Republic’s version of history occurred in the early 1950s. During this period of

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<sup>406</sup> AS 1589 III 1945, 1952, 1954, Univerza v Ljubljani, 3.

<sup>407</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

searching, Slovene authorities organized two Republic-wide commemorations of World War II: the ten-year anniversary of the founding of the Liberation Front, in 1951; and the ten-year anniversary of the meeting at Kočevje, in 1953. The first event was terribly planned with little coordination among the committees charged with its organization. At the last minute, most of the events fell through. The presses remedied the blunder of failed central planning by focusing on the many successful local, even spontaneous commemorations of the OF's anniversary that occurred all over the country. These occasions were planned by local municipalities and veteran's organizations. They were in effect self-managed commemorations that showed the power of NOB mythology among the masses, while highlighting the incompetence of the central authorities. In response to this central planning disaster, the second commemoration was expertly planned and executed, an attempt to show the power of the Republic to represent and shape its own mythology.

Though the founding of the Liberation Front on April 27, 1941 was a uniquely Slovene affair, its ten-year commemoration was closely monitored by the Central Committee of the Yugoslavian Communist Party. The tension between the Yugoslav and Slovene parties made it difficult for the Slovene Committee to organize a commemoration. The Slovenes were commemorating an uprising that occurred almost two months before the the Yugoslav party officially declared war on the Axis powers on June 22, 1941. If Yugoslavia was to control war memory, then the troublesome fact of an independent Slovene uprising needed to be suppressed. But the day of the uprising was too powerful a Republic-level memory to easily ignore.

The Slovene Party dutifully waited for orders from Belgrade before forming a special committee to organize the commemorative activities, which occurred on June 15, 1950. The Committee consisted of members of Slovenia's mass organizations (The Liberation Front, the women's organization, the youth organization, and the trade unions) and other "of the more important social and cultural institutions" (such as the Society of Physical Education, Triglav Film Studios, and the Slovene National Theatre).<sup>408</sup> The actual committee's purpose, however, was to coordinate publicity activities, construction activities, and organizational events among the mass organizations of the Republic. While the organizations involved excitedly prepared for this important holiday, their coordinating committee proved less competent. As late as January 1951, some organizers still hoped to produce myriad, expensive, planning-intensive commemorations, including: a special commemorative collection of Partisan prose; a compilation of Partisan poetry from before, after, and during the war; a documentary film; a musical concert; a museum display with two years' worth of wartime editions of the newspaper *Slovenski Poročevalec*; a monument to hostages killed in Begunje; another monument to those killed in Sveti Urh<sup>409</sup>; a sporting competition for members of the Communist Youth and Physical Education societies; and finally a broad, six-month-long worker productivity competition among trade unions and organizations of the Communist Youth. This productivity competition was one of the few portions of the commemoration that was successful. It would end on April 27<sup>th</sup> with a series of medals being awarded to the most

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<sup>408</sup> AS 1115, AC 806, 25. I. 1951, 1, 6-7 (Važnijih društvenih i kulturnih institucija).

<sup>409</sup> Meaning a monument to Partisans killed in Sveti Urh in 1944. The same area was the site of hundreds of postwar executions of those accused of collaboration; no one intended to commemorate those deaths.

productive workers.<sup>410</sup> In January 1951, Slovenia's Agitprop commission conducted their own analysis of the preparations and concluded that there was no coordination among the mass organizations. Each was preparing its own itinerary. On January 24<sup>th</sup>, Comrade Dimec argued that all was not lost, provided the organizations could simply continue planning as usual and take measures to coordinate their programs before April.<sup>411</sup>

The Slovene Central Committee hesitated to take charge of the commemorations, worrying that their overactive involvement might offend the Yugoslav party. When April 27, 1951 arrived, there was no publication of Partisan prose or poetry ready, no documentary film, no musical concert, and no museum display of *Slovenski Poročevalec* from the war years. The worker competitions proved easier to coordinate, the thousands of workers involved only needed to continue working as usual. Organs of the trade unions had spent months urging worker productivity, at times publicizing worker mistakes<sup>412</sup> in the new spirit of socialist self-criticism.<sup>413</sup> On April 27<sup>th</sup>, winning unions were chosen in each of Slovenia's regions, and sent special medals to commemorate their accomplishments.

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<sup>410</sup> AS 1115, AC 806, 25. I. 1951, 1, 4-7.

<sup>411</sup> AS 1589 AC 751, 24. I. 1951, 1.

<sup>412</sup> An April 27, 1951 article in *Dolenjski List* says that the Front members of Dolenjske Toplice were successful in part because of listening to earlier criticisms against them by the trade union publication *Organicijski Vestnik*.

<sup>413</sup> A common feature of meetings in this time of searching was a discussion of the discrepancy between officials who promoted criticism as a means to find novel solutions and the need to maintain party discipline. At a 1949 Agitprop meeting, for example, Boris Zihelr described the solution to this conundrum as a dialectic where problems in contemporary literature could be overcome if there was more criticism, but this criticism needed to be of the sort that would "simultaneously nurture our literary personnel" (ki bi hkrati vzgajala naše literarne kadre). AS 1589 III AC 781, 1947/48, 2.



**Figure 4.2 Emblem of Third Party Congress, from: *Vestnik*, April 26, 1951, 1.**

While the Central Committee failed to organize celebrations, it proved far more adept at putting together a meeting of long-winded speeches. The party called the third congress of the OF into session in Ljubljana from April 26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> with a keynote speech running 101 pages (roughly 2 hours), by the party's chief ideologue, Edvard Kardelj. Kardelj had long advocated devolving authority to the Republics. In his speech he deeply historicized the OF as the hundreds-years-long culmination of Slovene's search for self-determination and self-respect. This legacy justified the current experiments with worker self-management (his brainchild). He then called the last 10 years of Slovene history the most important of them all as he rhetorically grounded the struggle to build Yugoslavia's unique form of socialism in the victory over Slovenia's most recent round of foreign oppressors.<sup>414</sup> Though the speeches of Kardelj, Kidrič, and Marinko were of course summarized in papers across Slovenia,<sup>415</sup> coverage of the 10-year anniversary featured far more local than Republic-level content.

What is surprising is that despite the lack of effective planning at either the Federal or Republic levels, newspapers across Slovenia, as an editor for *Dolenjski List* commented, "easily could have filled many pages with the reports received from front

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<sup>414</sup> Kardelj, "Ob ratifikacije balkanske pogodbe: govor v Ljudski skupščini FLRJ dne 23. marca 1953" (On the ratification of the Balkan Pact: Speech in the Peoples Assembly of the Federal Peoples Republic of Yugoslavia on March 23, 1953), 50-151.

<sup>415</sup> See for example front page of May 11, 1951 edition of *Ptujski Tednik*.

organizations around the country, though space unfortunately would not permit.”<sup>416</sup> These were not reports of the plans which the Committee failed to carry out, rather spontaneous, locally organized celebrations. While planning for the 10-year commemorations failed to effectively materialize at the top, they had a groundswell of popular support from below. Across Slovenia, local OF units, gymnasiums, trade unions, communal leaders, elementary schools, veterans’ organizations, and individual families carried out commemorations of the anniversary of the uprising. They made bonfires, attended solemn fireside meetings, visited battlefields, conducted plays, held educational workshops, constructed museum exhibits, gathered photographs. Out of respect for the federation, they organized baton relays (coinciding with the annual Tito baton relay, a one-month race across Yugoslavia ending on Tito’s May 25<sup>th</sup> birthday) to both the third congress of the OF and the top of Triglav mountain.<sup>417</sup> Those who climbed Triglav, Slovenia’s highest mountain and symbol of the Liberation Front, even built a bonfire on its peak.<sup>418</sup> These local commemorations were taken so seriously in the Ptuj region that a reporter even wrote an article criticizing the students at the Academy of the People’s Youth in Ptuj for carrying out a poorly rehearsed, poorly sung, and poorly performed program for the 10-year anniversary: “our people expect and demand much more from

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<sup>416</sup> *Dolenjski List*, May 5, 1951, 1. (Samo s naročil iz najrazličnejših krajev bi lahko napolnili več strani. Prostor nam žal ne dopušča . . .)

<sup>417</sup> *Dolenjski List*, May 5, 1951, 1; *Dolenjski List*, April 27, 1951, 1; *Dolenjski List*, April 20, 1951, 1; *Ptujski Tednik*, May 11, 1951, 1, 6; *Ptujski Tednik*, April 26, 1951, 1; *Savinjski Vestnik*, May 5, 1951, 1-2; *Savinjski Vestnik*, April 26, 1951, 1; *Vestnik*, April 26, 1951, 1; *Vestnik*, May 3, 1951, 1.

<sup>418</sup> *Večer*, April 26, 1951, 1.

those who will one day become our elites.”<sup>419</sup> No such articles criticized the poor planning of the KPS committee overseeing the Republic-wide commemorations. Interestingly, Maribor’s *Vestnik*, Ptuj’s *Tednik*, Novo Mesto’s *Dolenjski List*, and Celje’s *Savinjski Vestnik* all carried similar stories in late April/early May on increased grape production in Slovenia. Agitprop, it seems, had ignored a broadly shared victory culture in favor of viticulture.

The widespread assumption among state and party leaders that the commemorations had failed gave power to a contention among certain old fighters and Centrists in the KPS, like Miha Marinko and Lidija Šentjura, that the Liberation Front anniversary undermined support for the Federation. It seemed offensive that Slovenia’s commemoration of the uprising on April 27<sup>th</sup> occurred over two months before the Serbian uprising of July 4<sup>th</sup>.<sup>420</sup> In the summer of 1951, Josip Vidmar would sign a law commemorating June 22<sup>nd</sup>, the day of the invasion of the Soviet Union, as the day of the uprising; and between 1952 and 1968, Slovenia’s celebration of April 27<sup>th</sup> would be officially forgotten. Even the advocate of national rights Edvard Kardelj would support the changed date, as he worried far more about maintaining a strong Yugoslavia after 1952, when he lived and worked in Zagreb, than appealing to broad national sentiments in his home Republic of Slovenia.<sup>421</sup>

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<sup>419</sup> *Ptujski Tednik*, May 11, 1951, 6 (od naših bodočih najvišje kvalificiranih ljudi , pa naše ljudstvo pričakuje in zahteva mnogo več).

<sup>420</sup> *Delo*, April 27, 2012, <http://www.delo.si/novice/slovenija/27-april-skregani-med-seboj-in-z-zgodovino.html>.

<sup>421</sup> *Mladina*, May 6, 2005, <http://www.mladina.si/96788/kdo-bi-si-drznil-ukiniti-dan-of-kot-drzavni-praznik/>.

Between what party leaders felt to be the failed commemoration of the founding of the OF and Leage leaders' preparations for the 10-year anniversary of the Council of Ministers at Kočevje in 1953, Yugoslavian society experienced profound changes. In addition to the recentralizing tendencies which forced Slovenes to disband a holiday that undermined support for the federation, social and political controls throughout Yugoslavia became far more centrally directed. The period of openness was replaced by rigid, central party control. In short, while Stalin's death caused a brief thaw in social and political tension in many of the Soviet satellites; in already thawed Yugoslavia, his death gave the party the confidence it needed to refreeze. The next chapter will deal with the uncoordinated, protracted, and sporadic efforts to rein in Slovenia's civic sphere between 1953 and 1967. To conclude the present chapter, however, an examination of the Kočevje commemorations illustrates the transition between what Režek calls "the time of searching" and the period of "political stagnation."<sup>422</sup>

In 1953, with the split with Stalin completed, Tito published his first biography, "Tito Speaks" written by his trusted confidante, Vladimir Dedijer. In this book he outlined his vision of the war, closely describing his own experience in many of its battles, as well as his analysis of the various Republic's struggles. He described the Slovene front as a model to the rest of Yugoslavia, while emphasizing that the Slovenes would not have been successful without assistance and direction from the Yugoslav Communist Party.<sup>423</sup> Those organizing the commemorations of Kočevje in 1953 would

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<sup>422</sup> Režek, *Med Resničnostjo in iluzijo: Slovenska in Jugoslovanska politika v desetletju po sporu z Informbirojem* (Between truth and illusion: Slovene and Yugoslavian politics in the decade following the dispute with the Cominform), 125.

<sup>423</sup> Dedijer, *Tito Speaks: His Self Portrait and Struggle with Stalin*, 141, 150-151.

follow Tito's lead by highlighting both the heroism of the Slovenes, and their indebtedness to Yugoslavia. The Kočevje commemoration asserted that because Slovenes accepted Yugoslav governance during the war, they gained the central party leadership necessary to beat back the invaders, and join Slovenia to the brotherhood of Yugoslavian nations.

To produce such a Yugoslav-dominant narrative would require far greater control than Tito had during the war itself. As Agitprop had been disbanded in 1951, the Central Committee of the Slovene League of Communists now coordinated plans for the Kočevje commemorations with the Central Committee of the Yugoslav League of Communists. As part of the celebrations, the organizers planned to unveil a monument at Kočevje, publish a commemorative book with the names of all participants, hold a three-day conference at the site, with speeches by political leaders recorded in Slovenia's newspapers, and invite all politically reliable members of the initial conference to the festivities.<sup>424</sup> They would need perfect cooperation from media outlets to accomplish their plans. Unlike in 1951, this time they did in fact accomplish all of their plans. In 1953, however, the commemorations were conducted from above by the Central Committee without input from the mass organizations.

Though the subcommittee charged with organizing the commemorations did not begin meeting until May 1953, they were far more effective in their coordination efforts than those in charge of the 1951 celebrations. The subcommittee first sent letters to each of the regional People's Committees of Slovenia on May 4, 1953, asking elected

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<sup>424</sup> AS 111, 1177/1 4. Maj. 1953.

representatives to respond with lists of any NOB veterans who had participated in the conference at Kočevje. In the letter, the secretary noted that the original list of participants had been lost during the war, and many false claims to have been in attendance needed to be verified by competent Party authorities. They also asked that the political standing of each participant should be noted.<sup>425</sup> Most local People's Committees had no participants. The secretary from Trbovlje illustrates how little the planners knew about the original Kočevje participants. He responded to their request on May 21, 1953, stating that the only person from that region in attendance, Rudi Knez, had been executed by the Supreme Partisan Command at the end of 1944.<sup>426</sup> When the responses were received, the subcommittee then sent additional requests to ascertain the political reliability of those people. Most of the respondents included a one-paragraph summary of each of the participants. They described their current party standing, political reliability, activity, and any potential problems with family members or personal characteristics. Tone Kavčič from Krško, for example, was described as someone who “in essence isn't a bad person, but his wife and children are religiously inclined, and for all practical purposes have him under their control.”<sup>427</sup> Janez Božič, also from Krško, was described as “diligent and very politically active, but lacking in decisiveness.”<sup>428</sup> Political misfits were removed from the commemorative list, even if they had played key roles in the original conference, such as Edvard Kocbek. Only those known to tow the

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<sup>425</sup> AS 111, 285/1-53

<sup>426</sup> AS 111, 72/53.

<sup>427</sup> AS 111, 72/54 “Po svojem bistvu ni slab, vendar so žena in otroci versko nastrojeni in ga imajo delno pod svojim vplivom.”

<sup>428</sup> Ibid., “Je predan in politično zelo aktiven, manjka pa mu odločnosti.”

party line were invited to the ten-year anniversary of the Kočevje conference. Tone and Janez, mentioned above, made the list. The subcommittee then sent press releases to all Slovene newspapers; the text was published in full across the Republic. By 1953, newspapers again served as mouthpieces for the regime.

Overall, the Kočevje ceremonies were carried out successfully. The events, though far more modest in their preparations as compared to the anniversary of the founding of the OF, were carried out relatively flawlessly. What had been a backwater region of new settlers prior to 1953 became one of the symbolic centers of the Slovene commemorative landscape. Of course, coordinating these commemorations was far easier than the 1951 ceremonies as the mass organizations had minimal input in the planning stages. In fact, it was also in 1953 that the OF was officially disbanded and replaced by the Slovene Union of Working Peoples (SZDL), an organization more congruent with other front organizations in Yugoslavia. Unlike the Liberation Front, the name of this new organization did not serve as a constant reminder that the Slovene Liberation Front predated the entire Yugoslav Partisan movement.

## **Conclusion**

By 1953, the Socialist republic of Slovenia had reasserted strict control over the presentation and commemoration of war memory, within the framework of a more centrally controlled Yugoslavia. Histories available during this period were directly produced by the propaganda arm of the Council and Subcommittee for history. This committee had replaced Agitprop, which was disbanded in 1952 in the spirit of promoting greater self-management of the Slovene civic sphere. In essence, however, self-managing presses and media outlets were required to have party members on their

boards of directors, party members who reported directly the Central Committee, without Agitprop as an intermediary.

Creating a standardized narrative of the war seemed, by 1953, like a relatively easy task. At Kočevje the party had shown that the Partisan victory represented the triumph of Slovene national aspirations under the leadership of a more powerful Yugoslav party. Though the previous 1951 commemoration of Slovenia's unique uprising had more popular participation, the potential for Slovene separatism caused the central government to suppress this memory. Kočevje would become perfect shorthand for Slovenes mobilizing in support of Yugoslavia. The next chapter will explore how even within the supposedly homogenous structures of the state and party, both in federal and Republic-level relations, enormous differences quickly emerged on how best to present and use the lessons of the war.

## Chapter 5: Collect[iviz]ing the Story: 1953-1967

*[An Institute could provide] greater control over the presently anarchical state of NOB memoirs (where dates and facts are often mixed up), thus making sure that published materials in the future can become sources of believable evidence for historical reality.*

Slovene Agitprop Meeting, summarized by Milan Brezovar on May 28, 1952<sup>429</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

While the previous chapter describes an emerging symbiosis between war memory and political legitimacy, this chapter examines the divergence of war memories as the historians, publishers and politicians tasked with their management negotiated the complexity of Slovenia's socio-political structures. In 1948 the Agitprop commission coordinated the work of the press and publishing houses to produce all war histories written in Slovene. As Agitprop diminished in strength, then eventually dissolved in 1952, the publishers themselves had an increased role to play in monitoring their own work. The Kocbek affair showed the Central Committee that publishers alone could not be trusted to engineer socialist souls; they needed guidance. Between 1953 and 1967, several institutions vied to control the production of war memory in Slovenia. To gain both readers and coveted state funding, historians began to emphasize differences in interpretation. Histories began to focus on the war experiences of youth and women. Some tried to make the lessons of the war more relevant to the politics of self-management, or inversely the importance of a centralized economy. Though the regime

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<sup>429</sup> AS 1589 III 30, AC 739, 28.5.1952, 1-2 ([Bi bila z institutom] čim popolnejša kontrola dosedanjega anarhičnega pisanja memoarov NOB, v katerih so se datumi in dejstva križali in da bi bilo publiciranje o teh stvareh v bodočnosti čim bolj verni dokaz zgodovinske resnice).

proved unable to police (or even define) the boundaries of a uniform mythology against this contest of historians, the vibrance of their historical conflicts brought out interpretive nuances that broadened the appeal of collective war memory among ordinary Slovenes.

In the 1950's Yugoslav leaders hoped to use the legacy of the war to unify a highly diverse group of people. At the anniversary of the Kočevje conference in October 1953, for example, party leader and prominent Yugoslav ideologue Edvard Kardelj gave an example of how to construct such an inclusive history. He began his speech by quoting the poet Ivan Cankar's prediction that the "Slovene people will write their own destiny,"<sup>430</sup> then continued to show the relationship of that destiny to both the recent war and the Yugoslav federation by saying: "The true Slovene people – the workers of Slovenia – joined with all other Yugoslav workers during the war to begin to build our own destiny."<sup>431</sup> He then clarified the term "workers" to include "workers, farmers, and other working people who convened with rifles and machine guns in hand to become representatives of the genuine, armed, and fighting Slovenian people."<sup>432</sup> The war mattered to state leaders primarily as a means to mobilize support for contemporary politics. Thus Kardelj continued, "We have continued what we started. For power to truly remain in the hands of the working people rather than becoming coopted by the bureaucracy, the working people must have the guarantor of self-managing, democratic

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<sup>430</sup> Kardelj, "Ob desetletnici Kočevskega zbora: iz govora na proslavi dne 4. Oktobra 1953 v Kočevju" (On the ten-year anniversary of the Kočevje conference: from a speech given on the commemoration at Kočevje on October 4, 1953), 52. (da si bo ... slovenski narod pisal sodbo sam.)

<sup>431</sup> Ibid., 52, (Resnični slovenski narod – to je slovensko delovno ljudstvo – si je – skupaj z vsemi drugimi jugoslovanskimi delovnimi ljudmi – dejansko prav v letih vojne samo pričelo graditi svojo usodo).

<sup>432</sup> Ibid., 53, (pa so sedeli in sklepali delavci, kmetje in drugi delovni ljudje s puškami in brzostrelkami v rokah, to se pravi resnični predstavniki oboroženega in borečega se pravega slovenskega naroda).

institutions.”<sup>433</sup> He then argued that self-management provided a compromise for workers who require “neither private capitalists nor an all-powerful state apparatus.” Lest any think there was no longer a need for the Party he clarified, “of course factories do not belong to the working collective, rather they are common social property.”<sup>434</sup> He concluded his speech by again speaking of the importance of both Slovene and Yugoslav institutions: “In sum, at the ten-year anniversary of both the Kočevje Conference and the Second AVNOJ meeting, every citizen of socialist Yugoslavia can see that the goals we made then and in the first years after the war are beginning to be fulfilled.”<sup>435</sup>

By virtue of his position as one of Tito’s most important deputies, second in importance only to Aleksandr Ranković, Kardelj’s interpretation of history mattered. From the beginning of the war until his death in 1978, he was Slovenia’s most powerful political leader. His version of history proves compelling, however, for its ability to create a narrative of unity out of very serious disputes in Yugoslav society and politics. Yugoslavia was unique among the state socialist countries for the level of discord among its leaders that was visible both to its own citizens and observers from abroad. From the beginning of socialist Yugoslavian politics, those wishing to strengthen central political and economic control (Centrists) fought against those who wished for greater control to

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<sup>433</sup> Ibid., 1960, 53, (Kar smo tedaj začeli, to smo kasneje nadaljevali. Da bi oblast resnično ostala v rokah delovnega ljudstva in da si je ne bi prilstila birokracija, mora delovno ljudstvo imeti resnična jamstva v samoupravnih demokratskih institucijah).

<sup>434</sup> Ibid., 1960, 53, (da za dobro upravljanje tovarn niso potrebni ne samo privatni kapitalisti, ampak tudi ne vsemogočen in centraliziran državni aparat. Seveda tovarne niso last delovnih kolektivov, marveč so skupna družbena lastnina).

<sup>435</sup> Ibid., 1960, 60, (Skratka, ob desetletnici Kočevskega zbora in II. Zasedanja AVNOJ lahko vsak državljan socialistične Jugoslavije vidi da so cilji, ki smo jih postavili takrat in pa v prvih letih po vojni, pričeli postajati resničnost).

reside at either the Republic of Commune level (Federalists). In his history, Kardelj emphasizes that self-managing democracy is a war legacy, but a legacy that would have no meaning without a strong central party. For Kardelj, the Kočevje conference mattered because it was a victory for both Yugoslavia and Slovenia; one could not exist without the other. Moreover, all segments of Slovene society were necessary for the war's successful outcome.

Kardelj was not a historian, however, and by the late 1950's, collective understanding of war memory emerged along a few axes of interpretation dealing with political ideology, government structure, economy, and age. Along these axes, loaded historical terms defined the frequently binary ingredients needed to construct a personal or corporate history of the war. Four binaries emerged in this period. The most contentious binary pitted Slovene-centric histories against those that favored the Yugoslavian Central Committee as the main heroes of the war. In close relation, Slovene-centered histories often favored regional economic control and self-management over a Belgrade-centered command economy, which was favored by those who also advocated the dominance of the Yugoslav party in the war victory. By the 1960's some among the cohort of Slovenes who had actually served in the Liberation Front began to see their own interests as opposed to interests of youth. Finally, women's histories began to appear as an ever-so-subtle crack in the idea of a homogenous Slovene national victory. Thus a small handful of women's historians contended with an otherwise patriarchal collective memory of World War II. Nevertheless, the easy reduction of historical narratives into binaries shows that the basic building blocks of a war memory were collectively understood. By the mid-1960's, few Slovenes publicly questioned the

legitimacy of their regime. The Slovene Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia was something to be lived with or exploited, not opposed.

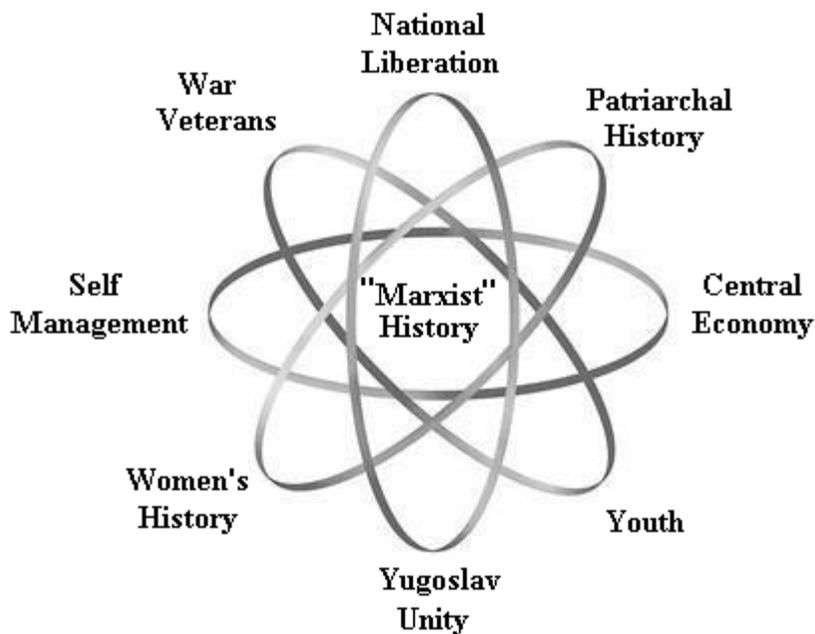


Figure 6.1 Imagining Marxist History

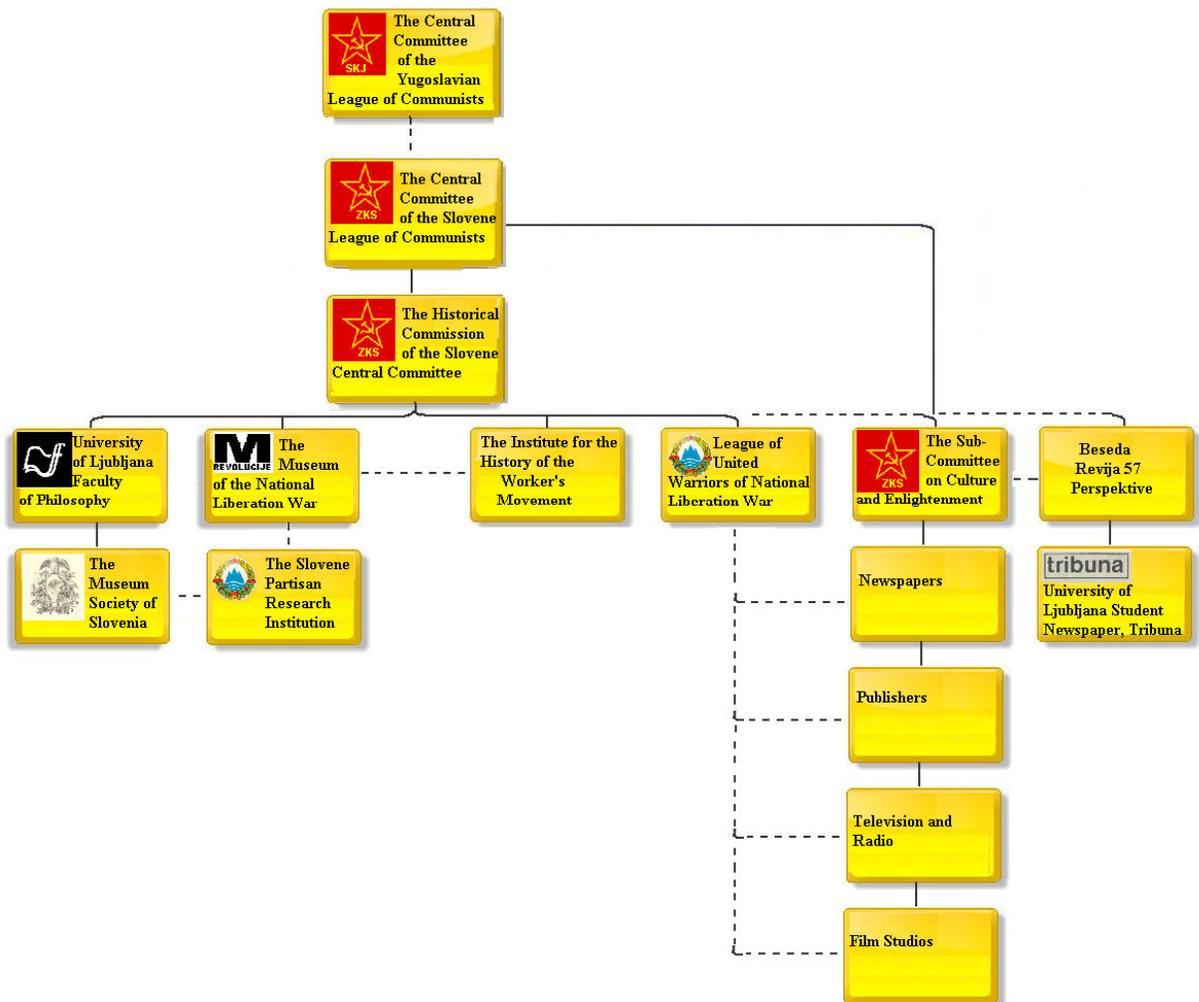
In Kardelj's imagining of Yugoslavia, these categories did not represent binaries but a series of dialectics from which a real, Marxist version of Slovenia's war history could emerge.

Historians who were unwilling to balance these binaries, as Kardelj often did, brandished the label of "anti-Marxist" to discredit their opponents. In addition to expertly balancing the symbiosis between state and federal institutions, Kardelj appealed to women and youth as well. As women's concerns began to appear in the presses of Yugoslavia, Kardelj tried to stress that any discrimination against women violated the spirit of national unity for which the Partisans fought.<sup>436</sup> As youth became concerned about the Partisan generation's privileges, Kardelj often argued that contemporary young people had unprecedented opportunities for socialist development, importantly, because of their inheritance earned from the wartime sacrifices of the Partisans.<sup>437</sup>

<sup>436</sup> Kardelj, "O družbenem položaju ženske pri nas," (On the social status of the woman among us), 193.

<sup>437</sup> See for example Edvard Kardelj's message to young voters ("Mladim volilcem") from October 27, 1953, his message to the Slovene League of Communists from October 18, 1955 ("Nove naloge naše

Between 1953 and 1967 the Central Committee thought it could sculpt a collective memory of the war according to Kardelj’s imagination. To do this it relied on a diverse assortment of professionals. Figure 6.2 shows the Central Committee’s ideal



**Figure 6.2 Governing history writing**

organizational structure as it would have existed in 1959. The Historical Commission reported directly to the Central Committee and attempted to direct the work of the Philosophy Faculty at Ljubljana University, the Museum of the National Liberation War,

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ekonomske politike in vloga komunistov”), or his message to the Belgrade city conference of the League of Communists from April 6, 1958, (“Pismo CK ZKJ in naloga komunistov”).

the Institute for the History of the Worker's Movement and the League of United Fighters of the National Liberation War. Each organization managed its own publications. By 1960 each was vying to become the sole mouthpiece of Slovenia's historical establishment.

The Central Committee quickly gave up on the Philosophy Faculty as a source for the kind of history the regime needed. Despite frequent purges and close monitoring of professors' personal lives, academics proved too difficult to mobilize in support of official memory. When University professors did deal with Liberation War history, they often did so through the infrastructure of either the Liberation War Museum or the Institute for the History of the Worker's Movement. The National Liberation War Museum proved to be an early favorite when it absorbed the University's Museum Society and took over the Partisan Research Council. In the early 1960's, however, the museum briefly came under the control of the Institute for the History of the Worker's Movement. By 1967 both institutions had become reliable enough that the Central Committee disbanded its historical commission. As the historians fought among themselves, the Veterans decided to take a greater role monitoring popular history, complaining frequently at Central Committee meetings when they felt someone had disrespected the war legacy. After 1967 they largely took over the role of post-publication censorship that had once been carried out by the historical commission.

The presses, which maintained both newspapers and regular literature publishing, gained increasing autonomy during the 1950's and 60's. All media were monitored post-publication by the sub-committee on Culture and Enlightenment, which worked sometimes in parallel and sometimes under the direction of the Historical Commission.

Radio was first controlled by the newspapers, but it became its own entity in 1959 with the advent of television when Radio-Televizija Slovenija was formed. Triglav Film Studios produced two World War II movies during this period. Slovenes also had access to translated movies from all studios in Yugoslavia and an increasing number of foreign films during the 1950's and 60's.

In addition, a small periodical press dealt directly with issues of the war, not under the direct control of the sub-commission. They included *Beseda*, *Revija 57*, its successor *Perspektive*, along with the student newspapers from Maribor and Ljubljana respectively, *Katedra* and *Tribuna*. These presses provided the only venue for authors to directly voice opposition to what they felt to be the regime's version of history. *Beseda*, *Revija 57*, and *Perspektive* are listed in the same box because each publication had many of the same editors and each was shut down for anti-Marxist biases.

For the Central Committee, a Marxist history by its very definition needed to be assimilated into a broader teleology of socialist progress. Commemorations of key points in Yugoslavia's war had already incorporated the standard of narrating World War II as a conflict with its origins in the distant feudal history of the South Slavic lands. No ceremony was complete without a discussion of the 16<sup>th</sup> century peasant uprisings in Croatia and Slovenia leading to an early national consciousness. This consciousness intensified as foreign capital replaced the feudal form of exploitation, leading to a nascent worker's movement that emerged after the South Slavs began ruling themselves in 1918. The worker's movement led to the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, becoming the vanguard of the worker's and resistance movements on the eve of the Second World War. The Party's ability to mobilize people in support of both national liberation and

revolution showed that the will of the people supported the Party.<sup>438</sup> The postwar period then, was one of continuing revolution. As soon as the party recognized the power of an emerging folklore of the war, it tried to direct this mythology toward its own goals of state building and social revolution.

### **The Line Tamers**

As early as 1948, state leaders thought that professional rigor might increase the power of NOB memory. But, in 1948, they had few places to turn for authoritative history production. In the preceding years, when the primary goal of the party was to assume power, officials had focused on destroying ideological competition, thus they had destroyed much of the vibrant wartime and prewar historical establishment. Most professional history in Slovene lands had previously been written by members of the Philosophy Faculty at the University of Ljubljana. Even though the Philosophy faculty had the only professionally trained cadres, for the new regime, they were the least trustworthy. Many professors within the Philosophy Faculty were fired at the end of the war for collaboration with Italian and German forces. In 1948 many more professors from the University's technical faculties were purged for their open support of the Cominform Resolution. As late as 1952 Boris Zihlerl continued to worry that "too many of [the University's] professors were foreign elements."<sup>439</sup> During much of the 1950's,

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<sup>438</sup> See for example Edvard Kardelj's speech to the Constitutional Assembly of the People's Republic of Slovenia from November 19, 1946, where he uses each of the plot elements outlined above (Kardelj, "Zakaj nam je potrebna kontrola in kakšna naj bo: Ekspoze o predlogu zakona o špložni državni kontroli dne 13. marca 1946" (Why we need control and what it should look like: An exposé on the draft law on General Social Control from March 13, 1946), 47-61). See also the *Programme of the League of Yugoslav Communists*, following the Seventh League Congress in 1958, which presents a similar history, starting with the exploitation of Yugoslav peasants by foreign capital (League of Yugoslav Communists, 93-112).

<sup>439</sup> AS 111, 115, 23/27, 10.2.1952, 2 (velik del predavateljskega kadra predstavlja nam tuje elemente...).

the highest levels of state authority simply side-stepped the University as a source for history. Whenever the question of University reliability emerged in the 1950's, the answer was always to ensure better training in Marxism, and the replacement of unreliable cadres with newer, more trustworthy party members.

In 1946 one society maintained by the University, the Museum Society of Slovenia, became coopted by state authorities through a National Council act that renamed it the Historical Society for Slovenia.<sup>440</sup> Founded in 1839, this was Slovenia's oldest historical organization, one that previously had the ambition to direct the Slovene people's historical endeavors. The National Council changed the Historical Society's director to a reliable Partisan veteran (first Milko Kos, then after 1948, a Partisan and well-known historian Fran Zwitter).<sup>441</sup> However, even with control over this institution, regime authorities still did not feel that they had the tools they needed to create proper war history. The focus of the newly coopted Society remained on the less-critical prewar history of Slovenia.

After 1948, the Central Committee began to focus on coordinating the work of museums. Many museums built off the efforts that Partisans had first made during the war to preserve evidence of their victory for future educational work. As early as January 1944, the Executive Committee of the Liberation Front had formed a Partisan Research Insitute, charging it with gathering information needed for the war effort, finding information to support Yugoslavia's border claims, and gathering documents from both

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<sup>440</sup> Melik, "Dvajset zborovanj slovenskih zgodovinarjev: predavanj na 20 zborovanje slovenskih zgodovinarjev, Ljubljana, 1-4. okt. 1980" (Twenty years of Slovene Historical Conferences: Talk given at the 20th anniversary conference of Slovene Historians, Ljubljana, 1-4. Oct. 1980), 326.

<sup>441</sup> Zveza Zgodovinskih Društev Slovenije, <http://www.ff.uni-lj.si/drustva/zzds/Seznami.htm>.

Partisan and enemy forces for postwar histories. When the war ended, this institute organized travelling exhibits of war artifacts across Slovenia. On February 10, 1948 the Research Institute became the Museum of National Liberation. Its mission included: “scientifically organizing war archives...producing scientific and popular publications about the NOB...to support research of the war [by] making materials from the war era available for researchers... [and] to produce a permanent public exhibit for the masses from selected materials.”<sup>442</sup> Elaborating on the role of the museum for *Ljudska Pravica* in June 1948, J. Kramar argued that, “Today, Slovenes are fighting a difficult economic battle with other Yugoslav peoples to fulfill the five-year plan. In this battle the duty of the Museum of National Liberation is to first show the progressive, revolutionary forces, who after the failure of the pre-April Yugoslavia, in a moment of destiny, led the peoples of Yugoslavia into and through the National Liberation War.”<sup>443</sup> By 1951 many NOB museums had emerged across Slovenia. Agitprop leaders wanted their Museum of National Liberation, housed in Ljubljana, to have authority over these smaller museums scattered across the Republic. They formed the National Museum of the History of the National Liberation War, giving it power to coordinate exhibits in all World War II-themed museums in the country. The Museum hired dozens of professional researchers. At the beginning of the 1950’s it seemed that the regime finally had control over history.

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<sup>442</sup> *Ljudska Pravica*, June 13, 1948, 4 (da uredi to gradivo na znanstvenen način...da izdaje znanstvene in poljudne publikacije o NOB...da pospešuje študije te dobi [s tem da] omogoči uporabo zbranega gradiva vsem...da iz izbranega gradiva izoblikuje za široke ljudske množice stalno rastavo).

<sup>443</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 (Danes ko slovenski narod skupaj z ostalimi Jugoslovanskimi narodami bije težko gospodoarsko bitko za izpolnitev petletnega plana, je odgovorna naloga MNO, da prikaže progresivne, revolucionarne sile, ki so po zlomu predaprilske Jugoslavije – v najusodnejšem času – povedle jugoslovanske narode v NOB, ter da prikaže veličino NOB).

Yet as the past became more politically, economically, and socially charged, many who the regime trusted to control history attempted to elevate themselves above the debates of their day by adopting supposedly detached, objective, and empirical stances towards their country's recent past.<sup>444</sup> Even trusted veterans of the Partisan war effort seemed unable to produce proper histories. Generous funding made cooperation with the regime a lucrative prospect by the late 1950's. Yet these same historians regularly disappointed those who provided their sustenance by searching for a historical reality void of a presentist gaze.

Historicizing Slovenia's war followed the contemporary fascination with empiricism and quantification that dominated so much of the world's social science in this period. In essence, the unimaginative but seemingly methodologically sound history writing of these years negated much of the social impact historians otherwise might have had. Lev Modič lamented this change in history writing. He argued before the historical commission in 1965 that "history as a science is closed to a small circle of professionals. Between the wars, historical articles played a rather significant social role and we should

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<sup>444</sup> While dozens of NOB-themed monographs (in addition to thousands of articles in the mass media and periodical presses) had appeared during the two decades since the end of the war, few were written by professional historians. Major literary figures like Josip Vidmar were active writers in the postwar period, as were trusted party leaders like Boris Kidrič (until his early death in 1953) and Edvard Kardelj. Some professional historians, such as Fran Saje, who published a lengthy, two-part study of Collaborators (*Belogardizem*) caused little worry to regime authorities. Many other historians, however, simply sought non-ideological means to be true to their professions. For example, non-narrative almanacs like *Springtime 1942: the Correspondences of Edvard Kardelj and Boris Kidrič (Jesen 1942: korespondenca Edvarda Kardelja in Borisa Kidriča)*; *Documents of the Peoples' Revolution in Slovenia, (Dokumenti Ljudske Revolucije v Sloveniji)* have proven useful to researchers like the present author, but received little public acclaim, as Slavko Rupel lamented in a 1965 review for *Borec* (review reprinted in archives of the Historical Commission, AS 1589, 389/0492, 1).

ensure that this can happen again in the future.”<sup>445</sup> In Modič’s opinion, professionals wrote only for each other’s edification, with the ambition to be authorities on what really happened. Even after budget constraints in the early 1960’s forced historians to look for other sources of funding, few were willing to write “commercial” literature.<sup>446</sup>

For Lev Modič, such detached historical writing was akin to “anti-historicism...an attempt to separate politics from history...with the idea that politics changes but knowledge remains the same.”<sup>447</sup> He then called for the Central Committee’s Historical Commission to have greater control over history with the understanding that “a knowledge of history becomes more urgent and necessary if we expect people to consciously and individually lead social affairs and movements.”<sup>448</sup> Conservatives, both in Ljubljana and Belgrade, often criticized the historical profession in Slovenia for undermining the proper lessons of the war by focusing on modes of analysis that failed to recognize the primacy of Marxism-Leninism.<sup>449</sup> By default, then,

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<sup>445</sup> AS 1589, 388/0307, 9.9.1965, 13 (Zgodovina kot znanost je zaprta v ozek krog izobražencev. Med obema vojnama so odigrali zgodovinski članki dokaj pomembno družbeno vlogo in to bo treba zagotoviti tudi v prihodnji).

<sup>446</sup> In his history of the Institute for the History of the Worker’s Movement, written on its ten-year anniversary in 1969, Bogdan Osolnik argues that the lack of funds for the institute harmed its scientific work by forcing its members to condense their diversity of research interests into narrow topics that would be popular with the commercial market. Osolnik was director of the institute at the time of his writing (Osolnik, “10 let dela Inštituta za zgodovino delavskega gibanja in njegovo mesto v slovenskem zgodovinopisju” (The work of the Institute for the history of the workers movement over the past 10 years and the place of the institute in Slovene historiography), 164, 171).

<sup>447</sup> AS 1589, 388/307, 9.9.1965, 2-3 (tkzv. antihistoricizma...da se znanost loci od politike...da se politika spreminja, znanost pa postaja enaka).

<sup>448</sup> Ibid., 3 (pomen poznavanje zgodovine je toliko večji in nujnejši če naj človek sam zavestno void družbena doganjanja in gibanja).

<sup>449</sup> At a meeting of the Historical Commission in 1965, for example, Marijan Britovšek argued that the Committee needed to increase its oversight of the Institute of the Worker’s Movement to make sure the “consciousness” of its cadres would become “deeply rooted in a Marxist conceptualization of

many of these attempts at objectivity were interpreted as separatist, capitalist, and a reflection of generational tension by authorities (categories with binary opposites in Figure 5.1, rather than inclusive of a dialectic whole).

In reality, any publishing historian made ablutions to Marxism in this period. Yet even Marxist histories with the goal of showing unity could easily be faulted for implying lessons that seemed to contradict prominent talking points of Yugoslavia's clearly separated camps. Thus "anti-Marxist historians" were most often those who contradicted the political/economic/social positions of their detractors. Historians dealing with Slovenia's Liberation Front, for example, could easily be seen as either too separatist or as overemphasizing the role of the Yugoslavian Community Party.<sup>450</sup> In writing about the prewar labor movement, discussions of the role of other parties could be seen as denying the vanguard role of the Communist Party or ignoring the over-bureaucratization of a Stalinist organization.<sup>451</sup> Regarding the decision of where to put the focus for revolutionary change, historians could be faulted with not recognizing the acceleration in social relations effected by the war generation, or refusing to understand that the ongoing revolution was being carried on by a newer generation.<sup>452</sup>

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historiography and history writing" (da se bo marksistična koncepcija raziskovanja in pisanja zgodovine kar najgloblje zakorenila v zavesti raziskovalcev), (AS 1589, 347/0052, 4.1.1965, 1-2).

<sup>450</sup> See the discussion that follows on the disputes surrounding entries on Slovenia's National Liberation War in the Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia.

<sup>451</sup> In 1965, Lev Modič argued at a Historical Commission meeting that revisionism was strong in writing Slovenia's recent history because too few Marxist historians were involved in the profession. She argued that non-Marxists were revising history to overinflate the relevance of non-Communists in the prewar labor movement and labeling the Yugoslavian party as "Stalinist," (AS 1589, 389/0098, 15.5.1968, 1-2).

<sup>452</sup> Members of the Historical Commission prepared a report on October 23, 1965 titled *The Problematique of Contemporary History Education: Failing Capitalism, Growing Socialist Power* (Problematika pouka novejsje zgodovine: razpadajoči kapitalizem rast socialističnih sil), in which its authors argued that the

For Slovenia's leadership, history's contemporary relevance had to do with what they could gain from its use. Yet for many less-than-Marxist historians, the very fact that they drew no explicit morals showed the integrity of their work. In her review of Čedomir Đurđević's *History of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia*, which she gave to the Historical Commission in 1965, Stana Gerk, then an archival worker, argued that the author falsely claimed revolutionary consciousness among coal miners in Trbovlje before the war. She faulted his desire to be ideologically pure over his desire to properly report facts.<sup>453</sup> For Gerk, along with so many others, avoiding dogma made history more truthful. At the same meeting, however, Milan Brezovar praised Đurđević's work for being "positivist, empirical, and factually oriented, while avoiding the annoyance of scientific analyses and conclusions."<sup>454</sup> Both Gerk and Brezovar were professionals within Slovenia's historical establishment, and both emphasized the need for "objective," therefore "factual," histories, while arriving at different conclusions about the same author.

The head of the Central Committee's Historical Commission, Vlado Krivec, felt the truth would lie somewhere between even the binary of Marxist/Bourgeois history. At a meeting in 1960 he described the problems that such interpretive binaries caused for understanding the "real" history of Slovenia's prewar labor unrest and the nature of the Liberation Front. Krivec decried interpretations coalescing around "the two extremes –

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generation of veterans was still carrying out the revolution, but that students needed an education that emphasized their involvement in continuing the revolution, as well, (AS 1589, 389/0038, 23.10.1965, 1-2).

<sup>453</sup> AS 1589, 389/0128, 1965, 1-2.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid., 7 (pozitivistična, empirično faktološka usmerjenost, brez večjih teženj za znanstvenih analizah in priključek).

the one being bureaucratic, which only sees the party.” Then he continued with more delicacy to describe the other extreme saying, “on the other hand, among a healthy percentage of people we’re noticing that they understand things as if our Front was a front in the Western sense of the word, not recognizing that the OF was a completely different manifestation of the masses and power.”<sup>455</sup> History needed to show the war as a collective victory without undermining the lead role of the party. Echoing an oft repeated faith in the historian’s profession, he continued, “Simply for the sake of defining the mission [of the Institute for the Study of the Worker’s Movement], it would be proper to clarify these questions, for only then can we achieve results. Moreover, a devoted researcher, if he/she will analyze facts, will be able to achieve such results.”<sup>456</sup>

Objectivity, it seemed to Krivec, would allow for a balance between an overly political history and a seditious one.

In the rest of Europe, the trend until the 1960’s was for state-funded histories in Axis-allied countries to ignore recent history, while many in countries that had sided with the victorious allies created a hagiography of that same period.<sup>457</sup> Slovene leaders felt

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<sup>455</sup> AS 1589, 278, 13.1.1960, 9 (Tu sta dve skranjnosti – ena je birokratska, ki samo vidi Partijo, na drugi strani pa pri gotovem procentu ljudi opazimo da pojmujejo stvari tako, kot da je bila pri nas Fronta v zapadnem smislu, ne pa, da je imela OF pri nas čisto drugo izraz širine in moči).

<sup>456</sup> AS 1589, 278, 13.1.1960, 9 (Za samo orientacijo, če bi te stvari razčistili, ker edino na ta način lahko pridemo do rezultatov. Sicer pa bo resen znanstvenik, če bo analiziral fakta, moral priti do tega). Compare to Thucydides description of his historical methodology in *the History of the Peloponnesian War*: “My conclusions have cost me some labour from the want of coincidence between accounts of the same occurrences by different eye-witnesses, arising sometimes from imperfect memory, sometimes from undue partiality for one side or the other. The absence of romance in my history will, I fear, detract somewhat from its interest; but if it be judged useful by those inquirers who desire an exact knowledge of the past as an aid to the interpretation of the future, which in the course of human things must resemble if it does not reflect it, I shall be content. In fine, I have written my work, not as an essay which is to win the applause of the moment, but as a possession for all time,” (Crowley, *The Peloponnesian War*, 10).

<sup>457</sup> For a comparative study of postwar memory politics, see Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner, and Claudio Fugó’s volume *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*.

themselves to be in the latter category, and insisted that their historians follow suit. Yet, even though the vast majority of funds for historical research were directed towards the history of the war, Slovene politicians frequently had to circumvent their own historical establishment to commemorate their history in a manner that was acceptable to the Central Committee. Something as important as the Assembly's commemoration of the Kočevje conference in 1963, for example, was completely organized by the Central Committee, with no input from the Republic's institutions for history.<sup>458</sup>

The Central Committee, through the instrument of its Historical Commission, attempted to manage the production of recent history. The Commission was staffed by loyal league members, not university-trained historians. The Commission was first organized as a sub-committee of the Central Committee in 1952 as part of the effort to rein in an unwieldy press. In 1959 the Historical Commission was organized as a separate institution.<sup>459</sup> After its reorganization in 1959, the Commission had the goal to “ensure the collection, organization, protection, and publication of material on the history of the worker's movement and Communist Party of Slovenia.”<sup>460</sup> As steps towards

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<sup>458</sup> The sources to be used included official party accounts; those histories written by prominent party members, including Edvard Kardelj, Boris Kidrič, Miha Marinko, Maks Šnuderl; and press accounts of previous commemorations of the conference at Kočevje. Professional historians and their institutions are absent (AS 1589, Odbor za proslavo 20-obltnice zbora odposlancev slovenskega naroda v Kočevju – propagandna komisija, bilten št. 1, 6.9.1963, 5-8).

<sup>459</sup> The Historical Commission had an ambiguous relationship with another sub-committee of the Central Committee, one charged with “Culture and Enlightenment.” While the former worked to be in the vanguard of war history, the goal of the latter, to influence *all* media, frequently caused each to step on the others' toes. Yet all were subordinate to the Central Committee, which had organized several subcommittees with the goal of increasing its own control, not promoting divisive, bureaucratic, self-interest.

<sup>460</sup> From a summary of the work of the Historical Commission for 1959, published for those in attendance at a meeting of the Historical Commission held on January 13, 1960 (AS 1589,278, 1960, 13.1.1960, 1). (Zagotoviti zbiranje, urejanje, zaščito in publiciranje gradiva za zgodovino delavskega gibanja in KP Slovenije.)

achieving these goals, the commission attempted to set the research agenda for the history department at the University of Ljubljana and the Institute for the History of the Worker's Movement; these groups cooperated with similar institutions in other republics on such tasks as composing entries for the Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia, writing and editing contributions to a history of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, monitoring school curricula, setting up meetings with the presses and film industries of the Republic to monitor NOB-related materials, maintaining the archives of the Central Committee, and working to ensure that there would be enough qualified historians in the Republic to carry out all of its goals.<sup>461</sup> The Commission often directed the work of professional historians to accomplish its various missions. In doing so, it attempted to maintain a façade of unity, as required by party discipline, but the only real consensus among Slovenia's variously organized historians was that they deserved more pay for their work.<sup>462</sup> Within the historical Commission, there was of course agreement that they alone could coordinate and lead Slovenia's historians. Yet even members of the commission regularly argued among themselves, were in discord with their minders in Belgrade,<sup>463</sup>

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<sup>461</sup> Ibid. and AS 1589, 14/234-65/66, 1.

<sup>462</sup> AS 1589 AC 739, 28.5.1952, 2. For example, during a Central Committee meeting in 1952, Historical Committee members agreed that the development of any future institute would need to pay researchers enough to be able to focus exclusively on their work, which they contrasted to the present state of affairs where researchers made less than high school teachers and were overburdened with administrative duties.

<sup>463</sup> See the discussion later in this chapter on the tensions between Slovenia's Historical Commission and the Yugoslavian Commission on how to write entries for Slovenia's participation in the National Liberation War. A report titled "Some Problems of the Yugoslavian Encyclopedia," sent to the Central Committee by the Historical Commission in 1959, described Slovene historians as "possessing an extremely heterogenous character...giving the sense that they belong more in the period of the 19<sup>th</sup> century than in our social reality," (zelo heterogenega profila...dobimo občutek da spadajo bolj v obdobje XIX. stol. kot pa v našo družbeno stvarnost) (AS 111 217-484/489, 1959, 4).

had to deal with the “burden of too many unskilled cadres of the old political order,”<sup>464</sup> all the while wondering why a public that loved the war so much could love it so wrongly.<sup>465</sup>

Between 1952 and 1959 the Central Committee oversaw history writing directly, working on occasion with veterans groups like the Society for the Protection of NOB traditions. However, by 1959 the need for stricter control followed the trend towards increased censorship across the Republic’s civic sphere, causing the Commission to begin to hold its own meetings. The increase in press directives behind the scenes followed several years of public pronouncements on efforts to increase self-management in the presses, by such means as getting rid of a directive organ like Agitprop. In essence, however, the Central Committee took over the role of Agitprop, and had the ambition to control presses more directly than the unwieldy Office for Agitation and Propaganda had been able. At a conference with reporters held on April 6, 1954, Boris Zihelr revealed the party’s dialectic of censorship when he responded to a question on what press controls still might exist in a now decentralized “cultural life.” He explained that the Central Committee and Slovene League of Working Peoples had organized advisory committees within major publishing houses like Slovenski Knjižni Zavod and Mladinska Knjiga. These committees would follow the lead of the editors. Yet in other publishing

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<sup>464</sup> AS 111, 255, 87-91, 10.7.1959, 1. From a report by the Historical Commission to the High Court on “Some Problems within the Institute for the History of the Worker’s Movement,” from July 10, 1959. (Institut je ovirala pri njegovem delu zlasti...obremenjenost s precejšnim številom starejšega političnega kadra ki nima sposobnosti in nagnjenja do znanstvenega dela.)

<sup>465</sup> Ibid., 2-3. In describing problems with the Institute for the History of the Worker’s Movement, Marjan Britovsek noted that the important work of the Institute was impeded by the fact that its work did not elicit much public interest, thus the institute only had funds to hire less-qualified historians, while institutions like the Museum of the NOB, which interested the public, could hire far more qualified personnel.

houses that showed a proper Marxist interpretive line, like Cankarjeva Založba, he explained that no such advisory boards were deemed necessary.<sup>466</sup>

It was in the process of advising historians that the Central Committee recognized the need to formally organize its Historical Commission. In 1953 the brief experiment with social liberalization was over and most of the Republic's publishing industry seemed on the road to properly supporting the goals of state and party again. Between 1953 and 1958 press and judicial proceedings against those who seemed to cross the boundaries of sensible socialist behavior ensured that that subversive material remained out of war narratives. On a federal level, the press and judicial campaigns against Milovan Djilas sent a very clear signal that Slovene authorities needed to eliminate their own dissidents. Djilas, the erstwhile head of Agitprop and member of Tito's inner circle, had angered his colleagues by first advocating greater press freedoms then arguing for steps to speed up the withering away of state authority as a means to show confidence in the ideology of self-management.<sup>467</sup> As editor of the Communist Party Mouthpiece *Borba*, party leaders felt that Djilas had far too much power to express his heretical views. He used that excessive power to write a series of 19 articles on self-management during the winter from 1953 to 1954. In January of 1954, he was removed from the party and, over the next decade, was continuously maligned in the national presses, appeared before

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<sup>466</sup> AS 1589, 792, 6.4.1954, 5.

<sup>467</sup> Režek, *Med Resničnostjo in iluzijo: Slovenska in Jugoslovanska politika v desetletju po sporu z Informbirojem* (Between truth and illusion: Slovene and Yugoslavian politics in the decade following the dispute with the Cominform), 41.

numerous courts, and received several prison sentences for slander against party and state leaders.<sup>468</sup>

Slovenia's most vocal detractor from an emerging war mythology, Edvard Kocbek, had already been silenced in 1952. Over the next four years Slovene leaders would continue to target supposed discontents within the periodical presses. The most prominent victims of these purges were authors and editors associated with the literary journals *Beseda*, *Revija 57*, and *Perspektive*. *Beseda* ran from 1953 until 1957, when it was denied the right to further publish in part because the opinions of some of its contributors made them seem "whiteguardish."<sup>469</sup> Until then, however, *Beseda* editors navigated between the Central Committee's legal bullying and its professed desire to broaden the Republic's intellectual discourses. Though histories of the war rarely appeared on the pages of this journal, and when they did appear, they rarely questioned official truisms; the charge of sullyng the NOB legacy was nevertheless used as a justification to terminate the journal.

Editors within the Student Union of the University of Ljubljana organized *Revija 57* in 1957. The journal covered literature and culture, with a goal to liberalize the Communist system from within. It was shut down in 1958 for an article by Joze Pučnik, "Our Social Reality and our Illustions," that described contemporary Yugoslavia as a totalitarian and oppressive system. Pučnik would serve a seven-year prison sentence for

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<sup>468</sup> Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias: State Building and Legitimation, 1918-2005*, 190-195.

<sup>469</sup> AS 1589 III 1945, 1952, 1954, Univerza v Ljubljani, 3.

slander and eventually emigrate to Germany.<sup>470</sup> When former editors and contributors to *Revija 57* (Janko Kos, Dominik Smole, Veljko Rus, Primož Kozak, and eventually Jože Pučnik)<sup>471</sup> were allowed to organize a new journal, *Perspektive*, in 1960 (following the relaxed press law of 1960), they faced constant harassment and were finally forced to cease publishing in 1964 for a series of offenses, including sullyng the legacy of the NOB. Dominik Smole, in particular, had offended authorities with his interpretation of Sophocle's *Antigone*. For Smole, the war between the brothers Eteocles and Polynices served as a powerful metaphor for the fratricide so prevalent during Slovenia's NOB. For the small circle of theatre-goers who saw the play before it was banned, the fact that Polynices was refused burial by King Oedipus served as a blatant reference to the postwar killings of collaborators.<sup>472</sup> They too lacked any sort of formal recognition, let alone proper burial. The editors of *Perspektive* had hoped to broaden civic discourses within the Republic, an acceptable mission by the 1960's. The fate of *Perspektive*, however, showed that questioning the legacy of the NOB would remain off limits for two more decades.

The Central Committee certainly policed the boundaries of acceptable history, but as war history gained collective resonance in a state that had broad popular support, most writers willingly policed themselves. The archives of the Historical Commission contain far more information on its directives and proactive efforts to create a positive memory

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<sup>470</sup> Režek, *Med Resničnostjo in iluzijo: Slovenska in Jugoslovanska politika v desetletju po sporu z Informburojem* (Between truth and illusion: Slovene and Yugoslavian politics in the decade following the dispute with the Cominform), 76-78.

<sup>471</sup> *Delo*, April 7, 2010, <http://www.pogledi.si/kolumna/zakaj-ze>.

<sup>472</sup> *Mladina*, February 11, 2005, <http://www.mladina.si/103036/slovenski-auschwitz/>.

culture in Slovenia than discussions on how to deal with deviants. While the history of World War II was not the sole domain of the Commission, it was its primary area of emphasis.<sup>473</sup> Thus through the sub-committees on history and culture and enlightenment, party leaders worked to create press releases for official commemorations of the war. Commission members read every publication on the war, worked with education policy, and even reviewed radio programs and movies (after broadcast/screening). Their comments functioned both as a layer of post-publication censorship and as a signal to producers on where to direct future endeavors.

Members of the Commission monitored school curricula throughout the Republic, and regularly lamented that too few hours were devoted to the study of the NOB and cried even louder that the presentation of the NOB was bogged down by tedious facts, facts that caused students to ignore the real socialist values this legacy could embody. At a Central Committee meeting in October 1952, Juš Stane foreshadowed the role his Committee would eventually expect the Historical Commission to fulfill: “Our farmers still hang various images of Saints on the walls of their children’s rooms... Yet we have countless examples of martyrs for the people, sacrificial icons if you will – which we’re simply not using in enough of an educational manner.”<sup>474</sup> For Stane the war could not remain the domain of factual, empirical histories. It needed to become a sacrament in the service of a new state religion.

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<sup>473</sup> From the summary of the work of the Commission for 1959, (AS 1589 11/234-65/66, 1).

<sup>474</sup> AS 1589, 636, 16.10.1952, 23 (Naši kmetje imajo še vedno po svojih sobah razni svete podobe... Mi pa imamo nešteto mučnikov za ljudstvo, požrtvovalnih likov - ki pa jih ne izkoriščamo dovolj v vzgojne namene).

Education policy during the 1950's and 60's remained the purview of the Republics, though the curricula of each Republic was frequently reviewed and criticized by the Yugoslav Central Committee.<sup>475</sup> The majority of curricula within Slovenia was coordinated among various subcommittees within the People's Assembly, but Slovenia's Central Committee often inserted its will into these committees, generally through the tool of its Historical Commission. Leaders within the Commission hoped that war history would show students the process through which individuals overcame "localism" to fight for and create the first proudly independent Slovene nation. As an early manifestation of Centralist/Federalist tensions, leaders from Belgrade were regularly offended that Slovenia's entire historical profession seemed to downplay the "brotherhood of nations" which had allowed for both Slovenia's liberation and that of the entire federation.<sup>476</sup> At their most extreme, such tensions would lead to accusations of Slovene separatist sentiments.<sup>477</sup> The frequent repetitions of the need to better/differently emphasize war history, both from the Republic's and the Federation's Central Committees, indicate that those creating primary and secondary school curricula had the bureaucratic inertia necessary to thoroughly annoy League leaders.

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<sup>475</sup> In the mid-1960's the Central Committee of the Yugoslavian League of Communists, often through its Historical Commission, made many efforts to establish uniform requirements for education across the Republics. The tension between a standardized Federal Curriculum and Republican control of education was one of the many aspects of the Centrist/Federalist debates of the 1960's. A summary of a meeting of the Yugoslavian Historical Commission from 1965 indicates that its members were keenly aware of this tension, and agreed that the Federal Commission's role was to advise the organs of the Republics and monitor their activities to make sure they did not present their history in overly romantic or nationalistic fashions (AS 1589 388-0005, 26.2.1965, 4-5).

<sup>476</sup> A summary of historical issues by the Historical Commission of the Yugoslavian Central Committee in 1963 claimed that Slovenes remained too "sectarian" in their history (AS 1589 323-0328, 27.12.1963, 7-8).

<sup>477</sup> To be sure, in the 1960's two members of the Yugoslavian Historical Commission (Boris Zihelr and Vlado Krivec) were also members of the Slovene Historical Commission.

While in the realm of public education, Slovene bureaucrats had ample room to respectfully ignore accusations of separatism coming out of Belgrade, the disparity between Slovenia's historians and those from other Republics came to the fore in efforts that required cooperation. One very prominent need for cooperation emerged in the effort to include entries on the NOB for the Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia during the latter half of the 1950's. Starting in 1955 the Central Committee of the Yugoslavian League of Communists began editing an Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia. Slovene entries were to be submitted by the Central Committee, which first organized a special sub-committee to direct the work of the Encyclopedia, but by 1961 gave the responsibility to its Historical Commission.<sup>478</sup> The Commission attempted to organize the efforts of the State Archives, the National Museum of the NOB, and the Institute for the History of the Worker's Movement. A summary of the work of the Historical Commission in 1961 complained that "because of the overly heterogeneous ideological profile of those participating in the official Republic edition, the Commission has recommended that the Republic's editors pay closer attention to the make-up of its cadres in the official edition."<sup>479</sup> The Slovene historical establishment had thus far proven unable to reach agreement among its own members,<sup>480</sup> and certainly could not be expected to meld its own "heterogeneity" with

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<sup>478</sup> AS 1589 11/234-65/66, 1 and AS 1589 11/234-67/68, 1-2.

<sup>479</sup> AS 1589, 111, 2, 34-67/68, 2 (Zaradi zelo heterogenega ideološkega profila sodelavcev pri strokovni republiški redakciji je komisija nasvetovala da republiška redakcija posveti večjo pozornost kadrovskemu sestavu svoje strokovne redakcije).

<sup>480</sup> See for example letters from the Historical Archive of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia sent to the State Archives of Slovenia on June 21 and July 22, 1955, complaining that several outstanding entries from the Slovenes have not yet been received. AS 1115 14/142, 2953.

histories coming out of the rest of the federation, especially the centrist histories from Serbia.

Once archival workers began sending entries to Belgrade, however, tensions between Serbian and Slovene war memories made composing a common Yugoslav NOB mythology almost impossible. In 1955 the Slovene historian France Saje was tasked with mediating between his own diverse historical community and Belgrade. Saje had risen to the top of Slovenia's historical community in 1952 with his comprehensive work on Slovene Collaborators, *Belogardizem*; he exhaustively documented the rise of the Partisan's most serious foes, breaking the reluctance of the regime to talk about this uncomfortable history in a way that decisively showed the error of these collaborators' ways and correctness of the current path of Revolution. Saje became first director of the archives, then of the Historical Commission, and by 1959 he also headed the Institute for the Study of the Worker's Movement. To achieve such prominent postings within his own Republic that carried an enormous amount of prestige in the federation as a whole; Saje had achieved a unique understanding of how to navigate between Slovene and Serbian visions of the recent past.

In a lengthy letter to the editors of the Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia in November of 1955, Saje tried to explain why things were taking so long on the Slovene end. He admitted that Slovene authors were perhaps overemphasizing the importance of the war in their own Republic by wanting to include special articles on events like the war in the small village of Cerklje.<sup>481</sup> Saje recognized that the editors were looking for a grand Yugoslav narrative, not a particularistic Slovenian catalog of events. But he defended a

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<sup>481</sup> AS 1115 14/142, 7.XI.1955, 2.

unique Slovene version of the war by describing how a Serbian proposal to date the beginning of Slovene liberation as March 1945 offended the honor of Slovene fighters, who had been liberating their Republic since April 1941.<sup>482</sup> March 1945 was the date that Yugoslav brigades first crossed the border into Slovenia near the village of Brod. While these brigades, along with Bulgarian and Soviet intervention, were critical to rescuing a defeated Slovene Partisan movement, their Serbian historians failed to recognize the long history of Slovene self-governance in liberated territory.

Saje's letter failed to achieve historical consensus between Belgrade and Ljubljana. Again in 1956 and 1957 Serbian editors complained that the Slovenes were slow in sending their contributions. Then, in 1959 a series of letters between Ljubljana and Belgrade removed the gloves of brotherly relations. The posterboy of Serb-dominated Centralizing tendencies, Alexander Ranković, argued in a November 10<sup>th</sup> letter to the Slovene Central Committee that Slovenes needed to standardize their archival procedures with those of the other Republics, and suggested that problems relating to compiling an encyclopedia might be minimized in the future if the Slovenes would verify the political reliability of their archival staff.<sup>483</sup> On December 12, 1959 Slovenia's Historical Commission met, and capped the year of discord by openly voicing why Slovenes could not ignore their own liberation war history in favor of Serb-dominated centrism. At this meeting Vlado Krivec argued that:

in other Republics they see our Liberation Front as if led by opportunism, not recognizing that without its firm foundation every resistance and uprising would have failed on the very first day . . . Even in Slovenia we

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<sup>482</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>483</sup> AS 1589 111/217, 10.11.1959, 1-3.

haven't properly shown the importance of our Front, even less so in the Yugoslavian context, and this is the fault of our humility and poor publicity work.<sup>484</sup>

At the same meeting where Krivec voiced his displeasure with other Republics' failure to recognize the Slovene Liberation Front (OF), he complained that Slovenes still were not allowed to commemorate the founding of their OF on April 27, 1941, but "they've forced us to recognize not even July [sic, June] 22<sup>nd</sup> as the day of our uprising but perhaps even some later date." He was referring to the fact that the day commemorated throughout Yugoslavia as the beginning of armed resistance — July 4 — marked the Yugoslavian Central Committee's decision to fight, which itself followed the invasion of the USSR on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, and was more than two months after the start of Slovenia's resistance movement.<sup>485</sup>

Following the fiasco with the Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia, some Slovene Central Committee members felt that an academic institution dedicated solely to the history of the war could eliminate some of the "heterogeneity" in the Republic's NOB history. The Institute for the History of the Worker's Movement, founded in 1959, seemed to Slovenia's leaders like the perfect solution. In its very name, the institute suggested that the war was part of a greater socialist movement. Dušan Bravničar headed the new institution and attended the 1959 meeting where Vlado Krivec voiced such displeasure

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<sup>484</sup> AS 1589 111/217, 12.12.1959, 5-6 (V drugih republikah smatrajo našo OF kot oportunistično in jim ni jasno, da bi vsak odpor in vsaka vstaja pri nas propadla že prvi dan, če ne bi šli na solidno formirano zaledje . . . Mi tega niti v Sloveniji nismo dovolj jasno prikazali, še manj pa v jugoslovanskem merilu in to zaradi naše skromnosti in zaradi premajhnega publiističnega dela).

<sup>485</sup> In 1960 the Yugoslavian Historical Commission agreed to a compromise with the Slovene Commission; they would allow a separate article on the Slovene Liberation Front if the Slovenes could produce an article on Slovene contributions to the war that followed the template of the properly composed contribution from Bosnia. The Slovenes consented. See letter from Yugoslavian Central Committee Historical Commission to Slovene Central Committee Historical Commission from Oct 1, 1960 (AS 111, 254-27/39, 1.10.1960, 1).

with Serbian hegemony over history. At that meeting, Bravničar used Krivec's comments as a segue into the internal politics of the Slovene historical community, asking that he be allowed to comment on his proposals for unifying the historical community at the next meeting. Bravničar hoped that his institute could absorb the only other organization devoted to war history, the Museum of the National Liberation War. Krivec, who was head of the historical commission, ignored Bravničar's proposal and moved on to other topics.<sup>486</sup> Krivec did not need an institute leader who he felt to be his subordinate to take control over another institution that was already under his control. The next year Krivec would dissolve the commission which had been tasked with writing Encyclopedia entries, absorbing that task into his own historical commission. He would also convince the Central Committee to give his Commission a supervisory role over Bravničar's institute.<sup>487</sup>

Bravničar's subordination to Krivec would not last for long however, as budget cuts in the early 1960's favored the Institute for the History of the Worker's Movement over the Commission on History. On June 19, 1960 the Central Committee allowed the Institute to begin to absorb the archives of the Central Committee. This process was never completed and in 2014 Slovenia's archives are still divided between the building of the National Archives on Zvezdarska Street in Ljubljana and the building of the successor

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<sup>486</sup> From archival evidence it appears this was not the first time Vlado Krivec acted impolitely towards a colleague. On May 4, 1951 eighteen workers from the Kolezija, Ljubljana party organization wrote a letter to President Miha Marinko complaining that Krivec never listened to other opinions and regularly invoked "party discipline" to give directives in an "undemocratic and uncommunist manner" (AS 1589, AC 928, 1945-1954, 4.5.1951, 1-2).

<sup>487</sup> AS 1589 111/234, Letno poročilo o delu zgodovinske komisije CK ZK Slovenije, Leto 1960, 1-2 (Yearly report on the activity of the historical commission of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia, year 1960, 1-2).

to the Institute on Kongresni Trg, Ljubljana. The Central Committee also sought to increase funding for more research positions to increase the professional vitality of the institution, and tie its work more into that of the Faculty of Philosophy at Ljubljana University.<sup>488</sup> By 1962 the Institute would absorb the Museum though still nominally under the control of the Commission. By 1966 the Historical Commission within the Central Committee would be disbanded, and the Institute would become the primary protector of the legacy of the NOB.

By 1961 the seventy-two employees of the Institute for the History of the Worker's Movement represented much of the diversity of Slovene memory politics. Members of the Historical Commission like Lev Modič and Vlado Krivec wanted the Institute to perform greater outreach programs to youth and students coupled with more effective efforts to teach the lessons of the war. At a meeting of the Historical Commission in 1961, Dušan Bravničar from the Institute complained that such expectations were unrealistic given the lack of personnel at the Institute. Lev Modič countered that the Institute's desire to produce perfectly documented material was causing it to publish too little and robbing the public of the opportunity to learn from the many documents and research it had already amassed.<sup>489</sup> The majority of historians working at the institute believed that their duty was to produce "objective", empirically based histories of the war, in the best tradition of world historiography. Later, in October of 1965, Comrade Škoberne lamented that the institute should not be expected to publish

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<sup>488</sup> AS 1589, 14/255, 19.6.1961, 3-5.

<sup>489</sup> AS 111 255-27/38, 17.1.1961, 1-4.

as many historical works as the popular presses, as the work of the institute was of much higher quality and required far more time and financial resources to produce.<sup>490</sup>

### **Popular Presses**

In 1960 historians at the Commission, the Institute, the Museum of the NOB, the University, and League members all sought to transform a civic and media space to which they also belonged. Their disagreements among themselves and diverse strategies for presenting the war to the public comprise the most comprehensive documentary evidence for understanding the collective significance of the NOB in this period. Evidence how war memory affected the population for which it was intended is not as explicitly archived as the opinions of the technicians who composed its history. Until 1967 (the year that the Center for Public Opinion Research was founded) the Central Committee felt no need to gauge the population's perception of war discourses. Rather they trusted their ability to control public opinion, still confident in their drive to transform society. At a meeting for the Historical Commission in 1965, Ivan Križnar argued that there was no need to see what the public thought of NOB museum exhibits, since the goal of these exhibits was to transform that public, not to please them.<sup>491</sup> At this same meeting, party secretary Mitja Ribičič expressed confidence in the transformative power of new media like television as he described watching a program about cooking fish one night. When he arrived at the market the next morning, all of the fish were sold out. The moral of this parable he summarized as “one single program, one

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<sup>490</sup> AS 1589 26.10.1965, 389/0346, 2.

<sup>491</sup> AS 1589, 388/0360, 16.10.1965, 4.

single film has a greater impact on our Slovene nation and the Yugoslavian public of today than anything else, certainly more of an impact than all our meetings...<sup>492</sup>

While those creating the policies for transforming Slovenes felt no need to measure their success, media producers who carried out official policies were far more in tune with public opinion. Between 1953 and 1967 Slovenia's media and presses became progressively more self-managing and by default, more concerned with producing material with mass appeal. While they made sure not to cross lines of socialist propriety in their media, they also were deeply concerned with making profits. They found NOB material to be consistently popular, though their productions rarely pleased the University and Party professionals described in the paragraphs above. And, those producing proper histories of the war received little popular attention. Slavko Rupel, writing a broad review of Slovene literature for the League mouthpiece *Borba* in 1961, noted that "two almanacs with NOB-themed contributions...from some of our most prominent literary representatives, including Kocbek, Ingolič, Bevk, Kajuh, Klopčič, Gruden, Levč, and Minatti, are more or less known, but have not achieved the level of popularity that one would expect from editions written by literatis and revolutionary fighters."<sup>493</sup> Media consumers, it seemed, preferred material with popular rather than academic appeal.

In the same year (1960) that the Institute, University, Museum, and Commission were vying to become sole mouthpiece for the history of the NOB, Yugoslav legislators

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<sup>492</sup> Ibid., 30-31 (Ena sama oddaja, en sam film danes vpliva na naš slovenski narod in na jugoslovansko publiko mnogo močnejše kot vse drugo, kot vsi naši sestanki, ki jih vsevprek organiziramo).

<sup>493</sup> Review reprinted in archives of the Historical Commission, AS 1589, 389/0492, 6 (Zbornik literarnih prispevkov s tematiko osvobodilnega boja ...s prispevkih naših najvidnejših literarnih ustvarjalcev: Kocbeka, Ingoliča, Bevka, Kajuha, Klopčiča, Grudna, Levca, Minattija sta bolj ali manj znani, čeprav morda nista dosegli tiste popularnosti, kot bi ju kot reprezentativni izdaji književnikov borcev in revolucionarjev morali).

passed their most sweeping liberalization of press controls. The press law of 1960, which included total abolition of pre-publication censorship, and increased emphasis on the need for publishers to support themselves from their own revenues, opened the way for Slovene authors to explore, own, and diversify a previously official memory of the war.<sup>494</sup> Through this symbolic process of purchasing shares in the legacy of the war, its memory became collective. And the flood of war media that followed created popular histories that became far more widely distributed than the work of professional historians. It was also through these popular histories that a monolithic collective memory gained the diverse details necessary to make it more palpable to real consumers. As the stories diversified, they became more inclusive of different segments of the Slovene population, gaining in significance what they lost in narrative cohesiveness.

To be sure, the erstwhile guardians of the NOB at the Commission for History still tried to manage the flood of NOB materials in the early 1960's, though their power to do so was far diminished. In the early 60's the Commission oversaw the publication of several bibliographies and collections of party documents which it hoped would improve the "ideological level of NOB-era contributions."<sup>495</sup> Sergej Vošnjak showed who the real discourse makers were at a Historical Commission meeting in 1961 when he pleaded with publishers to have their materials verified by either his Commission or the Institute before publication to ensure "the accuracy of materials, for in historical endeavors events must be historically accurate and true, leaving no room for the subjective, imprecise

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<sup>494</sup> Robinson, *Tito's Maverick Media: The Politics of Mass Communications in Yugoslavia*, 54-56.

<sup>495</sup> (Da bi se izboljšala idejna raven prispevkov iz obdobja NOB), AS 1589, 11/234, 65/66, 1-2.

summaries of individuals.”<sup>496</sup> Publishers in the 1960’s, however, were far more beholden to their readers than they were to an institute with little control over the public.

Following a loosening of press controls in 1960, histories of the NOB had indeed become “subjective,” with far more available “imprecise summaries” than had been possible when the Central Committee controlled all history writing. The federal 1960 Law on the Press eliminated pre-publication censorship and forced media outlets to become self-managing enterprises with 70 percent control over the allocation of their profits. Gertrude Robinson points out the correlation between this unprecedented freeing of the press in a state socialist country with the economic and political crisis pitting centrists against federalists. She shows that these two camps functioned much like independent political parties, each hoping to mobilize support for their positions among the constituents they represented. A press that was able to show both sides of an argument therefore became a necessity for a League that was no longer as unified as it had been in the 1940’s.<sup>497</sup> While the new press law allowed much more diversity in NOB histories, the law also contained provisions for prosecuting slander and libel. In the 1960’s such provisions, along with the vigilance of veterans themselves, would protect the positive legacies of the war. Nevertheless, easier access to publication in the 1960’s allowed for a greater diversity of stories to continually expand the collective memory of the National Liberation War.

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<sup>496</sup> “da se zagotovi točnost materijalov kerpri [sic] zgodovinskem podajanju morajo biti dogodki zgodovinsko točni in resnični, ker tu ne mora biti merodajna subjektivna analiza posameznika” (AS 1589,111/255-39/56, 8.2.1961, 7).

<sup>497</sup> Robinson, *Tito’s Maverick Media: The Politics of Mass Communications in Yugoslavia*, 38-49.

While collective memory became more inclusive of Slovenia's diversity in some ways, memory makers also fought to exclude Slovenes on the basis of wartime allegiances and gender. As for the former category, ever since the end of the war one of the Slovene Party's greatest fears had been the possible resurgence of former wartime enemies. In the 1940's the many trials against wreckers, saboteurs, spies, and profiteers frequently tied the misdeeds of these people to their history of opposing the OF. In the 1950's seemingly subversive media was regularly labeled as "white guard-ish," or opposed to state power, just as the wartime collaborators had been. By the 1960's the Office for State Security was spending inordinate amounts of time and money trying to monitor the activities of Slovenia's émigré community and preventing them from influencing people inside the Republic. In 1966 an internal memo actually argued that there was no longer a need to intercept all foreign newspapers, only those from a select few Slovene publishers known to harbor sentiments against the Revolution.<sup>498</sup> In reality, little such material made it into the Republic. Perspectives on the war deemed hostile to the Partisan victory simply did not appear in the Slovene Civic space in the 1950's and 60's. In addition, as shown in the previous chapter, the secret police organs of Yugoslavia intercepted almost all "hostile foreign propaganda."

### **Partizanke**

While almost no one dared to question the morality of the Partisan cause, by the early 1960's some began to wonder why so little had been written about the Partizanke, or female Partisans. The simple answer, as oft repeated by League leaders, was that the Revolution had solved the woman question in Yugoslavia. Tito had only allowed the

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<sup>498</sup> AS 1589, Republiški sekretariat za notranje zadeve, 8.5.1970, 1-3.

Anti-Fascist Women's organization (with its subsidiary, the Slovene Anti Fascist League of Women), to be formed in 1943 because he and his inner circle believed it would help move uncommitted women into the National Liberation Movement. From the beginning it was intended as a temporary organization that would dissolve once the war was over (it was in fact disbanded in 1953).<sup>499</sup> Until 1960, no one (publicly) felt a need to specifically historicize either this organization or women in the NOB, as the distinctions of class and loyalty to the OF seemed far more important than gender to these mostly male historians.

In 1960 Stanislava Gerk, one of the many researchers employed by the Institute for the History of the Worker's Movement, spearheaded a project to historicize what she felt to be the overlooked contributions of women to the war effort. Her initial failure to compile a Women's Almanac of the National Liberation War offers interesting insight into the boundaries of collectively accepted memory in the early 1960's. In her initial research proposal, Gerk explicitly stated that she wanted to write a history of women in the war, not a history of the Women's Organization (SPŽZ) since "women had been active in all stages of the Revolution, long before the war even started, and the SPŽZ was only an auxiliary organization intended to join non-committed women to the National Liberation Movement."<sup>500</sup> For two years she worked tirelessly on her project, until it was terminated because of budget shortages.<sup>501</sup> Gerk continued with the research on her

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<sup>499</sup> Jeraj, "Komunistična Partija, Antifascistična Fronta Žensk in uresničevanje ženske pravice v Sloveniji (1943-1953)" (The Communist Party, Antifascist Women's Front and the Realization of Women's Rights in Slovenia, (1943-1953)), 166-171.

<sup>500</sup> AS 1589, Zgodovinski Arhiv CK ZKS – Ženski Zbornik, 1.6.1960, 2 (da so ženske delale na vseh področjih že prej, preden se je ustanovila organizacija SPŽZ, ki je bilo samo pomožno sredstvo za vključevanje preostalega dela žensk v narodnosvobodilno gibanje).

<sup>501</sup> AS 111, 255, 27-58, 17.1.1961, 6.

personal time, however, and by 1970 she, along with Ivka Križnar and Stefanija Ravnikar-Podbevšek, would publish a 950-page volume in three parts with the Institute for the Study of the Worker's Movement.<sup>502</sup> The final product contained fourteen sections, ranging from women's contributions to the prewar worker's movement, to a minute periodization of women's participation in the war itself, to a biographical collection of Slovenia's national women heroes. The almanac contained archival collections, articles written by historians and prominent League members, and memoirs from veterans themselves.

In the interval, however, Gerk would become frustrated by the the fact that the Institute gave her project such low priority, that many of her collaborators had weak work ethics, and that she endured resistance to her project from some members of the Central Committee. Yet for Gerk, historicizing women in the NOB was a project that she took seriously and very personally. Gerk micromanaged the collection of documents and memoirs from regional councils all over Slovenia, and she expected her collaborators to share her own high level of commitment to the project. She even made efforts to compile documents from former veterans in areas bordering Slovenia. With some people, like Karl Prašnik, an ethnic Slovene veteran from Viktring, Austria, Gerk exchanged many warm letters thanking him for contributions that he was under no obligation to provide, even inquiring about his family at times.<sup>503</sup> With others, like Roža, from Koper, Gerk wrote increasingly angry letters throughout 1960, telling her at one point that if she could

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<sup>502</sup> Gerk, Križnar, Ravnikar-Podbevšek, *Slovenke v narodno-osvobodilnem boju: zbornik dokumentov, člankov in spominov* (Slovene women during the National Liberation War: A collection of documents, articles, and memoirs).

<sup>503</sup> AS 1589, *Zgodovinski Arhiv CK ZKS – Ženski Zbornik* (The Historical Archives of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia – Women's Almanac), see for example Prašnik's letter to Gerk from 21.4.1960, 1.

at least send in handwritten material, that Gerk would have someone in her institute do the work of typing it.<sup>504</sup> Roža had neglected to send any contributions by the time the project was terminated in 1961. Gerk seemed oblivious to another one of her contributor's quadruple burden: of preparing for exams at the Higher Party School, maintaining employment at the local museum, family responsibilities, and making contributions to the Women's Almanac. In response Gerk merely sent the woman money for reimbursement, without responding to any of her complaints.<sup>505</sup>

Many collaborators, however, shared Gerk's vision of the importance of the Almanac. Eight women researchers from the Institute even gave up their vacations in early 1960 to devote more time to collecting primary documents.<sup>506</sup> Within the Central Committee there was only one woman, Vida Tomšič, who actively supported Gerk's project, and used the resources of the Historical Commission to assemble archives relevant to women in the war.<sup>507</sup> Another Committee member, Mikuž Metod, however, feared that a specifically women's history of the war was unnecessarily removing women

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<sup>504</sup> AS 1589, Zgodovinski Arhiv CK ZKS – Ženski Zbornik, (The Historical Archives of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia – Women's Almanac), letter from Stana Gerk to Roža from 26.11.1960. Ever the pragmatist, Gerk then reminded Roža to write legibly enough for others to be able to read her handwriting.

<sup>505</sup> AS 1589, Zgodovinski Arhiv CK ZKS – Ženski Zbornik, (The Historical Archives of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia – Women's Almanac), letter from Katarina Vehar-Juri to Stana Gerk on 29.3.1960.

<sup>506</sup> AS 1589, Zgodovinski Arhiv CK ZKS – Ženski Zbornik, (The Historical Archives of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia – Women's Almanac), Pregled na dosedanega dela na zbiranje dokumentarnega gradiva, 21.4.1960, 1.

<sup>507</sup> Gerk, Križnar, Ravnikar-Podbevšek, *Slovenke v narodno-osvobodilnem boju: zbornik dokumentov, člankov in spominov* (Slovene women during the National Liberation War: A collection of documents, articles, and memoirs), 1-3.

from the “homogenous whole that was the National Liberation movement.”<sup>508</sup> That Gerk trudged on with her efforts, despite such opposition, empowered many of the women she worked with. One Atena, from Maribor, wrote to Stana in August about a man who opposed the Almanac saying, “He’s always behaved shamefully towards women Partisans, and now he’s giving himself the right to pass judgment. Shame on him!”<sup>509</sup>

Despite her best efforts, at the beginning of 1961 the Women’s Almanac project was terminated, and Gerk temporarily lost her job at the Institute.<sup>510</sup> By contrast, in 1967 another woman, Božena Grossman decided to write a popular history of the war with a decidedly women’s perspective. In *Once upon a Time (Nekoč je bilo)*, Dr. Grosman, who had been a Partisan doctor during the war, presented a series of her own recollections. Grosman was not a professional historian, did not work for an institution, and had to deal only with the self-managing, profit-oriented editorships of Slovenia’s publishing industry, not Central Committee members trying to protect a male-centered canon of the war. With no resistance, she published her manuscript with the children and young adult’s publisher, “Kurirčkova Knjižnica.” Another press, “Partizanska Knjiga,” released an updated version of her book in 1985. Grosman’s book was the first war memoir to be published by a woman outside the framework of either the League or the Anti-Fascist Women’s organization.

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<sup>508</sup> AS 1589, Zgodovinski Arhiv CK ZKS – Ženski Zbornik, (The Historical Archives of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia – Women’s Almanac), from a letter Stana Gerk wrote to Vida Tomšičič on 26.4.1960, 1 (iz homogene celote narodnoosvobodilnega gibanja).

<sup>509</sup> AS 1589, Zgodovinski Arhiv CK ZKS – Ženski Zbornik, (The Historical Archives of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia – Women’s Almanac), letter from Atena to Stana Gerk, 20.8.1960, 1 (Do partizank se je vedno obnašal nesramno, sedaj pa si prav on jemlje pravico sodenja. Sramota!).

<sup>510</sup> Gabrič, *Zgodovinopisje v zrcalu zgodovine: 50 let inštituta za novejšo zgodovine* (Historiography reflected in history: 50 years of the Institute for Contemporary History), 191.

Using an awkward second-person style of prose, addressing her memoirs to an anonymous young person, Grosman managed to explore many varieties of taboo topics. In her 1967 introduction, Grosman criticized dominant trends in NOB historiography using language that blurred the absolutes of right and wrong, the same style of language that forced Edvard Kocbek to stop publishing only fifteen years earlier (The previous chapter analyzes the media firestorm surrounding Kocbek's 1952 quote from *Strah in Pogum*: "It was right for us to unite against evil, but wrong for us to be so eager in our fight against it").<sup>511</sup> Grosman, however, had the protection of a more lenient mediascape. In the same sentences she also defended what she felt to be a particular women's perspective of the Partisan experience. Her somewhat folksy approach proved far more successful than either Stana Gerk's or Edvard Kocbek's. It is worth quoting at length from her introduction below:

I know you have heard and read, perhaps in school even learned, about the brave Partisans. You know of their heroic battles and the unparalleled suffering of our peoples. But there is a part of that story that you do not know, and that I will tell: of the volunteers who failed because of the fifth column and Ustaši traitors; of life in Partisan hospitals; of Partisan birthing clinics and orphanages; of the cares taken for our wounded and sick, women, mothers and children. You also might not know about the children of our Partisans and those in hiding, of orphans and refugee children.

There is another aspect where my account differs from what's commonly told. In most accounts there are some who are wonderously good and others who are terrifyingly evil. In real life, that's not how it is. Good people also fail at times, and evil people can on occasion do good. Those who were actually good, and less good, are the heroes of my stories, with

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<sup>511</sup> From a review of Edvard Kocbek's *Strah in Pogum*, written by Josip Vidmar, AS 1589 AC 783, Agitpropaska konferenca z novinarjami, 24 VI 1952, (Agitprop conference with reporters, June 24, 1952),83.

both their flaws and generosity. I will tell of unselfish Partisan comradeship and the horrible suffering of countless children.<sup>512</sup>

For Grosman, the Partisan movement had been far more complicated than masculine histories allowed and women's involvement in the war offered a perspective that needed to be historicized. To illustrate her perspective she wrote about topics like the conflicts she had with male supervisors during the war who were less qualified than her. To be sure, these supervisors were rarely Slovene. For most of the war she was the head doctor at an orphanage and birthing center hidden in the forests near Kočevje. She wrote warmly of the comradeship she shared with the men and women who worked there with her.<sup>513</sup> But while caring for children in both Southern Italy and Croatia she had to "fiercely fight for all materials" that had already been allocated to her.<sup>514</sup> While she persevered through gender discrimination among her own ranks, she felt far more annoyed by classist discrimination from foreigners. While in Southern Italy she writes of a particular British officer who refused to believe that she as a Communist woman could

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<sup>512</sup> Grosman, *Nekoč je bilo: iz spominov Partisanske zdravnice* (Once upon a time : From the memories of a Partisan doctor, 7-8. (Vem, da ste o tem že marsikaj slišali ali brali, najbrž ste se tudi v šoli že učili o hrabrih partizanih. Znani so vam njihovi junaški boji, poznano neizmerno trpljenje naših narodov. O nečem pa verjetno še ne veste mnogo in o tem bi vam rada pripovedala: o dobrovoljcih, ki zaradi pete kolone in ustaškega izdajstva niso uspeli; o življenju v partizanskih bolnišnici, o partizanski porodnišnici in o partizanskih dečjih domovih; o skrbi za naše ranjence in bolnike, žene, matere in otroke. Pa še o otrocih naših partizanov in ilegalcev, o tistih brez staršev in otrocih-beguncih. Še v nečem se moje pripovedanje razlikuje od pravljič. Tam so eni čudoviti dobri, drugi pa strašansko hudobni. V resničnem življenju ni tako. Tudi dobremu človeku včasih spodleti, a hudobnež lahko stori tu in tam kaj dobrega. Takšni, kot so res bili dobri in manj dobri, so junaki mojih zgodb, s svojimi slabostmi in plemenitostjo. Pripovedati nameravam o nesebičnem partizanskem tovarištvu ter o strahotem trpljenju nešteti otrok.)

<sup>513</sup> Grosman, 71-72.

<sup>514</sup> Ibid., 103 (A sem se morala za poslano zagrizeno boriti).

properly care for the wounded. She once even endured the indignity of this man searching her belongings for stolen material.<sup>515</sup>

While pride in overcoming gender discrimination and disdain for the behavior of British officers were acceptable topics in 1960's Slovenia,<sup>516</sup> Grosman did not hesitate to write about ethnic tensions among Yugoslavs. For example, while charged with the care of over 800 orphans in Split she feverishly worked to get aid from a local Catholic-run hospital, to no avail.<sup>517</sup> But more controversially, she openly described the subject of less than brotherly/sisterly relations between Croat Partisan officers and the leadership of her orphanage in Split. A certain quartermaster who had long ignored her requests for basic foodstuffs and clothing once contended that "our children need these materials too,"<sup>518</sup> to which she responded, "these children are as much yours as mine, there being only three Slovenes among them."<sup>519</sup> She finally received minimal aid by circumventing Partisan command through appealing directly to the Canadian Red Cross in Italy.<sup>520</sup>

Grosman took great pride in stating that, under her leadership, the birthing center in the woods near Kočevje had a 0 percent infant mortality rate. Despite the lack of electricity or hot water, she credited this success to good sanitation, an attentive staff, fresh air, and most importantly, her drive to make all mothers breast-feed. "I

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<sup>515</sup> Ibid., 89-91.

<sup>516</sup> To be fair she also wrote about a British officer who kindly helped her to obtain medical supplies, even though he deeply distrusted Communists, (Grosman, *Nekoč je bilo: iz spominov Partisanske zdravnice* (Once upon a time : From the memories of a Partisan doctor, 86-87).

<sup>517</sup> Ibid., 101-102.

<sup>518</sup> Ibid., 103, (tudi naši otroci so potrebni).

<sup>519</sup> Ibid., 103, (Ti otroci so saj toliko vaši kot moji, saj je med njimi samo troje Slovencev [sic]).

<sup>520</sup> Ibid., 102.

accomplished that which no health propaganda ever had, namely that all mothers nursed,” wrote Grosman.<sup>521</sup> Going against the common wisdom that undernourished women should not nurse, she insisted that all mothers who were able must share the benefits of their life-saving milk with their babies. In rare cases she procured cow’s milk and other materials to produce infant formula.<sup>522</sup> She contrasts her success to that of a “kind-hearted”<sup>523</sup> but elderly male doctor in Split who was not attentive enough to the specific needs of women and children. Though he told women to breastfeed, they slowly began to refuse his advice. As a result, several of these children tragically died.<sup>524</sup>

While Stana Gerk failed to use official avenues to insert women into the canon of Slovenia’s war mythology, Božena Grosman successfully wrote an “account that differed from what was commonly told.”<sup>525</sup> Indeed Grosman’s account was the first in Slovenia to narrate World War II as a battle to keep babies alive. Central Committee member Metod Mikuž had sought to prevent Gerk’s women’s history of the war with the charge that it would blur the collective nature of the struggle. Grosman, however demonstrated how to successfully include women in collective memories of the war. A second printing of Grosman’s book shows that she managed to expand the plot elements to Slovene’s collective memory of the war.

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<sup>521</sup> Ibid., 56 (Dosegla sem to, kar nikoli ni uspelo nobeni zdravstveni propaganda, namreč da so prav vse matere dojili).

<sup>522</sup> Ibid., 56-57.

<sup>523</sup> Ibid., 96 (dobrodušen).

<sup>524</sup> Ibid., 95-96.

<sup>525</sup> Ibid., 7.

While Grossman quickly succeeded in producing a popular women-centered history of the war by relying on market-driven media, Gerk too eventually gained support outside of Central Committee-controlled resources. She appealed to the veteran's organization, who provided her with funding and contacts among their women veterans. Without the League of United Fighters of the National Liberation War (ZZB-NOB), Gerk would have taken much longer to complete her 950-page tome. The ZZB-NOB straddled the divide between official and popular histories, and its members from across Slovenia actively collaborated with Gerk.<sup>526</sup>

In 1948, the Central Committee organized the ZZB-NOB to be a mass organization that would “mobilize participants of the NOB for the new period of fighting, the era of building socialism, with the same fighting spirit that unified them during the war.”<sup>527</sup> In the early years, organization members proudly participated in work brigades to fulfill goals related to the five-year plan. In these years the Control Committee sought to weed out opportunistic members, who they often claimed to be false veterans. By the early 1950's opportunism had become a tenet of the Veterans' organization's *raison d'être*, as it became an advocacy group for veterans and sought to help individual members to be economically and socially successful in the new Yugoslavia. As described in the previous chapter, by 1953 the ZZB-NOB was closely involved in the commemorations of the Kočevje Anniversary. From that point on, a branch of this organization, the Society for the Promotion of the Traditions of the NOB, would work to promote the

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<sup>526</sup> Gerk, Križnar, Ravnikar-Podbevšek, *Slovenke v narodno-osvobodilnem boju: zbornik dokumentov, člankov in spominov* (Slovene women during the National Liberation War: A collection of documents, articles, and memoirs), 1-3.

<sup>527</sup> *Ljudska Pravica*, July 4, 1948, 1 (z namenom da jih družijo v novi etapi borbi, v dobi izgradnje socializma, v istem borbenem duhu ki jih je vezal med vojno).

organization's view of history among the masses of Slovenia. After the 1950's every commemoration of the war involved these veterans. In the commemorative off-season, they wrote press releases, organized visits to schools, but most importantly (as will be explored in chapter seven), lobbied for veteran benefits.

The preponderance of media related to the NOB after publishers became self-managing indicates that its memory continued to have collective appeal in the 1960's. The debates over presenting war history that raged between Belgrade and Ljubljana, as well as the many Slovene institutions vying to lead the republic's history making, indicate the importance of this memory. By seeking to control and transform fundamental elements of the plot, these people were reifying the social importance of the overarching narrative itself.

Though state memory-minders constantly feared the influence of White Guard media from abroad, the far more common problem was people who shamelessly exploited war memory from within. The previous paragraphs discussed policymakers, historians, and writers who sought to take control of war discourses and broaden the story of the war to make its narrative constructs overlap with other discourses with which they identified. Among the consumers of war history, however, a very frequent phenomenon was simply seeking to use dominant discourses of the war for personal gain.

The importance of war memory justified a form of economic privilege that permeated widely across Slovene society. In the 1950's and 60's the directors of virtually all bureaucracies and self-managing companies were either trusted war veterans or old Communist fighters. Advancement in virtually any career was aided if one could show his or her veteran status. On the other side, complaint letters fill the archives of the

Central Committee's Control Commission from people describing problems at work, and using the rhetorical device of injustice that such a thing could happen to a veteran in Socialist Yugoslavia.

A more explicit use of war memory for personal gain occurred in the early 1950's. In 1951 Agitprop began composing a commemorative volume called "Spomine 1941" (Memories of 1941) where the most sacred of veterans, those who had participated in the war from the very beginning, received public recognition, a medal, and a cash payment. The cash payment would become the bane of the Control Commission's existence for several years. The Control Commission exchanged numerous letters with local party offices to determine if the veterans claiming the privileges associated with being early joiners were really who they said they were. The Control Commission eventually found 261 claims out of 483 to be fraudulent, more than half of the total. The Commission finally abandoned the cash payment in 1952 and subsequently stopped receiving so many false claims to veteran status.<sup>528</sup>

### **Kočevje Anniversaries**

In 1958 the Central Committee provided far fewer resources for the commemorations at Kočevje than they had five years previously. To begin with, a 15-year anniversary has less numeric resonance than a 10, 20 or 25-year anniversary. But in 1958 the Slovene Central Committee in particular feared the label of separatists from Belgrade. They were in the midst of trying to rein in attempts by journals like *Revija 57* and *Perspektive* to offer alternative Marxist economic explanations. They were also

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<sup>528</sup> AS 1589, AC 907-913, Letno poročilo o delu kontrolne komisije 1948-1953, (Yearly report on the activities of the control commission 1948-1953), 1-4.

trying to manage the encyclopedia controversy, outlined in previous paragraphs. In 1958 there were few historical professionals available to the organizers. The Institute for the Study of the Worker's Movement had not yet been organized, the University remained mostly suspect, and the Commission seemed like an unnecessary redundancy, as most Central Committee leaders had personal memories of the Conference.

Slovene leaders held a commemoration on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, where sporting events were followed by a speech by then-president of the Academy of Arts and Sciences, Josip Vidmar. The editors of *Dolenjski List* mentioned that some of the original delegates attended this event, but made no mention of any prominent League members.<sup>529</sup> Across the Republic, newspapers commemorated the November 29th anniversary of the AVNOJ meeting at Jajce, now known as the day of the republic; but few gave any mention of Slovenia's unique Kočevje conference. The author "R." of Ptuj's *Tednik* made mention of the importance of the Kočevje anniversary, but only inasmuch as it showed how Slovenes had recognized the "correct political leadership of the OF on the basis of people's democracy and the equality of Yugoslavian peoples," under the guidance of "their leader in the fight for a new Yugoslavia, Comrade Tito."<sup>530</sup> R. then discussed how the conference at Kočevje fit into the broader Yugoslavian war in 1943, describing the two most important battles of the year as Sutjeska and Neretva, both of which occurred in

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<sup>529</sup> *Dolenjski List*, October 9, 1958, 1.

<sup>530</sup> *Ptujski Tednik*, October 4, 1958, 1 (priznali pravilno politično pot OF na podlagi ljudske demokracije in enakopravnost jugoslovanskih narodov ... Veliko priznanje je dal zbor svojemu voditelju v boju za novo Jugoslavijo –tovarišu Titu).

Bosnia under the leadership of Yugoslav brigades and had little effect on the war in Slovenia.<sup>531</sup>

By 1963 the commemorations of Kočevje were far bigger and better coordinated across the Republic, and the Slovene Central Committee followed directives from the Yugoslavian, to ensure that Kočevje fit properly within a broader Federal memory cosmos. For the 20-year anniversary the People's Assembly organized sub-committees to coordinate with the Central Committee on how best to commemorate the event.<sup>532</sup> The Kočevje anniversary in October would follow that of the 19-year anniversary of the first Slovene governing council in Črnomelj, in February. At Črnomelj, the delegates first assembled at Kočevje met again to fully ratify all provisions of AVNOJ, under the direct leadership of emissaries from Tito's inner circle. For Belgrade, the importance of this anniversary to commemorating Slovenia's subservience outweighed its numerical awkwardness.

Again in 1963, as in 1958, the Republic's many professional historians were not consulted. The Institute for the History of the Worker's Movement was in the middle of reorganizing its core mission as a means to secure better funding, the Historical Commission was beginning to be seen as a redundant bureaucracy (it would be disbanded the following year), and the National Liberation Museum (renamed Museum of the Revolution) had recently been absorbed by the Institute. The Institute of the History of the Worker's Movement and Museum of the Revolution both opened displays about

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<sup>531</sup> Ibid., 1-2.

<sup>532</sup> AS 1589, 20-objetnica zbora odposlancev slovenskega naroda v Kočevju, (The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the council of representatives of the Slovene people in Kočevje), Bilten št. 1, 6.9.1963, 1-11.

Kočevje on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, but neither were involved in the official commemorations.<sup>533</sup>

Yet the Central Committee, which coordinated all aspects of the commemorations, proved capable of presenting history without the service of historians. In the initial planning stages committee members produced a bibliography of relevant sources that the press could use to present the history of Kočevje; with the exception of two articles written by Tito, all were written by either current or deceased members of the Slovene Central Committee, most of whom were participants at the original Kočevje conference.<sup>534</sup>

On October 3<sup>rd</sup> the festivities began in Kočevje. The Secretary of the Central Committee Miha Marinko gave a speech. On that same day a conference of ham radio operators convened in Kočevje to remember the crucial role their kind had played in



**Figure 6.3 Aleksandr Ranković and Edvard Kardelj in Kočevje**

keeping open communication lines during the war. On October 4<sup>th</sup> the newly remodeled hall where the original conference took place was reopened, as was a new post office in Kočevje.<sup>535</sup> On

October 5<sup>th</sup> the official

commemorative meeting in the building of the People's Assembly took place in

<sup>533</sup> *Večer*, October 2, 1963, 1.

<sup>534</sup> AS 1589, 20-obljetnica zbora odposlancev slovenskega naroda v Kočevju, (The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the council of representatives of the Slovene people in Kočevje), Bilten št. 1, 6.9.1963, 5-7.

<sup>535</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-10.

Ljubljana. Tito's heir apparent, the Serb and vice president of the League of Working Peoples, Aleksandr Ranković, presided over the event with the Yugoslavian Central Committee member and Slovene, Edvard Kardelj, at his side.<sup>536</sup> Ranković and Kardelj briefly put aside their differences for the solemn assembly. Figure 6.3 above shows Ranković strolling through Kočevje on October 5, 1963 with Kardelj on his right side and the Yugoslav Partisan leader (and Slovene) Franc Leskošek on his left.<sup>537</sup> For decades, the two had feuded over their visions of how best to solve Yugoslavia's national problem. Ranković favored a strong central authority while Kardelj had insisted since the 1930's



**Figure 6.4 Kočevje commemorations, 1963**

that only through devolving authority to the Republics could Yugoslavia avoid the Serbian Chauvinism that had doomed the first Yugoslavia. The next year, Tito would remove Ranković from the party, fearing that Ranković's power and popularity among Serbs destabilized the federation. In

addition, Ranković, who was also head of the secret police, was found to be bugging Tito's personal communications. For the remainder of the 1960's Tito would side with Kardelj and others in Yugoslavia who favored greater federalism over centralism. After

<sup>536</sup> Ibid., 1-3; *Celjski Tednik*, October 11, 1963, 1; and *Vecer*, October 5, 1963, 1. Tito was not present, though his portrait graced the Seskov hall in Kočevje. Tito was on a visit to Acapulco during the first week of October 1963.

<sup>537</sup> Photograph originally appeared in October 10, 1963 edition of *Dolenjski List*, pages 8-9. The caption reads "A large crowd gives a warm and heartfelt greeting to our dear guests who have come to Kočevje. Pictured are: comrades Edvard Kardelj, Franc Leskošek – Luka [Luka is his Partisan codename], and Aleksandr Ranković walking on the streets of our newly renovated city where the autumn sun shines upon the cleanliness, verdance, flags and flowers of the Rinži district."

1964 Kardelj would replace Ranković as Tito's presumed successor.<sup>538</sup> The Kočevje celebration of 1963, however, would show the uncomfortable coexistence of predominantly federalists with powerful centralists.

On October 6<sup>th</sup> 50,000 participants flooded into Kočevje, some of whom appear in figure 6.4.<sup>539</sup> Sub-committees within the assembly, as well as the Central Committee, made provisions to wine, dine, and safely transport almost all living participants of the conference to the ceremonies (seven of the original conference participants were not invited due to their "immoral political standing").<sup>540</sup> Working with newly formed RTV Slovenia, the Assembly provided funding for commemorative television and radio broadcasts from Kočevje. A new museum exhibit opened in the halls of the Šeškov hall where the original meeting took place.<sup>541</sup> Leaders of the Trade Unions and self-managing companies participated in the commemorations. Those who were forced to be absent concocted lengthy excuses well in advance of the commemorations.<sup>542</sup>

The Central Committee carefully managed its press releases to the various print, radio, and TV media of the Republic. It also tried to get copies of what the major papers

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<sup>538</sup> Edvard Kardelj's ambition for the highest position of authority in Yugoslavia never materialized, however, as he died in 1978, two years before Josip Broz Tito.

<sup>539</sup> *Dolenjski List*, October 10, 1963, 9. Caption reads, "Old acquaintances met up everywhere; there were many surprising meetings as many of the erstwhile representatives of the Slovene people had not seen one another in twenty years."

<sup>540</sup> AS 1589, Originalni sezname, ki smo jih prejeli od CK ZK Slovenije, gostje vabljeni na slavnostno sejo skupščine (Original lists received from the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia, guests invited to the solemn ceremony of the assembly), 23.9.1963, 1, (zaradi negativnih moralno političnih kvalifikacij).

<sup>541</sup> *Večer*, October 5, 1963, 1.

<sup>542</sup> AS 1589, 20-objetnica zbora odposlancev slovenskega naroda v Kočevju, (The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the council of representatives of the Slovene people in Kočevje), Bilten št. 4, October 2, 1963, 9-11.

planned to run before publication.<sup>543</sup> Since 1960, however, these media were far freer to interpret things as they pleased. Newspapers across the Republic lauded Kočevje as the beginning of Slovenian statehood, losing the subtle nuance of Slovene statehood in the service of Yugoslavian federation. Many summaries of the events concluded without even mentioning Kočevje's role in making Slovenia part of the broader Yugoslav Partisan movement. This was a Slovene moment: Kočevje was Slovenia's first parliament,<sup>544</sup> its independence meeting, the beginning of people's authority in Slovenia.<sup>545</sup>

## CONCLUSION

At the Brioni Plenum in the fall of 1953, Tito expressed his hope that the League could reassume its guiding role over society, weeding out “bourgeois-anarchist conceptions of freedom and democracy”.<sup>546</sup> Over the remainder of the next decade, Slovene politicians followed Tito's lead by trying to exert greater control over their presentation of World War II history. The mythology of this war had become so critical to legitimizing the League's monopoly of political power and so central to Yugoslavia's unique socio-economic experiment that it seemed to require an organization capable of professional curation. Slovene politicians formed a national museum, then a special sub-committee on history within their League's Central Committee, then they restructured the State Archives to fall under the control of that sub-committee, finally organizing a special

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<sup>543</sup> AS 1589, 20-obljetnica zbora odposlancev slovenskega naroda v Kočevju, (The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the council of representatives of the Slovene people in Kočevje), Bilten št. 2, September 25, 1963, 6-11.

<sup>544</sup> *Celjski Tednik*, October 11, 1963, 1.

<sup>545</sup> *Večer*, October 5, 1963, 3.

<sup>546</sup> Quoted by Sabrina Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias: State Building and Legitimation, 1918-2005*, 192.

Institute on the History of the Worker's movement that would eventually eclipse and absorb the roles of the sub-committee and Museum. With the expansion of the historical profession, however, control over the narrative quickly slipped out of the hands of the Central Committee, and became far larger than Belgrade could control. The neat dialectic of a war story that legitimized the party and self-managing collectives, praised Yugoslavian power and Slovene autonomy, and remained inclusive of youth, veterans, and women could not hold; only the ideologue Edvard Kardelj could attempt such a narrative. Those opposed to various historical interpretations often used the label of "anti-Marxist" against their competitors. For the most part, professional historians in this period tried to avoid moralizing the war, preferring to present what they felt to be objective facts. Unfortunately for the prestige of historians in this period, however, everyone else in the Republic cared most of all about the moral lessons of the war.

In 1960 a new press law eliminated pre-publication censorship. As presses and studios sought greater revenues, they solicited more and more stories of the war. Professional historians found themselves increasingly annoyed by these popular histories. Yet it was through these histories that Slovenes began to purchase symbolic shares in the national mythology of their Republic. They became Slovenes as they inserted themselves into the dominant narrative, self-managing the Republic's otherwise hegemonic discourses.

The Centralist-Federalist debates of the 1960's between primarily Serb and Croatian politicians were first heard in Slovenia in the context of World War II memory: Federalists argued that the war was a story of Slovene self-liberation, while Centralists narrated the war as evidence of Slovene indebtedness to the Yugoslavian "brotherhood of

nations.” As the 1960’s progressed, demands for linguistic rights, a territorial defense force, and total economic autonomy were all presented using a similar founding mythology, based on a Slovene-centric collective memory of the war.

War history was enormously popular during the 1950’s and 60’s. The collective appeal of the war had succeeded far beyond what its early promoters in the late 1940’s had hoped. Yet as this memory became collective, it expanded in ways that reflected a diversity among Slovenes which was far more complicated than those tasked with engineering socialist souls could yet appreciate. People like Božena Grosman and Stana Geršak added gender to a collective memory whose defenders were at first unwilling to process such a perspective. Veterans felt that the legacy of the war justified their own privileges and positions of authority in Slovene society. Historians felt that they alone had the right to interpret the lessons of the war, and were for the most part unwilling to produce the kinds of legitimizing narratives that state authorities wanted, so state authorities worked with veterans to write their own histories. All of these disputes served to reinforce the power of collective registers for war memory: the collective memory was worth fighting over; therefore, it was important.

## Chapter 6: 1968, Slovenia's Spring . . . Back into Tito's Arms

*If I am incapable of solving these problems, then there is no further need for me to remain in my present position.*

Josip Broz Tito, June 10, 1968.<sup>547</sup>

During the contentious political debates of the 1960's, Slovenia's leadership secured the right to represent its own Partisan past, in large part because these leaders had navigated a modus vivendi between their federal masters in Belgrade and the ordinary Slovenians who were the object of the state's revolutionary goals. Collective war memory legitimized the power of the state, while serving as a metaphor and justification for virtually every political issue debated during the decade. In 1968 a brief student protest movement caused the priesthood of Slovenia's postwar order, the veterans, to fear that a youthful segment of the population could undermine the Partisan-based mythological foundations of Yugoslavia. In their conservatory zeal, these veterans and policymakers greatly magnified a memory threat that had never really existed. Only a small handful of students complained that veterans received too many privileges, at the expense of younger, better-trained workers. Following Tito's skillful diplomatic handling of student movements across the federation, most students quietly went back to their studies while veterans loudly went back to proclaiming their own importance.

The prism of war memory offers a helpful analytical framework for interpreting Slovenia's almost-revolution of 1968.<sup>548</sup> While some students attempted to undermine

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<sup>547</sup> *Delo*, June 11, 1968, 1. Slovene translation from Serbo-Croatian (če nisem sposoben da rešim ta vprašanja, potem ni treba da sem še na tem mestu).

state authorities by pointing to incongruity between state ideals and official actions, the United League of Veterans of the National Liberation War (ZZB-NOB) undertook a massive effort to show a disconnect between the self-sacrificing nature of Slovenia's Partisan founders, and the selfish, over-privileged, "long-haired"<sup>549</sup> student protesters. The Central Party's cooptation of all but the most radical student protesters, as well as extensive press coverage of Yugoslavia's seeming enlightened role in the world, quickly turned public opinion against Slovenia's discontents. By the end of the 1960's the image of the Partisan had transformed from a radical fighter creating a revolutionary new system, to a conservative defender of Yugoslavia's unique social and economic system.

With the exception of some particularly out-of-touch veteran activists, few contemporary actors saw challenges to a collective war memory as a central part of the 1968 events. Historians of 1968 in Yugoslavia make almost no mention of war discourses. While war discourses may have played a minor role in the events of the late 1960's, these events had a profoundly transformational role on the nature of dominant Partisan war stories. State organs responded to charges against the Partisan legacy by further emphasizing the talking points of a collective memory that was serving well as a

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<sup>548</sup> Dmitrij Rupelj recognizes that undermining the legacy of the "fighting generation" was a key element within the student protests in Ljubljana. He uses this point, however, to show that Slovene protesters were rather one-dimensional in their opposition to the "reigning Bolshevik and Veteran values" (vladajoči borčevski, boljševiški vrednotni sistem); most students were not making an avante-guard critique of modern society. Rupelj, "Predlog modela za preučevanje slovenske umetnosti v šestdesetih letih" (A proposed model for researching Slovene art in the 1960's," 1076.

<sup>549</sup> The issue of men wearing their hair long seemed particularly troubling to the older, "revolutionarily" conservative generation. *Delo* youth columnist Ivan Vidio would argue on August 21, 1967 that the discrimination such young men faced was irrational ("Are all men with long hair really bad?" [so res vsi dolgolasci slabi?]). But mainstream articles in *Delo*, such as the November 18, 1967 feature, "Sex, Long Hair, Short Skirts –Anything Else" (Seks, dolgi lasje, kratka krila –kaj več?), expressed confusion at the emerging social norms. A more troubling photograph from the September 26, 1967 edition of *Delo* titled "Contemporary Mystery" (Sodobna Uganka) features a young man with long hair and, in a mocking tone, describes the process of determining that this person is in fact male.

pillar of regime legitimacy. But it was the aftermath of these debates, especially popular outcry against the student's iconoclasm, which transformed war memory from a popularly accepted elite construct to a genuine principle of conservative faith in Socialist Slovenia's institutions and values. Most instrumental in this transformation was the massive Veterans' League, the ZZB-NOB,<sup>550</sup> which furiously lobbied Assembly representatives, published articles in the national presses, and organized commemorations intended to teach the youth of 1968 the spirit of sacrifice and social consciousness that had characterized their own generation. They also made sure that legislators would teach youth to continue to give veterans preferential employment opportunities, health care, and pensions. By the end of the 1960's, a positive affiliation with the memory of the National Liberation War entailed conservative support for Socialist Slovenia and distaste for the decadent excesses of the student generation. By the 1970's, some young people would begin to subvert symbols of the NOB as a means to deconstruct the incongruity between official Yugoslavian values and what they perceived to be political reality.

Discussions of Slovenia's own war legacy took place within a web of interconnected plot elements occurring in the mass media that seemed to deconstruct public faith in governing institutions around the world. The first of these elements was the almost-daily news coverage of American atrocities in Vietnam. Yugoslav reporters vented their journalistic indignation at US policy, with no opposition from their own state authorities, while simultaneously praising the student-run protest movements against this war. In the Yugoslavian student presses, the tacit approval of revolutionary students in the West served as inspiration. When writers in *Tribuna* wrote about the Vietnam War,

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<sup>550</sup> Zveza Združenih Borcev Narodno-Osvobodilnega Boja (League of united fighters of the National Liberation War)

they did so in a manner that underscored a general sense of disillusionment with modern societies in both the East and West, and even with the Yugoslavian “middle.”<sup>551</sup>

Second, global student protests, but especially those in France and the United States, promoted introspection on the part of Slovene students that would lead to organized discussions including, among many other topics, questioning how well the League of Communists lived up to the values it proclaimed to follow. The scholars who identified with the Zagreb-based journal *Praxis*, which had been critiquing the inequality caused by Yugoslavia’s self-management system for several years, provided a large amount of material for these student presses.

Broader discussions of social inequality in Yugoslavia, coupled with very real student issues, would lead to protests that would die out only after Tito’s personal intervention. In a public television broadcast on June 15, 1968, Tito praised the students as acting in the “best traditions of Yugoslavia’s revolutionary history” and agreed to meet all of their demands. Tito’s response to the student protests would serve to temporarily delegitimize dissent as a means to negotiate with the state.

Finally, Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia and highly visible Czechoslovak refugees in Yugoslavia would strengthen the appeal of Tito’s non-alignment, third way movement in the eyes of most Slovenes. While both the West and Soviet bloc were literally on fire, Tito’s Yugoslavia had weathered student crises through reasonable discussion, once again proving that a respect for human dignity was superior to the neo-

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<sup>551</sup> See for example Rudi Rizman’s October 32, 1967 article “Theses on Vietnam as World Truths,” pages 1 and 3. He argues that American justifications for violence in Vietnam in the service of a higher good are similar to Yugoslav justifications for violence during the National Liberation War. All are excuses for violence in a world order underpinned by violence. Rizman instead envisions a world order where non-violence is a foundational principle.

Stalinism of the Brezhnev Soviet Union and the racist brutality of the United States. By the end of 1968, public support for Yugoslavian values was overwhelming.<sup>552</sup>

In the short run, this first Slovene Spring did not coalesce into a coherent program of resistance to either the Republic or the State. Tito and his central committee met almost all the demands of student protesters, co-opting many of the student protest leaders into state power structures. Rather than resistance and suppression along the lines of what followed the Hungarian uprising of 1956 or the Prague Spring, Slovenia instead experienced a decade dominated by support for Yugoslav institutions among the majority,<sup>553</sup> and a disengagement from politics by those who refused to accept Tito's compromise.<sup>554</sup> This detour from the Slovene Spring of 1968 indicates that converging discourses at the end of the 1960's did not lead in straight succession to the political upheavals of the 1980's, as some argue.<sup>555</sup> But, discourses from 1968, notably disillusionment with Yugoslav federal structures and questioning the purity of the Partisan legacy, would re-emerge in the 1980's. Many of the same people who had been involved in the student protests became key figures in the late 1980's. This later period is

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<sup>552</sup> Toš, *Vrednote v prehodu I. Slovensko javno mnenje 1968-1990* (Changing values vol I. Slovene public opinion 1968-1990), 133.

<sup>553</sup> Pervan, *Tito and the Students: The University and the University Student in Self-managing Yugoslavia*, 1. Ralph Pervan points out that Yugoslavian leaders consistently proclaimed their system to provide more real democratic rights than either bourgeois or people's democracies. A Public Opinion Survey from 1969 indicates that many Slovenes agreed with this idea: 75% of respondents ranked Yugoslavia first when asked to pick which of among 13 different countries they would pick as best exemplifying a "positive image and peacefulness in the world" (Toš, *Vrednote v prehodu I. Slovensko javno mnenje 1968-1990* (Changing values vol I. Slovene public opinion 1968-1990), 133).

<sup>554</sup> See Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution: Central Europe 1989*, 225-226. Kenney uses his metaphor of carnival to explore resistance to state power through apathy, levity, and escapism; he describes Slovenia in the late 1980's in his chapter titled "Slovene Spring."

<sup>555</sup> See for example Oto Luthar, ed, *The Land Between: A History of Slovenia*; John Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History, Twice there was a Country*; and Sabrina Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias: State Building and Legitimation, 1918-2005*.

generally referred to as a “spring” because of its ability to unify Slovenia’s diverse civic sphere. The first spring of 1968 was, by comparison, a failed revolution. Fluctuations in public opinion during the late 1960’s were facilitated by a press that was far more open than its state socialist counterparts elsewhere in the region, and better funded than much of Western media. Slovene newspapers, particularly *Delo* and *Nedeljski Dnevnik*, had wider readerships, more freedoms, and more financial resources than ever before.<sup>556</sup> In 1968 *RTV Slovenija* also began reporting televised news, and only one year later, 68.4% of Slovenes considered this news a necessity.<sup>557</sup> By 1965 the content of Slovene newspapers had become virtually indistinguishable from media in states with functioning freedoms of speech. Contemporary historians in the West stressed that while it was not a totally free press, it was far closer than any of the other media systems in the Eastern bloc. The previously mentioned 1960 federal *Law of the Press and other Media of Information* eliminated pre-publication censorship, and guaranteed freedom of speech and expression.<sup>558</sup> Article 40 of the 1963 constitution clarified that those freedoms “could not be used to overthrow the foundations of the socialist democratic order,” to “endanger the peace, international cooperation on terms of equality, or the independence of the country,” or to “disseminate national, religious, or racial hatred or intolerance; or to incite crime, [nor shall they be used] in any manner that offends public decency.” Furthermore the article stipulated that “the right to correction of information that has

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<sup>556</sup> Toš, *Vrednote v prehodu I. Slovensko javno mnenje 1968-1990* (Changing values vol I. Slovene public opinion 1968-1990), 47, 108. In a 1969 Republic-wide survey, 52.2 % of all Slovenes claimed to regularly read *Delo* and 51.2% claimed to regularly read *Nedeljski Dnevnik*, while 58.6% of respondents claimed to regularly read *Delo*, *Večer* or *Nedeljski Dnevnik*. Robinson, *Tito’s Maverick Media: The Politics of Mass Communications in Yugoslavia*, 41.

<sup>557</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>558</sup> Robinson, *Tito’s Maverick Media: The Politics of Mass Communications in Yugoslavia*, 41.

violated the rights or interests of man or organization shall be guaranteed.”<sup>559</sup> The social tensions accompanying the media events of 1968 would justify the use of libel suits and laws against publishing socially harmful information to prosecute journalists in the early 1970’s. Though Slovenes remained relatively unaffected, hundreds of Croats accused of excessive nationalism would be imprisoned through such laws in the early 1970’s.<sup>560</sup> The effect of these measures on reducing controversial material seems negligible in 1968, but more intensive efforts in the early 1970’s would certainly distinguish the media of that decade from the vitality of Slovenia’s press in the late 1960’s.

### **National Liberation War, Vietnam**

At the beginning of the year students in Yugoslavia, like students around the world, protested American atrocities in Indochina. Virtually everyone in Slovenia opposed what they considered imperialist actions by the United States in Vietnam. Slovene students protested against American involvement in Vietnam, with the full support of state organs and media. At first these protests only legitimized the peaceful nature of Yugoslavia’s non-aligned foreign policy. Later in 1968, however, they would become an element of the student critique of Yugoslav society.

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<sup>559</sup> Official English translation of 1963 Constitution of the Socialist Federation of Yugoslavia, article 40.

<sup>560</sup> Robinson, *Tito’s Maverick Media: The Politics of Mass Communications in Yugoslavia*, 59-61.

In the late 1960's almost every edition of *Delo* carried at least minimal reference to the progress of the war. For the vast majority of the domestic readership, the parallels to Slovenia's war against the seemingly invincible forces of the Third Reich were immediately obvious. Feature stories on North Vietnamese and National Liberation



**Figure 7.1 Vietnamese Partisan from *Delo*, October 31, 1967, p. 16. Caption: “On the Day of International Solidarity with the Struggle of the Vietnamese People.”**

Front leaders made the stories intensely personal. Press articles frequently referred to these fighters as “Partisans” and calls of solidarity with the Vietnamese people were everywhere. Editors frequently emphasized, however, that Yugoslavia's assistance to Vietnam was non-military in nature.

Images of North Vietnamese soldiers were modeled after the iconic, socialist realist depictions of brave, heroic Partisans still in wide circulation throughout Yugoslavia, while photographs of American soldiers in the Slovene press emphasized the aggressive nature of ideologically confused young men. The Tanjug press agency had only three reporters in Vietnam, so many of its images were taken from American sources. Yet the selection and filtering of images certainly was different for Yugoslav audiences than what the UPI and AP intended for American readers. The caption under the following photograph, figure 7.2, from the January 16, 1968 edition of *Delo* reads “For whom and for what? – As world public opinion continues to oppose American policies in Southeast Asia, Hanoi has prepared to offer terms, if the Americans will stop bombing the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. South Vietnamese priests are calling for

peace – Yet the Americans continue to send pictures like this one throughout the world of victorious paratroopers who fight and die in the Vietnamese jungles.”

The condemnation of Vietnam seemed even to unite generations. On February 23, 1968 the Veteran’s Organization, ZZB-NOB published in *Delo* their response to a request from the American Legion to call on the NVA to respect the Geneva Conventions in their treatment of American POW’s. The ZZB-NOB asked the American Legion to first insist that US forces stop indiscriminately killing civilians with their aerial bombing campaigns.<sup>561</sup> From the literary journal *Sodobnost* to the student newspapers, everyone condemned American policies in Vietnam.<sup>562</sup> The mainstream *Delo* even published translations of articles by prominent foreign antiwar activists like Jean Paul Sartre, Noam



**Figure 7.2 For whom and for what?**

Chomsky and the American politician Eugene McCarthy.

In general, the coverage of the Vietnam War served to legitimize the Yugoslav regime. A 1975 public opinion

survey showed that 58.9% of Slovenes felt that the

Vietnamese had won their struggle because of “their endurance in the fight for liberation and reliance on their own strength.” Another 10.2% felt that help from outside

was crucial, while 11.7 percent felt that various factors were

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<sup>561</sup> *Delo*, February 23, 1968, 21.

<sup>562</sup> *Sodobnost* 16 no. 5 (1968 ): 449-450 (editorial by staff): “Above all, the obvious and fundamental core similarities of our situation during the Second World War to the National Liberation War of the Vietnamese peoples obligates us to pursue a sustained and deliberate solidarity with them” (Še zlasti nas obvezuje k taki prizadeti osveščeni solidarnosti za narodnoosvobodilniboj vietnamskega ljudstva naša situacija v drugi svetovni vojni, saj je imela mnogo ne samo zunanjih, temveč tudi bistvenih podobnosti z današnjo situacijo vietnamskega naroda).

important. Only 2% of Yugoslav respondents felt that the Vietnamese won because “the enemy did not use all of its military means.”<sup>563</sup>

### **Student Protests**

Up until June 1968, the Slovene press had been reporting extensively on student-driven political unrest everywhere but in Yugoslavia. From coverage of Maoists in the Sorbonne to race riots in Watts, Trade Unions in the UK to protesting students even in Sweden, it seemed obvious to certain editorial writers like the Tanjug correspondent in Paris that the world was on the verge of revolution, and Yugoslavian political and social theorists were in the vanguard.<sup>564</sup> Even state socialist countries like Poland and Czechoslovakia were not immune to the revolutionary spirit. Only Yugoslavia, with its perfect blend of democracy and economic equality through the system of worker self-management was free from unrest, so it seemed. The Yugoslav League of Communists’ leader from Serbia, Veljko Vlahić, expressed support for French students as late as May, arguing that these protests proved the correctness of Yugoslavia’s self-management socialism.<sup>565</sup> And Slovenia, with its burgeoning economy and high standard of living, was certainly first among the Yugoslavian republics.

On the first day of protests at the University of Belgrade, June 2, 1968, students were met by police brutality. Dozens were arrested, their student organization was banned, and police freely beat students in the streets and in custody. The Central

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<sup>563</sup> (vztrajnost v borbi za svobodo, opiranje na lastno silo...ker sovražnik ni izkoristil vseh svojih vojaških zmožnosti), Toš, *Vrednote v prehodu I. Slovensko javno mnenje 1968-1990* (Changing values vol I. Slovene public opinion 1968-1990, 196).

<sup>564</sup> On June 5, 1968 an interview of Jean Paul Sartre by *Tanjug’s* Paris correspondent appeared in *Delo*, with the comment, “according to Sartre, it is obvious that self-management is the only hope,” (očitno je da je samoupravljanje edino upanje).

<sup>565</sup> Kanzleiter, “1968 in Yugoslavia: Student revolt between East and West,” 85.

Committee of the Yugoslav League of Communists immediately cautioned the Slovene Central Committee to be wary of publishing too much information about the protests. They feared first of all that the unrest might spread to Slovenia.<sup>566</sup> When covering disturbances among foreign students, editors of Slovenia's main media outlets generally took the demands of these students at face value. When students in their own Republic rioted, however, these same editors waited patiently for instructions from the Central Committee before proceeding. The first Slovene newspaper report on June 5<sup>th</sup> stressed counter-demonstrations among the League of Slovene Youth, while minimizing or ignoring the far more numerous students who felt protest was a last response to an unresponsive party and youth organization.<sup>567</sup> As student activists did not use the national presses to communicate with each other, this handwringing on the part of the media and political elites had little effect on them. Significant protests at the universities of Ljubljana and Maribor began the day after the first protests had erupted in Serbia. For the first week, total confusion reigned in the Slovene Central Committee. The Yugoslav Central Committee provided the Slovenes with detailed lists of the slogans Belgrade students were using, including extremely subversive ones such as "Down with Tito" and "Change the Constitution."<sup>568</sup> But most of the politically oriented slogans simply called for the Slovene leadership to live up to its own values such as: "Students: if you would

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<sup>566</sup> 1968, 248, Študentsko zborovanje - demonstracije. June 4, 1968 letter from Central Committee of Yugoslavian League of Communists to Central Committee of Slovene League of Communists, 2.

<sup>567</sup> *Delo*, June 5, 1968, 2. An article on June 5<sup>th</sup> only briefly mentioned that some extreme elements were protesting, but maintained that the majority of students felt that "demonstrations and disorders would not lead to a resolution of problems" (demonstracije in neredi ne vodijo k reševanju problemov), and were planning to organize a counter-demonstration against the protesters on June 6<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>568</sup> 1968, 248 594/0385 3.6.1968, 1 (dole Tito, promena ustava [sic]).

like higher rent, tuition, and the increased stratification of our society – minimize the flow of working class youth into our universities!”<sup>569</sup> And most of the slogans were hardly political, asking for better stipends, living conditions, and rather innocuously, for the right to be able to remain in the dorms during school breaks.

From a student perspective, the vast majority took to the streets because of the unsustainability of their academic environments, and their lack of future career prospects. Dorms were overcrowded, fees continually rising, and stipends available, it seemed, only to those with connections. The entire purpose of the university as a social leveler was undermined by the fact that only students from wealthy backgrounds could afford fees and had the resources to provide suitable living conditions for themselves while studying. On the other hand, upon graduation, the opportunity to gain positions within their respective fields of study seemed almost impossible. Ideally, a self-managing republic should offer positions to those most qualified, who the students naturally felt themselves to be. While the student press contained frequent references to the injustice of older generations keeping better positions, such references would intensify into serious polemics in the second half of 1968, when the ZZB-NOB became much more vocal in its call for the protection of veteran privileges. In the mean time, Tito’s personal intervention into the student protests separated the vast majority of students worried about their current and future standards of living, from the minority willing to question the wartime foundations of Yugoslavian society.

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<sup>569</sup> AS 1589 III, 248, 594/0398, 2. Študentsko zborovanje – demonstracije (Student meetings – demonstrations). (Študentje ali hočete: višje stanarine – šolnino – povečanje diferencije v naši družbi – manjši priliv delavske mladine na Univerzo!)

By the end of the year, student-run papers began to deconstruct not only the failures of Capitalism and Soviet Socialism, but the shortcomings of all modern societies, including self-managing Yugoslavia. Editors at *Tribuna* in particular chafed at the glorification of violence that was endemic to honoring the memory of any war. J. Pelikan wrote with disgust in the June 4, 1969 edition of *Tribuna* that the Slovene representative to the International Court for War Crimes in Vietnam, Vida Tomšič (the same person who appears in chapter 5 as editor of *Naša Žena* and a champion of a women's history of the Partisan movement), was a poor choice because of a statement she made in 1966 on the Vietnamese struggle: "This is nothing else but socialism conquering the world . . . Of course such conquering always involves horrible sacrifices and the shedding of blood, but such is the cursed law of human history. Neither Christianity nor the Mohammedan Faith ever conquered without such violence."<sup>570</sup> Pelikan's critique highlighted similarities between imperialist capitalism and expansionist socialism, both of which the editors of *Tribuna* frequently juxtaposed to the supposedly peace-loving foreign policy of Yugoslavia. Where the images in the daily press evoked an emotional reaction against

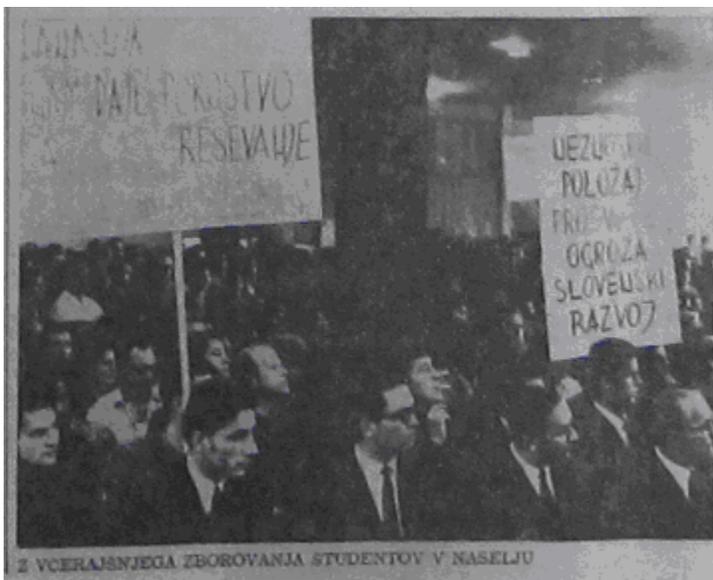
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<sup>570</sup> *Tribuna*, June 4, 1969, 6. There was no Central Committee response to this article, perhaps in part due to an issue addressed in an editorial by Sašo Srot in the same issue where he lamented the inability of he and his fellow editors to connect with their readers among the university students (*Tribuna*, June 4, 1969,1).

the perpetrators, student papers used these same images to argue against aggression, militarization, and war in general. Pointing out ill-worded statements on a war in which Yugoslavia had no military involvement was far less damning, however, than the radical student critique of Slovenia's politics of privilege. The lack of economic opportunity for students seemed a direct consequence of the respect to which World War II veterans found themselves so deserving.

### **Tito's Intervention**

In Slovenia, liberal members of the Central Committee had been monitoring the situation among students for years, and were ready with a novel solution: to simply delegitimize their concerns. Student organizations outside of the League of Communist Youth were not technically illegal, but the regime considered them illegitimate. So the first step in the battle for public opinion was to publish articles about the mechanisms for



**Figure 7.3** Students counterprotest in favor of regime, from *Delo*, June 4, 1968, 2.

redress available for students by using the official organs of the youth organization. On June 5<sup>th</sup>, two days after the beginning of the Belgrade demonstrations, Ljubljana student members of the official youth organization even organized a countermarch to proclaim their desire for order

arguing that “the existing democratic frameworks are sufficient . . . all problems can be

resolved within the framework of the self-management system.” The photograph from an article describing this countermarch, which ran in *Delo* on June 6<sup>th</sup>, appears above.<sup>571</sup> Of course many more students felt that demonstrations and disorder were the only means left to resolve their problems. Republican president Stane Kavčič encouraged the official student organization to be more introspective in preparation for their 8<sup>th</sup> congress. On June 20<sup>th</sup> student leaders indeed resolved to “do more and talk less,” which was also a response to a common complaint about the organization among protesting students.<sup>572</sup> Adult party leaders continued to act baffled by the fact that students were protesting without first lodging formal complaints. While the Slovene leadership would continue to use this strategy of confusion, Tito’s intervention on June 15<sup>th</sup> quieted most students and provided the League with a stunning propaganda victory.

Yugoslav politicians knew that when Tito intervened, debates were over. His intervention into the student unrest was welcomed by Slovenia’s leadership. On June 15, Tito gave a speech that was broadcast and published throughout Yugoslavia, where he praised students for rising up in the greatest tradition of socialist revolutionaries.<sup>573</sup> In his assessment, student protesters did not undermine the values of the war, but embodied them. He then used the issue of student uprisings to support his recent decision to favor the federalists within Yugoslavia, claiming that student issues stemmed from over-bureaucratization within Yugoslavia’s institutions. He then promised to meet all of the students’ demands, and over the coming months each of the republics did ensure that

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<sup>571</sup> *Delo*, June 7, 1968, 1 (Obstoječi demokratični ovirji so nam dovolj . . . vse probleme je mogoče reševati v okviru samoupravnega sistema).

<sup>572</sup> *Delo*, June 13, 1968 (preveč govorjenja in premalo dejanj).

<sup>573</sup> *Delo*, June 15, 1968, 1.

student stipends were increased and that more of these stipends were made available. In a previous address to the Yugoslavian assembly on June 9th, after promising to do everything in his power to help the students, he continued “if I am incapable of solving these problems then there is no need that I remain in my present position [as president].”<sup>574</sup>

Following Tito’s initial statement, several more from him and other members of his inner circle appeared over the next months, with nothing but praise for the students, but with an occasional reminder for students to present any remaining grievances through proper state channels (the League of Communist Youth). Behind the scenes, Slovene authorities met with student protesters, chiding them for not using official means to lodge their protests. Even before Tito’s speech, France Hočevar of the Central Committee wrote a resolution where he promised to meet student demands if made through proper channels, then cautioned the press to remain objective.<sup>575</sup> In the National Public Opinion Survey of 1972, Slovenes were asked to answer the following question: “There were major student protests and unrest throughout the world last year, such unrest appeared even among us. What do you believe are the reasons for such manifestations among us? Pick two answers [out of 12] which best represent your opinion.” The largest percentage of respondents, 30.1% answered, “the students have it too good, they don’t even know what they want”; next 22.5% answered “the poor material situation of students and unequal opportunities for study; 18.9% had no opinion; and 17.9% felt that Slovene

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<sup>574</sup> *Delo*, June 11, 1968, 1. Translation into Slovene from Serbo-Croatian: “če nisem sposoben, da rešim ta vprašanja, potem ni treba, da sem še na tem mestu.”

<sup>575</sup> AS 1589, 594/0406, 3.6.1968

students were “copying the example of global students (fashion).”<sup>576</sup> By 1972, the few remaining student protesters had failed to capture popular support within the Republic. Student critique of the politics of privilege surrounding war mythology had been largely delegitimized as the general public began to see them as privileged and spoiled.

### **Mass-media, in Czech**

In the last weeks of August 1968, the Slovene media gave the Warsaw Pact intervention against Czechoslovakia far more attention than it had given to either the Vietnam War or global student protests. On August 21, the presses of *Delo* literally stopped, and an entire issue was dedicated specifically to the plight of Czechoslovakians. Until the middle of September, the situation in what was usually termed the ČSSR (Czecho-Slovakian Socialist Republic) received front-page coverage, above the fold in *Delo* every single day. Over the next month *Delo* would also print a special section of news in Czech (České Novinky) for the relatively few but highly visible Czech and Slovak refugees who had availed themselves of Tito’s offer of temporary asylum.

Over the previous year the Slovene press had followed the events of the Czech spring closely. Alexander Dubček’s policies of “Socialism with a Human Face” seemed to mimic experiments with democratization and decentralization in Yugoslavia, giving welcome outside validation to Yugoslavs. Tito was quick in offering recognition and support to Dubček’s new government. At the end of July it seemed that the liberalizing Czechoslovak party would be able to withstand the wrath of the Soviet Union and

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<sup>576</sup> Toš, *Vrednote v prehodu I. Slovensko javno mnenje 1968-1990* (Changing values vol I. Slovene public opinion 1968-1990), 127. (PO SVETU JE BILO V LANSKEM LETU VELIKO STUDENTSKIH NEMIROV IN PROTESTOV, POJAVILI PA SO SE TUDI PRI NAS, KAJ SODITE, V CEM SO VZROKI ZA TE POJEVE PRI NAS? (Izberite dva odgovora, ki najbolj ustrezeta vasemu mnenju)), (predobro jum gre, sami ne vedo, kaj hocejo), (slab materialni položaj studentov, neenake možnosti za studij), (nisem razmisljal o tem, ne vem), (posnemanje studentskih protestov po svetu (moda)) [emphases in original].

Warsaw Pact countries. In the Yugoslavian press, the Soviet invasion of August 21 came both as a surprise and a worrisome reminder that the forces of supposedly reactionary socialism might again threaten their own system.

Behind the scenes, the Office for State Security exercised excessive vigilance in the weeks following the invasion. They monitored former Cominformists, recorded statements in favor of the Soviet intervention or comments critical of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, and expended extra efforts to prevent illegal crossings of their borders.<sup>577</sup> On the media surface, however, League leaders used this oppression as a rallying call in support of Yugoslavia's unique socio-economic systems, and progressive political values. At the end of 1968 the Yugoslav League's forceful condemnation of the Warsaw Pact invasion left the vast majority of Slovenes with pride in their federation.<sup>578</sup> It was a fitting end to a year that had poked at the foundations of Socialist Slovenia's legitimacy. The environment of overwhelming approval for the policies of the state also made possible the easy repression of the few remaining student protesters.

### **Radical Student Protesters**

By the end of June most students gratefully accepted Tito's admission of guilt and promise to remedy their situation. Conservative leaders viewed the remaining student protesters as either dangerous enemies or irresponsible extremists. Ultimately the focus of the ministry of internal affairs in the period after Tito's declaration became finding the

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<sup>577</sup> AS 1589 III 5 26/4 dela 4 in 5.

<sup>578</sup> Toš, *Vrednote v prehodu I. Slovensko javno mnenje 1968-1990* (Changing values vol I. Slovene public opinion 1968-1990), 68. In 1968, 59.9% of Slovenes felt that the Yugoslavian government's actions in relation to the Czechoslovakian invasion were correct. 19.3% of respondents felt that the government's actions were mostly correct but more could have been done to help the Czechoslovaks. The remaining respondents either opposed the government's actions, or felt unqualified to respond.

foreign elements influencing these protesters. In the minds of old fighters, enemies of the regime had to be associated with former collaborators beyond the borders of Yugoslavia. Though their relations to students were tenuous at best, some of these Yugoslav expatriates were serious threats. Those associated with the Ustaše, for example, committed acts of terrorism against Yugoslavian embassies abroad into the 1970's. Slovene authorities did not suffer physical attacks from Ustaše terrorists, but they were nevertheless extremely vigilant in policing the memory boundaries of World War II.

In the latter half of 1968, the same Central Committee meetings that dealt with subversive student publications also considered émigré literature critical of the Partisan war legacy.<sup>579</sup> On August 23, for example, the Regional Committee of Ribnica seized a letter from an alleged war criminal living in Rome, Vinko Levstik<sup>580</sup>, and forwarded it, along with their own commentary about how problematic the letter could be to the Central Committee of the Slovene League of Communists. Levstik had written a letter to the editors of *Dolenjski List* asking them to retract an article with accusations that he had been an interrogator for the Domobranstvo, directly responsible for the deaths of two Partisans. What the Central Committee found most damning about this letter, however, was Levstik's mention of "12,000 Domobranci killed in Kočevski Rog" at the end of the war. They worried that this letter might have been sent to multiple people and could

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<sup>579</sup> AS 1589 III, 248: summary of Executive Committee of the Central Committee of the League of Slovene Communist meetings in 1968, 10.

<sup>580</sup> AS 1589 III Box number 248 contains Central Committee meeting minutes from 1968 that dealt with such "dangerous social manifestations" (*družbeno škodljive manifestacije*) as letters sent from a former Domobranci interrogator, Vinko Levstik, living in Rome who contested articles in *Dolenjski List* characterizing him as a "butcher"; the need to better promote the example of veterans to the youth; and a discussion of articles appearing in the student presses *Tribuna* and *Katedra* which "mock" (*norčujejo*) the legacy of the NOB.

possibly sour international opinion on the Partisan war legacy.<sup>581</sup> The Levstik affair, as it came to be known, illustrates the fears state officials had over students who might go too far in questioning the Partisan legacy in World War II, and therefore, the institutions of Slovenia and Yugoslavia.

While students were free to make the most damning accusations about the state's inability to live up to its own values, suffering no repercussions against themselves or their publications, any hint of rhetoric that seemed to undermine the legacy of the NOB resulted in immediate consequences. Thus the Ljubljana University student paper *Tribuna* and the Maribor University's counterpart *Katalog*, were both temporarily denied publication rights in 1968 for "mocking the NOB and the ideological political system of our society."<sup>582</sup> The official statement of the ZZB-NOB was that "sullyng the revolution and her fighters – dead and alive – as we find on the pages of *Tribuna* is not art in the spirit of our cultural traditions and promises nothing for the cultural future of the Slovene people."<sup>583</sup>

Ivo Svetina's poem, "Slovene Apocalypse", published in *Tribuna* in October especially offended the leadership of the Central Committee and ZZB NOB. One line in particular, where Svetina rewrote the lyrics of a popular Partisan marching song to "Onward oh Brigadiers, Chop everyone to pieces, go find me a woman, then leave us

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<sup>581</sup> AS 1589 III, 1180/1, 08-149 594/0421, 10.9.1968 Informacija v zadevi Vinko Levstik (Information on the Vinko Levstik affair), 1-5.

<sup>582</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>583</sup> Ibid., 5. (Blatenje revolucije in njenih borcev – živih in padlih – kakršne nasledimo na straneh *Tribune* – ni umetnost v duhu kulturnih tradicij in ni obed [sic] za kulturno prihodnost slovenskega naroda). The ZZB NOB gave the statement containing these sentiments both to the Central Committee and *Delo*, which published it on November 13, 1968.

both alone,”<sup>584</sup> prompted a group of artists who rejected the radicalism of the student movement to publish an editorial on November 8<sup>th</sup> in *Delo* titled “Yes to Democracy, no to Decay.”<sup>585</sup> The signatories decried the avant-garde and modernist tendencies among student art, and called for a return to more classical forms. In a more forceful response to this poem the leadership of the ZZB-NOB argued that those who “write, draw and publish such things are morally and politically disqualified [from publishing], as are those who defend them.”<sup>586</sup> The editors of *Tribuna* responded that they had allowed the publication of material, even if they did not agree with its conclusions, because “humanism and democracy are only possible through the means of the equal exchange of opinions and the free expression of personal thought and speech.”<sup>587</sup> In an editorial in *Delo* on November 16, 1968 Matej Bor sympathized with one of *Tribuna*’s editors, Dmitri Rupelj, and cited Vojin Kovač’s “Chubby Manifesto of Socialist Revolution (Chubby Manifest Socialne Revolucije)” to argue that the established authority sees any evidence of independent thought as a threat. For a small group of students, this manifesto, named for Kovač’s English-derived nickname, “Chubby,” was a sort of Slovene *Port Huron Statement*, with an ambition to redefine the social and political purposes of Slovene art.<sup>588</sup> Most in positions of power, however, felt that the League of

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<sup>584</sup> *Entresiglo/Meddobje*, 1972, 1:1, 53-54. (Hej Brigade hitite, smrti vse pokosite, zensko mi ulovite, potem, naju sama pustite.)

<sup>585</sup> Rupelj, “Esej o Štajerski: se poraja mitizem” (Essay on Stajerska: Origins of mysticism), 1140.

<sup>586</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 (pišejo, rišejo in objavljajo take stvari moralno in politično diskvalificirani prav tako tisti, ki jih zagovarjajo).

<sup>587</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 (da je humanizem in demokracija le možna ob enakopravnem izmenjavanju mnenj in izražanjem posameznikove svobode mišljenja in govora).

<sup>588</sup> Svetina, “Pozorište Pupilije Ferkeverk ili pitanje rituala” (The theatre of Pupilija Ferkeverk or the question of ritual), 49.

Communists was managing society just fine, and certainly needed no input from student artists in the realm of politics. Incidentally, the scribe recording Bor's reference to this statement in the summary of Central Committee meetings during 1968 made two attempts to spell 'Chubby' correctly; first writing 'Chubbij' then crossing that out in favor of 'Chubbj'.<sup>589</sup>

A rising star in the Slovene party, Stane Dolanc, decisively condemned the Chubby Manifesto and Svetina's Slovene Apocalypse arguing that "there's no need in this situation to define the boundaries of ideological pluralism, the boundaries have already been drawn by shared human values."<sup>590</sup> The Slovene Republic's Secretary for National Defense, Rudolf Hribernik, would go farther than Dolanc, not only condemning the manifesto and poem, but comparing them to the kind of literature written by Domobranstvo propagandists during the war.<sup>591</sup> In a review of letters to the editor that the Central Committee undertook in the fall of 1968, they found that the majority of letters to the editors of major newspapers condemned the extremist students. The Committee noted the sentiments of one Božidar Lakota from Ljubljana as representative: "Freedom is not a personal prerogative but the product of a social contract."<sup>592</sup> The iconoclasm with which students attacked the mythology of the Liberation War ultimately only reinforced its hegemony in Slovene society.

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<sup>589</sup> AS 1589 III, 248, 4.

<sup>590</sup> AS 1589 III, 248, 7 (Nepotrebno je ob tej situaciji določati meje idejnega pluralizma, ker so se meje začrtale že v samih občečloveških vrednotah).

<sup>591</sup> AS 1589 III, 248, 8

<sup>592</sup> AS 1589 III, 248, 4.

Despite the worst fears of the Partisan generation, collaborationist rhetoric had almost no part to play in the discourses of 1968. The hardliner's focus on a small handful of students questioning the NOB<sup>593</sup> blinded these same officials to the the lack of opportunity facing a much broader segment of students. In the short run, it was Tito's intervention that allowed almost all of the protester's demands to be met. From that point on, the power of the state was no longer absolute, but conditional on its abilities to meet the ideological and economic needs of the majority of Slovenes. Over the next decade, it did so relatively well. For several years *Tribuna's* editors would endure various forms of unofficial censorship (such as presses claiming their equipment was broken, or that they had run out of paper), often causing the paper to cease printing for months at a time.<sup>594</sup> Yet, their alternative viewpoints continued to be printed and heard, often benefiting from the minor obstacles of seeming censorship. By the 1980's, rhetorics of the 1960's would again serve a purpose in making the Slovene masses equal negotiators with state powers. Certain legitimizing pillars of Yugoslavian authority, including a defined Slovene national community and a dominant collective memory of the Second World War, would

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<sup>593</sup> There certainly was a small amount of revisionist history that was smuggled into Slovenia across the Austrian and Italian borders. The Republican Secretariat kept a file of such "hostile propaganda" to the state in 1968, and included accounts of anti-state graffiti and statements made by individuals against Yugoslavian power. From 1589 III 5, 26/4, 1968 one finds limited evidence for propaganda that questioned the legacy of the Partisan War. For instance, authorities confiscated a leaflet printed in Trieste that said "Slovenes: Why Malawi, Basutoland, Namibia; why not Slovenia? We've had enough of Yugoslavia!" (Slovinci: Zakaj Malawi, Basutaland [sic], Namibia; zakaj ne Slovenija? Dovolj je Jugoslavia!). In Murska Sobota, officials noted graffiti that said "Long live Hitler, screw Tito" (Živel Hitler, Tito fuj!).

<sup>594</sup> In 1971, for example the Assembly representative Slavko Bohanec asked the president of the assembly, Miloš Poljanšek, if allegations by the editors of *Tribuna* of suffering censorship through the press's unwillingness to print their material were true. Poljanšek's spokesman, Milan Hasl responded to Bohanec's other questions concerning media policy, but ignored his question about *Tribuna* (AS 111, 056, 23-71, 10.9.1971, pp. 2/41-2/42).

underpin these negotiations, giving confidence both to the state and the people now its equals. Both claimed to inherit the legacy of the war.

In their seminal works on Yugoslavia's history, Sabrina Ramet and John Lampe use Slovene student protests as illustrations of the spread of discontent from Zagreb and Belgrade to the rest of the country. Trans-republic discourses certainly did inform student protests. The Ljubljana University student paper *Tribuna* contained material written by students from all over Yugoslavia, and even included a section with notable quotes from student papers in other Universities in Yugoslavia. But Ljubljana student papers, heavily informed by events occurring in Yugoslavia, Europe, and the United States, were also concerned with their own affairs. In an article on March 5, 1968 in *Tribuna*, after stressing the importance of French slogans to Slovene students, F. Pivec attempts to summarize student concerns by quoting an anonymous Zagreb student in Ljubljana: "The issue is the League of Communists. If they give us no substance, someone else will. We need to be thinking about bigger social and political issues in our country, and the necessary involvement of students in those issues; there needs to be greater activity as well if we want to change the situation at universities. I believe that students and graduate students have never been in a worse situation than the current." Thus for F., social and political issues are relevant, but the final complaint is that closest to home: F. describes poor living conditions and the lack of student health insurance as illustrations of a global breakdown.<sup>595</sup>

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<sup>595</sup> *Tribuna*, March 5, 1968, 3 (to je vprašanje Zveze komunistov. Če mi ne bomo dali osnove, jo bo dal kdo drug. Razmišljati moramo o velikih družbenih in političnih problemih naše države in o potrebnem opredelovanou študentov s tem v zvezi; potrebna je tudi večja aktivnost, ki bo spremenila stanje na univerzi. Mnenja sem, da študentje in diiaki še nikoli niso bili v bolj inferiornem položaju kot sedaj).

## Kočevje

On October 3, it was time again for the now-ritual sacrament at Kočevje, the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Conference of Delegates. This time, Slovenia's leaders hoped to use the memory of World War II as an example to wayward youth. The Presidency of the Assembly organized a committee, which began coordinating plans for the anniversary in April. This committee began its work by looking carefully at the plans for the Croatian and Bosnian commemorations of their meetings to join Yugoslavia. In Bosnia a television documentary was being planned, which convinced the president of the Slovene committee, Janko Rudolf, that there was a precedent to produce a similar documentary in Slovenia.<sup>596</sup> The Committee eventually funded an adaptation for television of a selection of memoirs, "Viharni Časi" (Stormy Times), that were first broadcasted on the radio in 1959. The Committee worked to coordinate the efforts of the Slovene Assembly, the Central Committee, the Youth Organization, and the Veteran's Organization.<sup>597</sup> Committee member Marjan Jenko convinced his colleagues to include the presidency of the League of Trade Unions among the invited participants, as well.<sup>598</sup>

By May the Council in charge of the ceremonies had agreed to hold commemorations in the Šeškov hall in Kočevje where the original Conference of Delegates took place, as well as the building of the Slovene Assembly in Ljubljana.<sup>599</sup> Between May, when the Committee finalized its preparations, and October, when it carried them out, the student movement and Warsaw Pact invasion had intervened. As

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<sup>596</sup> AS 1115 06-14/68, 8.4.1968, 1-4.

<sup>597</sup> AS 1115 06-14/68, 10.5.1968, 1.

<sup>598</sup> AS 1115 06-14/68, 9.5.1968, 1.

<sup>599</sup> AS 1115 06-14/68, 10.5.1968, 2.

early as the May 10<sup>th</sup> meeting, however, Janko Rudolf would emphasize that the “social and mobilization value” of the commemorations justified the expenses.<sup>600</sup> Joško Štrukelj disagreed, arguing that costs could be reduced without diminishing the appeal of the ceremonies.<sup>601</sup> In the end, 450 delegates arrived in Kočevje, whose transportation and hotel fees, in addition to the cost of the ceremonies, added up to 73,000 Dinars, while the commemorations in Ljubljana, which had been downsized to reduce cost, totaled 145,000 Dinars.<sup>602</sup> (The average monthly wage for all of Yugoslavia in 1968 was 862 Dinars).<sup>603</sup> In the meetings of the Slovene Assembly, the value of this commemoration became an explicit opportunity to show the upcoming generation an example of social responsibility. Edvard Kardelj further pushed through measures to ensure that schools across Slovenia took time to explain the historical importance of these events. State leaders dedicated a new monument to the Partisan fighters of the National Liberation War.

Despite the best efforts of the organizers to coordinate media through a publisher’s conference,<sup>604</sup> coverage of the event was far less than it had been during previous anniversaries. Maribor’s *Večer* carried news of the events from October 1<sup>st</sup> through 3<sup>rd</sup>, but Ljubljana’s *Delo* devoted only one story on October 3 to Kočevje, and carried a reprint of Sergei Kraigher’s speech at Kočevje from the previous day. Veterans of the ZZB-NOB would take note of this in an angry editorial in *Delo*, for they too had

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<sup>600</sup> AS 1115 06-14/68, 10.5.1968, 2-3.

<sup>601</sup> AS 1115 06-14/68, 9.5.1968, 1.

<sup>602</sup> AS 1115 06-14/68, 10.5.1968, 3.

<sup>603</sup> *Statistički Godišnjak Jugoslavije* (The Statistical Yearbook of Yugoslavia, 1971), 267.

<sup>604</sup> *Delo*, September 20, 1968, 2.

made explicit their desires for this commemoration to serve as a teaching moment for wayward youth. While Maribor's *Večer* gave front-page coverage to the event, analysis of the meetings was lacking, merely listing what occurred and who spoke. The directors of *Delo* editorialized the commemorations in brief summaries, and conveyed the message that these commemorations had an especially important educational value following a year of youth unrest. Before the commemorations even started, their editors ran a piece claiming that "we desperately need examples from the Revolution for our young generation."<sup>605</sup> As conservatives gained social power in Slovene society after 1968, the defenders of its memory culture wanted to make sure that the 30-year anniversary of Kočevje would receive far more media attention.

## **CONCLUSION, SUMMER OF TITO LOVE**

In Czechoslovakia, the revolutionary atmosphere of 1968 led to a military intervention. In Slovenia, it led to higher student stipends, lower fees, and an enormous increase in funding for the Communist youth organization. Tito's regime, it seemed, had never been more popular. Those who could not conform to the ideals of Slovene Yugoslavism in large part retreated from public life. Slovenes rarely protested the values of the regime in the following decade. But seldom did the symbols of the regime evoke great, genuine feelings of support either. The 60's were unique in the convergence of factors that brought destabilizing rhetorics to the surface, into the public realm, then dismissed them without ever effectively coming to terms with them. Despite increased funding for students, Yugoslavia could not guarantee careers to its intelligent young professionals. A more-visible youth organization could not compensate for the lack of

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<sup>605</sup> *Delo*, September 30, 1968, 7 (Vzori iz revolucije so mladi generaciji nujno potrebni).

opportunity for young college graduates to become part of Yugoslavia's elite. In the 1970's veterans would give themselves unprecedented benefits for their war service, literally robbing Slovene coffers of the resources it needed to empower its younger citizens. In 1967 no one questioned the legacy of these veterans. By 1970, debates over the importance of their memory were again silent. The silence of 1970 was very different than the silence of 1967, however, as veterans had only convinced themselves and lawmakers that their sacrifice had created a better life for all Slovenes.

Over the next few years, the League of Communist Youth was able to so effectively co-opt destabilizing tendencies among youth that there was essentially nothing left to protest. The state had met the concerns of its people, and provided mechanisms for even students to work out their needs within an official framework. While war memory barely informed the student protests, regime officials had been terrified by the potential that protesters might question the legacy of the NOB. In reality, the protesting students did not threaten any of the ideological pillars of the regime's legitimacy, but in Tito's spin actually supported the best traditions of Yugoslavian Communism, and helped to restore a revolutionary spirit that had been stifled by an overly powerful, overly centrist, and overly bureaucratic bureaucracy. During the 1960's, Tito skillfully side-stepped a revolution. Despite serious social pressures coming to the fore in 1968, the decade of the 1970's was perhaps the greatest period of Slovene support for the Yugoslav federation.

### **Part III: The Baby Throws out its Bathwater**

Chapters seven through nine describe the period when the mythology of the NOB rose to its most hallowed status, only to be destroyed as the state institution it supported fell into chaos. In the 1970's the League of United Warriors became entrenched in all levels of Slovene government, demanding that the state not only respect the legacy of the war, but pay ever-increasing benefits to its soldiers. These benefits would literally bankrupt the entire federation, often forcing Slovenes to advocate foreign loans to pay veteran benefits. As Yugoslav debt caused debilitating hyper-inflation, the once-marginal critique of the NOB mythology gained volume, and veterans' efforts to enforce the lessons of their generation became parodied by some and increasingly opposed by a vocal minority of Slovenes.

By the 1990s, however, as the new Republic shed its socialist moniker, many Slovenes felt more attached to their story of the war than they did to the government system created in that war. As Slovenes entered the European Union and NATO, many cautiously embraced the new order, confident that it was their own traditions that made them suitable partners with Europe. The story of the NOB as the victory of a small, united people against massive odds remained powerful for many in the new civic configuration.

## Chapter 7: Whose Memory is it? 1969-1985

*Those in charge must explain how the Liberation victory could have spawned such a disgusting fear of the enemy. They must explain how a responsibility to protect history can be separated from a responsibility to our fellow human beings... We will never be able to escape our nightmares and paranoia until we publicly admit our guilt, our enormous guilt. Unless we Slovenes make such an admission, the darkness of our past will forever cloud the promise of our future.*

Edvard Kocbek, 1975<sup>606</sup>

*For him there's no solution through a total revolution, son of a bitch 'n Janez wants self-affirmation.*

Pankrti, 1980<sup>607</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

After 1968 the Partisan war memory began to lose crucial segments of Slovene society. Youth had been largely appeased, but not incorporated into the memory cosmos of their state. Federalists had been effectively marginalized as Centrists took control, and Centrists felt perfectly comfortable with a war memory that placed Slovenia's Liberation Front in a subservient position to the Yugoslav. Veterans spent the long decade of the

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<sup>606</sup> Pahor and Rebulja, *Edvard Kocbek: Pričevalec našega časa* (Edvard Kocbek: a witness of our time), 150. The above quote is Edvard Kocbek's answer to Boris Pahor's question "What do you think should be done regarding the unknown fate of the Domobranci?" He referred to what historians now know to be the 14,000 captured collaborators that Partisan forces murdered one month after the end of the World War II. Though the Office for State Security initially suppressed distribution of the interview inside the Socialist Republic, the Central Committee later reversed that decision and Kocbek's answer became widely available. (Odgovorni ljudje nam morajo razložiti, kako je mogla osvobodilna zmaga spočeti iz sebe tako ostudno bojazen pred nasprotnikom. Povedati nam morajo kako more odgovornost do zgodovine odvezati od odgovornosti do človeka... Tako dolgo se ne bomo znebili preganjavice in more, dokler javno ne priznamo svoje krivde, svoje velike krivde. Brez tega dejanja Slovenci ne bomo nikoli stopili v čisto in jasno ozračje prihodnosti).

<sup>607</sup> Pankrti, "Totalna Revolucija" (Total Revolution), from album *Dolgcajt, (Boredom)*, 1980. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qt9MCuEvhNQ>. ("Totalna revolucija za njega ni rešitev, Janez kurbin sin hoče samopotrđitev.")

1970's seeking to spend their memory capital on pensions and special economic privileges, effectively liquidating any meaningful identification with war memory among other segments of Slovene society. In these years of memory quiet, the attempts of dissidents like Edward Kocbek and discontents like Slovene punk rockers to challenge the legacy of the NOB went largely unnoticed, but not forgotten. The subtle cracks they formed in the Partisan memory monolith would force a serious reevaluation of Slovene war memory in the late 1980's.

Despite public apathy, in the realm of history writing, the National Liberation War gained more professional attention than ever before. During the 1970's, historians produced dozens of monographs on Partisan topics, using the Republic's now well-organized archives. Detailed accounts of individual brigades, tomes purporting to give complete histories, and many collections of memoirs filled bookstores and libraries. This flood of historical work occurred in an environment where little antagonism existed between state, academia and League. Historians of the 1970's were remarkably loyal to the regime. As a result, they had little oversight. Former organs of historical control, such as the Historical Commission, had been disbanded in 1967, and the Institute for the Study of the Worker's Movement no longer had the ambition to control discourses, merely to contribute to them. In 1970 another Commission for the Study of History was formed within the Socialist Union of Working Peoples front organization, but this organization no longer had the goal to censor and control history, merely to ensure that all topics were being covered by members of the Institute and University faculties.<sup>608</sup> As

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<sup>608</sup> See for example the Commission's program for 1983: AS 1115, 18, 014, 1982, or Miroslav Stiplovšek's description of why he picked his research topic for his 1977 article in *Kronika*, "Razvoj delavskega in ljudskofrontskega gibanja na Domžalskem območju, 1935-1941" (Development of the workers' and

shown by people like the poet Edvard Kocbek, who would cross lines of accepted discourse in 1975, Slovene leaders still expected these historians to exercise discretion. In almost all cases, however, the Republic's historians proved perfectly trustworthy.

Historians' discretion at the beginning of this era reflected the propriety of a society that broadly accepted their regime and its values. At the beginning of the 1970's, the power of conservatives and Yugoslav centrists in Slovenia seemed as if it were at its peak. After 1968, most students, who had been the most extreme in their opposition to the State, allowed themselves to be co-opted and subverted by the League, and the majority of the population approved of how Tito had handled their grievances. The students' dismissal from the public sphere was so complete that by 1972 most Slovenes had little sympathy for the demands of student protesters.<sup>609</sup>

While countercultural students failed to win the support of even the majority of their fellow students, another event in the late 1960's, the Road Affair, briefly had the potential to seriously destabilize the Yugoslavian federation. Indeed some historians have described this affair as an important intersection on the drive towards independence, pitting liberal-minded Slovenes against conservatives, both in Ljubljana and Belgrade.<sup>610</sup> The power of the media event that created the affair crossed generations and many other boundaries in the rage it generated in Slovenes as a collectivity. As has occurred repeatedly since Slovenia's inception, references to World War II were rampant in

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people's front movements in the Domžale region, 1935-1941), 81. He writes that the Commission helped him to realize that this topic had not yet been adequately covered.

<sup>609</sup> Toš, *Vrednote v prehodu I. Slovensko javno mnenje 1968-1990* (Changing values vol I. Slovene public opinion 1968-1990), 127.

<sup>610</sup> See for example James Gow and Cathy Carmichael, *Slovenia and the Slovenes: A Small State and the New Europe*, 56-60.

discussions of this issue, which had essentially nothing to do with the Second World War. It was a public discussion over where to allocate funds for highway construction. Both centrists and federalists referenced the war to shore up their arguments. Paradoxically, conservatives' ability to take control of the potentially separatist rage generated by the Road Crisis ended the era of Slovenia's most liberalizing reforms.

In 1969 the Yugoslavian federal government secured a loan from the World Bank for infrastructural development that Slovene Assembly members, notably the decentralist Stane Kavičič, felt should be earmarked for a modern highway connecting Slovenia, and by default the rest of Yugoslavia, with Austria. The Federal Assembly, however, forced Slovene leaders to share this money with Croatians and Macedonians, which caused liberal Slovenes, led by Kavčič, to formally protest. Kavčič was under enormous pressure from his own assembly to oppose this federal move. On July 31<sup>st</sup> he received a letter signed by the leaders of five administrative regions and two ministers demanding that the decision of the Yugoslavian Executive Council be overturned. The letter cited massive public unrest over the issue, and made numerous arguments for Slovenes to keep the bulk of the loan, including that "up until now Slovenia has given enormous resources for the maintenance and reconstruction of the existing road network ... solving not only its own traffic needs...but making possible economic growth and the development of tourism in all of Yugoslavia."<sup>611</sup>

Slovene Federalists saw the Road Affair as evidence of an ossified, corrupt bureaucratic structure in Belgrade, which Slovenes were beginning to prove they could

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<sup>611</sup> AS 1115, 0612-2/69, 31.7.1969, 5 (Slovenija je ze dosedaj dajala zelo visoka sredstva za vzdrževanje in rekonstrukcijo obstoječega cestnega omrežja...Pri tem ni samo reševala potreb prometa na njenem območju...ter s tem tudi gospodarski rast in razvoj turizma na vsem jugoslovanskem prostoru).

do without. Yet it was precisely those Slovenes, notably Kavčič, who suffered the most serious repercussions from the Road Affair. In 1969 Slovene conservatives successfully convinced both their fellow Slovene delegates and Federal Assembly members that Kavčič had mishandled the Road Affair by failing to secure funds for Slovenia. At home the leader of the assembly and erstwhile mentor to Kavčič, Sergej Kraigher, reprimanded him for a lack of League discipline.<sup>612</sup> In Belgrade, France Popit pledged to work with federal structures, and even felt the need to explain that Slovenes were not planning to secede from the federation, which, as Sabrina Ramet points out, was “a sure sign that the subject had been broached unofficially.”<sup>613</sup> Edvard Kardelj even denounced alleged separatists in a newspaper article in which he argued that those calling for Slovenia’s separation from Yugoslavia were no different than the White Guard who tried to undermine the goals of the Liberation Front during the war.<sup>614</sup>

Within three years of the Road Affair, the conservatives France Popit and Stane Dolanc successfully removed Stane Kavčič from Slovene politics, and effectively silenced his liberal cohorts.<sup>615</sup> Dolanc convinced delegates that Kavičič was unable to administer, incompetent, and dangerously subversive to cherished values from Yugoslavia’s Partisan founding. Dolanc represented a return to those wartime values that had made the Socialist Republic supposedly great in the first place. By the late 1980’s,

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<sup>612</sup> Gow and Carmichael, *Slovenia and the Slovenes: A Small State and the New Europe*, 56.

<sup>613</sup> Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias: State Building and Legitimation, 1918-2005*, 224.

<sup>614</sup> *Delo*, October 24, 1969, 4.

<sup>615</sup> Gow and Carmichael, *Slovenia and the Slovenes: A Small State and the New Europe*, 56-57.

many would consider Kavčič a hero of reform — but not in the early 1970's<sup>616</sup> The global conservative backlash to the reforms of 1968 played out in Slovenia in a manner that sought a return to revolutionary, Communist principles in the face of market-oriented reforms and social liberalization. The cult of the National Liberation War would prove a key component of this drive.

Despite the relative calm of a population that largely supported its federation, and the centrists who had taken control of the assembly, Slovenia's secret police paid very close attention to the potential for continued unrest. Referring to the Road Affair, an internal memo from 1969 noted that "because of some primarily economic problems, as well as open questions about relations between the Federation and Republic...certain nationalist and chauvinistic tendencies have been felt in Slovenia, especially in the current period."<sup>617</sup> That same memo pointed out that no individuals or organizations had yet been found operating inside the Republic, but cautioned that political émigrés, the Roman Catholic Church, and bureaucratic-statist elements from the East (their term for former Cominform supporters who Security Services worried might become active again after the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia) could all try to exploit the current situation. Ironically, the memo claimed that Slovenia's good roads and open traffic with the West (the supposed lack of which was driving unrest in the Republic to begin with) made the job of tracking down such subversive material much more difficult. Its author

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<sup>616</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>617</sup> AS 1589, Republiški sekretariat za notranje zadeve, Državna Varnost, 29.9.1969, 1 (Zaradi nekaterih, predvsem gospodarskih težav, odprtih vprašanj v odnosih federacija – republika ...so predvsem v sedanjem obdobju v Sloveniji, nekoliko bolj prisotne nacionalistične in sovražne tendence).

admitted that separatists active in both Croatia and Kosovo were receiving much of their literature, and perhaps even weapons, through the Slovene corridor.<sup>618</sup>

For Slovene intelligence, however, the most serious among the potential threats was that formed by the foreign émigré community. The police infiltrated groups abroad, and knew that many just across the border were calling for Slovenia to separate from Yugoslavia. Yet the memo concluded that the threat from the émigré community remained, in 1969, only a potential threat. The writer of the memo reasoned that the 355 editions of hostile foreign propaganda and six enemy propaganda posters seized in 1969 was much less than that in previous years. Of the enemy propaganda posters, most were done by repeat offenders.<sup>619</sup> The memo further argued that not only were political émigrés' methods of propaganda ineffective (such as sending unsolicited mail to Slovene residents, who often complained to the local police<sup>620</sup>), but their fundamental misunderstanding of Slovene politics made them unable to connect with domestic audiences. According to the memo, foreign propagandists used information "about certain reforms that we are openly discussing and resolving" to promote their own agenda of "reconciliation with the homeland." The author posited that the propaganda probably only succeeded in influencing a small minority of the Slovene intelligentsia.<sup>621</sup> The

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<sup>618</sup> Ibid., 1-9.

<sup>619</sup> Ibid., 3-4. Office of State Security files record the slogans used on the posters and handbills, but unfortunately, do not contain reproductions of the posters themselves.

<sup>620</sup> One of the cases of hostile propaganda that the Office seized in 1969 was an advertisement for Vinko Levstik's "Hotel Bled" in Rome, accompanied by an advertisement for the Australia-based newspaper, *Slovenska Pravda*. Apparently certain Slovenes in 1969 shared a rather universal disdain for junk mail. Advertisement located among appendices to: AS 1589, Služba državne varnosti pri RSNZ SR Slovenije, 1969.

<sup>621</sup> Ibid., 3-4 (določene probleme reformskega in mednacionalnega značaja, ki jih v naši družbeni stvarnosti sicer javno obravnavamo in postopoma rešujemo...pomiritve z domovino).

memo continued that had this propaganda been influencing an actual organized group, it might be more problematic. The author then concluded that the fact that the Slovene émigré community had renounced the use of violence made them a far smaller threat than Croatian and Albanian expatriates.<sup>622</sup> Without completely dismissing the relevance of the State Security organization, however, the author argued that more funds and personnel were needed to deal with potential threats from the East and to support efforts to counter spying from NATO countries.<sup>623</sup>

Over the next few years the minor nationalist flare-ups that occurred in Slovenia were directly tied to pro-Partisan memories of the war. In 1970, for example, Tito cancelled a trip to Italy because of provocations from the neo-Fascist *Italian Social Movement* (MSI) party, including an assault on several ethnic Slovenes in Trieste.<sup>624</sup> In response, thousands marched in cities across Slovenia, with 3,000 people demonstrating in Ljubljana alone. During these counter-demonstrations, the Office for State Security was embarrassed by certain slogans like “Trieste is Ours!” and “Calm down Macaronis!”; slogans that seemed to level the moral high ground from which Yugoslav leaders hoped to peer down at Italian Fascists. Yet officers of State Security did nothing more than ask leaders of the protests to avoid such provocations.<sup>625</sup> Thousands of Slovenes in the early

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<sup>622</sup> Ibid., 4-5.

<sup>623</sup> Ibid., 7-12.

<sup>624</sup> AS 1589, Republiški sekretariat za notranje zadeve v Ljubljani, služba za državna varnost, (The republican secretariat for internal affairs in Ljubljana, agency for state security), V. Z-3/190, 14.12.1970, 1.

<sup>625</sup> AS 1589, Republiški sekretariat za notranje zadeve v Ljubljani, služba za državno varnost, (The republican secretariat for internal affairs in Ljubljana, agency for state security), V. Z-3/185, 12.12.1970, 1-2. (Trst je naš!, Makaronijarji Mir!)

1970's still felt the sting of a nationalistic slight, loyalty to their leader, and hope for the territorial enlargement of their Republic along lines that Tito himself had once advocated.

During the federal clampdown on nationalists in Croatia during 1971-72, the Office for State Security concluded that virtually no Slovenes sympathized with the nationalists to the South. In their analyses many Slovenes feared that Croatians might not only separate from Yugoslavia, but that reckless separatists might even cut Slovenia off from the rest of the federation. Most Slovenes favored harsh measures against the Croatians, and faulted a misunderstanding of democracy for causing the problems in the first place. The Security Office recorded fights that broke out between nationalist Croatians in Slovenia and Slovenes who did not share their sentiments.<sup>626</sup> Even the radical student group broadcasting through *Radio Študent* at the University of Ljubljana condemned *Matica Hrvatska's* nationalism. Its editors, however, also argued that Tito had become "hysterical" in his dealings with nationalists, forgetting that they needed to be treated fairly before the law. The radio editors then opined that perhaps increased economic opportunity would diminish nationalism throughout the federation.<sup>627</sup>

The above examples show specific moments in the early 1970's when Slovene support for the institutions of Yugoslavia was tested, and that support was proven to be overwhelming. Just as few opposed Slovenia's place within Yugoslavia, few opposed the memory structures that legitimized the Republic and Federation. An anonymous public opinion survey from 1972 confirms that when Slovenes were questioned about the

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<sup>626</sup> AS 1589, Služba državne varnosti pri RSNZ SR Slovenije, (The republican secretariat for internal affairs, agency for state security), V. Z-3/193 20/12 1971, 1-5.

<sup>627</sup> Appendix to AS 1589, Služba državne varnosti pri RSNZ SR Slovenije, (The republican secretariat for internal affairs, agency for state security), V. Z-3/193 20/12 1971, 1-3.

fundamentals of Yugoslavian values, the majority shared the vision of their leaders. When the Center for Public Opinion research asked respondents to rank Yugoslavia among 13 other countries in terms of “peaceful politics and image in the world,” 75% picked Yugoslavia first.<sup>628</sup> Surveyors then asked respondents to rank Yugoslavia in terms of “the opportunity that most people have to influence social policy.” Yugoslavia was ranked first by 46% of respondents, followed by 44% who picked “don’t know.”<sup>629</sup> When asked a question that referenced recent problems in the federation, “In your opinion, has Slovenia developed the way it should inside the Yugoslavian federation during recent years,” 47.3 percent of respondents offered a nuanced “in part” as their answer. Another 25% answered “yes” while 18.2% said “no.”<sup>630</sup>

Despite widespread support for its traditions, ambivalence towards Yugoslavia’s future would only increase during the coming decades, as a stagnating then collapsing economy did little to promote faith in the federation. In the early 1970’s, however, the centrists who controlled Slovene politics found their most ready allies among those who identified with the memory of the National Liberation struggle. In their official agenda for 1972 the veteran’s organization, ZZB-NOB, made mention of the recent crisis in Croatia, proclaiming that “Soldiers will never forget how many sacrifices have been invested in the new order. They also recognize that the breakdown in unity among our peoples will yield the same or more terrifying results as those of 1941, when nationalist

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<sup>628</sup> Toš, *Vrednote v prehodu I. Slovensko javno mnenje 1968-1990 (Changing values vol I. Slovene public opinion 1968-1990*, 133 (miroljubne politike in ugleda v svetu).

<sup>629</sup> Ibid. (zaradi možnost, ki jih ima večina ljudi za vplivanje na družbene odločitve).

<sup>630</sup> Ibid., 135 (Kaj menite, ali se je Slovenija znotraj Jugoslovanske skupnosti v zadnjih letih razvijala tako, kot bi se morala?).

hatred allowed the occupier to carry out his murderous mission so successfully.”<sup>631</sup> The leadership of the ZZB-NOB would remain loyal to the federation and its official values until the late 1980’s; after independence, its leaders continue to argue that the foundations of Slovenia’s democracy, rule of law, and social system stem directly from the sacrifices of the Partisans.<sup>632</sup>

During the 1970’s and 80’s the ZZB-NOB would become far more involved in Slovene politics than ever before, acting through its various committees almost like a trade union for veteran interests. As members of the Slovene League of Working People, ZZB-NOB lobbyists worked hard in the final two decades of Slovenia’s membership in the Yugoslavian federation to make sure their concerns were public issues. After the 1960’s, no Slovene sub-committee discussing Veteran’s Affairs, and no Slovene General Assembly meeting ever convened without an invitation for representatives from this

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<sup>631</sup> AS 1115, 024-14, 14.4.1972, 1. (Borci ne bodo nikoli pozabili, koliko žrtev je vloženih v novo ureditev. Zavedajo pa se tudi dejstva, da razkroj enotnosti med našimi narodi lahko enake celo še poraznejše rezultate, kot smo jih doživeli leta 1941, ko je narodnostna mržnja omogočila okopatorju, da je lahko svojo morilsko misijo opraviljal tako uspešno.)

<sup>632</sup> For example, almost twenty-two years after independence, on January 24, 2013, the governing council of the ZZB-NOB issued a statement of support for the protesters in Ljubljana: “members of the Council agree that the source of the spontaneous mass protests is a loss of faith in the current government, a government which through ideological blindness has only deepened the current crisis rather than trying to save the state from it...members of the council recommend changes, but changes that respect the fundamental values of the constitutional order (Slovenia is a democratic, social country under the rule of law in which power is held by the people)...the council believes that the key to overcome the current crisis lies in affirming the values of the National Liberation War – democratic self-determination, social solidarity, and humanist tolerance. The ZZB bears the message of the Liberation Front of the Slovene people and therefore unanimously joins the spontaneous, collective protest. With its active involvement the ZZB supports all participants of the protest movement regardless of ideological or political belief.” (so se člani Sveta strinjali, da je osnovni vzrok spontanih masovnih protestov izguba zaupanja v sedanjo vlado, ki v ideološki zaslepljenosti krizo pogloblja namesto, da bi državo reševala iz nje...so člani Sveta naglašali potrebo po spremembah, toda ob spoštovanju temeljnih vrednot ustavne ureditve (Slovenija je demokratična, pravna in socialna država, v kateri ima oblast ljudstvo)...Svet ZZB smatra, da je vodilo za premostitev krize afirmacija vrednot NOB – demokratične samozavesti, socialne solidarnosti in humanistične strpnosti. ZZB je nosilec sporočila Osvobodilne fronte slovenskega naroda in se zato vsestransko vključuje v spontani vseljudski protest. S svojo aktivno udeležbo podpira ZZB vse udeležence protestnega odpora brez ozira na ideološko ali strankarsko pripadnost). Available at <http://www.zzb-nob.si/aktualno/>.

organization to attend. By the 1970's their organization had become perhaps the most powerful interest group in Yugoslavia. The ZZB-NOB had transformed from its founding in 1948 as a sort of party transmission belt intended to mobilize veterans in the fight for socialism to an autochthonous machine, ever reminding the government of its socialist roots, and its obligation to maintain socialist values. And the interest for which ZZB-NOB members campaigned most actively was financial pensions. These pensions, privileges, and health benefits would literally bankrupt the federation in the early 1980's, but veterans' political clout made their benefits virtually untouchable.

The campaign for pensions was not a one-time campaign, given that during the years after the OPEC crisis the organization had to make sure that veterans' pensions increased enough to compensate for rises in the cost of living. The effort was no mean feat for people dealing with a currency that regularly inflated in the double digits. By the 1970's many members of the leadership of the National Liberation Front were at the height of their careers. Many in the lower-level officer core were in their 20's and 30's during the war, and still had considerable career and political power during the 1970's. It should not be surprising then that the site of the most vigorous debates in this decade involved deciding who could worthily receive Partisan pensions, how to categorize veterans, and how to determine the level of benefits that should be given to each category.

During the first two decades after the war state leaders largely ignored the needs of their veterans. These men and women were, after all, the best fighters for the new battle to build socialism, and should remain willing to sacrifice as they had during the war. They, like everyone else, were expected to give financial resources to the state

through volunteer labor and bond purchases. The state that was newly formed by the sacrifices of thousands of primarily young people, and was also newly in enormous debt, certainly had few resources to pay pensions. Those Slovenes who had been conscripted into the German army were actually eligible for pensions from the Federal Republic of Germany six years before a comprehensive law covered Slovene Partisan veterans.<sup>633</sup>

Thus in the early years, able-bodied veterans received only minor privileges distinct from the rest of the population (such as free hunting licenses, priority access to Agrarian plots, preferential access to housing in some locales, unofficial bias in hiring, and limited disability payments).<sup>634</sup> Along with all working citizens, they were covered under SNOS's Law on Social Security from April 20, 1945, which was enacted before the war was even over to replace the rather generous social security plans that Slovenes had become accustomed to either as citizens of the Reich or as subjects of the Kingdom of Italy.<sup>635</sup>

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<sup>633</sup> AS 1115, 012-12/63, 27.8.1963, 7-9.

<sup>634</sup> Early laws on veteran privileges contained in: Uradni List SNOS št. 12 letnik I/II, odredba 113, 27. junija. 1945; Uradni List SNOS št. 22 letnik I/II, odredba 168, 1. avgusta. 1945; Uradni List SNOS št. 255/35-1945; letnik III št 45, Zakon o stanovanjskih in poslovnih prostorih (law on residential and commercial spaces), 29. julija 1946, čl. 12; Uradni List SNOS št. 24 letnik I/II odredba 176; Uredba o priznanju in veljavnosti v času okupacije opravljenih tečajev in izpitov ter dosežnih izpričeval in diplom (decision on recognizing the validity of courses and exams as well as received certificates and diplomas during the period of the occupation), 8. avgusta. 1945; Uradni List LRS, št 10-24 II. 1948; Zakon o potrditvi, spremembah in dopolnitvah zakona o agrarni reformi in kolonizaciji v Sloveniji z dne 17. decembra 1945 ter zakona o dopolnitvah in spremembah zakona o agrarni reformi in kolonizaciji v Sloveniji z dne 6. aprila. 1946 (law confirming changes and additions to the law on agrarian reform and colonization in Slovenia from December 1945 as well as a law on additions and changes to the law on agrarian reform and colonization in Slovenia from April 6, 1946), čl. 17.

<sup>635</sup> For the SNOS plan see "Uradni List LRS št 47.1946, 6.7.1946, Pravilniki, navodila, odredbe in odločbe ministerstev vlade Ljudske Republike Slovenije, člen 1, (Procedures, instructions, decrees and orders of the ministry of the government of the people's Republic of Slovenia, article 1)." The Italian occupiers honored the former kingdom of Yugoslavia's obligations to its pensioners and gave Slovenes full citizenship rights as Italians as described in: "Pravilnik o izvrševanju proračunu mestne občine Ljubljane za proračunsko leto 1943, XXI/XXII; Kraljevina Italija službeni list za Ljubljansko pokrajino/Regno d'Italia Bolletino Ufficiale per la Provincia di Lubiana no 8A 27. Gennaio. 1943-XI E.F. (Guide for implementing the budget for the

In the late 1950's some Slovene lawmakers began to worry that the Law on Social Security for Workers, Civil Servants, and their Families, a 1950 expansion of the 1945 law, did not adequately recognize the unique needs of veterans. Article 136 of the 1950 law ensured that veterans, even if they did not meet the minimum eligibility criteria for retirement (being at least 65 years old and having worked 45 years) could apply time served in the NOB towards retirement.<sup>636</sup> In 1956 the Assembly's Council for Suggestions and Accusations discussed why they felt the 1950 law had not gone far enough. They cited examples of workers who received poor pensions because their earnings in the last year of work (on which pensions were based) were low due to health problems resulting from service during the war. The Council agreed that something should be done to ensure that veterans could receive at least a minimum retirement, no matter their work history.<sup>637</sup> As discussions on social welfare progressed during the

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city of Ljubljana for the budget year 1943, XXI/XXII; Kingdom of Italy's official bulletin for the Ljubljana region)." The German occupiers provided a social security and pension system for Slovene laborers who had been granted German citizenship within those areas annexed to the Reich. The German system was more limited than that enjoyed by Germans in the metropole but far more generous than the purely exploitative occupation regimes in much of Eastern Europe (where Nazi occupiers added almost no social welfare resources to existing bureaucracies): "Verordnung zur Ergänzung der Verordnung vom 15. Mai. 1941 über die Regelung der Sozialversicherung und Beitragspflicht für Arbeitseinsatz und Arbeitslosenhilfe; hier: Freiwillige Fortsetzung der Pensionsversicherung für Angestellte" in "Verordnung-und Amtsblatt des Chefs der Zivilverwaltung in den Besetzten Gebieten Kärntens und Krain, Ausgabe B, Klagenfurt, Jahrgang 1942 (Regulation in supplement to the decree of May 15, 1941 for the regulation of social security and contributions for employment and unemployment benefits: herein as a voluntary continuation of the pension insurance for employees found in "*The Gazette of Regulations for Municipal Authorities of the Occupied Territories of Koroška and Gorenjska*," edition B, Celovec, for the year 1942). All three laws available on <http://sistory.si>.

<sup>636</sup> AS 227, I, 960, Zakon o socialnem zavarovanju delavcev in uslužbencev in njihovih družin, čl. 136 (Law on social security of workers and civil servants and their families, article 136).

<sup>637</sup> Stenografski Zapiski Ljudske Skupščine Ljudske Republike Slovenije (tretji sklic), "Poročilo o delu odbora za predloge in pritožbe Republiškega zbora Ljudske skupščine LRS od aprila do oktobra 1956" (Report on the activity of the committee for recommendations and accusations of the Republic's council of the people's assembly of the people's republic of Slovenia from April to October 1956), (page 215), available at <http://sistory.si/publikacije/prenos/?urn=SISTORY:ID:1087>.

1950's most of the delegates and policy makers were themselves veterans. Even so, in order to insure proper input from these constituents, as early as 1954, Slovene President Boris Kraigher decreed that at least one member of the ZZB-NOB should be part of an Assembly Council discussing changes to social security law and healthcare in the Republic.<sup>638</sup> In 1964 the Executive Council of the People's Assembly would form a special Commission for Veterans of the National Liberation Army, which always had representatives from the ZZB-NOB in attendance. This group remained active into the 1980's.<sup>639</sup>

In 1958 the ZZB-NOB successfully advocated for a Law on Military Wartime Invalids. Though this was merely an addition to a legislative concern for invalids that had been in effect since 1945, the new law added special funds for health coverage, and made it possible for veterans to receive both a regular pension and additional money to compensate for the financial burden of their injuries.<sup>640</sup> This additional money would make up the difference between the average pension amount in Slovenia for that year, and whatever the veteran was actually making. However, veterans were stratified in the

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<sup>638</sup> Uradni List LRS št 14, 15. IV. 1954, Odlok I, Odlok o določitvi zavodov in organizacij, ki delegirajo člane v Svet LR Slovenije za zdravstvo in socialno politico, 5. aprila. 1954 (Working papers of the People's Republic of Slovenia, no 14, April 15, 1954, decision 1, decision on the designation of institutes and organizations which delegate members to the council of the People's Republic of Slovenia for healthcare and social polictics, April 5, 1954).

<sup>639</sup> AS 1589 III, 1180/1, 08-149, 9.10.1968, 8. Gradivo za IK CK ZKS, Informacija o izvajanju zaključkov CK ZKS o aktualnih problemih borcev NOV v Sloveniji, (Materials for the Executive Council of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia, Information on carrying out decisions of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia on contemporary problems of veterans of the National Liberation War in Slovenia).

<sup>640</sup> Stenografski Zapiski Ljudske Skupščine Ljudske Republike Slovenije (Četrtri sklic), seje od 1. septembra do 30. aprila. 1959, priloga o zdravstvu in socialnem zdravstvu, (Stenographic minutes of the People's Assembly of the Peoples Repulic of Slovenia (fourth edition) meetings from September 1 to April 30, 1959, addendum on healthcare and social health), 472-474. Available at: <http://sistory.si/publikacije/prenos/?urn=SISTORY:ID:1091>.

total amount they could receive, based on the number of years they had served in the war. Those who joined before the surrender of Italy, on September 9, 1943, were eligible for 100% of the difference between their pension and the average pension in Slovenia. Those who had joined after this date could receive only 85% of that same amount.<sup>641</sup> The categorization of veterans based on years of service remains part of the current Republic's legislation on benefits. In these early years legislators, most who were still veterans themselves, actually worked to limit benefits. As veterans aged, however, their organization would successfully demand ever-increasing financial rewards as compensation for their legacy.

Aging veterans were the elephant standing in the back of the assembly hall at almost every general legislative meeting in the 1960's — everyone knew that veteran needs would become an enormous financial burden, yet almost no one was willing to stand against the legacy of the NOB for the sake of financial prudence. In 1960 only 53 veterans in all of Slovenia were receiving full pensions under the stipulations of the Law on Military Wartime Invalids, though an additional 3,102 were receiving some level of financial assistance to compensate for otherwise low pensions.<sup>642</sup> For most of the 1960's, lawmakers had the convenience of procrastination to deliberate on veterans' needs. After all, most of the soldiers who fought in the Partisan units were only in their 20's during the

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<sup>641</sup> Sejni zapiski ljudske skupščine ljudske republike slovenije (četrti sklic) seje od 1. marca do 31. avgusta 1961 (Minutes of the people's assembly of the people's republic of Slovenia (fourth edition) meetings from march 1 to August 31, 1961), 329. Available online at: <http://www.sistory.si/publikacije/prenos/?urn=SISTORY:ID:1097>. AS 1115, Ljudska skupščina LRS Odbor za družbena sredstva, pododbor za ustanove (The people's assembly of the people's Republic of Slovenia: committee for social resources, subcommittee for construction), 12. junija. 1961, 2-6.

<sup>642</sup> Sejni zapiski ljudske skupščine ljudske republike slovenije (četrti sklic) seje of 1. marca do 31. avgusta 1961, (Minutes of the people's assembly of the people's republic of Slovenia (fourth edition) meetings from march 1 to August 31, 1961), 329, available online at: <http://www.sistory.si/publikacije/prenos/?urn=SISTORY:ID:1097>.

1940's, so time was still on the side of the delegates of the 1960's. They used this time to expand veteran's privileges as generously as they could, confident that the next generation of lawmakers would find the necessary funds. Though public opinion was on their side, these lawmakers' unwillingness to challenge veterans left state institutions enslaved to dominant historical discourses, leading the entire federation to financial ruin only two decades later.

Between 1958 and 1960, delegates expanded existing legislation on veterans several times. In contrast, farmers, a category of people still suspect to many socialist ideologues, remained outside the Republic's social safety nets. Many farmers, however, were also veterans, which forced lawmakers to broaden their imaginations to accommodate the burdens of collective memory. Farmers were not initially covered by the Law on Social Security for Workers, Civil Servants, and their Families. The law was amended in 1959 to include farmers, which prompted the Assembly to then amend its Law on Military Wartime Invalids in 1961 to make sure that farmer-veterans could receive the equivalent of the average retirement in Slovenia. While considering the expansion of the Social Security and Invalid laws to include farmers and their families, delegates like Angelica Boštjančič pleaded with other lawmakers to "not dispute how much they have given for our freedom, for our socialist order. Our material resources have grown enough that we should be able to resolve even their needs."<sup>643</sup> Pavel

Žirovnik, a delegate and veterans' representative from Kozjansko in the agricultural

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<sup>643</sup> AS 1115, Stenografski zapisnik 4. odbora seje za vprasanja dela in socialnega zavarovanja, Zbora proizvajalcev LS LRS dne 24. februarja 1960 ob 10 uri, 11, (Stenographic minutes of the fourth council's meetings for questions of labor and social security, council of manufacturers of the people's assembly of the people's republic of Slovenia from February 24, 1960 from 10:00 to 11:00), (Ne moremo osporovati koliko so oni prenesli za našo svobodo, za našo socialistično ureditev in ker so materialna sredstva že toliko porasla, da bi tudi za njih našli primerno rešitev.)

region of Štajerska, went even further than Boštjančič , arguing that farmer veterans should receive either a cash bonus or discount on what they paid into the social security and health care system, as “Agricultural producers do not overburden the health insurance system with things like colds, whereas industrial workers are obligated to visit a doctor to get some sort of legitimation that they were really sick and justifiably absent from work.”<sup>644</sup> Few in still-revolutionary Slovenia shared Žirovnik’s admiration for small holders, and his suggestion went nowhere, but no one could ignore Boštjančič’s appeal to the dignity of the Partisan generation. By 1965, farmer *veterans* and their immediate families would be covered under the state’s health insurance program; other farmers would receive no such option until 1969.<sup>645</sup> By contrast, their livestock had health protection against certain epidemics under the Law on Measures to Increase Husbandry and the Health Protection of Livestock, two years earlier, in 1967.<sup>646</sup>

Another expansion occurred in the timing of eligibility for benefits in the law on Social Security. Where the 1958 expansion guaranteed the full average yearly retirement for veterans who had joined before the surrender of Italy, many felt this was an injustice to veterans from areas that had been part of the Kingdom of Italy before the war. These people had been unable to join Partisan units until the area was formally annexed by the Slovene National Committee on October 11, 1943, one month after the cut-off date for veterans from elsewhere in Slovenia to receive full pensions. As existing legislation was

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<sup>644</sup> Ibid., 4. (Za gripo kmetijski proizvajalci ne bodo obremenjali zdravstvenega zavarovanja, delavec je prisiljen iti k zdravniku, ker mu je to nekako legitimacija podjetju, da je bil res bolan, in je bil upravičeno odsoten.)

<sup>645</sup> AS 1115, 06150 -25/65, 28.12.1965, 1.

<sup>646</sup> AS 1115, 06150-37/67, 10.2.1967, 1.

modified during the 1960's, the language in laws changed to include the exception of Primorska veterans. Assuming that loyal Primorska veterans would have quickly answered the call to mobilization that immediately followed annexation, lawmakers modified the deadline for privileged veterans to "September 9<sup>th</sup> or October 14, 1943."<sup>647</sup>

In 1966 many local councils had become overzealous in providing health care to farmer veterans, causing the presidency of the Assembly to worry that the Republic's resources were being over-extended, in the words of Janko Smole, "to broaden coverage even to farmer-veterans who joined the National Liberation Army only a few days before the end of the war."<sup>648</sup> When the presidency proposed legislation to curtail these excessive benefits, however, the Socio-Health Care Council rejected it, arguing that the presidency needed to look at the issue more comprehensively, in a way that did not discriminate against certain categories of warriors.<sup>649</sup> Assembly president Ivan Maček rather vainly assumed that in the future his presidency could "talk more clearly about the nature of proposed changes, so that everyone can understand our perspective — not just delegates, but even warriors. The issue could even be concretely shown, with numbers."<sup>650</sup> Though a war veteran himself, Maček failed to understand that numbers mattered very little in the collective drive to perpetually expand privileges for his fellow fighters. Little of this mattered to Maček personally; as a working member of the

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<sup>647</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>648</sup> AS 1115, 0612-39/66, 19.11.1966, 7 (...začeli uveljavati razširenje zdravstveno zavarovanje tudi kmetje-borci, ki so stopili v NOV nekaj dni pred koncem vojne).

<sup>649</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>650</sup> Ibid., 8 (zelo jasno govoriti o značaju sprememb, tako da bodo stvar razumeli vsi – ne samo poslanci, temveč tudi borci. Problematiko je treba tudi konkretno prikazati s številkami).

Assembly he received his own coverage, along with most working Slovenes, under the Law on Social Security for Workers, Civil Servants, and their Families.

Housing assistance was yet another category of privilege that expanded in these years. Veterans had been given preferential access to housing since 1945. In 1961, those veterans who either lacked housing or lived in substandard conditions were being documented by the ZZB-NOB, which worked with the State Fund for Housing and the Republic Lottery to provide new apartments for 762 veterans. During the 1960's, some programs prioritized these veterans according to years of service. In 1968, for example the Office of the Republic Secretary for Urbanism only recognized housing needs among veterans who had served between 1941 and 1944.<sup>651</sup> By 1969, however, the ZZB-NOB proclaimed that over the previous seven years enormous progress had been made, so that there were no longer any homeless veterans (of any category) in Slovenia. In their estimates, however, 2,715 remained in substandard living conditions.<sup>652</sup> Earlier that year the same organization estimated that 14,600 veterans lived in substandard conditions, but they revised that estimate downward as most were farmer-veterans seeking modest loans for improvements to homes they already owned.<sup>653</sup> Housing assistance for veterans

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<sup>651</sup> AS 1115, 59-21/68, Socialistična Republika Slovenija, republiški sekretariat za zdravstvo in socialno varstvo (Socialist Republic of Slovenia, republican secretariat for health and social welfare), 23.12.1968, 1.

<sup>652</sup> AS 1589 III, 1180/1, 08-149, 9.10.1968, 8. Gradivo za IK CK ZKS, Informacija o izvajanju zaključkov CK ZKS o aktualnih problemih borcev NOV v Sloveniji, (Materials for the Executive Committee of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia on fulfilling resolutions of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia on current problems of veterans of the national liberation war in Slovenia). By contrast, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development estimated that on a single night in January 2011, 67,495 American veterans were homeless (*Washington Post*, December 13, 2011, available online at: [http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/number-of-homeless-vets-down-12-percent-report-says/2011/12/12/gIQAznJzqO\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/number-of-homeless-vets-down-12-percent-report-says/2011/12/12/gIQAznJzqO_story.html)).

<sup>653</sup> AS 1115, 061, 12-6/69, Skupščina Socialistične Republike Slovenije, Komisija za vprašanja borcev NOV, (Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia, Commission for questions of veterans of the national liberation war), 19.2.1969, Ad. 2.

would remain a serious concern of the ZZB-NOB into the 1980's, and most in the various committees dealing with housing within the Assembly were sympathetic to veterans' needs.<sup>654</sup>

By 1969 the Republic had significant legislation and infrastructure in place to care for socially marginalized veterans, though very little for socially marginalized non-veterans. Those veterans requiring pensions or pension support, health care, and housing assistance were all able to receive generous financial assistance. Franc Krese would brag to fellow delegates in 1962 that their veteran's legislation was among "the most progressive in the world."<sup>655</sup> Despite their successes, many at the height of their careers were members of the Partisan generation, and they were influenced both by self-interest and the recent constitution to further legislate care for veterans. They had liberated Slovenia during the war, built the new state through enormous personal sacrifices after the war, and now, it seemed, deserved to live off the largesse of their creation.

Article 161 of the 1963 constitution made the protection of disabled veterans a Federal concern, meaning that in the future Republic, legislation would need to conform to another level of oversight.<sup>656</sup> By 1968 discussions were already underway for the next Yugoslavian constitution, which would make funding for veterans a wholly communal

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<sup>654</sup> Sejni zapiski ljudske skupščine ljudske republike slovenije (četrti sklic) seje od 1. marca do 31. avgusta 1961 (Meeting minutes of the peoples assembly of the people's republic of Slovenia (fourth edition) meetings from March 1 to August 31, 1961), 327-329, available online at: <http://www.sistory.si/publikacije/prenos/?urn=SISTORY:ID:1097>.

<sup>655</sup> Sejni zapiski ljudske skupščine ljudske republike slovenije (četrti sklic) seje od 1. februarja do 31. maja 1962, 1961 (Meeting minutes of the peoples assembly of the people's republic of Slovenia (fourth edition) meetings from May 31, 1961 to 1962), 91. Available at: <http://sistory.si/publikacije/prenos/?urn=SISTORY:ID:1099>. (med najnaprednejše na svetu).

<sup>656</sup> Official English translation available at: [www.worldstatesmen.org/Yugoslavia\\_1963.doc](http://www.worldstatesmen.org/Yugoslavia_1963.doc).

affair, yet mandate uniform legislation for these communes from a federal level.<sup>657</sup> Slovene lawmakers would resist the pressure to devolve responsibility to the communes, however, arguing with a summary to a 1968 meeting of their Assembly's Joint Commission for Constitutional Questions that "the Federal constitution should only govern those socio-economic questions that are of fundamental importance to the unity of its system," implying the need to stay out of Republic affairs, while still funding their responsibilities towards veterans.<sup>658</sup> In practice, after 1963 Slovene veterans could receive financial assistance on the basis of both Republic and Federal laws on invalids and social security. In 1968, for example, when considering all forms of assistance, Slovene lawmakers provided an average of 920 Dinars per person per month to needy veterans, while the federation provided an additional 690,<sup>659</sup> or 234 dinars above the average monthly wage for all Slovenes in 1969, 1,376 Dinars per month.<sup>660</sup>

Before this next constitution became law, Slovene delegates enacted the most sweeping legislation for veterans to date. At the beginning of 1969, the Assembly's executive council decreed that all veterans who had joined the Partisan army before September 9, 1943 (or October 14, 1943 if from Primorska), regardless of when they

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<sup>657</sup> See for example files from the discussions in 1968 of the succinctly named: *Joint Commission of all Councils of the Assembly of the Socialist Republic for Constitutional Questions Group for Researching the Roles of the Federation and Republic in Socio-economic and Political Areas as well as other areas of Critical Mutual Relations*, in AS 1115, 061.114-5/68.

<sup>658</sup> AS 1115, 061.114-5/68, 3.6.1968, 6-7 (da ureja federacija v okviru družbeno ekonomskega sistema le tista vprašanja ki so temeljnega pomena za enotnost tega sistema).

<sup>659</sup> AS 1589 III, 1180/1, 08-149, 9.10.1968, 5. Gradivo za IK CK ZKS, Informacija o izvajanju zaključkov CK ZKS o aktualnih problemih borcev NOV v Sloveniji, (Materials for the Executive Committee of the Central Committee of the League of Slovene Communists, Information on accomplishing resolutions of the Central Committee of the League of Slovene Communists on current problems of veterans of the national liberation war in Slovenia).

<sup>660</sup> Statistički godišnjak Jugoslavije, (The Statistical Yearbook of Yugoslavia, 1971), 377.

began collecting their retirement, would be guaranteed health insurance and a minimum retirement. Those who held the distinction of “Spomenica 1941” (meaning they had joined the movement in 1941) or were veterans of the Spanish Civil War would be ensured 960 Dinars per month, while those who joined the Partisan movement between January 1, 1942 and September 9, 1943 or October 14, 1943 would be guaranteed 85% of that, or 816 Dinars per month. The Assembly foresaw that these amounts would need to change each year to keep up with inflation.<sup>661</sup> The decree was intended to account for the unfairness that inflation had caused for veterans who had retired earlier, when average retirements were lower. A federal decree from 1967 had assigned Republics the duty of valorizing pensions to the rate of inflation.<sup>662</sup> The Republic’s 1969 decree essentially mobilized the ZZB-NOB for an annual campaign to expand benefits for veterans.

Over the next decade, former Partisans began retiring in droves, and each year the ZZB-NOB fought for greater privileges for these people in the halls of the Assembly. By 1981, 90% of the now 114,000 people who the ZZB considered participants in the NOB had retired. In that same year, campaigns for veteran privilege had been so successful that the combined needs of World War II veterans were consuming 33.6% of all government expenditures in Yugoslavia, from the level of the federation all the way

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<sup>661</sup> AS 1115, 59-8/69, Socialistična Republika Slovenija, republiški sekretariat za zdravstvo in socialno varstvo, (The Socialist Republic of Slovenia, republican secretariat for healthcare and social welfare), 10.1.1969, pages 1 and 3, in table 1.

<sup>662</sup> AS 1115, 061. 91-2/68, Skupščina Socialistične Republike Slovenije, Začasna delovna skupina poslancev in strokovnjakov za proučitev sistema zdravstvenega in invalidskega varstva ter zavarovanja in sistema pokojinskega zavarovanja, delovna skupina za proučitev sistema pokojinskega zavarovanja (The assembly of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia, temporary working group of representatives and technicians for researching a system of health and disability protection and insurance and a system of pension insurance, working group for the study of a system of retirement insurance), Ad. 5c.

down to the Commune.<sup>663</sup> These privileges included special recognition payments to those who had joined in 1941, veterans of the Spanish Civil War, and National Heroes,<sup>664</sup> whose funding comprised 70% of the total spent on all veterans.<sup>665</sup> These veterans were entitled to new cars every five years, special access to natural healing centers, the right to retire ten years earlier than everyone else, housing assistance, and generous payments on top of regularly earned pensions.<sup>666</sup>

The majority of veterans using up the other 30% of funds were still very well cared for. Invalid veterans and veterans who fell below ever-valORIZING income or retirement levels continued to receive assistance with health insurance, and pension additions. Despite financial woes, the ZZB-NOB continued to campaign for expansions to both categories of privilege and the definition of who could receive privileges. By 1981 certain pension bonuses were being paid to poor NOB veterans who lived beyond the borders of Slovenia.<sup>667</sup> As the veteran population aged, Social Security and the Law

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<sup>663</sup> AS 1115, 06019-1/82, *Financiranje temeljnih pravic borcev vojaških invalidov in družin padlih borcev* (Financing basic rights for veterans and wartime invalids and the families of fallen fighters), 25.11.1982, 2. By contrast, obligations to veterans in the United States for fiscal year 2012 consumed 3% of the federal budget (Department of the Treasury Internal Revenue Service, form 1040 Instructions, 104). The United States in 2011 had a similar proportion of veterans to overall population in 2011 as Slovenia in 1982: roughly 5.7% in Slovenia [114,000/2000000] to 7% in USA (*ABC News*, Nov 11, 2011, available online at: <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/us-veterans-numbers/story?id=14928136>).

<sup>664</sup> AS 1238, 941, *Zveza združenih borcev narodno-osvobodilne vojne SR Slovenije Republiški odbor*, (Alliance of united veterans of the national liberation war of the socialist republic of Slovenia, republican committee) 10.5.1972, 2.

<sup>665</sup> AS 1115, 06019-1/82, *Financiranje temeljnih pravic borcev vojaških invalidov in družin padlih borcev*, (Financing basic rights of veterans and wartime invalids as well as the families of fallen fighters), 25.11.1982, 1.

<sup>666</sup> AS 1115, 06091-24/80, *Zapisnik s pogovora delegatov iz SR Slovenije v zveznem zboru Škupščine SFRJ z dne 9.9.1980*, (Minutes of speeches of delegates from the socialist republic of Slovenia in the united council of the socialist federal republic of Yugoslavia from September 9, 1980), 3, 7-12.

<sup>667</sup> AS 1115, 06091-34/91, 14.10.1981, 16.

on Military Wartime Invalids expanded to account for more and more types of disability. In 1981 the Republic completed a spa resort on the Slovene coast specifically intended for veteran use, though only Spomenica 1941 and Spanish Civil War veterans had completely free access to this pool. By 1985 the Republic was paying for these special veterans to use hot springs, spas and natural healing centers across Slovenia, while post-September 9 or October 14, 1943 veterans only received funding for conventional medicine.<sup>668</sup>

While few dared to argue that veterans could do without some of their ever-expanding benefits, the question of how to pay for this burden continually vexed lawmakers. In 1966 the federal Assembly ruled that it would neither increase nor decrease funding for the basic entitlements it ensured to veterans. The Slovene Republic had forced the balance onto the individual communes, but by 1973 had assumed most responsibility for pooling and redistributing commune funds as the areas with the most veterans in Southern Slovenia were also generally rural and poor areas.<sup>669</sup> Between 1976 and 1983 the burden of payment transferred to Communes, though with assistance from a general Republic fund. In the 1980's some Slovene lawmakers tried to get the federation to reassume payment for veteran benefits. Only Serbian lawmakers (who were otherwise

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<sup>668</sup> AS 1115, 024-81/B, Program dela republiškega odbora ZZB-NOV Slovenije za leto 1985, (The program of activities of the republican council of the alliance of united veterans of the national liberation war of Slovenia for the year 1985), 21.12.1984, 2-4; AS 1115, 59-2/4-84, Republiški komite za borbe in vojaške invalide – Ljubljana, (Republican committee for veterans and wartime invalids – Ljubljana), 8.1.1985, 1-4.

<sup>669</sup> AS 1115, 061. 91-5/68, Skupščina Socialistične Republike Slovenije, Začasna delovna skupina poslancev in strokovnjakov za proučitev Sistema zdravstvenega in invalidskega varstva ter zavarovanja in sistema pokojinskega zavarovanja, delovna skupina za proučitev sistema pokojinskega zavarovanja, The assembly of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia, temporary working group of representatives and technicians for researching a system of health and disability protection and insurance and a system of pension insurance, working group for the study of a system of retirement insurance), 24.aprila.1968, pp.1-2. AS 1115, 0612-16/73, 24.maja. 1973, Ad. 5.

almost always at odds with Slovenes in this decade) agreed with the Slovenes. Serbia and Slovenia, after all, had the highest per-capita participation in the NOB, while areas like Macedonia and Croatia had very little. In a 1980 meeting, Slovene veteran Janez Japelj would subtly poke fun at those delegates who wanted the hugely indebted federation to reassume some of the burden, noting that the Slovene National Liberation War was fought by Slovenes, and that Slovenia could therefore fund its own veterans.<sup>670</sup>

As veteran expenses were literally destroying the society they claimed to have founded, the ZZB-NOB intensified its efforts to control that society. Veterans were not content to merely receive financial rewards for their service, but insisted that their experiences serve as a guide to all of Yugoslavian society. During the 1980's, the yearly plans of the organization consistently proclaimed their goals to influence society as broadly as possible. Unlike in earlier decades, there was no longer a commission to defend the memory of the war; the Institute for the History of the Worker's Movement had broadened its scope far beyond the NOB, and the Museum of the National Liberation War was poorly funded. By the mid-1980's, the Veterans Organization was the dominant defender of the Partisan-centered collective memory. In their yearly report for 1983 the presidency of this organization stated that "as a moral-political force on the basis of our Revolutionary experience, we participate in all areas relevant to resolving questions of self-managing development in our socialist society."<sup>671</sup> These areas included: organizing

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<sup>670</sup> AS 1115, 06091-24/80, Zapisnik s pogovora delegatov iz SR Slovenije v zveznem zboru Škupščine SFRJ z dne 9.9.1980, (Records from the speeches of delegates from the socialist republic of Slovenia in the united council of the Assembly of the socialist federation of the republic of Yugoslavia from September 9, 1980), 7-12.

<sup>671</sup> (se na podlagi svojih revolucionarnih izkušenj in kot politično moralna sila družbe vključuje v reševanju vseh bistvenih vprašanj razvoja socialistične samoupravne družbe) AS 1115, 061-83/B, 24-5/83, Statut

most commemorations of wartime events, maintaining and building new monuments, participating in delegate meetings from the level of the Commune all the way to the Federal Assembly, working as an active organization with the Slovene League of Working Peoples, maintaining a publishing house with four regular publications, cooperating closely with the federal organization, and working to influence the League of Socialist Youth. The goals they hoped to accomplish through these various mechanisms included “reinforcing the concept of the brotherhood of nations” by combatting the “chauvinism” that seemed so prevalent by the 1980’s, fighting against widespread “pessimism” in Slovenia, shoring up people’s faith in socialism and self-management, and working to promote careers in the military and law enforcement among the youth.<sup>672</sup>

While many of these goals were addressed through truisms, the final goal of promoting careers in the military and law enforcement involved very tangible actions. Those who wanted a career in the military and law enforcement were required to recognize the importance of the military effort of the Partisans, then were expected to replicate it by being willing to defend the fruits of the Revolution. In the aftermath of the student unrest in 1968, the ZZB-NOB intensified its efforts to serve as an example to the youth. In 1968 the veterans used the commemorations at Kočevje to explicitly teach youth they considered wayward. By 1973, the League of Socialist Youth had become such reliable allies of the regime that they helped to manage the 30-year anniversary of the Conference at Kočevje, under the watchful supervision of the ZZB-NOB.

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Zveza združenih borcev narodno-osvobodilne vojske slovenije, (Statute of the Alliance of united veterans of the national liberation war in Slovenia), 17.10.1983, 1.

<sup>672</sup> Ibid., 10-24.

The Kočevje conference actually followed the commemoration of the 30-year anniversary of the founding of the youth organization. In their preparations, associated publications, and speeches, the Slovene Youth Alliance's (ZSM) leaders made numerous mention of "those revolutionary values" as "important nurturing values that can have tremendous influence on us youth, and serve as ammunition in the battle against various foreign, anti-socialist influences."<sup>673</sup> To promote this influence, the ZSM organized such events as a hike along special paths important to the liberation of Kočevje, with the goal of having at least 20 youth from every commune in Slovenia attend. They held a special commemorative meeting at Kočevje, and organized sporting and music competitions. In addition to the youth festivities, the Central Committee held its now-traditional commemorative meeting in the halls of the Ljubljana Assembly building.<sup>674</sup>

Unlike in previous years, in 1973 there was little effort to court the media. No one planned any documentary movies or special television programs and little effort was made to record the event for public consumption. Maribor's *Večer*, for example, only ran a historical piece describing the Kočevje conference as the first Slovene parliament. They carried no coverage of the commemorative events in Kočevje.<sup>675</sup> The next day they ran an analysis of Federation president's Mitija Ribičič's speech at the Ljubljana commemoration, in which he emphasized that the conference symbolized Slovenia's

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<sup>673</sup> (revolucionarnih tradicij...Prav to je pomembni vzgojni factor, ki lahko močno vpliva nan as mlade, hkrati pa služi kot podstrek v borbo proti raznim tujim oz. antisocialističnim vplivom) AS 1589, 0380-16/73, 19.9.1973, 2 Narod si bo pisal sodbo sam, (the people shall write their own destiny).

<sup>674</sup> AS 1589, 0380-16/73, 19.9.1973, 1-2. Poročilo o poteku 30-letnica zasedanje zbora odposlancev slovenskega naroda v Kočevju, (Report on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the meeting of the council of ministers of the Slovene nation in Kočevje).

<sup>675</sup> *Večer*, October 4, 1973, 4.

willing participation in the Yugoslavian federation, and a need to continually protect that participation against chauvinists.<sup>676</sup> In showing proper respect to the Partisan generation, the youth leaders may have failed to effectively court the media, but they knew the importance of lavishly treating the Partisans themselves. In addition to paying for the transportation and hotel costs of all living participants of the Kočevje conference, youth leaders also arranged 46 dinars per person to cover wine, cognac, whiskey, beer, coffee, juices, beef tongue, veal, pork chops, potica pies, and cheeses.<sup>677</sup>

While the youth leaders of 1973 knew how to treat their elders fantastically well, just one decade later, members of the same youth organization became fed up with their constant menu of deference, and beef tongue. Starting in 1974 the ZZB-NOB took a leading role in preparing the population for the Territorial Defense Force's (TO)<sup>678</sup> yearly war games.<sup>679</sup> In these military exercises the TO would make sure that its troops, along with veterans and civilian volunteers, were properly readied to handle a fictitious enemy.<sup>680</sup> The veterans preferred to make scenarios that would force ordinary Slovenes to relive the veterans' World War II fantasies. Many war-game exercises involved long campouts in the woods, with no access to television or radio – the very tools that one would need to execute a modern defense. Veterans expected utmost cooperation from the youth organization in these yearly exercises, using these maneuvers as a teaching

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<sup>676</sup> *Večer*, October 4, 1973, 1.

<sup>677</sup> Addendum to: AS 1589, 0380-16/73, 19.9.1973.

<sup>678</sup> One of the greatest devolutions of power from the federation during the period of decreasing centralization occurred in 1968 when the individual Republics formed Territorial Defense as auxiliary defense formations to the main army of the JLA.

<sup>679</sup> AS 1115, 024-1/B, 21.12.1984, 4.

<sup>680</sup> *Delo*, October 3, 1974, 1.

moment par excellence. Such teaching moments, along with various commemorations of the glorious founding of the state, had become some of the only functions the now-collapsing state could reliably carry out. Desacralizing them in any way, as Janez Janša would do in 1984, would become a criminal offense.

Youth remained outside the privileged financial sphere of the veterans, and someone certainly should have recognized that they were a poor choice to maintain these veterans's legacy. By the early 1980's many youth began to bristle at their obligatory military service, which their elders saw as the only way young people could carry on the fruits of the Liberation War. In 1983 the presidency of the youth organization held a conference on the themes of Comprehensive Peoples' Defense and Socialist Self-Protection, during which the youth president Janez Janša read a 34-page report that expanded on an article he had previously published in *Mladina* titled "The Safety and Protection of a Proletariat State, with some General Thoughts on the Military as a Whole." The actual Committee for Comprehensive People's Defense and Socialist Self-Protection found his speech and article to be so subversive that the League leadership eventually purged Janša from the party (ostensibly for not properly updating his residency),<sup>681</sup> stigmatizing him to the extent that he was unable to find work for three years. They deemed Janša's thesis — that the JLA was a dictatorial power that alienated itself from the masses of the working class — to be a leftist, nihilistic critique of the

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<sup>681</sup> Sklep o izključitvi iz ZKJ, Zveza Komunistov Slovenije (Decision on removal from the League of Yugoslav Communists), Ljubljana Center filed in AS 1589, Državna Obramba, 1983.

current status quo.<sup>682</sup> Janša also breached the rather open state secret about disproportional representation of Serbs and Montenegrins in the officer corps of the JLA.<sup>683</sup> The Committee's report criticized Janša and people like him for "taking democracy and humanism as excuses to criticize our past and present."<sup>684</sup> The reviewers rejected what they saw as Janša leftist critique of Slovene bureaucracy. They bristled when he called Slovenia "Stalinist," and felt Janša to be guilty of the kinds of critiques coming from the peace movement and other social organizations that refused to work within the system to find solutions to the Republic's problems.<sup>685</sup>

Though Janša harshly criticized the bureaucracy of the JLA, he was not as anti-establishment as the establishment so falsely witnessed against him. His university training, after all, was in military studies. He began his official report with a lengthy tribute to the legacy of the National Liberation War.<sup>686</sup> He worried that over-bureaucratization, however, prevented more talented people from rising in rank, thus making the federation less battle-ready. He critiqued the culture of secrecy in the military, wondering why foreign military publications had data on numbers and types of weaponry in the Yugoslav army that not even active duty personnel knew. This culture

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<sup>682</sup> AS 1115, 15.4.1983, 2, seje komite SRS za splošno ljudsko obrambo in za družbeno samozaščito, (meetings of the committee of the socialist republic of Slovenia for general people's defence and for social self-protection).

<sup>683</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>684</sup> Ibid., 6-7 (V zakup jemljejo demokracijo in humanizem, jemljejo si pravico kritike naše preteklosti in sedanjosti).

<sup>685</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>686</sup> AS 1115, 15.4.1983, appendix, 1-3, seje komite SRS za splošno ljudsko obrambo in za družbeno samozaščito (Meeting of the committee of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia for general people's defence and civil protection).

of secrecy was far more damning, however, for leaving little recourse for abused soldiers, who he worried were often scarred for life. Janša decried the sale of Yugoslav military hardware to active war zones in the third world. Yugoslavia's Liberation War victory had supposedly created a non-aligned movement meant to inspire the third world, not destroy it. His most offensive critique (at least the critique most vigorously disputed) was of the yearly war game exercises, which he argued were always reported as positive, and focused on the theoretical weaknesses of an imaginary enemy, rather than the real weaknesses of Slovenia's own society.<sup>687</sup> To be fair, during the previous year Slovene President Viktor Avbelj admitted at a Central Committee meeting discussing General People's Defense that in 1982 Slovene units were surprised and confused by the unexpected snow.<sup>688</sup> The reviewers of Janša's piece pointed out that they did in fact review both positive and negative aspects of the war exercises in the mass media.<sup>689</sup>

While Janša criticized the defects of a failing system from within the system (he was after all president of the League of Socialist Youth), he nevertheless touched on topics that were far too sensitive for regime leaders. Like so many in 1980's Slovenia, he sought solutions that were outside the realms of traditional League thinking. In her 1984 volume on Yugoslavia, Pedro Ramet described this lack of faith as the telltale sign of an apocalyptic society; but ever the optimist, she was quick to note that she did not mean to

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<sup>687</sup> Ibid., 4-5, 12-19, 29, 32-33.

<sup>688</sup> AS 1589, K-DT-74/82, Komite SRS za SLO in družbeno samozaščito, 21.10.1982, 10.

<sup>689</sup> AS 1115, seje komite SRS za splošno ljudsko obrambo in za družbeno samozaščito, (Meeting of the committee of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia for general people's defence and civil protection), 15.4.1983, 2-3.

prophecy a foreboding doom for the federation, merely one of many possible scenarios that could be reasonably avoided.<sup>690</sup>

Several years before Ramet's analysis, and long before the young Janša began writing, Edvard Kocbek would insert a small but persistent chink into the armor of the NOB mythology. In 1975 he conducted an interview for Boris Pahor's Trieste-based periodical *Zaliv*, in which, among other things, he discussed the topic of the Partisan army's postwar killings of captured collaborators. Kocbek had long been in the regime's doghouse. In 1949 the former Christian Socialist member of the Liberation Front had published *Tovarišija*, in which he argued that at times Partisan brutality was excessive. In 1952 his fictional *Strah in Pogum* humanized Partisans to an extent that undermined their otherwise infallible portrayal in literature. Yet his open admission that the regime had purposefully killed thousands of unarmed prisoners at the end of the war was his most provocative accusation yet.

On March 18, 1975, Pahor published Kocbek's interview, along with several articles about Kocbek, in a small pamphlet titled *Edvard Kocbek: A Witness of our Time*.<sup>691</sup> "The little blue book," as it became known to regime authorities (the name illustrates how little regime authorities knew the book...the cover is actually light green), contains several articles in honor of Kocbek, then concludes with a short interview.<sup>692</sup> Kocbek talks about the postwar killings of the Domobranci in only three of 153 pages, but these pages, along with an earlier quote from an unpublished text that "every war is

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<sup>690</sup> Ramet, *Yugoslavia in the 1980's*, 1985, 4, 21.

<sup>691</sup> Pahor and Rebula, *Edvard Kocbek: Pričevalec našega časa* (Edvard Kocbek: a witness of our time).

<sup>692</sup> Omerza, *Edvard Kocbek : osebni dosje št. 584* (Edvard Kocbek: personnel file no. 584), 2010, 328.

cursed, even the National Liberation one,” caused leaders of the Slovene state and League to panic.<sup>693</sup>

Though *Zaliv* was freely available in the Socialist Republic, officers of the State Security Service monitored its activity, and knew from tapped telephone lines about the interview with Kocbek even before its publication. On March 20<sup>th</sup>, border security forces detained Boris Pahor as he tried to cross into Yugoslavia with copies of the pamphlet. They confiscated the material and revoked his Yugoslavian passport for one year. On March 28<sup>th</sup> his co-publisher Alojz Rebula was detained and questioned at another border crossing, though Alojz had no copies of the pamphlet. Though there was no official order to prevent the pamphlet from entering Slovenia, agents on the ground had effectively prevented it from reaching any meaningful audience.<sup>694</sup> Without explicitly censoring the pamphlet, the Republic Committee of the Slovene League of Working Peoples (SZDL) held a closed session press meeting on April 8<sup>th</sup> where SZDL president Mitja Ribičič warned the media of Kocbek’s pamphlet as part of a broader attack on Yugoslavia’s system of government, set to coincide with a worsening economic situation and the anticipated death of Tito. Media producers got the message, and cancelled two pending publications of Kocbek’s in addition to giving no coverage to the little blue book.<sup>695</sup>

On April 12<sup>th</sup>, however, SZDL president Mitja Ribičič publicly mentioned the pamphlet. During a speech commemorating the birth of national hero Dušan Kveder, he

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<sup>693</sup> Pahor and Rebula, *Edvard Kocbek: Pričevalec našega časa* (Edvard Kocbek: a witness of our time), 71, 146-148 (je vsaka vojna prekleta, tudi narodnoosvobodilna).

<sup>694</sup> Omerza, *Edvard Kocek: osebni dosej št 584*, (Edvard Kocbek: personnel file no. 584), 2010, 230.

<sup>695</sup> Ibid., 248-250, 443.

mentioned a Trieste pamphlet that sought to “apologize for the morality of our revolutionary leadership to white guard emigrants because we destroyed fascist traitors from the occupation during our final liberation operations.”<sup>696</sup> Ribičič was of course prominent among those revolutionary leaders. He led the Secret Intelligence Service during the war and was almost certainly one of the primary architects of the mass murder of captured collaborators at the end of the war. As a side note, in 2005 the Slovene Constitutional Court dismissed all charges of complicity in these murders against Ribičič for lack of evidence. In 1975, however, he ‘did protest too much’ as he feverishly sought to punish Kocbek for his pamphlet.

On April 18, 1975 the Central Committee became involved in the efforts against Kocbek, holding a top-secret meeting where its leadership decided that the best course of action would be to deflate any potential for Kocbek to become a martyr. On May 9<sup>th</sup>, they pushed the periodical *Naši Razgledi* to publish the entire blue book. Celebrating this move at another meeting on May 7<sup>th</sup> France Popit again referred to international forces trying to destroy Yugoslavia saying “They were expecting to get a new Solzhenitsyn or Djilas, to cause a commotion in the world that they could use for a new attack on Yugoslavia ... But now we’ve picked a different path, we’ve chosen a political battle.”<sup>697</sup>

Over the next year, none within Slovenia’s civic sphere would come to Kocbek’s defense, and many mobilized against him. On May 10 the former president of the

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<sup>696</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 256 (da bi se moralo naše revolucionarno vodstvo vodstvo opravičiti pred belogardistično emigracijo, ker smo uničevali fašistične izdajalce v času okupacije v zadnjih osvobodilnih operacijah).

<sup>697</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 284-285 (Oni so pričakovali da, da bodo dobili novega Solžženjicina ali Djilasa, da bodo po svetu lahko zagnali hrup, da bodo tudi to izkoristili za nov napad na Jugoslavijo itn...Sedaj pa smo šli v drugi poti, šli smo v politično bitko).

Slovene Literary Society and former National President Josip Vidmar condemned Kocbek's interview in the daily *Delo* for denying the role of the party in the Liberation War, and claimed that Kocbek and Pahor were far too friendly with the émigré White Guard community. On May 23 the current president of the Slovene Literary society, Ivan Potrč, insultingly denied Kocbek's Partisan credentials claiming, "Partisan warriors and communists cannot stand idly by but must offer a firm rebuttal," which for Potrč was that "this is an artistically poor book that wishes it was literature."<sup>698</sup> In June the former director of the Institute for the Study of Contemporary History, Bogdan Osolnik disavowed Kocbek as well. The former director of the Museum of the National Liberation War, Franc Zwitter, made sure Kocbek was removed from the list of speakers for a commemoration of the Partisan War across the Austrian border in Koroška that August.<sup>699</sup> His former Christian Socialist Partisan friends Tone Fajfar and Jože Javoršek disavowed him in a Serbo-Croatian pamphlet they published in July (*That Sorry Interview: A Guide to the Pamphlet Edvard Kocbek, Witness of our Time*), where they troublingly admitted that the captured collaborators had suffered "an unlucky fate," but claimed Kocbek was far too friendly with them, "which hurt only himself and his legacy."<sup>700</sup> Future defense minister Dimitrij Rupel and future president Milan Kučan were more guarded in their analyses of the Kocbek affair, but nevertheless felt that he should not be sullyng the legacy of the NOB. In his 1987 apology for how he had once

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<sup>698</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 292-293 (Da je to literarno revna knjiga, ki hoče biti literatura...partizanski borci ter komunisti ne moremo tiho mimo vsega tega in zato smo morali spregovoriti).

<sup>699</sup> *Ibid.*, 301, 353.

<sup>700</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 350-351 ("Taj bijedni intervju: povodom knjižnice 'Edvard Kocbek, svjedok našeg vremena'"...končna žalostna usoda the domobrancev...škodil predvsem sebe in svojemu ugledu).

treated Kocbek, Rupel would write that he was offended by the scandal the affair had caused abroad, feeling that a true patriot should “wash our dirty laundry at home, showing only a pretty face in public.”<sup>701</sup>

While none in Slovenia came to Kocbek’s defense, editors at *Der Spiegel* and *Deutsche Welle* paid close attention to the media campaign against him in Yugoslavia. Kocbek’s friend, the human rights activist Heinrich Böll, conducted many interviews supporting Kocbek. These interviews served as evidence to Slovene authorities of a broader international attack against Yugoslavia, showing the wisdom of their decision to assault Kocbek in the press rather than through the judicial system.<sup>702</sup> Böll’s involvement in the Kocbek affair caught the attention of papers throughout Yugoslavia, with Zagreb’s *Vjesnik* running the tabloid-style headline “Kocbek, Böll and Us” (Kocbek, Böll i Mi), which is also an only slightly ungrammatical way to say “Kocbek, Makes me Sick.”<sup>703</sup>

In his thorough study of Slovene Kocbek archives, Igor Omerza concludes that in 1975 and 1976 the Kocbek affair had little impact on the Slovene public. Though many leaders of its civic society mobilized against him, few seemed to notice at the time how damaging his accusations were to the primary pillar of regime legitimacy. Omerza notes that Kocbek’s pamphlet did influence at least the young philosopher Spomenka Hribar to confront the postwar killings in her 1985 pamphlet “Guilt and Sin” (Krivda in greh).<sup>704</sup> The next chapter will examine Hribar’s contributions to both the undermining of the

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<sup>701</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 408 (svoje ‘umazano perilo’ operemo doma, zunaj pa kažemo lep obraz).

<sup>702</sup> *Ibid.*, 345-347.

<sup>703</sup> *Ibid.*, 348. Using proper Croatian word order and the accusative rather than dative case, “Kocbek makes me sick” would be “Kocbek me boli.”

<sup>704</sup> *Ibid.*, 564.

regime's founding narrative and her role in forming an independent civic society. The Kocbek affair illustrates how vitriolic the guardians of Slovenia's NOB legacy were willing to be, even against a minor, three-page condemnation published on the other side of the border.

In between the Kocbek and Janša affairs, the regime had two more commemorations of the Kočevje conference to plan. While the 1973 festivities seemed a wonderful way for the ZZB-NOB to teach the lessons of the war to the youth, by 1978 the veterans' organization played no role at all, choosing instead to use its resources for the Yugoslavian AVNOJ commemoration one month later. Since the early 70's when the organization voiced its adamant approval of the policies against Croatian Nationalists, the veterans' group had been slowly moving towards commemorations that promoted a closer Yugoslavian Union, at the expense of exclusivist Slovene holidays. In 1978 the SZDL front organization formed a coordinating committee that managed to hold a small commemoration for veterans in Kočevje.<sup>705</sup> There was no special session of the Assembly in Ljubljana, and no special events for the veterans, and virtually no effort to court the media or promote commemorative tourism for the holiday. Living participants did receive a small medal to thank them for their role at the conference.<sup>706</sup>

Five years later many organizations worked to commemorate the solid founding of Slovene statehood, just as that very state's power seemed to be melting into air. As the economy of Yugoslavia floundered, transnational movements now competed with a

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<sup>705</sup> *Večer*, October 4, 1978, 1; AS 537, 0380-16, Kordinacijski odbor za proslavo (coordination committee for the commemoration), 27.9.1978.

<sup>706</sup> Appendix to: AS 537, 0380-16, Kordinacijski odbor za proslavo (coordination committee for the commemoration), 27.9.1978.

League that once had the ambition to control all facets of people's social lives. Peace movements, environmentalism, religious fervor and consumerism all vied with the League's rituals for the loyalty of Slovenes. Seeking greater legitimacy, in 1983, the state mobilized its historians to play a key role in the Kočevje commemorations, through the Commission for the Study of History. The Commission was organized that year. This was the first time professional historians had been given any role at all in the celebrations. The ZZB-NOB had one of its members in the leadership of this commission and the Commission was governed by the Slovene League of Working Peoples, but its main participants were historians from the Institute for the History of the Worker's Movement and the Universities of Ljubljana and Maribor.<sup>707</sup> Thus the erstwhile academic pariahs of the state were now trusted enough by a bankrupt leadership to lead its most sacred commemoration. These historians had proven loyal to the regime over the past decade, and they used University resources to cover expenses. True to their profession, these historians organized an academic conference in Kočevje, which interested almost no one. The organizing committee even postponed the conference until April 1984 due to lack of interest. Even many historians declined the offer to participate in the conference.<sup>708</sup> The theme was "The Kočevje Conference as a Delegate System."<sup>709</sup> Once finally organized, most of the living participants did not even attend.

The other commemorations followed many of the traditions that had been established in previous years, with the Slovene League of Working Peoples (SZDL) and

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<sup>707</sup> AS 1115, 18-014, 21.12.1982, 6-8.

<sup>708</sup> AS 1115, 0380-16, 6.9.1983, 7.

<sup>709</sup> (Kočevski zbor, delegatski sistem), AS 1115, 0380-16, 6.9.1983, 1.

People's Assembly splitting the bill. Local companies donated funds for decorations as well.<sup>710</sup> Before the commemorations began, the SZDL funded a museum display on "Building People's Authority" in Kočevje.<sup>711</sup> Unlike in 1978, the Slovene Assembly did hold its commemorative meeting in the halls of the Assembly on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, and the meeting was available for Slovenes to watch at 8:00 PM on October 3<sup>rd</sup> from Ljubljana Channel 1.<sup>712</sup> The previous day a delegation of four from the original conference went to Kočevje to lay wreaths on the graves of National heroes.<sup>713</sup> A Partisan choir sang, and a drama troupe performed Partisan-era plays.<sup>714</sup> People gathered for chess tournaments and the society of Slovene invalids held a commemorative bowling match.<sup>715</sup> The SZDL held a gathering on that same day in Kočevje, where people listened to a speech by the current Federal Assembly delegate and former leader of the Institute for the History of the Worker's Movement, Bogdan Osolnik. These participants were not treated with refreshments or hotel accommodations, only travel expenses and a daily honorarium.<sup>716</sup> The Slovene Postal Telegraph and Telephone service offered delegates commemorative envelopes, though they had to pay for them just like all other customers.<sup>717</sup> The

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<sup>710</sup> AS 1115, 06-72/82-1/1, 10.1.1983, 4.

<sup>711</sup> AS 1115, 0380-16, 6.9.1983, Ad, 2.

<sup>712</sup> *Večer*, October 3, 1983, 13.

<sup>713</sup> *Večer*, October 3, 1983, 2.

<sup>714</sup> AS 1115, 0380-16, 6.9.1983, 11.

<sup>715</sup> AS 1115, 06-72/82-1/1, 10.1.1983, 3.

<sup>716</sup> AS 1115, 0380-16, 6.9.1983, Ad, 2.

<sup>717</sup> AS 1115, 0380-16, 6.9.1983, 18.

commemoration that had once justified the entire Partisan fight was no longer worth the cost of postage.

## **Punk**

While the Kočevje commemorations were having less and less public resonance, an emerging culture of dissonance would completely confuse the Republic's repressive apparatus and prick the mythology of the NOB in a way that none before had been able. In 1977 Gregor Tomc and Pero Lovšin formed the punk band *Pankrti*. *Pankrti*, which is a play on the common Slovene pronunciation of "punk," but also means "bastards," were among the pioneers of new wave rock and roll in Yugoslavia, and had a significant following throughout the federation. Their first single in 1978, "Ljubljana's feeling sick" (*Lublana je bulana*), helped develop a devoted following for the band, but did not seriously challenge the regime's hold on power. League leaders had long resigned themselves to the fact that staying in power was worth giving up their original goal of completely controlling all aspects of society.<sup>718</sup> "Lublana je bulana" dryly mocks this recognition:

Ljubljana's got itself a zoo  
Sometimes it's got a circus too  
The zoo is always with us  
It's boring with no circus  
Ljubljana's feeling sick<sup>719</sup>

This song describes life in a society dominated by *panem et cirque*, where the bread is running out. Such an interpretation is more convincing when considered in light

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<sup>718</sup> Lilly, *Power and Persuasion: Ideology and Rhetoric in Communist Yugoslavia, 1944-1953*, 140-144.

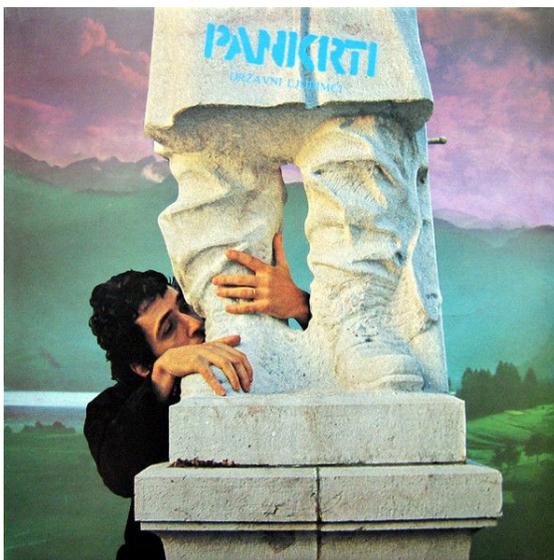
<sup>719</sup> Pankrti, "Ljubljana's Feeling Sick" (*Lublana je bulana*), from single *Lublana je bulana*, 1978, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=10WADEY4weg> (*Lublana ma živalski vrt, Lublana ma učas cirkus, živalski vrt je zmeri, če ni cirkusa je dolgcajt. Lublana je bulana*).

of the first song on their first full album *Boredom*, titled “Bread and Games,” from 1980.

Its lyrics include:

We want bread and we want games right away  
It’s all the same ‘cause we live for the day.  
Bread and games! We ain’t never going back!<sup>720</sup>

Those listening to *Pankrti* had spent their childhoods being compared to the self-sacrificing Partisans, who they could never equal lest the very fabric of Slovenia’s memory structures unravel. Now they wanted *panem et cirque* free from the burden of history. When *Pankrti* first came on the Yugoslav music scene, authorities tolerated their music as just another form of rock. Over the next three years, however, those who



**Figure 7.1** *State Lovers*

identified with the punk genre developed a highly visible subculture. This subculture seemed subversive by the 1980’s as punks began to parody symbols of state power. The cover to *Pankrti*’s next album in 1982, “State Lovers,” for example features a picture of Gregor Tomc kissing the feet of a statue that appears to be a generic hero from virtually any totalitarian state (figure 7.1).

In the background one sees a painted panorama of mountains, forests, farm-fields, and a body of water of the type that one frequently finds in nationalist posters – the strength and beauty of “national homelands” rarely align themselves so panoramically in nature.

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<sup>720</sup> Pankrti, “Bread and Games” (Kruha in iger), from album *Dolgcajt (Boredom)*, 1980, available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E5S07\\_zq\\_Mg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E5S07_zq_Mg) (Hruha in iger nam rajš dejte zdej, sej tko itak nočmo več naprej. Kruha in iger! Nočmo več nazaj!).

In case there was any confusion over the intention of this album, its first track was titled “Behind the Iron Curtain.”<sup>721</sup>

In 1980 another group, *Laibach*, began to worry authorities with its brand of self-described “industrial rock.” *Laibach*’s name immediately offended the Partisan generation, as *Laibach* is the German name for Ljubljana.<sup>722</sup> Their style of music and dress parodied that of totalitarianism a bit too convincingly for local leaders, who effectively barred the group from performing at any venue in Slovenia until 1985.

In 1981, Slovene president France Popit felt that the threat of neo-Nazism among punks was severe enough to warrant a crackdown. While right-wing ideology certainly influenced punks in Western Europe, in Slovenia it served far more often as a means to parody the professedly leftist system of Yugoslavia. In 1983, for example, Igor Vidmar was arrested in Ljubljana for wearing anti-Nazi punk buttons that nevertheless contained images of swastikas. He served a thirty-day prison sentence for offending national and patriotic sentiments.<sup>723</sup>

While avant-gardistes like *Laibach* were pressing the boundaries of state propriety, the more popular *Pankrti* began openly assaulting the Partisan legacy. In their 1984 *Red Album*, which they intended as a Communist version of the Beatle’s *White Album*, band members openly mocked the legacy of the NOB by rearranging popular Partisan songs to Punk formats. Songs like “Bandierra Rosa” and “Hey Comrades” were

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<sup>721</sup> Image and album information courtesy of Discogs.com, available at: <http://www.discogs.com/Pankrti-Dr%C5%BEavni-Ljubimci/release/771337>.

<sup>722</sup> Tomc, 1995, “The Politics of Punk”, 122.

<sup>723</sup> Tomc, *Ibid.*, 121.

performed by Partisan choirs at nearly every commemoration of World War II — they had the status of hymns in the religion of the NOB.

The regime rightly saw these various youth subcultures as a threat to their monopoly on power. Through police oppression and the mechanism of the youth organization, regime leaders specifically suppressed punk. A combination of successful tactics and changing tastes did in fact remove punks from much of Slovenia's public sphere. Disco remained. In his analysis of the police brutality, arbitrary arrests, and discrimination that lasted from 1981 until 1984, co-founder of *Pankrti*-cum-sociologist Gregor Tomc writes that “The punk culture never quite managed to recover from this encounter with the repressive apparatus of the party state, but then, neither did the Party.”<sup>724</sup>

## CONCLUSION

After 1968, collective memory of the National Liberation War became inseparable from the legitimacy of the Republic and Federation. The Partisan meta-memory took on meanings that both justified and were undermined by the personal and collective politics of a self-interested gerontocracy. The same people who fought to build Socialist Slovenia financially destroyed the Republic as they justified personal rewards on the basis of their legacy.

When students first challenged this bequest in 1968, the overwhelming majority of Slovenes rejected their positions. While few challenged the doctrine that the war victory was a building block of Yugoslavia and part of its basic, rather monolithic legitimizing narrative, a much more diverse society could not necessarily agree on just

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<sup>724</sup> Tomc, *Ibid.*, 114.

what that narrative legitimized. Veterans of course fought both for increasing benefits and to suffocate ordinary Slovenes with the honor of their generation. A few Slovenes began to reject this legacy: through parody and iconoclasm, as in the case of punks and industrial rockers; through outright rebellion, as in the case of Janez Janša's report on the bureaucratic failings of the JLA; or through questioning the very morality of the state's founding, as Edvard Kocbek did with his call to state leaders to account for the extrajudicial postwar killings of captured collaborators. The Partisan war memory began to slowly unravel as the state it legitimized could no longer afford to pay for both the upkeep of its founding generation and the socialist society it promised to all of its citizens. As the state began to fall apart, the pillar of its legitimacy became a focal point for those wanting to either deconstruct or reconstruct its ideological edifice.

## Chapter 8: Heirs of a Cold War...Going off the Rails on a Crazy Train: 1986-1997<sup>725</sup>

*The next step would be for a constitutional amendment that guarantees civic plurality...Such an ammendment would surely lead to long, drawn-out disccussions and perhaps something even worse, for rarely, if ever, does a political elite willingly give up its priviliges...*

Joze Pučnik, 1987<sup>726</sup>

*We pledge to cooperate with all parliamentary parties, all extra-parliamentary parties, and all other citizens with ideas that contribute to realizing a united vision for the future of Slovenia.*

“Europe Now: The Election Program for the League of Communists of Slovenia – Party of Democratic Renewal,” 1990<sup>727</sup>

For almost fifty years, Slovenes negotiated their individual lives either within or against the confines of an overbearing collective destiny. Approved histories of World War II grounded that destiny in a common struggle that formed the basis of a national community. These stories also justified the causes of contemporary regime leaders. They served as warning to detractors against socialist progress. And, after the 1970’s,

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<sup>725</sup> Osbourne, “Crazy Train” from album *Blizzard of Ozz*, 1980.

<sup>726</sup> Pučnik, “Politični system civilne družbe,” (The political system of civil society), 1987, 140 (...bo prava naloga ustavno zavarovati pravice civilnega pluralizma... Tukaj bo gotovo prihajalo do dolgotrajnih razprav in morda še do česa hujšega: silno redki so primeri, da se politična elita prostovoljno odpove svojim privilegijem...).

<sup>727</sup> “Evropa Zdaj”: Volilni program ZKS-stranke demokratične preнове, (“Europe Now”: the voting program of the League of Communists of Slovenia Party for Democratic Renewal), (Sodelovali bomo z vsemi strankami v parlamentu, zunajparlamentarnimi strankami in drugimi državljskimi pobudniki idej, ki bodo pripomogli k uresničevanju skupne vizije bodoče Slovenije), AS 1589 02/6-124/1, February 2, 1990.

these stories lingered as apologies for a failing state, creating an excuse to give unsustainable financial privileges to its heroes.

Between 1986 and 1997, Slovenes carefully reconsidered the building blocks of their old socialist order as possible ingredients to create a new state, new societies, and new forms of collective belonging. The history of World War II stood in the crosshairs of politicians, writers, journalists, and TV producers who effected a collective reckoning with the once-dominant, Partisan-centered master narrative. The new political, social, and cultural institutions actively engaged with the memory of a war that had been a cornerstone of the old order.

Many leaders of the new civic sphere had very personal connections to the discourses of the war. Of course, so did the majority of Slovenes, for whom the Partisan memory offered narrative certainty as they negotiated their own lives within a whirlpool of everchanging discourse. Individual experiences shaped much of public opinion in this period, which surveys show to have been in a state of flux between acceptance of the old Partisan-centered narratives and support for formerly illegal accounts of the war that created heroes out of anti-Communists. Leaders within the new civic sphere negotiated their plans for a new Slovenia within the structures of an increasingly powerful European Community, seeking either to balance the values of Europe with those entailed within the old narrative of the Partisan War, or seeking to completely reject the old story in the name of European values. After 1997, when Slovene policymakers knew they would be accepted into NATO and the EU, much of the popular uncertainty of this period decreased. The Partisan story of the war survived and its promoters skillfully reinterpreted its message to make it compatible with post-socialist Slovenia. The majority of Slovenes

passively accepted this history, neglecting to come to terms with the crimes this history had so long suppressed. Those advocating historical justice seemed to want more than compensation, they wanted a new history as well, one that many feared could serve as a legitimizing pillar for a sort of Franco-like conservative, Catholic Slovenia.

### **Reconciliation**

The philosopher Spomenka Hribar was one of the few people who seemed to take notice of Edvard Kocbek's 1975 interview in *Zaliv*, in which he discussed the postwar killings of suspected Collaborators. The revelations deeply affected her personally. By 1983 she began crafting an essay for a special collection by *Nova Revija* dedicated to Kocbek. In her essay "Guilt and Sin" she called for Slovenes to collectively come to terms with this national crime. "Killing people by the thousands as if they were livestock is a crime against the nation. It is a crime not only against those murdered, but against those who survived. It is a sin against both the destroyed, and against the very victors themselves. It is our sin, all of us."<sup>728</sup> For Hribar, that the very founding narrative of the nation was based not on heroism, but ruthless murder, meant that the nation as a whole had to find a way to atone for its sins. Her following corporeal metaphor fittingly conflates the individual with the collective: "Just as the right and left hands are part of the same body, so too were the murdered Domobranci part of our national body. They were part of my body."<sup>729</sup>

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<sup>728</sup> Hribar, *Krivda in Greh, (Guilt and Sin)*, 1990, 35, (Pobiti ljudje kakor, klavno živino, v tisočih kosih, je zločin nad narodom! Ne samo nad tistimi, ki so bili pobiti, temveč tudi nad tistimi, ki so ostali živi. Ni le greh nad poraženci, temveč nad zmagovalci samimi. Nad nami).

<sup>729</sup> *Ibid.*, 35 (Kakor sta levica in desnica roki enega telesa, tako so tudi pobiti domobranci del svojega, našega narodnega telesa. Mojega telesa). By 1985, Hribar had endured dozens of press articles condemning her yet-unpublished essay. In her first defense of her essay in November 1985, she replaced much of her emphasis on a nation with an emphasis on common humanity, writing: "Anyone who is or

In her essay on the moral implications of the killings, Hribar became the first in Slovenia to use the term “reconciliation,” calling for it on a public level as the only way to repair a nation that was scarred from its very founding. She defined national reconciliation as “the cohesion of all national forces, of all creative powers within a nation, a cohesion that only emerges through recognizing plurality of thought, all of which is directed towards a unified Slovene being.” She continued that “any form of ideological exclusivity is fatally dangerous.”<sup>730</sup> Without such a process of coming to terms with the past, Hribar could only foresee a future where the guilt and suffering associated with extrajudicial killing would remain personal affairs. By spreading the burden across the nation as a whole, she predicted a real ability to deal with the gravity of these murders.<sup>731</sup>

But in 1984, before Hribar had even submitted a draft of her essay, the Office for State Security began questioning her, and forced the avant-garde journal, *Nova Revija* to omit Hribar’s piece from their collection on Edvard Kocbek. For security officers and Central Committee members, the most problematic portion of her essay was at the very

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does is another human me, and in that regard, my neighbor. Making peace with that idea, that we are all people, only people, is the basis of national reconciliation as I see it...” (Vse, kar kdor koli počne ali je, je moj drugi človeški jaz – in v tem smislu: bližnik. Zmiritev s to resnico, da smo vsi ljudje, samo ljudje, je bistvo narodne sprave, kakor jo jaz pojmujem...). Quoted in Slabe, *Slovenska narodna sprava v časopisju (1984-1997) : diplomsko delo*, (Slovene national reconciliation in the newspapers (1984-1997): dissertation). 1984, 62. By 1992 Hribar would completely distance herself from what she considered to be the chauvinistic nationalism that caused many in Slovenia to oppose giving benefits of citizenship to non-ethnic Slovenes from areas in the former Yugoslavia. In a 2007 interview she told Jure Trampuš that many began to target her own ethnic origins in this period, to show that she could not be a real spokesperson for Slovenes because of her Serbian father. *Mladina*, July 20, 2012, available online at: <http://www.mladina.si/114256/spomenka-hribar-obema-stranema-skrajnim-na-desnici-in-skrajni-levici-vseskozi-ustreza-da/>.

<sup>730</sup> Hribar, *Krivda in Greh, (Guilt and Sin)*, 1990, 62 (kohezija vseh narodnih sil, vseh ustvarjalnih sil v narodu, kohezija ki se more kazati le v priznanju nazorskega pluralizma, usmerjenega v enotno slovensko bit).

<sup>731</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-27.

end, where she called for an obelisk to be erected to those murdered Domobranci in the center of Ljubljana.<sup>732</sup> Though *Nova Revija* only had a circulation of 3,500, it had already become a center of anti-regime thinking and its essays influenced other, more widely read periodicals such as *Mladina*, with a circulation of 50,000. By 1987, even mainstream media such as RTV-Slovenija and Delo covered essays in *Nova Revija*.<sup>733</sup> Hribar's proposed obelisk would therefore pierce the very foundation of Slovenia's NOB mythology, and in 1984, state leaders could not tolerate such a proposal. So, without allowing her to publish any defense, let alone her original essay, certain writers initiated a limited press campaign against her in 1984 and 85.<sup>734</sup> The very issue of her proposed monument to all who died during the war became the talking point around which her detractors characterized her call for national reconciliation. Dušan Mevlja expressed his anger in the form of a poem that ran on January 24, 1985 in the ZZB-NOB's publication *TV-15*:

In answer to her insistent, emotional imploring,  
in Ljubljana should be built,  
to praise the turncoats' guilt,  
in memory of all traitors – an obelisk soaring!  
This will finally eliminate distinction,  
as surely all died for their nation,  
on this side or the other,  
Partisan or collaborator...  
With such a thought coming from her brain,  
God knows she's surely insane!  
Perhaps ours are as worthy as Germans deaths,  
should now even they have wreaths?

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<sup>732</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>733</sup> Circulation for *Nova Revija* printed on back cover during 1980's. Circulation for *Mladina* taken from Gow and Carmichael, *Slovenia and the Slovenes: A Small State and the New Europe*, 94-95.

<sup>734</sup> Slabe, *Slovenska narodna sprava v časopisju (1984-1997) : diplomsko delo, (Slovene national reconciliation in the newspapers (1984-1997): dissertation)*, 2004, 10.

For her emotionally distressed proposal,  
does Spomenka too need an obelisk memorial...?!<sup>735</sup>

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Poetics notwithstanding, the sin and guilt that Hribar described could not be forever kept under the rug, not in 1980's-era Slovenia. In 1986 Maribor University's student paper *Katedra* ran excerpts from her essay and in 1987 *Nova Revija* published the complete essay in an edition dedicated to Edvard Kocbek.<sup>736</sup> Before publishing her complete essay the editors of *Nova Revija* gave Hribar a chance to sharpen her analysis of the reasons behind the postwar killings in "Avant-garde Hatred and Reconciliation," which ran in the journal's 57<sup>th</sup> issue at the beginning of 1987. In this article she described the process through which first the Slovene party, then Yugoslavian party, took control of the Liberation Front.<sup>737</sup> The process ended by creating "übermenschen" out of party functionaries who became "impeccable, direct, objective sources of truth and justice, or rather: Truth."<sup>738</sup> She defined avant-gardistes as those who possessed absolute truth, equating their own will to that of the people, which in the Slovene case allowed Communists to then dismiss large sections of the Slovene population from the national

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<sup>735</sup> Quoted in Slabe, *Slovenska narodna sprava v časopisju (1984-1997) : diplomsko delo, (Slovene national reconciliation in the newspapers (1984-1997): dissertation)*, 2004, 61, (Na njen roteči, čustveni pritisk, naj bi zgradili sred Ljubljane, da povečamo prodane, v spomin vseh izdajalcev – obelisk! Ker končno, kaj bi ločevali, saj brez razlike vsi za dom so pali, na tej ali na drugi vojni strani: belogardisti ali partizani. ... Če misel tako porodi se v glavi, bogme, da tale glava ne pri pravi! Ker so nas družno z nemci vred morili, naj bi jih zdaj za to še počastili? Naj za to predlog, poln čusnih stisk, zgradimo še Spomenki obelisk...?!).

<sup>736</sup> *Mladina*, July 20, 2012, interview with Spomenka Hribar by Jure Trampuš. Available online at: <http://www.mladina.si/114256/spomenka-hribar-obema-stranema-skrajnim-na-desnici-in-skrajni-levici-vseskozi-ustreza-da/>

<sup>737</sup> Hribar, "Avantgardno sovraštvo in sprava," (Avantgard hatred and reconciliation), 1987, 75-85.

<sup>738</sup> *Ibid.*, 80 (...Nad-človeka; on je nosilec Resnice in Pravice, in sicer neposredno in popolno, njegova resnica je *objektivna resnica*, torej Resnica [emphasis in original]).

community.<sup>739</sup> This was the first article where she defended her concept of reconciliation, calling it “an alternative to avant-gardism ... one that does not destroy but creates...the soil from which grow *love* and *memory*. [An idea] that denies the homeland to none, that excommunicates neither living nor dead from the national community, but rather gathers all people in an attitude of acceptance, tolerance, and cooperation.”<sup>740</sup> She then descended from her lofty idealism directly into the chambers of the Central Committee, calling on Communists to “step down from the pedestal of avant-gardism, as the only way to engage in real dialogue with the masses...is to give up its apriori knowledge of ‘objective truth.’”<sup>741</sup> In her epilogue she concluded that she meant every word she wrote, though no law protected her freedom of thought.<sup>742</sup>

Hribar’s was no lone voice. The entire 57<sup>th</sup> edition of *Nova Revija*, subtitled *Contributions to a Slovene National Program*, explored alternatives to the status quo of a League that professed total control over politics, society, and economy. Though banned by the Slovene Central Committee, this edition was widely distributed across Slovenia. The web portal for the “Slovene Spring” maintained by the Museum of Contemporary History in Ljubljana considers this issue a turning point in the path to Slovene

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<sup>739</sup> Ibid., 86-87.

<sup>740</sup> Ibid., 101 (alternative avantgardnosti, ki ne podira ampak gradi...’zemlja’, iz katere rasteta *ljubezen* in *spomin*. Nikomur ne odreka domovine, nikogar ne ekskomunira, ne živega ne mrtvega, temveč zbira ljudi v dopušcanje in tolerantno medsebojnost [emphases in original]).

<sup>741</sup> Ibid., 97, 101 (mora se-stopiti s piedestala avant-garde. Šele tako bi lahko stopila v resničen dialog z ‘ljudskimi masami’...Odreka jim apriorno vedenje ‘objektivne resnice’ [emphases in original]).

<sup>742</sup> Ibid., 102.

independence.<sup>743</sup> As its writers advocated a new Slovene state, they took special aim at the legacy of war memory, upon which Socialist Slovene leaders so relied for legitimacy.

Spomenka's husband, Tine Hribar, wrote the first article of the *Contributions*. He compared 19<sup>th</sup> century Slovene literary figures' descriptions of their nation to both Hegel's organic idea on national origin and Ernest Renan's constructivist approach to show that Slovenes' national aspirations were as valid as any other. Interestingly, before the *Contributions* ran, almost no one in Slovenia had advocated independence. Without explicitly citing his wife, or using her term "reconciliation," he then analyzed the Liberation Front as both a foundational event for Slovene nationality, and one that, through Communist brutality, needlessly divided the nascent national community.<sup>744</sup>

"Partisanism," he wrote, "is as different from humanism as is humanity different from history."<sup>745</sup> Using Edvard Kocbek's notion that deterministic history in a Marxist sense destroys humanity, he continued to describe Partisanism as the perspective of "seeing a human as a subject rather than as a human," but more ominously as a subject "who according to Nietzsche's proposal carries the will to power, becoming an übermensch...who after becoming a super-human simultaneously becomes inhuman."<sup>746</sup> He then argued that when people began to see themselves as autonomous beings, they could become subjects in the modern sense of the word, one that respected a national

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<sup>743</sup> Available at [www.slovenskipomlad.si](http://www.slovenskipomlad.si).

<sup>744</sup> Hribar, "Slovenska Državnost," (Slovene Statehood), 1987, 4-17.

<sup>745</sup> Ibid., 18 (Razlika med partizanščino in človekostjo je mogoče uzreti z vidika razlike med človekom in zgodovino).

<sup>746</sup> Ibid., 18 (z vidika razlike med človekom kot človekom in človekom kot subjektom...Nietzschejeva predstava, da človek kot nosilec volje do moči lahko postane nadčlovek...kolikor se ima dejansko za nadčloveka, tedaj postane nečloveški...).

government as a creation of the public, a “res-publica”.<sup>747</sup> Trying to balance the dual nature of his idealized subjects as both members of a nation and individuals, he used a curious analogy to a parasite: “It is in the personal interest of a subject to limit itself and not destroy the human that is its host. It is in the personal interest of the nation as a subjective creation to not abuse its people...self-determination is not the self-determination of the Slovene nation as a Nation, rather the self-determination of Slovenes as individuals.”<sup>748</sup> Thus the fault of Partisanism was not that it had contributed to Slovene national consciousness, rather that it had stifled the diversity of Slovenes, which in Hribar’s opinion could be solved by allowing Slovenes to freely choose...another uniform national destiny. In formulating this kinder, gentler parasite, Hribar hoped to preserve the national legacy of the Communist victory, without the Communists.

Veljko Namorš’s essay in *Contributions* similarly argued to preserve the legacy of the war without its victors, by promoting multi-lingualism in the Yugoslavian Army. Namorš described how the founders of the original Liberation Front created a successful Slovene National Army that annoyed the Yugoslavian Party, which wanted Revolution more than National Liberation. By the end of the war, the central party had incorporated Slovene units into the new People’s Army, essentially halting Slovene national aspirations.<sup>749</sup> Peter Jambreč’s article similarly argued that National Liberation and Revolution were two separate aspects of the war. Just as Socialist Revolution had been

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<sup>747</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>748</sup> Ibid., 29 (V lastnem interesu subjekta je torej, da se omeji in ne uničuje človeka kot svojega gostitelja. V lastnem interesu nacije kot subjektne tvorbe je, da ne zlorabi naroda...samoodločba ni samoodločba slovenskega naroda kot Naroda, marveč samoodločitev Slovencev kot posameznikov).

<sup>749</sup> Namorš, “O vprašanju slovenskega jezika v JLA,” (On the question of the Slovene language in the Yugoslav People’s Army), 1987, 115-119.

inseparable from National Liberation for Communists during the war, so too, he felt, must the national question be a key component of the quest for greater democratization in 1980's Slovenia.<sup>750</sup>

The *Contributions* became a forum for decades' worth of regime discontents. The writer just mentioned, Peter Jambreč, had been an editor of the student paper *Tribuna* (mentioned in chapter six) during the late 1960's. So too were several of the editors of *Nova Revija* in 1987, including: Dimitrij Rupel, Drago Jančar, and Peter Vodopivec. Ivo Svetine, who wrote *Slovene Apocolypse*, the poem that mocked Partisans and inspired state leaders to unofficially censor *Tribuna*, was also one of the paper's editors. Many more of its editors would soon become influential participants in the Slovene independence movement.

Fifteen months after the publication of the 57<sup>th</sup> edition, in April, 1988, some of its contributors (including Spomenka and Tine Hribar, Alenka Puhar, and Gregor Tomc) joined with several other people under the defacto leadership of Igor Bavčar to form the Committee for the Defense of Human Rights. The original name of the organization, The Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Janez Janša, was far more appropriate, as he was the only human the Committee ever seriously concerned itself with.<sup>751</sup> While not living up to its final choice of names, the committee certainly was indispensable for mobilizing thousands of people in defense of Janez Janša, who had been arrested for revealing military secrets. The Committee successfully convinced Slovenes that Janša's

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<sup>750</sup> Jambreč, "Pravica do samoodločbe slovenskega naroda" (The Slovene people's right of self-determination), 1987, 174.

<sup>751</sup> Rupel, "Slovenia's Shift from the Balkans to Central Europe," 1994, 187.

offenses were not about attacking the military and its associated memory of the National Liberation War, rather that Janša was defending Slovene self-determination, a legacy of the NOB against chauvinistic Serbs who no longer respected the federalism of Yugoslavia.

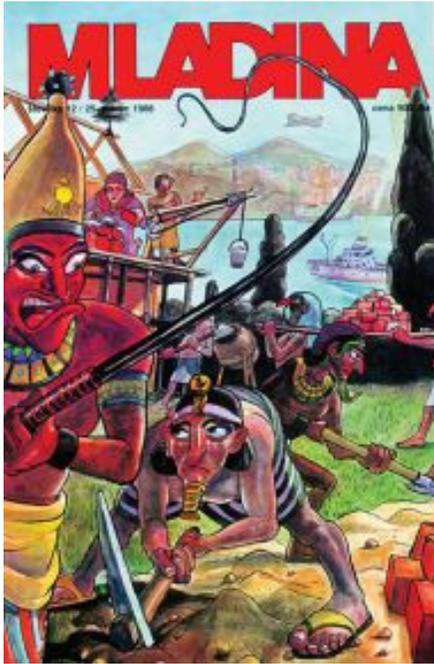
The previous chapter describes Janez Janša's provocative analysis of the Yugoslav National Army, an analysis that cost him not only his role as president of the Socialist Youth Organization, but his membership in the League as well. He quickly became involved with the editors of *Mladina*, who in the 1980's transformed from the mouthpiece of the Socialist Youth Organization into a completely self-managed, self-financing publication. Its publication run of 50,000 issues immediately sold out, with its articles being translated across Yugoslavia. At the time, each issue was read on average by seven different people, people who valued its in-depth reporting, playful willingness to discuss taboos, and the power that it lent to Slovenes' diverse but growing opposition to the socio-economic and political status quo of Yugoslavia.<sup>752</sup>

In early 1988 the editors of *Mladina* ran a series of articles that questioned practices by the People's Army, such as using recruits to build private homes for generals. For many Serbs, the People's Army was an institution that guaranteed the fruits of the Liberation War victory – the Serbian veterans' organization in particular regularly voiced its outrage that Slovene authorities even allowed such articles to be printed. For Slovenes, the Liberation War was the start of real political autonomy – Slovene officials therefore frequently reminded Serbs that they had no right to tell Slovenes what to censor. Many of these articles were accompanied by provocative covers, such as the

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<sup>752</sup> Gow and Carmichael, *Slovenia and the Slovenes: A Small State and the New Europe*, 94-95.

March 25<sup>th</sup> feature where cartoonist Milan Ertl compared the use of recruits for the



**Figure 8.1** Cover of *Mladina*, March 25, 1988

private benefit of generals to the Pharaohs' exploitation of slave labor (figure 8.1).<sup>753</sup> Editors continued to question practices such as the predominance of Serbs and Montenegrins in the officer corps of the Army, lack of equality for Slovene or any Yugoslavian language other than Serbo-Croatian, and Yugoslavian arms sales to Ethiopia (at the same time that Western musicians were collecting funds for refugees through Band-Aid concerts).

The final provocation for Belgrade authorities came on May 10, 1988 with an article titled "Night of the Long Knives."<sup>754</sup> In this article Vlado Miheljak used an allusion to the Nazi SS's destruction of its former SA allies to describe a secret Yugoslav People's Army plan to militarily intervene in Slovenia if the situation became too politically unstable. Through this intervention they planned to replace Slovenia's liberal political leaders with people more supportive of federal power. On the day the article ran, the People's Army urged the Slovene Central Committee to ban the article by Vlado Miheljak, and the Slovenes reluctantly agreed.<sup>755</sup> Differences between Serbian and Slovene war memories had precipitated this crisis: many Serbs

<sup>753</sup> *Mladina*, Sep 7, 2012, available online at: <http://www.mladina.si/115674/>.

<sup>754</sup> *Mladina*, May 10, 1988 (Noč dolgih nožev).

<sup>755</sup> Muzej Novejše Zgodovine, *Razstave Slovenske Pomlad*, (*Exhibit on the Slovene Spring*), <http://www.slovenskapomlad.si/1?id=28>.

viewed the Army as an institution made sacred by its role in World War II, while most Slovenes at this time saw a distinct national and political community as fruits of the Liberation War. Slovene authorities attempted to address the crisis itself without coming to terms with its underlying memory tensions. They would fail.

The Committee for the Defense of Human Rights was far more adept at exploiting these memory tensions. The Yugoslav military had been conducting an investigation since April and decided that Janez Janša was the person who made the material about an invasion available to Miheljak. Three weeks later they arrested Janša, along with fellow reporter David Tašič, editor France Zavrl, and a non-commissioned officer who had leaked the plans to *Mladina*, Ivan Borštner.<sup>756</sup> Within weeks the committee collected over 100,000 signatures demanding that the Ljubljana Four (as they first named them; they later shortened their common designation to the initials of their surnames, JBTZ) be given a civilian rather than military trial. Without such a trial, Slovenia had essentially ceded its sovereign control over jurisprudence to the military, a non-Slovene military, they reasoned.

The committee then organized protests near the prison on Metlikovo Street, where the four were held, and in Revolutionary Square in the center of Ljubljana. During their first mass protest on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, the now defunct *Pankrti* reunited one last time to provide a free concert of irreverent tunes, including those such as “Bandierra Rosa,” which rearranged a popular Yugoslav military anthem into a punk song.<sup>757</sup> Protesters marched

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<sup>756</sup> Rupel, “Slovenia’s Shift from the Balkans to Central Europe,” 1994, 187.

<sup>757</sup> Recordings of some of their performances from this first protest are available on Youtube, such as “Bandierra Rossa” at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ki213FwdIQg>.

throughout the month of June. As many as 40,000 gathered on June 22<sup>nd</sup>. The Committee continued to issue daily press releases.<sup>758</sup> On June 30<sup>th</sup> the military court sentenced the Four to between six months and four years in prison.<sup>759</sup> The marches continued.

Media outlets across Yugoslavia paid close attention to the trial. Reporters at *Mladina's* Serbian equivalent, the in-depth and often provocative news magazine *NIN* (*Nedeljske Informativne Novine*) frequently used articles from the Slovene magazine as a source for their negative analyses of Slovene civil society. On June 12<sup>th</sup>, Milan Damnjanović wondered why Slovenes in the Society for the Protection of Human Rights felt they could deny Yugoslavia the legal right of any state to protect its military secrets, while simultaneously arguing for the implausibility of Miheljak's assertion that these secrets contained plans for a military invasion of Slovenia.<sup>760</sup> In a sarcastic dismissal of the power of civil society as simple mob-rule Damnjanović wrote: "Bavčar...urges the public to behave in a 'civilized fashion but with conviction.' It seems however that this method of using the force of the public is far more oppressive than the 'oppression' of the regime, because this 'public' does not even allow the appropriate organs of the state to do their jobs."<sup>761</sup> More damning, however, Damnjanović suggested that political leaders in Slovenia were complicit with the Janša defense, arguing that the situation could only

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<sup>758</sup> Rupel, "Slovenia's Shift from the Balkans to Central Europe," 1994, 187.

<sup>759</sup> Rizman, *Uncertain Path: Democratic Transition and Consolidation in Slovenia*, 164.

<sup>760</sup> *NIN*, June 12, 1988, 16.

<sup>761</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 (Бавчар...апелује на јавност да поступа „цивилизовано и одлучно.“ Изгледа, међутим, да је овај пут, притисак јавности много вечи од „притиска“ власти, односно да „јавност“ не дозвољава надлежним органима да врши свој посао).

have become so extreme with their involvement. He cited the Slovene member of the Yugoslavian Central Committee, Stane Dolanc, as his source for these accusations.<sup>762</sup> Dolanc had merely requested an investigation into how Janša had obtained these documents.<sup>763</sup>

In reality the Slovene Central Committee at first agreed with the decision to arrest Janša. Many were the same people who had urged the Ljubljana Office to dismiss him from the party only four years earlier. While Damnjanović had little basis for his June 12 accusation against Slovene politicians, four days earlier, on June 8<sup>th</sup> the Central Committee did in fact hold a secret meeting (certainly unbeknownst to reporters in Serbia) to discuss “people’s defense and social self-defense.” Republic president Milan Kučan began the meeting by saying that the situation with the Janša trial had the potential to seriously destabilize Slovene society. He then admitted that he and committee member Janez Stanovnik had separately met with delegations from the Society for the Defense of Human Rights. He concluded his opening remarks by saying that he agreed with the Society on the need to provide the accused with an advocate and a means to defend themselves, lest the situation “spin into proportions that we can no longer control.”<sup>764</sup> When Lieutenant General Mirko Mirtič spoke, he claimed that the trial against the four was being carried out with full respect for the law. He viewed requests by the Central Committee and League of Working Peoples for more information into the documents that Miheljak had written about “as nothing more than coercion against the organs of

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<sup>762</sup> Ibid., 16-17.

<sup>763</sup> AS 1589,K-SZ-30/88, Komite za SLO in DS SR Slovenije, 8.6.1988, 73.

<sup>764</sup> AS 1589,K-SZ-30/88, Komite za SLO in DS SR Slovenije, 8.6.1988, 65 (drugače se bo to odvijalo v dimenzije ki za nas ne bodo več obvaldljive).

jurisprudence” which, he continued, amounted to “a pardon for Janša,” which would have serious “political implications.”<sup>765</sup> He asked the Committee to end such pressure for the sake of the children of officers in the army, who were, he presumed, suffering abuse from those seeking Janša’s release.<sup>766</sup> Janez Stanovnik repeatedly said that Mirtič’s accusations “shocked” him, wondering why the army refused to see the Slovene Central Committee as its ally. Jože Smole begged the military leadership to reveal the secret documents as a means to end the wild rumors coming from people with no access to the truth, who were simply “fishing in muddy water.”<sup>767</sup> Smole and Kučan then demanded that the accused have access to lawyers, whether military or civilian, and argued that the entire lack of proper legal defense embarrassed Yugoslavia in front of Europe and would create a completely uncontrollable situation at home.<sup>768</sup> As the meeting concluded, however, Kučan explained that Mirtič’s comments showed a total lack of faith in Slovene political institutions from the Yugoslav Army.<sup>769</sup> While no one said so explicitly at the meeting on May 8, everyone in the Slovene Central Committee knew that the secret documents for which the four had been arrested were indeed a plan for a Yugoslav military coup against Slovenia’s Communist leadership.

Over the next month the demand by the Committee for the Defense of Human Rights that a civil trial be held for the Four began to be more and more preferable to a

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<sup>765</sup> Ibid., 70 (ne morem imeti za kaj drugega kot za pritisk na pravosodne organe...naj se odločajo za oprostitev Janše...je rodil politične implikacije).

<sup>766</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>767</sup> Ibid., 73-75 (ribarenje v kalnem).

<sup>768</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>769</sup> Ibid., 100.

Slovene Central Committee that similarly felt threatened by the Yugoslav Army. By the time the verdict against the Four was read on June 30<sup>th</sup>, Slovene party members had become largely sympathetic to the accused. By August the Slovene Central Committee released all of the prisoners after its own investigative commission found that certain aspects of the trial, such as the fact that it was held in Serbo-Croatian rather than Slovene, violated the Yugoslavian constitution.<sup>770</sup> The Society for the Defense of Human Rights had forced the Slovene Central Committee to act. With no support from the army, the politicians chose to back the protesters.

### **Kosovo**

While the trial was ongoing, *Mladina* editors turned much of their attention to the Yugoslav People's Army's (JLA) suppression of separatists in Kosovo. For Slovenes, the fact that Kosovar Albanians lacked their own Republic showed that Serbs refused to respect the rhetoric of national self-determination upon which the federation had been founded. Though *Mladina* had been running stories about military actions against Albanians since 1987, in the summer of 1988 their coverage started a broader dialogue inside Slovenia, and then across Yugoslavia. Kosovo had forever been a geographic sore spot for the Socialist federation. During the AVNOJ conventions, Tito and his inner circle guaranteed the province to Serbia, eager to gain the participation of Serbs in the National Liberation War.<sup>771</sup> Few Albanians had participated in the Partisan movement; rather, many willingly collaborated with the German and Italian occupation regimes, even to the extent of driving as many as 40,000 Serbs and Montenegrins out of the

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<sup>770</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>771</sup> Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias: State Building and Legitimation, 1918-2005*, 2005, 164.

German-occupied zone.<sup>772</sup> With little Liberation War capital to build upon, the community of Albanian Kosovars found little favor with Communist authorities. For decades positions of authority in the autonomous region were held by minority Serbs while majority Albanians had substantially lower standards of living.<sup>773</sup>

In late 1987 a new series of clashes began between armed Albanian separatists and units of the JLA. The new Serbian president, Slobodan Milošević, had announced that plans were underway to annul the autonomous status of Vojvodina and Kosovo. He argued this move was necessary to give Serbia was sovereignty over its own affairs. Croats and Slovenes accused the Serb army of committing war crimes and refusing to give national rights to ethnic Kosovars and Hungarians within Serbia.<sup>774</sup> Jože Smole of the Slovene Central Committee argued that although the state had to respond to militant separatists, the Serb media was enflaming the situation. He called instead for more open dialogue between the two sides.<sup>775</sup>

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<sup>772</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>773</sup> Ibid., 295-301.

<sup>774</sup> Meier, *Yugoslavia: A History of its Demise*, 84-94.

<sup>775</sup> Rizman, "The Post-war Retribution in Slovenia: Its Death Toll," 164; *NIN*, June 12, 1988, 9.

The backlash inside Serbia, especially from the more vitriolic elements of the maligned media, was enormous. On September 25<sup>th</sup> *NIN* ran an issue with a cover



Figure 8.2 Cover of *NIN*, June 12, 1988

painting that graphically showed the feeling of alienation many Slovenes were beginning to feel towards the army – the Serb magazine depicted Slovenes as little green aliens (figure 8.2). By painting Slovenes as aliens, *NIN*'s editors showed that Slovenes not only had no right to be commenting about the affairs of the army in Kosovo, but also portrayed them as creatures that belonged neither in Yugoslavia, or on planet earth for that matter. Milan Damjanović, the same journalist who had been covering the Janša trial for *NIN*, wrote

the feature for the “alien edition,” in which he responded to Smole’s call for less inflammatory media by referencing Albanian atrocities against Serbs during the Second World War as if that war was still ongoing, 40 years later: “So Serbs and Montenegrins in Kosovo aren’t worried because of the genocide being carried out against them, nor are they worried about Albanian nationalists raping girls and old women while murdering boys and old men, nor even does the fact that an entire nation is being pushed northward

worry them. None of these things frighten them; they are only worried if they regularly read the newspaper!”<sup>776</sup>

Due to widespread anger over Slovene representations of the conflict in Kosovo, in 1989 enough Serbs and Montenegrins would engage in a boycott of Slovene products to seriously harm Slovenia’s economy, and prompt even greater economic ties between Slovenia and Western Europe.<sup>777</sup> When the masses and leading government officials in Slovenia began to question the role of the Yugoslav military in Kosovo, Serbian media first symbolically cast Slovenes as outsiders, then economically forced them to become such.

### **Serb vs. Slovene Veterans**

By 1988 serious tensions between the Slovene and Serbian Republics began to permeate the last institution of federal unity, the veterans who guarded the memory of the National Liberation War. In the mid-1980’s Slovene Veteran’s society repeatedly used the legacy of the war as a justification for their Republic’s membership in the Yugoslavian federation. In 1983, as shown in the previous chapter, the Veteran’s organization even chose not to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> Kočevje anniversary, preferring to emphasize the commemoration of Yugoslavian unity represented by the AVNOJ meetings. By 1988 the Slovene Republic no longer had the resources to commemorate Kočevje, only the local commune provided funds for the event.<sup>778</sup> While 40,000

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<sup>776</sup> *NIN*, June 12, 1988, 9 (Значи Срби и Црногорци на Косову нису узнемирене због тога што албански националисти силују децу и старице, пребијају дечаке и старце, терају цео народ на покрет према северу, већ су узнемирени ако редовно читају новине!).

<sup>777</sup> Rizman, *Uncertain Path: Democratic Transition and Consolidation in Slovenia*, 164.

<sup>778</sup> A letter from the Črnomelj Institution for Education and Culture mentions the lack of funding for Kočevje’s celebrations in their bid to get resources to upgrade the hall in Črnomelj where another major

Slovenes had gathered in the center of Ljubljana in July to support Janez Janša, only a few dozen veterans still made the trip to Kočevje in October. They sang Partisan songs, held solemn campfire meetings, and this time, paid for their own food, transportation, and lodging. Aside from local presses, the event received almost no media coverage.

Ljubljana's *Delo*, the largest paper in the Republic, did not cover it. Slovene speakers' third most widely read paper, *Večer*, only covered the Kočevje anniversary because of a



Figure 8.3 Kočevje commemorated through layout error in 1988

layout error. As can be seen in a newspaper clipping from that day, whoever placed the copy forgot to remove a small paragraph mentioning the Kočevje conference that appeared at the end of an

advertisement for a children's program about the planet Jupiter (figure 8.3).<sup>779</sup>

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Liberation Front meeting occurred during the war, AS 1589, 06-24/86, 27.9.1989, Zavod za izobraževanje in kulturo Črnomelj, (Foundation for education and culture Črnomelj).

<sup>779</sup> *Večer*, October 3, 1988 (TV Ljubljana at 10:00, "School TV." Today's lineup includes the fifth episode of a Belgrade series "New Findings on Old Planets." The first four episodes acquainted us with the inner planets of our solar system (Mercury, Venus, the Moon, and Mars), which astronomers researched in the 1960's and early 70's. After 1972, research stations turned towards our Sun's outer planets. The first in line is Jupiter. This program will talk about that planet and its satellites.

Among other things, the National Liberation War in Slovenia laid the foundations for Slovene statehood. This occurred hand in hand with the creation of a new democratic Yugoslavia, founded on equal rights among nations as a brotherly organization of all Yugoslavian peoples. The Council of Representatives of the Slovene people held in Kočevje from October 1 to 3, 1943 made a significant contribution to these goals).

Even before the Kočevje conference, it was clear to many in the Slovene organization that they would soon be divorced from the federal society of veterans. As early as June 15<sup>th</sup>, the veteran-dominated Federal Council for National Defense expressed its anger in a press release to *Tanjug* over baseless attacks against the army, and the failure of all levels of responsible Slovenes to halt such attacks, including Slovene veterans.<sup>780</sup> This was the first of many serious polemics between the two veteran's organizations. In October Central Committee and Slovene veteran's organization member Janez Stanovnik responded by asking the Serbian leadership of the Veteran's organization to "resist false, baseless, and incomprehensible arguments against the Slovenian people and their leadership."<sup>781</sup> Mihajlo Švabić, president of the Serbian Veteran's organization, responded in a public meeting in Belgrade in November by saying that if the Slovenes were dissatisfied, they could leave Yugoslavia: "go to Philadelphia," he suggested.<sup>782</sup>

Having been rejected by their former Serbian allies at the federal level, the Slovene Veteran's organization turned 180 degrees from support for the Federation to support for a more open Slovene society. In 1990 a local veterans' council from Gorica wrote to the committee drafting a new constitution to show their support for the effort. The council then requested that the symbol of Slovenia not be changed in a new political order – to show respect to the traditions of the NOB, which had built a free and

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<sup>780</sup> The full press release appeared on page 14 of *NIN* on June 19, 1988.

<sup>781</sup> AS 1115, 59-2, Savezu udruženja boraca NOR-a SR Slovenije – Opštinskom odboru Bežigrad – Ljubljana, (League of unity for fighters of the national liberation war of Slovenia – Communal committee of Bežigrad – Ljubljana), 27.12.1988, 2 (odbijate lažne, nenačelne i neargumentovane napade na slovenački narod i njegovu rukovodstvu), Serbian translation of Slovene original.

<sup>782</sup> Quoted in Rizman, *Uncertain Path: Democratic Transition and Consolidation in Slovenia*, 164.

independent Slovenia. They concluded their letter by asking that all pensions and benefits accrued by veterans in the Socialist Republic be honored in whatever new structure emerged to govern Slovenes.<sup>783</sup>

Only one year earlier, in 1989, the Slovene Veteran's Organization had yet to give up on its Serbian and federal counterparts. Indeed the pensions and benefits that the Slovene warriors hoped to preserve were still very much intertwined with federal politics in 1989. At the beginning of the year, 53,137 of the roughly 80,000 living veterans were receiving payments of various categories from both the Federal and Republic budgets.<sup>784</sup> To reduce healthcare costs the Slovene Assembly had adopted a comprehensive nationalization of health insurance in 1988 that gave coverage to all citizens on the basis of monthly personal premiums. Members of the Republican Committee for Warriors and Wartime Invalids worried that the rationalization measures that had accompanied the nationalization of healthcare harmed veterans, specifically by shutting down nursing homes, forcing regional hospitals to replace services offered by local clinics, reducing available ambulance services, almost eliminating in-home care, and reducing payments for special benefits such as climatological healing.

Though the veterans's organization accepted that cost-reducing measures were necessary in light of the harsh economic realities of late-1980's Yugoslavia, its members still felt that extra benefits should be maintained for the Partisan generation. The Republican Committee decided to exempt all participants in the National Liberation War

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<sup>783</sup> AS 1115, 59-2, 001-02/89-2, 17.10.1990, 1-2.

<sup>784</sup> AS 1115, 593-01/3-89, Socialistična republika Slovenija, Republiški komitet za borbe in vojaške invalide, (Socialist republic of Slovenia, Republican committee for veterans and wartime invalids), 5.10.1989, 1.

from paying monthly health insurance premiums, receiving subsidized, though by comparison to what they previously enjoyed, less-stellar health coverage.<sup>785</sup> As the Committee members summarized their October meeting on benefits for veterans, they justified the exemption on premiums by noting that “we are talking about a generation of wartime veterans whose health was threatened and often destroyed during the National Liberation War.” The Committee then noted that “we are discussing people who are in their seventies, whose health needs are certainly increasing, but whose population size is quickly diminishing through natural means.” After illustrating that the costs to insure dying people would not be overly prohibitive, they then admitted their fear of the Veteran’s lobby by saying that any other solution would cause “serious political ramifications and misunderstandings among health-users.”<sup>786</sup>

While the veteran’s organization continued to wield significant political clout in 1989, they were not immune to contemporary discourses questioning the glory of the NOB mythology. In April one of the Veteran’s Organizations two publications, the *Journal for National Liberation War History and Preservation of Revolutionary Traditions*, sponsored a roundtable discussion on “Victims of the Second World War among Us.” Among other topics, the discussion dealt directly with the issue of the postwar killings of suspected collaborators, with the hopes of laying a foundation for a form of reconciliation. Its organizer, Zdenko Čepič hoped participants, ranging from prominent historians to an expert on émigré media, could “discuss victims from neither a

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<sup>785</sup> Ibid., 2-8.

<sup>786</sup> Ibid., 7 (da gre za generacijo vojnih veteranov, katerih zdravje je bilo ogroženo in narušeno v NOB in da gre za ljudi starosti okrog 70 let, katerih zdravstvene težave sicer povečujejo vendar se številčno ta populacija naravnim potom hitro zmanjšuje...imeli pa bi ostro politično odmevnost in nerazumevanje med uporabniki).

political nor ideological perspective, but from a technical one.”<sup>787</sup> That the Republic’s formerly most powerful interest group would sponsor such a conference shows just how vulnerable the mythology of the NOB had become. Only four years earlier, a writer for the Organization’s other publication, *TV-15*, had ridiculed Spomenka Hribar in poetic verse (quoted partially at the beginning of this chapter) for even suggesting such a concept as reconciliation. A very graphic illustration of the uncertain economic, political, and social atmosphere within which the Organization operated can be seen in the final pages of the May-June edition of the journal that published the roundtable. Where funding for the Veteran’s Organization and its prestigious journals had once been secure from membership dues, the League of Working Peoples, and the Republican Assembly, its editors now had to run advertisements for everything from a casino in Portorož, to Michelin tires (“We can’t always choose between good and bad roads, but we can choose the best automobile tires”), to Paloma toilet paper.<sup>788</sup>

In an article that the roundtable considered, Jože Dežman argued that Slovenia’s war dead needed to be separated from the categories of “good and bad deaths,” which could only be done if Slovenes wrote a new history that overcame the “duality” of their history. Slovenes needed a reconciliatory history. According to Dežman, pro-Partisan historians “lauded triumphs without end” while the émigré community “uncritically

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<sup>787</sup> Čepič, “Žrtve druge svetovne vojne pri nas : okrogla miza” (Victims of the Second World War among us: Round table), 588 (ni govoriti o žrtvah s političnega ali ideološkega stališča, marveč s strokovnega).

<sup>788</sup> In appendices to *Revija za zgodovino NOB in ohranjanje revolucionarnih tradicij*, letnik XLI, Maj-Junij, 1989 (o izbiri lepih ali slabih poti ne moremo vedno odločati sami, lahko pa odločamo o pravi izbiri avtomobilskih gum).

justified their own demise.”<sup>789</sup> He then attempted to tabulate all war deaths in Slovenia, a project that he continues to work on in 2014 through the Commission for Mass Graves.<sup>790</sup> The roundtable also considered an article on the Slovenian Political émigré community by Milica Strgar, in which she cautioned that the notion of reconciliation must be considered in light of the diversity of the people wanting such reconciliation. She described the émigrés themselves, who ranged from political extremists who still considered terrorism a viable option, to those who supported the right-wing junta in Argentina, to those who actively supported the American war in Vietnam, to those who were willing to recognize the real progress made by Slovenia’s socialist regime.<sup>791</sup> Some at the roundtable, like Tone Kebe, argued that reconciliation should not diminish an appreciation for the very real threat to Europe that the Partisans helped to defeat.<sup>792</sup>

Ferdo Gastrin and Zdenko Čepič felt that the overall historiographical thrust during Slovenia’s recent past had mistakenly sought to show the primacy of the party. They called instead for social history from below to remedy a perspective that inevitably cast historical actors as either good or bad.<sup>793</sup> Zdravko Klanjšček, a former member of the Central Committee’s Historical Commission, found these condemnations of past

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<sup>789</sup> Dežman, et al., “Žrtve druge svetovne vojne pri nas : okrogla miza” (Victims of the Second World War among us: Round table), 592 (brez meja triumfirajo...nekritično odpravičajo svoj poraz).

<sup>790</sup> See <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Commission-on-Concealed-Mass-Graves-in-Slovenia/140594939301098>.

<sup>791</sup> Strgar, “Žrtve druge svetovne vojne pri nas : okrogla miza” (Victims of the Second World War among us: Round table), 607-614, 618.

<sup>792</sup> Kebe, “Žrtve druge svetovne vojne pri nas : okrogla miza” (Victims of the Second World War among us: Round table), 621.

<sup>793</sup> Gastrin, et al., “Žrtve druge svetovne vojne pri nas : okrogla miza” (Victims of the Second World War among us: Round table), 622-624; Čepič, “Žrtve druge svetovne vojne pri nas : okrogla miza” (Victims of the Second World War among us: Round table), 624.

history writing particularly offensive, as he took great pride in the various topical monographs, histories of individual brigades, memoirs, comprehensive histories, and archival materials that his Commission had helped to make available.<sup>794</sup> Klanjšček, Kebe and Strgar foreshadowed what would become their organization's official position over the next two decades; roughly, that the positive legacies of the Partisan victory must be preserved at all costs, while the postwar killings ... require further research before a definitive position can be taken.

### **Political and Memory Pluralism**

At the same time that the veteran guardians of the old order tepidly explored the topic of reconciliation, those opposed to the socialist status-quo made it one of their rallying calls. By December 1988, one of those separatist activities that Serbian corporate groups were decrying Slovenes for included permission to form separate political parties. Recognizing that the League of Communists no longer had a monopoly on political power, Milan Kučan led the drive to maintain the relevance of the League by allowing it to freely compete with the increasing demands coming from non-League organizations. He also announced that the Central Committee would allow members of civil society to take part in discussions within the League of Working Peoples on proposed amendments to the constitution. The first political party to form was the Slovene Democratic Union, in January 1989. Janez Janša and the former *Tribuna* editor who wrote one of the *Contributions to the Slovene National Program*, Dimitrij Rupelj,

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<sup>794</sup> Klanjšček, "Žrtve druge svetovne vojne pri nas : okrogla miza" (Victims of the Second World War among us: Round table), 624-626.

were among the party's founders.<sup>795</sup> One of their first platforms was a demand to erect a monument to all wartime victims, victims of both Fascism and Stalinism.<sup>796</sup>

On May 8<sup>th</sup> the Slovene Democratic Union joined with two other new parties, the Social Democratic Union and Farmer's Union, as well as several independent social organizations to issue the May declaration. This declaration demanded a sovereign, and independent Slovene state that would freely regulate its relations with other states (including Yugoslavia). This new state would be founded upon respect for human rights and a form of democracy that allowed for political pluralism.<sup>797</sup> In September the Slovene Assembly passed 81 constitutional amendments that strengthened the Republic's right to self-determination, including the right to separation, and abolished the vanguard role of the League of Communists.<sup>798</sup> That December, Milan Kučan announced that free elections would be held on April 8, 1990. A coalition of six opposition parties coalesced into the Democratic Opposition of Slovenia (DEMOS)<sup>799</sup> that formed in December, while the Communist party renamed itself the *Party for Democratic Renewal*, while keeping *League of Communists of Slovenia*, as its suffix.

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<sup>795</sup> Rizman, *Uncertain Path: Democratic Transition and Consolidation in Slovenia*, 164-165.

<sup>796</sup> Čepič, "Žrtve druge svetovne vojne pri nas : okrogla miza" (Victims of the Second World War among us: Round table), 588.

<sup>797</sup> Društvo slovenskih pisateljev, Slovenska demokratična zveza, Slovenska kmečka zveza, Slovensko krščansko socialno gibanje, and Socialdemokratska zveza Slovenije. (The Society of Slovene Writers, the Slovene Democratic Alliance, the Slovene Farmer's Alliance, the Slovene Christian Socialist Movement and the Social Democratic Alliance of Slovenia), *Majniška Deklaracija, (May Declaration)*, available online at: <http://www.vojaskimuzej.si/razstava/razstava.aspx?item=2&page=2>.

<sup>798</sup> Urad vlade RS za komuniciranje, *20 Let samostojne Slovenija*, (Office of the government of the republic of Slovenia for publicity, 20 years of independent Slovenia), available online at: <http://www.dvajset.si/prvih-20/leto-1989/>; Rizman, *Uncertain Path: Democratic Transition and Consolidation in Slovenia*, 165.

<sup>799</sup> Demokratska Opozicija Slovenije

The former dissident and *Contributions to a Slovene National Program* contributor Jože Pučnik became the leader of the DEMOS coalition that united essentially all opposition parties in Slovenia. Dimitrij Rupelj and Janez Janša joined their Democratic Union to the coalition which now included Spomenka and Tine Hribar, along with another former *Tribuna* and *Nova Revija* editor as well as historian, Peter Vodopivec. The desire for reconciliation now became one of the key elements in the DEMOS platform. In their most widely distributed election placard, the slogan “for an independent Slovenia, for national reconciliation” appeared at the bottom of a list of candidates.<sup>800</sup>

Those organizing the Party for Democratic Renewal similarly dealt with reconciliation, though their meaning differed considerably from that of the opposition parties. Since the beginning of Kučan’s presidency in 1986, he had made righting certain wrongs of Slovenia’s Stalinist era a priority. Those wrongfully imprisoned and murdered during the Yugoslav Dachau and Buchenwald trials (trials of Yugoslav Communists accused of becoming Western spies while in concentration camps) had been officially rehabilitated as early as November 1986. In early 1987, Kučan’s office ordered the newly reformed Historical Commission to organize a committee that would figure out just how to right other wrongs of the past. Over the first months of 1987 that committee returned recognition payments and retirement/health benefits to several still living

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<sup>800</sup> Tomažič, *Časnik*, 2012 available online at: <http://www.casnik.si/index.php/2012/03/22/ekskluzivno-nova-dejstva-o-nastanku-demosa/> (Za samostojno Slovenijo, za narodno spravo).

Slovenes who had been previously black-listed.<sup>801</sup> In 1990, Kučan's campaign pledged that if elected, they would continue to look at certain historical excesses of the party, to deal "honestly with the past, not forgetting past guilt. We want to materially and morally right people's past wrongs."<sup>802</sup> Though implied, the campaign did not, however, explicitly mention the postwar killings that had become a rallying call for the opposition.

As Slovenes began to read about the many new parties they would encounter in the upcoming elections, some people purchased, and ostensibly read, a book published in English by the emigrant to Great Britain, Ljubo Sirc, *Between Hitler and Tito*, that offered perhaps the most compelling defence of collaborators that the Slovene public had ever read.<sup>803</sup> It would become more widely available after 1991, when Sirc translated his memoir into Slovene (adding explanatory footnotes and sources that were absent in the original English version). In his autobiography of the war, Sirc described his own attempt to find a third way between the extremes of Communist Revolution and open collaboration, he joined the small group of Slovene Četniks who accepted the authority of Draža Mihajlović, because they believed him to be the only representative of the

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<sup>801</sup> AS 1589, 02-1-1, 891/1, 12.11.1988. These policies are outlined in a November 12, 1988 letter to the public prosecutor's office in Belgrade, justifying the Slovene Central Committee's request for interrogation records.

<sup>802</sup> AS 1589, 010-07/2, 16.4.1990, Predsedstvo ZKS Stranka demokratične prenove, (The presidency of the League of Slovene Communists Party for Democratic Renewal), appendix, (poštenost do preteklosti, krivic ne bomo poravnavali s pozabo. Ljudem želimo materialno in moralno popraviti krivic iz preteklosti). Those managing the national archives filed these documents under the collection for the presidency of the Central Committee, as the leaders of the new party continued to use their former bureaucratic structure. This particular file is among the last collections held by the collection for the Central Committee.

<sup>803</sup> On December 19, 1989 *Demokracija* ran an interview with Ljubo Sirc where interviewers Viktor Božič and Katja Boh gave Sirc the opportunity to summarize many of the points in his book (*Demokracija*, December 19, 1989, 8-9).

legitimate prewar Yugoslavian government.<sup>804</sup> He described his willingness to work with the Liberation Front, but faulted the Communists for alienating many fellow travelers as they became more extreme, causing what he called a Civil War (rather than war of National Liberation) to be fought on Slovene soil.<sup>805</sup> Sirc's memoir became one of the focal points around which those calling for national reconciliation began to understand the recent 45 year history of Slovenia. Perhaps collaboration was not a question of absolute right or wrong, but of adapting values to conditional circumstances. As for reception of his book, despite broad publicity efforts on the part of Sirc himself, it had only a single printing. Though not a direct evaluation of his work, during the same year that Sirc published the Slovene edition of his memoirs, he ran for president, receiving only 1.38 percent of the popular vote.<sup>806</sup>

In April 1990 Slovenes voted overwhelmingly for the DEMOS coalition, it won 51% of the seats in the National Assembly.<sup>807</sup> The former Communists or Party for Democratic Renewal had appropriately adapted to the times, and as a reward still managed to win 41% of the Assembly vote. Many Slovenes had an improved opinion of the Communist Party because of their willingness to give up a monopoly on power.<sup>808</sup> Lojze Peterle, a Christian Democrat became prime minister, while the Communist Milan

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<sup>804</sup> Sirc, *Med Hitlerjem in Titom* (Between Hitler and Tito), 29.

<sup>805</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-23.

<sup>806</sup> Slovenska Tiskovna Agencija, December 6, 1992, available at [www.sta.si](http://www.sta.si).

<sup>807</sup> Bugajski, *Political Parties of Eastern Europe: A Guide to Politics in the Post-Communist Era*, 639-640.

<sup>808</sup> Rizman, *Uncertain Path: Democratic Transition and Consolidation in Slovenia*, 42.

Kučan would remain president of the Republic.<sup>809</sup> Both knew the value of some sort of reconciliation with the past if their new, politically diverse government was to work.

On July 8, 1990 Alojzij Šuštar, archbishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Ljubljana, invited Milan Kučan and newly elected prime minister Lojze Peterle to a solemn ceremony at Kočevski Rog to commemorate the postwar killings. Each saw this as a chance to come to terms with the past. Milan Kučan and Alojzij Šuštar shook hands in front of 30,000 people pledging to end the deep divisions that had plagued Slovene society for so long. They erected a monument to the murdered Domobranci, over half of whom lost their lives in the nearby gulleys. Now, it seemed, Slovenes could remember both those who had sacrificed in nearby Kočevje to create the foundations of an independent Slovenia, as well as the terrible tragedy that had occurred only a few miles away in Kočevje's Rog (horn, a type of plateau overlooking steep cliffs). Spomenka Hribar celebrated the monument as part of her own vision of reconciliation saying "today we have again become a complete 'whole' nation because we have dedicated a monument to those previously unspoken people without forgetting those who we've always publicly remembered."<sup>810</sup> While no polling data exists for the 30,000 people in attendance that day, certainly a wealth of national surveys over the next two decades shows that such a simple end to memory conflicts was a chimera of the overwhelming optimism that so many Slovenes felt on the eve of independence. In his rhetorical analysis of Kučan's speech at the event, Andrej Skerlep argues that Kučan did everything

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<sup>809</sup> Plut-Pregelj and Rogele, *The A to Z of Slovenia*, 2010, 129.

<sup>810</sup> *Demokracija*, July 10, 1990, 1 (Tega dne smo postali spet neokrnjen, 'cel' narod; s tem, da smo se poklonili spominu doslej namenoma zamolčanih, ne da bi pozabili na tiste, ki smo jih javno že prej spominjali...).

he could to accommodate a form of reconciliation, without alienating the majority of Slovenes who feared the politics of those who advocated on behalf of the fallen Domobranci. In the long-run, this superficial reconciliation ceremony had little healing effect.

Two months after this ceremony, one was held at a site where 300 suspected collaborators had been murdered in Krimška Cave. This ceremony was organized by the Christian Democrat party, with an accompanying mass to be held by the archbishop France Perko. No representatives of supposed leftist parties were invited, though the organizers had not completely given up on the notion of reconciliation, as they invited the person who had coined the term, Spomenka Hribar, to give the keynote speech. While describing the reasons for this commemoration Ivo Žajdela wrote: “Had it not been for Krimška Cave and many other abominations of Communist revolutionary terror, there would have been no Village Guards in Slovenia, no later Domobranstvo ... in sum there would have been no Civil War.”<sup>811</sup>

### **Politics of Domobranstvo Memory**

In December, 1990 90% of the eligible electorate in the Republic voted 88% in favor of separating from Yugoslavia. When their act of independence went into effect six months later, Slovenes of all political and personal beliefs united behind their Territorial Defense Forces, now led by Janez Janša, to fight a ten-day battle with the Yugoslavian Army. Following a truce, and several months of an uneasy cease fire, countries

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<sup>811</sup> *Demokracija*, September 21, 1990, 10 (Če ne bi bilo Krimške jame in mnogih drugih grozot komunističnega revolucionarnega terorja ne bi bilo na Slovenskem nobenih vaških straž (bele garde), nobenega (kasnejšega domobranstva)...in nasploh nobene državljanske vojne).

throughout the world slowly began to recognize Slovene independence, including the United States of America on April 7, 1992.<sup>812</sup>

Almost immediately after independence the DEMOS coalition itself could not agree on how best to run any number of tasks related to building an independent state. Their main dispute revolved around the economy. Defense Minister Janez Janša, Prime Minister Lojze Peterle and their allies like Dimitrij Rupel desired a quick implementation of the kinds of shock therapy so prevalent in the Eastern bloc at that time. They were opposed by Peterle's finance minister, Jože Mencinger, who favored gradual privatization.<sup>813</sup> Mencinger's views tempered much of the desire for extreme privatization during Slovenia's transition, though he was forced to resign his ministership over disagreements within his SDS party. Many within the DEMOS coalition itself felt that the quick privatization of a socially controlled economy would wreck devastating havoc on the livelihoods of Slovenes. Slovenia would eventually privatize most state-run industries, but their privatization process was more drawn out than any in Eastern Europe, and as a direct result, Slovene standards of living remained among the highest and most equitable of any Eastern bloc country during the difficult years of Democratic and free market transition.<sup>814</sup>

Lacking a convincing economic package to sell voters, Janša especially began to appeal to what he perceived to be the latent anti-Communism of his constituents. This conservative turn became the final wedge splitting DEMOS apart. In 1992 people like

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<sup>812</sup> Rupel, "Slovenia's Shift from the Balkans to Central Europe," 1994, 192-194.

<sup>813</sup> Rizman, *Uncertain Path: Democratic Transition and Consolidation in Slovenia*, 155.

<sup>814</sup> *Ibid.*, 154-155.

Spomenka and Tine Hribar left, disgusted with what they felt to be Janša's dangerous populism. Janša's populism, however, effectively drew on very prominent motifs in early 1990's Slovenia. He appealed directly to the hundreds of thousands of Slovenes who began to directly confront what they now perceived to be a monolithic historical legacy of the national liberation war.

It was in these early years that Slovene Public opinion swayed more to the side of the Collaborators' memories than ever before (or after) in Slovene history. In 1990 the Center for Public Opinion research began to track views on Second World War history. One of their questions asked people to rank which of five opinions on the War was closest to their own. The first answer read "The Partisans were correct in their fight against the occupiers, the Domobranci inexcusably collaborated with the occupiers." The second possible answer was that "the Partisans fought for a Communist revolution which the Domobranci correctly opposed." The third answer nuanced support for collaboration by offering that "the Domobranci correctly resisted a Communist Revolution, but should not have collaborated with the occupiers." The fourth option allowed people to disagree with all of the above options, while the fifth was simply "don't know." In 1992, 10% of all respondents picked the second, uncritically pro-Domobranci position. Over the first decade of independence, between 17.6 and 21.6 percent of respondents picked the third, qualified pro-Domobranci position. In 1992 only 33.3 percent of respondents were willing to uncritically pick a pro-Partisan stance. During the other years of the decade, between 36.3 and 39.9 percent of respondents chose the first, pro-Partisan answer.<sup>815</sup>

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<sup>815</sup> Toš, "Vrednotenje v preteklosti: pogledi na Partisanstvo in domobranstvo" (Evaluating the past: Opinions on the Partisans and Home Guard, 66-69.

	1990	1992	1993	1994	1996	1997	1999
Pro-Partisan	39.6	33.3	36.3	37.7	39.1	39.9	39.5
Pro-Domobranci	8.7	10.0	8.7	7.6	8.1	6.5	8.7
Qualified Pro-Domobranci	20.1	18.1	17.6	21.4	21.5	21.6	21.5
Other	5.0	7.2	5.5	3.7	4.2	6.6	5.7
Don't Know	26.6	31.3	32.0	29.5	27.1	25.5	24.7

**Table 8.1 Slovene Memory Surveys in 1990's, developed from Toš, 2007, pp. 66-67.**

In 1994, at the height of this alternative memory's appeal, Janez Janša first published *Trenches: the Path of Slovene Statehood* (Okopi: Pot slovenske države). In this book he revealed why he, a former Communist League member, felt so personally connected to the tragedy of the murdered Domobranci. His own father, it turned out, had been among their ranks. He wrote how his father was sent to Kočevski Rog, at the end of the war, lined up against a cliff edge, then brutally machine-gunned, falling into the abyss. Miraculously, his father had survived the ordeal, lying buried under other corpses until nightfall when he crawled out. Two local women fed him and gave him new clothes. When he was again captured by Partisans a kind-hearted officer kept him imprisoned long enough for an amnesty against former collaborators to take effect, thereby saving his life.<sup>816</sup> Janez Janša wrote how his father never talked about these experiences, and he only knew the details of his father's story in full by 1991, when the younger Janez commanded the Slovene army during its ten day war against the Yugoslav

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<sup>816</sup> Janša, *Okopi pot Slovenske državnosti, (Trenches: the path of Slovene statehood)*, 1994, 27-35.

armada. Janša wrote that he took courage from his father's story, and that it provided the motivation he needed to transform Slovenia's former Communist political space.<sup>817</sup>

A few years later, in 2000 *Mladina* reporter Sebastijan Ozmec questioned people in Janša's hometown about the story, who maintained that it was not true. Ivan Janša Sr. had indeed been with the Domobranci, but after the war he was imprisoned briefly in Škofja Loka then allowed to return home on account of his youth. He had never been anywhere near the killing sites.<sup>818</sup> Even later, in 2009 Bogomir Štefančič wrote an article for the conservative Catholic magazine *Družina*, where he argued that political calculations were preventing a real coming to terms with Slovenia's postwar dead. He accused both the left and right of the political spectrum, and specifically called out Janez Janša as one who gained political capital by exploiting the story of the murdered Domobranci. He questioned whether the story of his father was even true, noting the many similarities between the supposed narrative of Ivan Janša Sr. and an account by Franc Dejak that had been published one year before Janša's book.<sup>819</sup> Whether factual or not, Janez Janša's account of his father's suffering certainly rang true to anti-Communist and conservative memories in early 1990's Slovenia.

Janša's account in 1994 came at the tail end of a flood of memorials, press articles, television programs, and to a lesser extent historical monographs whose creators hoped to fill gaps in what they constructed to be official versions of Slovenia's history. In the small villages of Gorenjska, Dolenjska, and Štajerska; areas where the bulk of male

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<sup>817</sup> Ibid., 36-43.

<sup>818</sup> *Mladina*, October 17, 2000, available online at: <http://www.mladina.si/87659/m-jansa/.../>.

<sup>819</sup> *Družina*, March 25, 2009, available online at: <http://www.druzina.si/icd/spletnastran.nsf/all/9C736E1DB0201F02C12575860035236D?OpenDocument>.

youth had joined either German or Collaborator military units, monuments began to appear in the center of towns, usually inside church-owned property. By 1994, virtually all village centers in Slovenia had such a monument.<sup>820</sup> Sometimes these monuments replaced ones to the Communist Partisans, often they appeared in church courtyards, or on the sides of Church walls. The one organization that had sought to mobilize Slovenes on the basis of being Slovenes long before the Communist party came to power, the Catholic Church, now began to reckon with its defeated adversaries. In most monuments to the Domobranci, a crucifix served as a shorthand symbol of their cause, rather than the Eagle or swastika that their units used during the war. The crucifix began to compete in Slovenia's symbolic space with either the star of Communism or the Triglav mountain symbol of the Liberation Front.<sup>821</sup>

### **Mass Killings become Public**

As early as 1990 Slovenia's mass media began running stories "about those whom until now, it was forbidden to speak of."<sup>822</sup> They joined a broad Eastern European discourse of glasnost as they tried to supplant a collective memory with their own communicative memories. Among Serbs and Croats, revelations about massive crimes against collaborators motivated public opinion against the formerly dominant Partisan war narrative. Wars in Bosnia and Croatia necessitated new mobilizing narratives. In Bosnia, Serbian belligerents largely came to identify with the Četnik enemies of the

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<sup>820</sup> Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, September 3, 2003, available online at: <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1342488.html>.

<sup>821</sup> Ibid.

<sup>822</sup> This is the subtitle to Marjan Horvat's November 6, 1990 article in *Mladina* on the murders of 9-12 people in Babja Ložica by Partisan forces one week after the war ended. *Mladina*, November 11, 1990, 26 (pišemo o tistih, o katerih je bilo do danes prepovedano govoriti).

Partisans while Croats more cautiously embraced imagery of the Ustaše collaborators. In Slovenia, public opinion was harder to sway as there were fewer people with personal memories favorable to collaborators and far more people who viewed the wars to their South with horror. Instead, many Slovenes seeking what they called historical justice tried to identify with a broader Eastern European move for glasnost as inspired by Gorbachev's reforms in the Soviet Union.

As monuments began to appear in villages across the country, each generated a flurry of letters to the editors of Slovene presses. Some like Ciril Jaklič's September 18, 1993 letter to *Slovenec* celebrated that justice was finally being found for victims of the "Red Revolution."<sup>823</sup> Others like Franc Perme used letters to the editor to help organize a Slovene Society to care for "silenced graves," calling the postwar murder of Domobranci a Slovenian Holocaust.<sup>824</sup> On a personal level, many sought to publicly identify those who had participated in the murderous crimes of Partisan liquidators, both during and after the war. Sometimes this caused confusion as shown in an August 14, 1990 letter to the editor of *Delo* where Andrej Jenko wrote that a previous letter to the editor had mistakenly identified Ivan Hočevar from Medvode as one of the postwar murderers when it was really Jože Plenov. In this letter Jenko even wrote that Plenov had often bragged about his role as a killer, who personally tied people together with wire before shooting them.<sup>825</sup>

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<sup>823</sup> *Slovenec*, September 18, 1993, 8 (rdeče revolucije).

<sup>824</sup> *Slovenec*, July 31, 1993, 8 (slovenskega holokavsta).

<sup>825</sup> Jenko, *Delo*, "Nismo bili likvidatorji" August 14, 1990, 28.

Other letter writers sought to contribute to national reconciliation, often within the framework of an emerging European Union. On July 3, 1990 Marjan Remič used the front page of *Demokracija* to explain the absurdity of Slovenia's memory debates through a comparison to the new Europe: "The two Germanies are uniting, while the old Allied powers who suffered the greatest number of deaths in the history of humanity are forgiving them. The victorious and defeated are uniting, and unlike us they aren't even brothers by blood... We can't really expect Europe to accept us with all of our graves and bones."<sup>826</sup>

Some articles directly attacked the humanist legacy of the Liberation War by arguing that the postwar killings were not an aberration but part of a pattern of Communist brutality that had spanned the entire war. On August 28, 1990 Ivo Žajdela justified the formation of Village Guard units (who had collaborated with the Italian occupiers) by arguing that until the summer of 1942, more Slovenes had died at the hands of the Communist Secret Service (VOS) than from the occupiers. He then justified collaboration on the basis of the thousands of Slovenes unjustly killed by the liberation Front during and after the war.<sup>827</sup> On August 26, 1992, Pavel Kogej dismissed all notion of reconciliatory propriety in his letter to the editors of *Slovenec*, on the occasion of a monument being erected to fallen Domobranci from Rovte. He called Communists "criminal... beastly killers."<sup>828</sup> Franco Juri satirized the emerging memory debate with

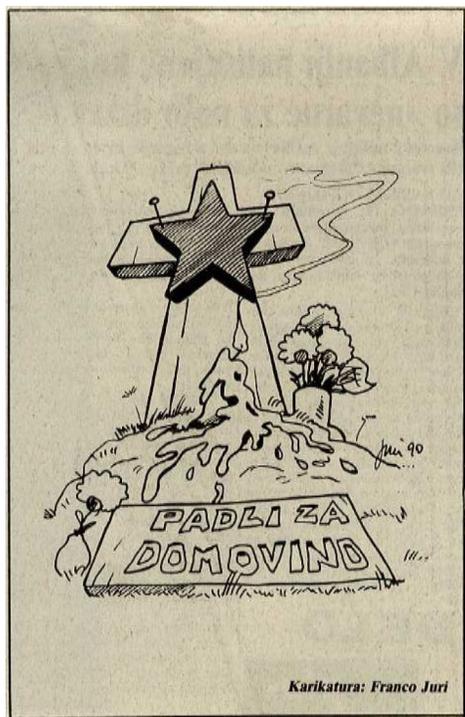
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<sup>826</sup> Remic, *Demokracija*, July 3, 1990, 1, (Nemčiji se združujeta, nekdanji zavezniki, kot žrtve največje morije v zgodovini človeštva, odpuščajo. Zmagovalci in poraženci se združujejo pa še bratje po krvi si niso... In če si zares želimo v Evropo, potlej nas ta z grobovi in kostmi zagotovo ne bo sprejela).

<sup>827</sup> *Demokracija*, August 28, 1990, 10.

<sup>828</sup> *Slovenec*, August 26, 1992, 9 (zločinski Komunisti eksekutorji zverinsko pomorili...).

his cartoon “Fallen for the Homeland,” which appeared in *Delo* on November 1, 1990 (Figure 8.4). The cartoon shows a Partisan star malignantly superimposed over a crucifix, poking fun at Spomenka Hribar’s idea that a monument could be erected to both



**Figure 8.4 Fallen for the Homeland**

Partisans and collaborators.<sup>829</sup>

Monographs also began to freely appear in Slovene bookstores that gave readers ready access to formerly illegal viewpoints. Editors of *Mladina* in particular had begun promoting interest in these alternative viewpoints by printing excerpts from émigré literature as early as 1989.<sup>830</sup> In the early 1990’s former émigré books like Tomaž Kovač’s *We lie Dead in a Ravine*, (*V rogu ležimo pobiti*) which describes the horrors of the postwar murders, became available inside Slovenia. This book

informs the description of the postwar killings in the second chapter of this dissertation.

Ljubo Sirc’s memoir, mentioned earlier in this chapter, appeared in Slovene translation in 1991.

In that same year Ferdo Gestrin published *The world under Krim*,<sup>831</sup> in which he outlined the everyday suffering of residents in several small villages (under the mountain

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<sup>829</sup> *Delo*, November 1, 1990, 2.

<sup>830</sup> See for example: Franci Zavrl, “Slovenska politična emigracija,” (Slovene political emigration), *Mladina*, February 3, 1989, 8-11.

<sup>831</sup> Gestrin, *Svet pod Krimom*. The Russian word ‘Krim’ of Tatar origin is usually translated as ‘Crimea’ in English. The hill and cave known as ‘Krim’ in Slovenia are rarely discussed in English, and when they are, such as in Andrej Mihev’s paper on mass graves in Slovenia, the convention is to retain the Slovene name

Krim) during the Second World War. Gestrin had been a University Professor and much-published author during the Socialist Regime. He narrates the Second World War as the summation of hundreds of years of history for the region, that he describes with a lengthy analysis of all available historical and archaeological evidence. He then transitions to a story of how Fascist, Nazi, and Partisan forces abused the local population in pursuit of end goals that were foreign to the actual needs of these deeply historicized villagers. He blames the development of collaborator military groups on Partisan terror tactics against supposed collaborators and the Partisan practice of requisitioning grain and livestock.<sup>832</sup> Gestrin maintained his credibility among his former peers by referring to MVAC volunteers and Domobranci as “traitors” and “White Guardsmen” throughout his narrative. Yet it was the appendix to his book that provided such damning evidence on the need to reevaluate uncritical histories of the Partisan war. He wrote the names and causes of death for everyone who perished from this small region during and shortly after the war, dividing people according to the military group that killed them. Sixty-nine people from these villages were killed by the occupiers, another sixty-nine by the Domobranstvo, while 136 were killed by the Partisans. Of the 136 people killed by the Partisans, 108 were murdered during the mass killings after the war was over.<sup>833</sup>

Four years earlier Ciril Žebot, a political refugee living in the United States who was among the founders of the anti Communist Village Guards, wrote *Everlasting Slovenia: Memories and Insights from the 70-year Period following the May Declaration*.

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(Mihevc, “Use of the Caves as Mass Graveyards in Slovenia,” [http://www.sbe.com.br/anais26cbe/26CBE\\_499-503.pdf](http://www.sbe.com.br/anais26cbe/26CBE_499-503.pdf)).

<sup>832</sup> Gestrin, *Svet pod Krimom*, 61.

<sup>833</sup> *Ibid.*, 199-202.

His book was a totally unapologetic defense of anti-Communist Slovene forces. The book was available in Slovenia, even reviewed by the widely circulated *Mladina*. His assertion that the Domobranci were patriots rather than collaborators sharply contradicted public opinion. By grounding his history in the 1918 May Day declaration that had founded the first Yugoslavian state, Žebot directly attacked the notion that Slovenia's independent political history had begun with the Conference at Kočevje held by the Communist-led Liberation Front.<sup>834</sup> According to Žebot, Slovenes had a long political history extending as far back as Habsburg reforms following the revolutions of 1848. 1918 represented a turning point in his analysis, however, because that was the first time Slovenes had a real chance at political independence. For Žebot, the 70-year period following the May Day declaration became a series of failures, where Slovenes subsumed their natural right of self-determination to Serbian and Stalinist hegemonic interests.<sup>835</sup> His monograph, coming shortly after the publication of *Nova Revija* special edition 57, made its writers' call for Slovene independence far more explicit. He in fact was among the founders of an émigré organization called "United Slovenia" that had been calling for an independent state since the 1960's.<sup>836</sup>

The largest hurdle on the path to independence for Žebot had been Slovenia's Stalinist revolution. Though he admitted that reforms had significantly changed the Republic since the 1960's, he still decried the Stalinist legacy, notably a version of World

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<sup>834</sup> Žebot, *Neminljiva Slovenija: Spomini in spoznanja iz razdobja sedemdesetih let od Majniške deklaracij* (Everlasting Slovenia: Memories and insights from the seventy year period since the May declaration), 9-10.

<sup>835</sup> Ibid., 70, 221.

<sup>836</sup> Ibid., 447-450.

War II history that completely suppressed a fair analysis of the collaborators. He called the Domobranci the most independent military forces Slovenes had ever before or since controlled.<sup>837</sup> He described the Partisans as an incompetent army that, during the period of Italian occupation, had a mutual agreement with Italian forces to not carry out an actual resistance. For the Communists this allowed them instead to focus on their goals of revolution through liquidating all opponents. For Italian forces this provided an excuse to remove forces from hotter theaters of war to focus on terrorizing the Slovene countryside. Žebot's Village Guards then somehow convinced the Italians to stop their harsh reprisals in exchange for cooperation in policing against Communists.<sup>838</sup> When the Germans occupied all of Slovenia in 1943, Žebot makes an argument similar to the second chapter of this dissertation: that the Partisans were wholly ineffective as a military force, only succeeding at the end of the war with massive Yugoslavian and Soviet help.<sup>839</sup> He then details in length the postwar murder of anti-Communist forces from across Yugoslavia on Slovene territory. It was only after the war that Communist forces were actually victorious.<sup>840</sup>

These monographs by Kovač, Gestrin, Sirc and Žebot sought to revise a history that their authors painted as monolithic and totalitarian, much the same way they viewed the state that such history supported. Even when agreeing with historians writing within

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<sup>837</sup> Ibid., 296.

<sup>838</sup> Ibid., 257-260.

<sup>839</sup> Ibid., 291-292.

<sup>840</sup> Ibid., 390-393.

the Socialist Republic, Žebot for example, regularly labeled them as “regime historians.” Such new and counter-cultural histories generated almost immediate opposition.

### **(Ir)reconciliation**

In 1992 Draga Ahačič answered the title to her book, *Liberation War or Civil War?*, by writing:

Of course the thesis of a revolution and counter-revolution being fought in Slovenia during the war can only be argued if one ignores the Italian-German-Hungarian dismemberment of Slovenia, then completely omits the overall European and global conflict between the Axis forces and the Allies, then willingly looks beyond the fact that this conflict created fronts between attackers and defenders especially those who justifiably sought to defend their territories, their independence and their fundamental human rights. This was not an ideological war, but a war for survival, especially for those whom the Fuhrer considered to be less-worthy races.<sup>841</sup>

Ahačič had gained her fame as an actor in Partisan theatre troupes during the war. In her postwar life she continued both play and film acting, often in war-themed productions. Ahačič regularly recited her memories as an avatar into the theatrical world of the NOB. The war was not just a formative event in her life, it was her life. Her artistic work directly influenced her later academic interests. In *Liberation War or Civil War* she accuses Ciril Žebot (deceased by the time of her writing) for influencing much of the revisionist history that she finds to be so offensive. She argues that his thesis, that the Communists sought a Revolution from the beginning, ignores the heroic sacrifice that

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<sup>841</sup> Ahačič, *Osvobodilna ali državljanska vojna?*, 1992, 15 (Seveda pa je to tezo o medvojni revoluciji in protirevoluciji na Slovenskem mogoče postavljati edinole, ce se odmisli italjansko-nemsko-madžarska okupacija in razkosanje Slovenije ter se popolnoma odpise temeljni evropski in svetovni spopad med salami osi in zaveznikov, skratka, ce se samohotno prezre zgodovinska dejstva, da je ta spopad vzpostavil fronto med napadalci in zavojevalci pa med tistimi, ki so upravičeno poskusali braniti svojo neodvisnost in svoje temeljne cloveske pravice. To ni bila ideoloska vojna ampak vojna za obstoj, zlasti tistih ki jih je Fuhrer uvrscal za manjvredne rase).

Partisans made to liberate Slovenia from occupiers who sought the genocidal destruction of the Slovene people.<sup>842</sup> She firmly, if inaccurately, grounds Slovenia's struggle in the broader cosmopolitanism of the Holocaust. Nazis sought only to Germanize Slovenes, to eradicate their culture and language, which is hardly genocide. As shown in chapter one, for example, when German forces deported Slovenes, they actually sent them to Serbia. Across Europe, "deportation" of Jews was a euphemism for mass murder, or actual genocide.

While Ahačič acknowledges that certain events from the war such as the postwar killings and excessively violent wartime reprisal killings had been left out of previous histories in Socialist Slovenia, she does not believe that such irregularities justified collaboration.<sup>843</sup> Rather she argues that such events were isolated incidents, even understandable given the terrors of everyday life under foreign occupation.<sup>844</sup> In her opinion, one should not condemn the Liberation Front, the Party, or its leadership because of the isolated acts of a few rogue individuals.<sup>845</sup> When it came to reconciling her view of the past with those she wished to counter, however, Ahačič directly attacked Spomenka Hribar's idea that reconciliation was needed at all. In a footnote she wrote, "I've always found the term reconciliation to be inappropriate because it reminds me of the paternalistic way parents insert themselves into children's fights, forcing the bloodthirsty kids to temporarily make amends. They of course kiss and shake hands in

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<sup>842</sup> Ibid., 69-71.

<sup>843</sup> Ibid., 129-134.

<sup>844</sup> Ibid., 144-145.

<sup>845</sup> Ibid., 121.

front of their parents while secretly making faces and threatening each other.”<sup>846</sup> She continues to attack Hribar’s idea of an obelisk to all who died as an insult to all war dead, which might have current political value but in the end only cheapens the sacrifice of the Partisans who fought on behalf of all Slovenes.<sup>847</sup>

By 1993 Spomeka Hribar herself began to question the notion of reconciliation. In *Fear of Freedom* (Strah pred svobodo) she wondered why those on the right wing of Slovenia’s political spectrum had become so fundamentalist. She decried what she saw as monolithic thinking and called on Domobranci apologists to assume some guilt as well.<sup>848</sup> In this article, Hribar first publicly distanced herself from the idea of reconciliation, arguing that it was impossible to create a single worldview that could speak for the diversity of Slovene thought.<sup>849</sup>

It was in the early 1990’s that the organization specifically dedicated to reconciliation, *Beside the Birch Tree of Reconciliation* (Ob lipi spravi), increasingly began to advocate a form of reconciliation that would not remember just the deaths, but the ideals that a contemporary generation thought the Domobranci and other collaborators had died for.<sup>850</sup> When the organization officially formed on June 15, 1991, it defined reconciliation according to an official declaration that called for several things

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<sup>846</sup> Ibid., 186, footnote 1 (Oznaka sprava se mi je zdela ze od vsega začetka neustrezna, ker prevec spominja na trenutno “pobotanje,” s katerim starsi paternalisticno posegajo v otroške prepire in pretepe in pri katerih si mali vrocekrvnezi sicer na ukaz starsev podajo roke in se poljubijo, pri tem pa se na skrivaj spakujejo drug drugemu in se zjugajo).

<sup>847</sup> Ibid., 186-191.

<sup>848</sup> Cited in Slabe, *Slovenska narodna sprava v časopisju (1984-1997) : diplomsko delo, Slovene national reconciliation in the newspapers (1984-1997): dissertation*, 2004, 105.

<sup>849</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>850</sup> Ibid., 84-87.

that Kučan's presidency could not accept, namely that those whom the organization accused of war crimes be forbidden from leaving the Republic, and that all former émigrés (in other words those that the Communist regime saw as criminals) be allowed into the Republic.<sup>851</sup> By 1993 Spomenka Hribar, one of the founders of this organization first removed herself, then became a target of attacks by this organization for being too beholden to Communist-era ideology.<sup>852</sup> The idea of reconciling different worldviews in the name of a common, inclusive and tolerant Slovene national community seemed to die when the idea's founder herself began to reject the idea.<sup>853</sup>

Between October 1993 and June 1994 two commemorations occurred near Kočevje. The first was the fifty year anniversary of the no longer traditional commemoration of the meeting of Liberation Front representatives at Kočevje between October 1 and 3, 1943. To some this commemoration of Slovene statehood had special significance now that Slovenia really did exist as an internationally recognized State. On a national scale, however, the commemorations were as muted as they had been during the 1988 festivities. The fifty year anniversary of the Kočevje conference in October 1993 showed just how fragmented this national community had become. There was no government participation in or more importantly funding for what had once been celebrated as the beginning of Slovene statehood.<sup>854</sup> The Society for the United Veterans of the National Liberation War failed to secure state funding for the event, and instead cooperated with the local authorities in Kočevje. President Milan Kučan did, however,

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<sup>851</sup> Ibid., 89-94.

<sup>852</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>853</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>854</sup> *Večer*, October 4, 1993, 2.

attend the event. Though a numerically important anniversary, the event was far more muted than ever before in its history. A few dozen veterans laid wreaths on monuments around town. Some of the original attendees visited the town.

In Maribor, a former automobile manufacturing town hit hard by the loss of a Yugoslav market, Bojan Buda wrote an editorial lamenting that some thought all old holidays had to be done away with, but expressed gratitude that the event, as small as it was, still managed to be shown in its entirety on Ljubljana's TV channel.<sup>855</sup> In this same newspaper cartoonist Drago Senica depicted the new political elites as a policeman, chasing away a man writing the slogan of the Kočevje conference "the people shall write



**Figure 8.5 The People shall Write their own Destiny**

their own destiny" on the side of the wall, much as Liberation Front graffiti artists once plastered the slogan all over occupied Ljubljana (Figure 8.5).<sup>856</sup>

Far more people (8,000) attended a solemn meeting on June 15, 1994 in the nearby Kočevski Rog.<sup>857</sup> This time, Archbishop Alojzij Šuštar held spoke of the historical injustice that so many murdered people had yet to receive official recognition for their victimhood from the state.

Unlike the commemoration four years previous, this

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<sup>855</sup> *Večer*, October 4, 1993, 3.

<sup>856</sup> *Večer*, October 4, 1993, 3.

<sup>857</sup> Slabe, *Slovenska narodna sprava v časopisju (1984-1997) : diplomsko delo, (Slovene national reconciliation in the newspapers (1984-1997): dissertation)*, 2004, 92.

time no left-oriented politicians, including those from then ruling Liberal Democrats of Slovenia were invited to attend.

In 1995 the now established sociologist Gregor Tomc (Eight years after his last performance with *Pankrti*) teamed with historian, Doroteja Lešnik to write a history of the Second World War (Lešnik's name appears first in their study). Their book *Red and Black: the Slovene Partisan and Home Guard Movements* provides a meticulously researched account of the war that explicitly rejects ideological blinders from either end of Slovenia's political spectrum.<sup>858</sup> To do this, they show both military organizations to have been abominably criminal regimes. In their analysis, the Communists were guided by a totalitarian leadership seeking revolution from the beginning, alienating their potential allies and causing unnecessary conflict with religiously inclined and conservative Slovenes.<sup>859</sup> They describe the collaborator claim to have fought for the best interests of Slovenia as almost nonsense, and show that they were not only institutionally beholden to the occupiers, but in large part shared their ideologies, particularly intense anti-Semitism as well.<sup>860</sup> Nevertheless, for rank and file Village Guards and Domobranci, the uncertainty of the war and real fear of Communist atrocities certainly motivated collaboration. To nuance their approach, however, Lešnik and Tomc show the partial truths to the historic claims of those who identify with both sides in Slovenia's war. While rank and file Partisans certainly were motivated by a desire for liberation from occupying armies, their front was indisputably a vehicle for

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<sup>858</sup> Lešnik and Tomc, *Rdeče in Črno: Slovensko Parizanstvo in Domobranstvo* (Red and black: Slovene Partisans and Home Guards).

<sup>859</sup> *Ibid.*, 24, 38.

<sup>860</sup> *Ibid.*, 124-130.

uncompromising revolution as well. While the Domobranci did fight to protect their fellow Slovenes against perceived Communist atrocities, they followed orders from their German and Italian masters, allowing both armies to free up large numbers of troops for their fight against the allied forces. In the present political order, the authors point out that apologists for each side have ignored less savory elements of each military formation during the war. Among the Partisans, for instance, fewer than 4% of fighters were actually women and major inequality existed within the ranks between officers and the enlisted. Among rank and file Domobranci, ideological affinity to Nazism, especially the anti-Semitism that blamed the war on Jewish masters in both East and West was far more prevalent than any have admitted since the war.<sup>861</sup> Their book offers a call for reconciliation, but one where those identifying with each side recognize their enormous guilt, a guilt that encompasses all segments of the Slovene population. Few responded to the kind of reconciliation that Lešnik and Tomc suggested, a kind that called on apologists for both sides to reconcile the inconsistencies between their histories and uncomfortable facts.<sup>862</sup>

## **CONCLUSION**

For decades historians in Slovenia wrote about the war as a conflict from which the present socio-political order had triumphantly emerged. Histories that explicitly rejected this teleology rarely made it into the Republic. Those histories that made it across the border found little public acceptance. As Yugoslavia's economic and political infrastructure began to crumble leaders became first unable then unwilling to police

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<sup>861</sup> Ibid., 43, 48-54, 94, 126-128.

<sup>862</sup> Ibid., 187.

Slovenia's war memory, the boundaries of which became increasingly blurry for both political elites and the masses. The memories that had legitimized the once powerful federation only began to unravel when an alternative vision of victimization and an attack on Slovene separatism combined to challenge the Partisan legacy. Spomenka Hribar opened the floodgates for an attack with her calm call for reconciliation. At first, reconciliation seemed to many guardians of the old order as an admission of defeat. For decades, however, the memory of the Partisan war had also legitimized the military's presence in everyday Yugoslav life. *Mladina's* attacks on this legacy resonated/dissonated not just in Slovenia but across the federation. While Slovenia's government cautiously defended *Mladina's* editors, Serbian veterans felt that questioning the Army constituted an attack on the legacy of the Liberation War. Slovenes united across the ideological spectrums of an emerging civil society and political culture in opposition to the Milošević government's attempts to suppress regional autonomy. Once pluralistic democracy and independence had been achieved, however, differences in policy began to be entailed by differences in World War II memory. The leaders of the Catholic Church and reformed Communist party, who met together at Kočevski Rog in 1990 to achieve national reconciliation quickly found that a national community cannot be imagined at the expense of its members' very real concerns. Memories and histories associated with Slovenia's dominant totalitarian movements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: Communism and Clerical/National-Socialist/Fascist Collaborationism found themselves unable to even superficially reconcile in the new democratic order. By 1994, even Spomenka Hribar began to reject her call for reconciliation. The erstwhile defenders of the NOB legacy in the veteran's organization, the ZZB-NOB had yet to fully mobilize to

protect their memory. In the confusion of the new state, elderly veterans were momentarily content simply to continue to receive their pensions and benefits; the same financial benefits that led the state into bankruptcy during the mid 1980's.

## Chapter 9: Goodbye Commisars, Hello Commissioners, 1997- June 5, 2013

*Seventy years ago we faced the military machinery of Hitler and Mussolini. Today we are not targeted by tanks and airplanes, but by global financial capital. We will stand our ground.*

Janez Stanovnik, World War II Veteran and President of the Association of United Warriors for the Preservation of the Traditions of the National Liberation War, April 27, 2013<sup>863</sup>

In 1989 Francis Fukuyama celebrated the seeming millennial triumph of capitalist power by describing the collapse of State Socialist regimes as “the end of history.”<sup>864</sup> For many in Slovenia that turning point represented a new beginning, a new opportunity to reexamine the histories that had been such important elements of the old government’s political, social, and even economic legitimacy. During the first years of independence rather uncritically supportive histories of the Collaborators, notably the Domobranci began to circulate freely in Slovenia’s media. As the last chapter showed, a few politicians, the Institute for National Reconciliation, and many within the Catholic clergy began to use a history of victimization to entail their own conservative social and economic visions for the new country. In the uncertain times of a post-independence Slovenia the debates between pro-Partisan and pro-Domobranci histories raged, though by 1997 sharply diminished when the new state began its accession into NATO and the EU. To gain this acceptance, Slovene policy makers had to navigate discourses not just

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<sup>863</sup> *Reporter.si*, April 27, 2013, “Ob prazniku Stanovnik spet grmel: Fiskalno pravilo zahtevajo ‘trije tuji žandarji,’” <http://www.reporter.si/slovenija/ob-prazniku-stanovnik-spet-grmel-fiskalno-pravilo-zahtevajo-%C2%BBtrije-tuji-%C5%BEandarji%C2%AB/15948> (smo se pred 70. leti soočali z vojaško mašinerijo Hitlerja in Musolinija, danes pa nismo tarča tankov in letal, temveč svetovnega finančnega kapitala in to je treba zdržati).

<sup>864</sup> Fukuyama, *The National Interest*, Summer, 1989, 3-5.

from diverse memory politics within the Republic, but from conservative politicians in Slovenia's powerful EU member neighbor, Italy. Many Slovenians' decisive "end of history," especially the end to confusing debates on World War II history, it seemed had arrived with membership in the European Union in 2004.

At the end of the first 2000 decade a combination of domestic political pressure and global economic failures would again cause a crisis of neoliberalism inside Slovenia that created a fertile environment to reevaluate memory debates that had previously never been concluded, only ignored.<sup>865</sup> In 2009 the Commission for Mass Graves worked with a special police task force to excavate one site of mass killings, in the Barbara mine shaft in Huda Jama (Evil Cave). As images of the remains of hundreds of men and women murdered in this cave became public, once muted debates on Slovenia's wartime past became far more virulent.<sup>866</sup> In 2012 Slovenes began marching in the streets of Ljubljana to protest corruption, cronyism, and seeming unnecessary austerity measures. The ZZB-NOB officially joined the protesters in January 2013.<sup>867</sup> Over the first six months of 2013, World War II polemics have become sharper than ever before in independent Slovenia's history. Those who feel the victimization of the murdered Collaborators have successfully joined their call for reconciliation to broad European discourses on the hypocrisy of differentiating World War II victims based on who killed them. In 2008 the

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<sup>865</sup> In her discussion of a Dublin memorial garden to Irish volunteers in the British Army during World War I, Ann Rigney shows that contestation is one of the processes that allows memories to retain their social relevance. A resolved memory, then, is one that no longer performs a function causing it to become forgotten, Ann Rigney, "Divided Pasts," 93-96.

<sup>866</sup> *RTV-SLO*, March 3, 2010, <http://www.rtvlo.si/slovenija/dezman-huda-jama-pompeji-totalitarne-groznje/224869>.

<sup>867</sup> ZZB NOB Slovenije, *Sporočilo Sveta ZZB NOB Slovenije* (Report of the Council of the Alliance of United Veterans of the National Liberation War of Slovenia), <http://www.zzb-nob.si/aktualno/>.

conservative Slovenian EU presidency supported a Czech bill to recognize August 23 as the Europe wide Day of Remembrance for Victims of all Totalitarian and Authoritarian regimes.<sup>868</sup> On the other hand, those who identify with a Partisan history of the past have in recent months been narrating Slovenia's Liberation struggle as a heroic battle of isolated Slovenes against the powerful armies of a German-dominated Europe.<sup>869</sup> They reenact their themes to these battles on the streets of Ljubljana almost every day.

As shown in the previous chapter, during the early 1990's Slovenia's professional historians frequently met and published studies of the Second World War that they hoped might contribute to some form of reconciliation. They hoped that their unbiased, strictly professional analyses could overcome polemics by appealing to the public's better, more rational instincts. Their histories succeeded in meeting the highest standards of professional historiography, and like their counterparts in the 1960's, had virtually no impact on public opinion. By the latter part of the 2000 decade many historians began to protest state policies favoring those who were willing to portray the country's recent past according to stark black and white binaries favored by conservative politicians. Many historians began to rebel against the new conservatism by focusing not just on formerly suppressed plot elements within recent history, but by emphasizing the legacy of the war and recent Communist history, both its embarrassing warts and positive liberal values. Institutional frameworks like the Commission for the Research of Concealed Mass Graves and the Institution for Reconciliation favor the kinds of conservative interpretations of the past that emphasize the totalitarian nature of Slovene Communism.

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<sup>868</sup> *Mladina*, August 24, 2008, <http://www.mladina.si/115220/>.

<sup>869</sup> *Reporter.si*, April 27, 2013.

They have received ample funding through the Slovene ministry of Culture in recent years. Those opposed to such simplifications have found resources through the Veteran's Organization. The Institute for Contemporary History, National Museum and Universities have struggled to remain politically unbiased as their funding is tied to government sources.

On May 1, 2004 eight former socialist states entered the European Union. During the years leading up to accession, the Republic of Slovenia consistently ranked among the top two of these applicants in indicators of economic success and democratization<sup>870</sup>. Despite being one of the few countries to regularly meet EU economic and value-based expectations,<sup>871</sup> Slovenia was the last of these states invited to join the Union. This delay was almost entirely due to the concern certain Italians had over a clause within Slovenia's property law. According to article 68 of the 1991 constitution, only Slovene citizens were allowed to own real property<sup>872</sup>. Italian politicians interpreted this article as

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<sup>870</sup> Between 1993 and 2004 Slovenia's GDP per capita was the highest of the former Socialist new member states except for the years 1998, 1999, and 2001 when it followed the Czech Republic. Slovenia's overall Freedom House Democracy score between 1993 and 2004 was also the highest among all East Central European states except for the years 1999, 2001, and 2002 when it followed Poland. In 2004 Slovenia tied with Poland for the highest democracy score in the region. GDP data taken from CIA World Fact Book available through University of Missouri Library website at [www.unmsl.edu/services/govdocs.htm](http://www.unmsl.edu/services/govdocs.htm). Freedom House reports cited in Goehring, *Nations in Transit 2008: Democratization from Central Europe to Eurasia*, 21-25, 537; and Howard, *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe*, 71-77.

<sup>871</sup> At a most basic level the requirements for states to join the European Union were contained within the resolutions of the June 1993 European Council meeting at Copenhagen. These Copenhagen criteria include the following three points: "stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities; the existence of a functioning market economy as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union; the ability to take on the obligations of membership including adherence to the aims of political, economic & monetary union," [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/enlargement\\_process/accession\\_process/criteria/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/enlargement_process/accession_process/criteria/index_en.htm). According to Ferfila and Phillips, Slovenia had little trouble meeting EU measures of democracy and human rights, but lacked in free market development (*Slovenia: On the Edge of the European Union*, 97-98).

<sup>872</sup> Uradni list RS, št. 33/91-I, <http://www.us-rs.si/o-sodiscu/pravna-podlaga/ustava/iii-gospodarska-in-socialna-razmerja/?lang=0>.

Slovene refusal to recognize the rights of Italian minorities forcibly expelled from Yugoslavia at the end of World War II.<sup>873</sup> Center-left Slovene politicians, for the most part comfortable with their own narrative of wartime victimization by Italians, saw little reason to revise the law. Little reason, that is, until they realized by 1997 that this article was hindering their accession possibilities to the European Union.<sup>874</sup>

Over the next decade the ZZB-NOB frequently clashed with far right organizations in Italy. On February 10, 2007 Italian President Giorgio Napolitano referred to the 1947 transfer of Istria to Yugoslavia as part of a “Slavic annexationist plan” with “dark undertones of ethnic cleansing.”<sup>875</sup> Croatian president Stjepan Mesić wrote him a letter complaining of “open racism, historical revisionism, and political revanchism.”<sup>876</sup> The European Commission’s spokesperson Pia Hansen responded that Mesić’s comments were inappropriate. Editors at Slovenia’s *Dnevnik* immediately saw this as Napolitano’s government trying to impose historical interpretation guidelines on Croatia for accession to the European Union.<sup>877</sup> Napolitano’s government then issued a

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<sup>873</sup> Bučar, “The International Recognition of Slovenia,” 1997, 40.

<sup>874</sup> On July 17, 1997 the following amendment was added to the Slovene constitution: “Foreigners may obtain ownership rights to real property under the conditions determined by law. Foreigners may only obtain ownership of real property through inheritance as provided for by laws of reciprocity.” On July 3, 2003 this article was again modified to the following: “Foreigners may obtain ownership rights to real property under conditions determined either by law or by international agreements as ratified by the national assembly under the condition of reciprocity. This Law and international agreement as outlined in the above paragraph must be accepted by the national assembly with a 2/3 majority of all deputies,” <http://www.us-rs.si/o-sodiscu/pravna-podlaga/ustava/spremembe-in-dopolnitve-ustave/?lang=0>.

<sup>875</sup> Quoted in Repe, “Spremenjeni pogledi na zgodovino” (Changing views of history), 47. Slovene translation from Italian original (slovanski aneksionistični načrt...ki je dobil mračne obrise etničnega čiščenja).

<sup>876</sup> Ibid., 47. Slovene translation from Croatian original (odprtega rasizma, zgodovinskega revizionizma in političnega revanšizma).

<sup>877</sup> *Dnevnik*, February 14, 2007, <http://www.dnevnik.si/clanek/228656>.

reply to Mesić, saying that they meant no offense to Croatians. Milan Kučan, then out of office responded on March 16<sup>th</sup> (at a memorial in Strunja for victims of Fascism) that Napolitano certainly should not imply that such genocide was then the fault of Slovenia, and he lamented that Croatians seemed to be forced to conform their memory politics to the will of Fascists in the Union just as Slovenes had been forced to do (ostensibly through modifying their property laws).<sup>878</sup> Though Janez Janša, then prime minister of Slovenia, refused to get his government involved in the controversy others like Janez Stanovnik, former Central Committee member and current president of the now non-governmental ZZB-NOB organization had no problem decrying the hypocrisy of an Italian government seeking to make its refugees superior to Slovene victims.<sup>879</sup>

Immediately following the controversy surrounding President Napolitano's comments, the Union of Istrians for the Liberation of Istria and Esilio announced it would hold a conference to commemorate the postwar expulsion of ethnic Italians from Dalmatia. This was the organization's first annual conference, and it purported to speak for all wartime refugees, though neglected to invite any representatives of refugees from Nazi-Fascism. The organization for Refugees from Slovenia wrote their Italian counterpart a letter complaining that they had not received an invitation. The Slovene society's president, Ivica Žnidaršič then wrote that she planned to inform the European

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<sup>878</sup> *Delo*, March 16, 2007, <http://www.delo.si/clanek/38759>.

<sup>879</sup> Repe, "Spremenjeni pogledi na zgodovino" (Changing views of history), 47-48.

public, the Council of Europe, and the European Union that the Italian organization's claim of a Slovene-led genocide during the war was completely baseless.<sup>880</sup>

During the late 1990's predominantly center-left politicians within the Drnovšek government yielded to pressure from beyond their borders to reexamine their property laws. Inside Slovenia, however, the power of those who identified with a Partisan memory of the war far outweighed that of Collaborators. In addition, demands tied to a memory of victimization under the old regime ranged from the absurdly impractical, such as a movement among some Clergy to return church lands seized at the end of the war<sup>881</sup> to the reasonable such as trying the still living Mitja Ribičič for his involvement in the postwar killings, to a morally imperative demand to financially support those who had suffered under Communist oppression. The first of these demands has never seriously entered the discussions of Slovene legislators.

The second, to hold Mitja Ribičič accountable for his involvement in postwar crimes occurred in 2005. The Slovene Public Prosecutor charged him with complicity in the crime of genocide for personally drafting a list of 234 people to kill. This list had been found earlier that year by a police criminal investigator, Pavel Jamnik, while conducting research in the Slovene archives.<sup>882</sup> Initially lawyers debated whether he could be charged, as Yugoslavia had not signed the Convention on Genocide until 1951 (six years after the crimes). Prosecutors used the precedent of the 1907 Hague convention, which made responsibility for war crimes retroactive, to continue with their

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<sup>880</sup> Žnidaršič, *Vestnik: Interno glasilo društva izgnancev Slovenije, (The herald: an internal voice for the society of the exiled in Slovenia)*, April 2007, 2.

<sup>881</sup> Rizman, *Uncertain Path: Democratic Transition and Consolidation in Slovenia*, 112-113.

<sup>882</sup> Trampuš, *Mladina*, May 30, 2005, <http://www.mladina.si/92535/>.

prosecution.<sup>883</sup> On August 23<sup>rd</sup> the Constitutional Court rejected this claim to retroactive guilt, and threw out the case. They decided there was neither enough evidence nor a legal framework to convict Ribičič. His son Ciril was a member of the court and did not recuse himself from the case.<sup>884</sup>

The third demand of collaborators, to receive payment for those who suffered from Communist oppression had had a more complicated history. Slovenia's Assembly passed a law on November 6, 1995 which promised damage payments, pensions, transportation assistance and housing aid to victims of wartime aggression.<sup>885</sup> The law included those who suffered acts of specifically defined aggression<sup>886</sup> from German forces during the 1941 invasion of Yugoslavia, from subsequent German, Italian, and Hungarian occupying forces, and victims of Yugoslav National Army (JNA) aggression in 1991. Not only did this law offer nothing to other victims, but article six of this law prohibited assistance to people who collaborated with occupying forces.

Over the next decade, determined interest groups lobbied to amend the law to include victims of the Partisans. On March 11, 2001 a revision to this law included a

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<sup>883</sup> Greganović, *B-92*, May 26, 2005, [http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2005&mm=05&dd=26&nav\\_category=167&nav\\_id=169217](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2005&mm=05&dd=26&nav_category=167&nav_id=169217).

<sup>884</sup> *B-92*, August 23, 2005, [http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2006&mm=08&dd=23&nav\\_category=167&nav\\_id=209207](http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2006&mm=08&dd=23&nav_category=167&nav_id=209207).

<sup>885</sup> Zakon o Žrtvah Vojnega Nasilja (ZZVN), (The Law on Victims of Wartime Aggression) *Uradni list RS*, št. 63/1995 z dne 6. 11. 1995, <http://www.uradnilist.si/1/objava.jsp?urlid=199563&stevilka=2917>.

<sup>886</sup> Acts of aggression include: "Those who for reasons of political, national, racial, or religious reasons were forcibly resettled (exiles), sent to prison camps (prisoners), jail (inmates), forced labor (labor deportees) or internment (internees) as well as persons who fled from wartime aggression (refugees) and forcibly adopted children (stolen children)" (author's translation), *Uradni list RS*, št. 63/1995 z dne November 6, 1995, <http://www.uradni-list.si/1/objava.jsp?urlid=199563&stevilka=2917>.

one-time payment for those forcibly mobilized into the German army.<sup>887</sup> Only on November 17, 2006, after Janez Janša's SDS party was back in control, did the Slovene Constitutional Court rule that the original law was in violation of the constitution for not including payments to those suffering from Communist Partisan aggression.<sup>888</sup> This prompted the national assembly to amend the law on September 16, 2009 to include victims of any armed forces during the Second World War, including the Partisans.<sup>889</sup> To the chagrin of many sympathetic to Slovenia's wartime collaborator groups, the law currently does not include the immediate postwar murders of captured Domobranstvo<sup>890</sup> soldiers.<sup>891</sup> Vanessa Čokl in a November 9, 2009 letter to the editors of the Maribor newspaper *Večer*, argues that this shows the unwillingness of Slovene politicians to accept that World War II was a Slovene civil war, where all forces unjustly suffered.<sup>892</sup>

On November 8, 2005 the National Assembly elected Janez Janša to be prime minister. One of his government's first acts was to organize a Commission to research

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<sup>887</sup> Uradni list RS, št. 18/2001 z dne March 14, 2001 article 10. <http://www.uradni-list.si/1/content?id=30115>.

<sup>888</sup> The court ruled in favor of Elizabeta Dolenc and Marija Petan, who argued that because their parents were murdered by Partisan forces, they were forced to suffer extreme privations as stolen children, which negatively impacted their entire lives. Številka: U-I-266/04-105 in Uradni list RS, št. 118/2006 z dne November 17, 2006, <http://www.uradni-list.si/1/objava.jsp?urlid=2006118&stevilka=5072>.

<sup>889</sup> Uradni list RS, št. 72/2009 z dne Septemer 18, 2009, article 1, online at <http://www.uradni-list.si/1/objava.jsp?urlid=200972&stevilka=3184>.

<sup>890</sup> The Slovensko Domobranstvo (Slovene Home Guard) was a group organized by the former conservative politician, Leo Rupnik in October 1943 to fight Communist Partisan aggression. This group was armed, trained, and financed by Nazi Germany. Its soldiers were required to swear an oath to Adolf Hitler before joining the organization.

<sup>891</sup> Uradni list RS, št. 72/2009 article 2 stipulates that wartime aggression victims only include those who suffered between April 6, 1941 and May 15, 1945. Most of the postwar massacres occurred at the end of May and early June. <http://www.uradni-list.si/1/objava.jsp?urlid=200972&stevilka=3184>.

<sup>892</sup> Čokl, *Večer*, November 9, 2009.

the mass graves covering Slovenia. A precedent had been set by the Spanish Association for the Recuperation of Historical Memory which in the early 2000's began exhuming mass graves from the era of the Civil War, setting a precedent for a form of reconciliation through symbolically reburying the past that has caught the attention of broader European audiences.<sup>893</sup> Janša, in turn, was able to secure generous funding from the European Commission to carry out these exhumations.<sup>894</sup> While mass burial sites were largely known in Slovenia, they remained buried from public discourse until large scale exhumations literally forced those who were buried into the collective consciousness of Slovenes.

Though proclaimed as a step towards reconciliation, the commission immediately stirred controversy within the historical community. On November 11, 2005 the Janša government chose Joze Dežman, then serving as president of the Museum of Contemporary History, to lead the sixteen-member Commission on Concealed Mass Graves. Other historians immediately cried foul, fourteen of whom signed a document at the end of the year calling on the government to stop coercing its alternative view of history onto Slovene society. They pointed out that Dežman did not even hold a Master's Degree, and assumed that his appointment had far more to do with his political reliability than his academic qualifications. Dežman had previously worked within the late Central Committee's Historical Commission, and had served as an editor of the ZZB-NOB's

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<sup>893</sup> For a discussion of the Spanish Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica see Berber and Colaert, "History from the Grave? Politics of Time in Spanish Mass Grave Exhumations," 440-456.

<sup>894</sup> For a discussion of EU funding for Slovene exhumations see: Dečman, *Mladina*, May 24, 2007, [http://www.mladina.si/90911/uvo-manipulator--lan\\_decman/?utm\\_source=tednik%2F200720%2Fclanek%2Fuvo-manipulator--lan\\_decman%2F&utm\\_medium=web&utm\\_campaign=oldLink](http://www.mladina.si/90911/uvo-manipulator--lan_decman/?utm_source=tednik%2F200720%2Fclanek%2Fuvo-manipulator--lan_decman%2F&utm_medium=web&utm_campaign=oldLink).

publication *Borec*. Despite his experience in historical institutions tied to the previous regime, by the early 2000's other historians accused him of becoming increasingly more conservative in his politics towards the past. When he was appointed director of the Museum, for example, Božo Repe, Peter Vodopivec, and Dušan Nečak resigned in protest.<sup>895</sup>

Many reasons for these historians' mistrust (aside from their worry about his lack of academic credentials), and ostensibly the reason that Jansa's government was so willing to trust Dežman lied in a book he had recently published *Saving Ourselves from the Red Ice Age with Reconciliatory Love*. The bulk of this book consisted of personal portraits of families who had lost loved ones during the postwar killings. In the first and final section of the book, however, he focused his attention on Slovene's lack of reconciliation. He accused Slovene leaders of being unwilling to betray the criminals that still lived within their midst due to a large, still Stalinist-era conspiracy of silence.<sup>896</sup> Unlike Žebot, Dežman did not deny the positive legacy of the Partisan war, even taking pride in his own father's service in the Liberation Front. He made clear that atrocities occurred on both sides, but felt that the silenced fate of the murdered Domobranci needed to be discussed more openly and honestly.<sup>897</sup> Many of his reviewers took issue with his accusations of a still Communist era conspiracy in all levels of Slovene society. When he accused even the magazine *Mladina* of being "red" for its criticisms of the current government, reporter Peter Petrovčič responded by pointing out that it was in the pages of

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<sup>895</sup> Horvat, *Mladina*, August 6, 2009, <http://www.mladina.si/47874/dezmanov-odhod/>.

<sup>896</sup> De žman, *S spravno ljubeznijo iz rdeče ledene dobe*, (With reconciliatory love from the red ice age), 2006, 9-11.

<sup>897</sup> *Ibid.*, 8, 257-258.

*Mladina*, in 1989 that Slovenes first (legally) read a detailed description of someone who had survived the postwar killings.<sup>898</sup>

Dežman and his team, for their part, did everything in their power to magnify the task they had been given. They consistently fought for greater funding to exhume graves. The Commission coordinated the efforts of their organization with groups in Croatia; many of which were made up of family members still uncertain on the fate of their loved ones.<sup>899</sup> The organization secured 380,000 Euros in 2008, for example, to conduct DNA analyses of extant soft tissues at a special lab in Škofja Loka, claiming that with appropriate funding virtually all of the remains could be identified.<sup>900</sup> In 2008, when Slovenia held the presidency of the EU, this Commission took advantage of the continent wide platform to gain greater awareness for all victims of European totalitarianisms by holding a public hearing on crimes of totalitarian regimes. Jože Dežman gave a speech comparing the cover-up of postwar killings by Slovenia's Communist regime to the refusal of politicians in neighboring Italy and Austria to talk about Nazi-Fascist era crimes by their own citizens. He then showed data arguing that roughly one third of those

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<sup>898</sup> *Mladina*, December 8, 2005, <http://www.mladina.si/94800/>.

<sup>899</sup> Komisija Vlade Republike Slovenije za reševanje vprašanj prikritih grobišč, *Program dela komisije vlade republike Slovenije za reševanje prikritih grobišč v letu 2008*, 4, (*The Commission of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for resolving the question of hidden graves, a review of the work of the commission of the government of the republic of Slovenia for the resolution of hidden graves in 2008*, 4), [http://www.mddsz.gov.si/fileadmin/mddsz.gov.si/pageuploads/dokumenti\\_pdf/komisija\\_grobisca\\_program2008.pdf](http://www.mddsz.gov.si/fileadmin/mddsz.gov.si/pageuploads/dokumenti_pdf/komisija_grobisca_program2008.pdf).

<sup>900</sup> Dečman, *Mladina*, May 24, 2007, [http://www.mladina.si/90911/uvo-manipulator--lan\\_decman/?utm\\_source=tednik%2F200720%2Fclanek%2Fuvo-manipulator--lan\\_decman%2F&utm\\_medium=web&utm\\_campaign=oldLink](http://www.mladina.si/90911/uvo-manipulator--lan_decman/?utm_source=tednik%2F200720%2Fclanek%2Fuvo-manipulator--lan_decman%2F&utm_medium=web&utm_campaign=oldLink).

Slovenes killed during the Second World War were killed by “Titoism”.<sup>901</sup> Boris Mlakar, who had written a book in 2003 that sympathetically examined reasons behind collaboration, focused his speech instead on crimes committed by the Nazi regime in Slovenia.<sup>902</sup> Ljubo Sirc, who had written the book *Between Hitler and Stalin*; Pavel Jamnik, the police investigator spearheading efforts to indict still living Slovene war criminals, and fellow member of the Commission on Concealed Mass Graves, Mitja Ferenc all spoke; alongside representatives from other East and Central European new member states. The most lasting result of this conference was pushing member states to recognize August 23 (the Day of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact’s signing) as the European Day of Commemoration for Victims of Totalitarian Regimes.<sup>903</sup> The day is now officially commemorated in Slovenia along with several other member states.

Shortly after Commission members returned home from Brussels, historian Božo Repe cautioned against adopting a simple template of totalitarianism that would apply to both the former state socialist regimes of Eastern Europe and Slovenia: “by coopting Eastern European stories, or melding them into a single totalitarian mass one obscures almost all of our own domestic historical traumas, from collaboration and the role of the Catholic Church to the social reasons behind revolution even to the extreme pressure on individuals to wholly reject Communism after 1991”.<sup>904</sup> The Slovene initiative to equate

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<sup>901</sup> Dežman, *Poročilo Komisije vlade Republike Slovenije za reševanje vprašanj prikritih grobišč : 2005-2008* (The report of the government of the Republic of Slovenia’s Commission for resolving the affair of newly discovered graves: 2005-2008), 197-198.

<sup>902</sup> Mlakar, “Repression over the Slovene People by the German Nazism,” 117-124.

<sup>903</sup> Jambreč, ed. *Crimes Committed by Totalitarian Regimes*, 2008, 313.

<sup>904</sup> Quoted in Horvat, *Mladina*, August 27, 2009, <http://www.mladina.si/48122/boj-s-totalitarizmi/> (S posvojitvijo vzhodnoevropskih zgodb oz. zlitjem v eno skupno totalitarno se lahko enostavno prekrijejo vse

Stalinist crimes with Nazi crimes especially offended veterans' groups in Russia, who protested outside the Slovene embassy in Moscow.<sup>905</sup> Repe's fellow University of Ljubljana colleague Jože Vogrinc faulted this categorical mistake described by Repe to cold political calculation: "the Slovene Right, specifically the SDS and NSi parties are trying to replace Slovenia's history from the last century with an imported imitation, a right wing nationalist explanation based on the Eastern European Stalinist occupation including: forced assimilation, terror, and forcing a party dictatorship onto society. They cannot cleanse themselves of the blood that came from collaboration with Fascism and Nazism, so they instead try to disinfect themselves with the blood of Eastern European victims of Stalinism."<sup>906</sup> At the end of 2008 prominent historians could still focus on the political implications of those who identified with the postwar victims, for the most part, ignoring the victims themselves. At the time philosopher Slavoj Žižek lamented that with the early revelations of mass graves the Slovene Left had the opportunity to engage in reconciliation on its own terms rather than as a response to pressure from the right. By exhibiting such callousness, however, they had missed a rare opportunity.<sup>907</sup> One year later mass discourses in Slovenia, on both the Right and Left of the political spectrum,

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notranje zgodovinske travme, od kolaboracije in vloge katoliške cerkve do socialnih vzrokov za revolucijo, tja do konformističnega osebnega konvertitstva po letu 1991).

<sup>905</sup> *Mladina*, November 17, 2011, 68, <http://www.mladina.si/media/objave/dokumenti/2011/11/17/49.pdf>.

<sup>906</sup> Quoted in Horvat, *Mladina*, August 27, 2009, <http://www.mladina.si/48122/boj-s-totalitarizmi/> (Natančneje povedano: slovenska desnica, zlasti SDS in NSi, poskuša Slovincem vzeti lastno zgodovino prejšnjega stoletja in jo nadomestiti z uvoženim ponaredkom, desno nacionalistično razlago vzhodnoevropskih izkušenj stalinistične okupacije, raznarodovanja, terorja in vsiljene partijske diktature nad družbo. Sama se ne more oprati krivde za sodelovanje s fašizmom in z nacizmom, zato bi se rada dezinficirala s krvjo vzhodnoevropskih žrtev stalinizma).

<sup>907</sup> *Mladina*, November 17, 2011, 7, <http://www.mladina.si/media/objave/dokumenti/2011/11/17/49.pdf>.

would change as the Commission on Concealed Mass Graves revealed the extent of the postwar killings.

In 2009 the Commission announced that they had found 581 mass graves across Slovenia. The Commission had been making regular reports since 2006, however the



**Figure 9.1 Research Center for National Historical Reconciliation**

reports in 2009 caused an explosion in Slovenia's media because they involved extensive photographic data coming from the Huda Jama site near Laško. Working with the Commission, the Research Center for National Reconciliation published

many photographs from the site and has regularly cooperated in excavations since 2009. One photograph (figure 9.1), used to advertise a research symposium by the Center in 2012 simultaneously elicits disgust for the horror of the murders while humanizing victims of terror by showing their connection to still living Slovenes.<sup>908</sup>

Because of the activity of Dežman's team and the cooperation of the Research Center and police taskforce, by 2009 many began to realize that the postwar killings were far more extensive than they previously could have imagined. In Dežman's estimates, 100,000 people from former Axis and Collaborator armies had been murdered in Slovenia in the first months after the end of the war. The presidency of the ZZB-NOB issued a statement showing regret for what had happened, but refused, as a representative

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<sup>908</sup> From cover of proceedings of conference. Dezman, *Resnica in sočutje: prispevki h crni knjigi Titoizma, porocilo 3 (Truth and compassion: contributions to the black book of Titoism, report 3)*.

of Slovene war veterans, to take responsibility for crimes they blamed on the Yugoslav Army.<sup>909</sup> Huda Jama became a focal point of media attention in 2009. Seven hundred of perhaps three thousand corpses were exhumed at a special ceremony on March 8, 2009. Politicians from both the Left and Right attended. Notably absent were conservative Prime Minister Janez Janša and Liberal president Borut Pahor. Janša gave no excuse for his absence, though many speculated he only exploited the postwar killings when he needed the political capital; in 2009 he did not need it. Acting president Borut Pahor, on the other hand missed the ceremony because he instead attended a Women's Day celebration in nearby Celje (less than 10 kilometers away). When questioned on his choice, he argued that the Huda Jama ceremony was a lower priority.<sup>910</sup> He did not make that mistake again. Due to the outrage his decision had generated, in 2010 he managed to attend both celebrations for Women's Day on March 8, and a commemoration at Huda Jama on July 27. At his speech on July 27, 2010 he seemed as if he might be speaking also to himself as he addressed the crowd: "As we were [sic] getting maturer as a nation and a country, we Slovenians have also become more mature when it comes to sensing the tragedies that occurred during World War Two and after it."<sup>911</sup>

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<sup>909</sup> Zveza združenih borcev za ohranjevanje tradicij narodno-osvobodilnega boja, *Izjava ZB o pričanju in tako imenovani odvezi molčečnosti*, (The league of united fighters for the preservation of traditions of the national liberation war, statement of the League of Fighters on retaliations and so-called oaths of secrecy), <http://www.zzb-nob.si/aktualno/?stran=22>.

<sup>910</sup> *Mladina*, November 17, 2011, 7, <http://www.mladina.si/media/objave/dokumenti/2011/11/17/49.pdf>.

<sup>911</sup> English translation from Slovene by Daniel Novakovič, Republic of Slovenia Government Communications Office, July 27, 2010, [http://www.ukom.gov.si/en/media\\_room/newsletter\\_slovenia\\_news/news/article/391/1708/cdcf830b03d1baffd10b54781c6a57a/?tx\\_ttnews\[newsletter\]=68](http://www.ukom.gov.si/en/media_room/newsletter_slovenia_news/news/article/391/1708/cdcf830b03d1baffd10b54781c6a57a/?tx_ttnews[newsletter]=68).

In response to increasing media attention surrounding the mass graves, the ZZB-NOB sponsored a research volume in 2007 that aimed to “contribute to national peace”.<sup>912</sup> Many of the 43 contributors were among the signatories of the protest letter to the government of Slovenia from December, 2005. Some, like the former Partisan Bogdan Osolnik, had been involved both in the Institute for the History of the Worker’s Movement as well as the Central Committee’s Historical Commission from the 1950’s through the 1970’s. Other’s like Božo Repe had served on the reconfigured Historical Commission in the 1980’s and was one of many influential historians reevaluating structures of totalitarianism in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s. All contributors rejected royalties to make this collection possible.<sup>913</sup>

Janko Pleterški wrote the first article that encapsulated the thesis of the entire project. He argued that the current independent Slovene state would not exist had it not been for the Partisan victory during the National Liberation War. He then expressed regret for the terrible tragedy of the postwar killings, claiming that these killings went against everything the National Liberation War stood for. He concluded by arguing that he could not accept national reconciliation that attempted to justify the collaboration of Slovenes with foreign occupiers, but was willing to accept reconciliation on the basis of accepting all human beings, regardless of political persuasion.<sup>914</sup> The first two sections

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<sup>912</sup> When I ordered a copy of this volume in 2009 the office staff of the ZZB-NOB refunded my money and sent me the book for free, with a signed letter from the president of the organization, Janez Stanovnik. In this letter he expressed his wish that my use of the research material would help “contribute to national peace” (prispevati k narodni pomiritvi). I cautiously share his sentiment. Articles from this collection inform the current as well as my first two chapters.

<sup>913</sup> From the same letter by Janez Stanovnik

<sup>914</sup> Pleterški, “O NOB in Spravi,” (On the national liberation war and reconciliation), 2007, 27-31.

of the volume then featured articles examining the recent Slovene cultural wars, showing the fallacy of trying to replace respect for the old socialist order with a revised history where “clero-fascists” became the heroes. The next section described the horrors of the occupation, carried out both by foreign and domestic armies. The next two sections contained articles legally justifying the Communist Party’s governing framework, while the two sections following described the Partisan army’s medical care and cultural work. The final section outlined the enormity of Slovene victims from all Axis forces, including collaborator forces. Tadeja Tominšek Rihtar provided detailed tables showing that twice as many Partisan forces had died as Collaborators, arguing that had this been a Civil War the numbers would likely have been more congruent.<sup>915</sup> Far more Partisans died, as Janez Stanovnik pointed out in the same volume, using her data, because the Partisans fought against both collaborators and occupiers.<sup>916</sup>

During the same period that members of the Commission for Concealed Mass Graves were taking their demands for recognition of all victims to the presidency of the European Union the ZZB-NOB sponsored another collection of essays on the Partisan movement. This volume, edited by Jože Pirjevec and Božo Repe laid out many of the same arguments as the collection published in 2007. *Resistance, Suffering, Hope: The Slovene Partisan Movement, 1941-1945*, differed from the previous, however, as it was published in English. Though funding came entirely from the Veteran’s organization, the title page of the volume notes that it was “published during the EU Presidency of the

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<sup>915</sup> Tominšek Rihtar, “Žrtve druge svetovne vojne in povojnega nasilja (1941-1946)” (Victims of the Second World War and postwar persecution (1941-1946)), 319-328.

<sup>916</sup> Stanovnik, “Slovenski Zbornik 2007: NOB v slovenskem narodovem spominu” (Slovene Almanac 2007: The National Liberation War in the Slovene National Memory), 18.

Republic of Slovenia, January-June, 2008.”<sup>917</sup> Both those advocating a radical reinterpretation of World War II history and those refusing to throw out pre-independence historiography had decided by the late 2000’s to take their narratives to audiences beyond Slovenia’s borders.

In 2008 director Vinko Möderndorfer entered the discussion on mass graves with his movie *Landscape Number Two* that shows Slovene society as fractured and incapable of reconciliation. He accomplished this through the appropriate device of a horror movie. In the film young Sergej works as an apprentice to Polde from whom he learns both the skills of home repair and the thrills of petty crime. When working in a former Yugoslavian general’s home, the two steal what they hope is a valuable painting, and inadvertently a document that shows who was really behind the postwar killings near Kočevski Rog. The general (who looks strikingly similar to Mitja Ribičič) realizes his document is missing when the two thieves try to extract a ransom for the painting. The general hires a shadowy figure who was once his professional ally to do whatever it takes to recover the document. He could care less about the painting. In the interregnum, this trench-coat wearing man, who speaks only Serbo-Croatian, murders everyone who is close to the young repairman/thief, including Polde. He continues murdering, even after the general dies of natural causes.

At the end of the movie the killer corners the thief on the edge of a cliff in Kočevski Rog. They struggle, at which point the killer suicidally (and unexplainably) jumps into the abyss, the same abyss where thousands of collaborators fell murdered one month after the end of the war. A dozen police cars then capture Sergej, covered in

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<sup>917</sup> Pirjevec and Repe, *Resistance, Suffering, Hope: The Slovene Partisan Movement, 1941-1945*, 2008, i.

blood, who naturally had become their prime suspect as everyone close to him had been found dead. The only evidence that might save Sergej lies buried among thousands of unexhumed corpses. Polde and Sergej serve as a Christ metaphor, though in Möderndorfer's version, only the two robbers are crucified while the Prince of Peace is nowhere to be found. Sergej is left to atone not only for his own sins, but the sins of an entire generation within and among whom the opportunity for reconciliation seems as impossible as finding a killer who had just leapt off a cliff.<sup>918</sup> Even seventeen years after Yugoslavia itself had jumped off a cliff Sergej still must answer for the sins of his fathers. To promote his film, Möderndorfer wrote in 2008 that "...every unresolved past, whether personal or national, has consequences, and always returns. Its return inevitably becomes the burden of newer generations, who not only have nothing to do with the history of their forefathers, but in reality could care less about it."<sup>919</sup>

In 2010 another director, Žiga Virč produced a short film *Trieste is Ours* that offered a far more positive analysis of the potential for reconciliation. The film begins with a classic World War II scene. The commander Franc explains the importance of retaking Trieste to a young recruit, then curiously points to Tito's star on his cap and mentions that this hat was worn by his father in the Partisan years. A woman then drives into camp with a late 1990's model Renault Clio and motions to Franc who embarrassedly gets into the car with his wife. The movie then focuses on the fractured home life of Franc, who has alienated himself from his wife and teenage daughter over his obsession

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<sup>918</sup> Möderndorfer, *Pokrajina št. 2* (Landscape No. 2), <http://www.pokrajina-st2.org/izjavareziserja-si.html>

<sup>919</sup> Ibid. (vsaka nerazčiščena preteklost, bodisi osebna ali nacionalna, pušča sledove in se neprestano vrača. Njeno povračanje pa vedno obremenuje tiste nove generacije, ki s preteklostjo svojih dedov in očetov nimajo ničesar in ostajajo do te problematike celo brezbrizni).

with the supposed historical injustice that Trieste never became a Slovene city. He eventually decides, after mouthing along to a vinyl recording of a Tito speech, that his small platoon of reenactors will personally invade Trieste. As he prepares for his venture Franc runs into conflict with the local police force. The commander had previously asked him to suspend his war games because of heightened security measures along the border in anticipation of an upcoming visit from President Barack Obama. Franc ignores the request and begins to lead his troops towards Trieste. When local officers try to seize some of Franc's weapons, he fires on them with a submachine gun. They duck for cover, unsure whether the ammunition is live. He then flees what is now a crime scene to join his Partisan unit, who must battle with 21<sup>st</sup> century police alongside reenactors dressed as Nazi-era German soldiers. As the battle between reenactors of an idealized past and the defenders of the present order intensifies, Franc's daughter suddenly appears. She rides into the confusion on a white horse, leaping over the huddled police officers to join the Partisan-themed miscreants. The young woman embraces her father, wearing his partisan hat, and the film ends with a family reconciled, ostensibly on the eve of what will become lengthy prison sentences for all involved. Yet the viewer sees that family and reenactor camaraderie need not suffer from the humorous irreconciliability of Slovenia's contemporary political and memory structures.<sup>920</sup>

In late 2008 global markets began to suffer the combined effects of an imploding housing bubble in the United States coupled with banking crises in Ireland and Iceland that sent markets worldwide crashing. Slovene unemployment began to steadily rise as the availability of credit receded. Over the next three years employees in the large public

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<sup>920</sup> Virč, *Trst je naš!* (Trieste is ours!), 2010.

sectors of Greece, Italy, and Spain suffered debilitating austerity measures as governments in each of these countries satisfied the requirements for European Central bank bailouts that bureaucrats and politicians in Europe's metropole deemed necessary to save the Monetary Union. On average Slovenes weathered the early years of this financial crisis better than many EU citizens. In the early bailouts Slovene taxpayers remained net contributors to the European Union and the International Monetary Fund. By the summer of 2012 Ljubljana Bank began discussing a bailout, from Slovene government sources, causing foreign newspapers like Der Spiegel began to wonder if the Slovene public sector would soon need a European bailout as well.<sup>921</sup> In late summer, 2012 Slovenia's government began to enact limited austerity measures such as cutting salaries for public employees. The OECD even recommended that the Slovene government lower unemployment benefits.<sup>922</sup> In 2012 Slovenia's unemployment rate hovered around 14% with two-thirds of those people being under the age of 35.<sup>923</sup>

Throughout the first period that Janez Janša's party, the SDS (Slovene Democratic Party) remained in power (2004-2008) his government endured numerous scandals, leading to accusations of rampant corruption. In 2011 investigations began into allegations that Janša personally had received bribes from the Finnish manufacturer Patria in exchange for the purchase of armored personell carriers. During his government's tenure the grocery giant Mercator merged with the country's second largest

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<sup>921</sup> Rizman, *Uncertain Path: Democratic Transition and Consolidation in Slovenia*, 155; Marn, *Mladina*, August 10, 2012, <http://www.mladina.si/114862/voda-v-grlu/>.

<sup>922</sup> Marn, *Mladina*, April 12, 2012, <http://www.mladina.si/142900/teba-je-varcevati/>.

<sup>923</sup> Statisticni Urad Republike Slovenije, *Aktualno na trgu delo: prozne oblike zaposlitev, brezposelnost, in neaktivnost, (Current market activity: flexible measures for employment, unemployment and inactivity)*. [http://www.stat.si/novica\\_prikazi.aspx?id=5045](http://www.stat.si/novica_prikazi.aspx?id=5045).

brewery, Laško, causing allegations of a form of capitalism that ignored the social responsibility Slovene workers had come to know under the socialist regime.<sup>924</sup> In November 2012, a massive protest movement began in the streets of Ljubljana. A loose conglomeration of people were angry over the corruption and blind neo-liberal policies that they blamed for their economic hardships. That austerity measures accompanied this recession, even before Slovenia had reached the level of crisis of countries receiving bailouts seemed unnecessary to those Slovenes hurt most severely by a receding economy.<sup>925</sup> As police and military units began to quell the protesters, often violently, the number of demonstrators ballooned. In December, 2012 Spomenka Hribar pointed out in an interview to *Mladina* that such violence had been unheard of during Slovenia's spring of the late 1980's. She spoke of her own naivete and that of so many other Slovenes in assuming that simple democracy would solve all social problems.<sup>926</sup> By early 2013 many began to reason that Slovenia and the EU required fundamental structural changes if they were to survive, they needed in the words of Jože Vogrinc to transform "the structural crisis of capitalism into democratic socialism," while of course avoiding one party rule.<sup>927</sup> The other main symbol uniting the protesters is a virulent disdain for Janez Janša. On March 20, 2013 his party would lose in a no-confidence vote and be replaced by *Pozitivna Slovenija*, with Alenka Bratušek as the new prime

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<sup>924</sup> Mekina, *Mladina*, April 23, 2009, <http://www.mladina.si/46974/clanek/>.

<sup>925</sup> Lorenci, *Mladina*, November 23, 2012, <http://mladina.si/117987/ljudstvo-brez-stranke/>.

<sup>926</sup> Trampuš, *Mladina*, December 21, 2012, <http://mladina.si/118996/dr-spomenka-hribar-slovenska-zveza-komunistov-konec-osemdesetih-let-ni-poklicala-ne-vojske/>.

<sup>927</sup> Vogrinc, *Mladina*, April 25, 2013, <http://www.mladina.si/143965/hlapcevstvo-ali-razvoj/> (da se strukturna kriza kapitalizma razplete v demokraticni socializem).

minister.<sup>928</sup> One June 6, 2013 Jansa received a two year prison sentence from the Ljubljana circuit court for charges of accepting bribes from Patria.<sup>929</sup> His sentencing occurred 25 years and five days after he was imprisoned by the Yugoslavian army for divulging state secrets.

Four days before his party lost in a no-confidence vote, Janša wrote a lengthy article that he published on his party's website: "A Culture of Life instead of a Culture of Death" where he forcefully argued for a connection between rising discontent with his conservatism and the influence of former Communists in Slovenia. He discussed the tragedy of Huda Jama and almost 600 other sites of mass murder in Slovenia. He then wrote: "After 1989 there have been many reconciliatory and other steps made in Slovenia, in large part intended to ensure that nothing will be done. The propaganda machine that has been created by a culture of death has heartlessly ground up everyone who talks about the unacceptability of evil, calling them defenders of the Domobranci movement and Collaboration." He then continued that Slovenes could not superficially condemn evil without holding those evil-doers, still in power, accountable.<sup>930</sup>

At the beginning of 2012 the Veteran's Association concerned itself with a rather typical issue for its members: pensions. One austerity measure that the SDS had spearheaded, was the Law on Balancing Public finances. Clause 143 of this law decreed

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<sup>928</sup> Lubej, *MMC RTV SLO*, March 21, 2013, [http://www.rtv slo.si/slovenija/alenska-bratusek-tu-smo-zaradi-ljudi-in-ne-zaradi-sebe/304945?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=enovice](http://www.rtv slo.si/slovenija/alenska-bratusek-tu-smo-zaradi-ljudi-in-ne-zaradi-sebe/304945?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=enovice).

<sup>929</sup> Modič, *Mladina*, June 5, 2013, <http://www.mladina.si/144872/konec-ali-sele-zacetek-politichnih-problemov/>.

<sup>930</sup> Janša, *Slovenska demokratska stranka*, March 4, 2013, <http://www.sds.si/news/5998> (V Sloveniji so bili mnogi spravni in drugi koraki, narejeni po letu 1989, v veliki meri namenjeni temu, da se ne bi nič naredilo. Propagandni stroj, ki ga je ustvarila kultura smrti, je neusmiljeno zmel vsakega, ki je spregovoril o nedopustnosti zločina kot takega in ga razglasil za zagovornika domobranstva in kolaboracije).

that veterans' pensions would temporarily be lowered.<sup>931</sup> On August 14 (before the upcoming European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism), Janez Stanovnik wrote a press release opposing the rewriting of history and devaluation of Slovene values that right wing Slovenes sought to promote by equating victims of Nazi-Fascism with those of Socialist Yugoslavia.<sup>932</sup> In October he came out explicitly against the pension reductions.<sup>933</sup> In November, then, the organization found its issue with the protest movement. On November 17, 2012 Janez Stanovnik wrote a proclamation of support for the protesters.<sup>934</sup> On January 24, 2013 the Veteran's organization officially joined the protesters, calling for a return to the values of the Liberation Front, notably a socially-minded state governing structure.<sup>935</sup> During a speech commemorating the founding of Slovenia's Liberation Front, on April 27, 2013, Stanovnik explicitly compared the neo-capitalist policies of the new Europe to the tanks and bombs of Europe's new order from 70 years ago.<sup>936</sup> In the early 2000's Mladina editors frequently

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<sup>931</sup> Kosak, *Mladina*, August 10, 2012, <http://www.mladina.si/114822/delitev-osamosvojiteljev/>.

<sup>932</sup> Predsedstvo ZZB-NOB, *Spominski dan na žrtve vseh totalitarnih in avtoritetnih režimov, (Presidency of the League of United Fighters of the National Liberation War, A day of remembrance for the victims of all totalitarian and authoritarian regimes)*, <http://www.zzb-nob.si/aktualno/?stran=4>.

<sup>933</sup> Predsedstvo ZZB-NOB, *Pokojinska reforma, sporočilo predsedstva ZZB-NOB Slovenije (Presidency of the ZZB-NOB, Pension reform, a message from the president of the ZZB-NOB of Slovenia)*, <http://www.zzb-nob.si/aktualno/?stran=3>.

<sup>934</sup> Predsedstvo ZZB-NOB, *Solidarnostna izjava – podpora protestni manifestaciji 17.11.2012, (Presidency of the ZZB-NOB, Manifest of solidarity- a statement of support for current protests November 17, 2012)*, <http://www.zzb-nob.si/aktualno/?stran=3>.

<sup>935</sup> ZZB NOB Slovenije, *Sporočilo Sveta ZZB NOB Slovenije, (ZZB-NOB, A message from the council of the ZZB-NOB of Slovenia)*, <http://www.zzb-nob.si/aktualno/>.

<sup>936</sup> *Reporter.si*, "Ob prazniku Stanovnik spet grmel: Fiskalno pravilo zahtevajo 'trije tuji žandarji'", (Stanovnik complaining again about the holiday: fiscal responsibility requires three foreign gendarmes), April 27, 2013, <http://www.reporter.si/slovenija/ob-prazniku-stanovnik-spet-grmel-fiskalno-pravilo-zahtevajo-%C2%BBtrije-tuji-%C5%BEandarji%C2%AB/15948>.

ran stories comparing the structures of the EU and NATO to those of Nazi-Fascism, though their voices were a minority in the Slovene civic sphere that was full of European hype.<sup>937</sup> The Veteran's Organization had been very much in favor of joining the Union then, to protect Slovene independence and the inheritance of the Liberation War.<sup>938</sup> By 2013 Europe's problems had caused many Slovenes to again take comfort in their own imagined traditions of balanced social, economic, and political freedoms.

On April 4, 2013 a historian who identifies as left oriented, Jože Pirjevec, joined with another historian who opposes uncritical condemnation of Slovenia's recent past, Božo Repe, to form a new political party, "Solidarity: For a Just Society." In forming the party they also gained the support and collaboration of the person who started the debates on reconciliation, Spomenka Hribar. Rudi Rizman, a political scientist who appears frequently in the footnotes of this dissertation joined the new party, along with former *Nova Revija* editor Aleš Debeljak, *Mladina* reporters Grega Repovž and Jure Trampuš, historians Vlado Mihelj and Igor Vidmar, among 600 other signatories.<sup>939</sup> Perhaps sensing how little impact historians have traditionally had on Slovene public opinion,

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<sup>937</sup> Entire editions of the magazine on April 8, 2002, May 13, 2002, March 10, 2003, and May 12, 2003, for example, were dedicated to critical examinations of these organizations: [www.mladina.si](http://www.mladina.si).

<sup>938</sup> Predsedstvo ZZB-NOB Slovenije, *Programski temelji in usmeritve za delovanje zveze združenj borcev za vrednote NOB Slovenije (Presidency of the league of united fighters of the national liberation war of Slovenia, organizational plans and visions for the activity of the league of united fighters for the values of the national liberation war of Slovenia)*, May 15, 2002, <http://www.zzb-nob.si/onas/dokumenti/programske-usmeritve/>.

<sup>939</sup> Biščak, *Planet siol.net*, April 4, 2013, [http://www.siol.net/novice/slovenija/2013/04/solidarnost\\_stranka\\_pirjevec.aspx](http://www.siol.net/novice/slovenija/2013/04/solidarnost_stranka_pirjevec.aspx).

these men and women are now trying to advocate on behalf of “that segment of Slovene society that still feels connected to a tradition of social society and social thought.”<sup>940</sup>

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<sup>940</sup> *Dnevnik*, April 4, 2013, <http://www.dnevnik.si/slovenija/v-ospredju/joze-pirjevec-ustanavlja-novo-stranko-ki-jo-bodo-gradili-na-vrednotah-bratstva-med-ljudmi> (predvsem tisti del slovenskega naroda, ki je še vezan na tradicijo socialne države in socialne misli).

## Conclusion

*Politically engineered history never lasts. One can form institutions, one may coerce only a certain kind of history; but there will always be someone who decides to write differently. The more any one idea is propagated, the more people will wonder what might be its alternative. In the interregnum, of course, you have stagnation, spinning in circles, and the reduction of important intellectual thoughts into base polemics and personal attacks. For an individual such confusion is simply part of being human. Overcoming that confusion can be burdensome, it takes time and energy, but it absolutely must be done.*

**Božo Repe, 2007<sup>941</sup>**

Two characteristics set Slovenia apart from most countries of East Central Europe. First, Slovenia has done remarkably well in transitioning to democracy and a free market system, experiencing few of the “transition blues” so common to former Communist-led regimes. Second, a seeming paradox is that Slovenia is one of the few newly independent European countries where dominant histories of World War II have consistently portrayed the Communist victors in a positive light. The preponderance of such narratives attest to a collective memory of the war which continues into the current millennium to extract political and social capital from a Communist-centered story of World War II that long ago fell out of favor in many other former Eastern-bloc states.

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<sup>941</sup> Božo Repe was referring to current policies of Slovenia’s Center-Right government to promote histories that reduced the complexity of Slovenia’s wartime and Communist pasts to a form of monolithic totalitarianism. He compared such practices to those of the former state Socialist regime. Quoted in *Mladina*, January 30, 2007, <http://www.mladina.si/93423/vzorci-obnasanja-se-ponavljajo-imeti-je-treba-nadzor-nad-policijo-vojsko-ekonomijo-in-nad-drugim/>. (Politični inženiring nad zgodovino namreč dolgoročno ni uspešen. Tudi če ustanavljaš neke svoje inštitucije, četudi forsiraš samo neki tip zgodovine, vedno se bo našel kdo, ki bo napisal drugače. Vedno bolj, ko neko stvar propagiraš, bolj ljudi zanima, kaj je na drugi strani. Seveda pa vmes pride do stagnacije, nekega vrtenja v krogu in reduciranja nujnega intelektualnega premisleka na polemike o ljudeh. Za posameznika je to čisto človeško, seveda zelo obremenjujoče, jemlje čas in energijo, a upreti se temu je pač neizogibno.)

To define such a memory as collective, one must recognize that collectives are not a sum total of all individual memories within Slovenia, nor are they a simplistic notion that all Slovenes somehow think and remember things in the same way. Rather, defining a collective memory involves understanding the common denominators of national memory politics, which define dominant discourses within a transnationally mediated, though locally obvious national cultural space. Collective memory is a normative construct, defined by political power, folkloric motifs, and an individual negotiation of identity against what is perceived to be standard. One of the best places to investigate this is by looking at those outlaw discourses, which define themselves in opposition to dominant memories. The rhetorical straw men that detractors from dominant discourses set up shed great light on the construction of the actual discourses they seek to replace. In Slovenia, collective memory of the war is a powerful force in present day politics and civic society. The majority of the Slovene population continues to largely accept a collective memory of the war that is strikingly similar to memories prevalent during the Yugoslavian period. As the templates for Slovene collective memory work in harmony with broader European discourses, they are likely to endure for some time.

Into the present, collective memories of the National Liberation War in Slovenia serve as pillars of variously constructed Slovenian national communities. They emerge along a continuum of discourses that seem exclusively local within a Slovene context and ideologies that clearly come from outside Slovenia, notably Europe. In reality, they emerge as a negotiation where the boundaries between the local and global are hardly distinguishable, what Roland Robertson calls “glocalization.”<sup>942</sup> Though even officially

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<sup>942</sup> Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*.

sanctioned memories are diverse and highly unstable, collective memories of the war remain positively correlated with a certain Slovene sense of self, an identity that permeates all layers of the diverse societies that exist within Slovenia and in certain ethnically Slovene borderlands of the republic's territory. A mass movement for Slovenian collective identity first *fully* crystallized within the Socialist Federation of Yugoslavia, where the victory of World War II served as an early legitimizing factor for Tito's union of South Slavic peoples. Its memory remains perhaps as a form of opposition to the fear that another form of totalitarianism; the Clero-Fascism of the war years is waiting to replace it at any time.

For decades the collected experiences of World War II had been regularly reinterpreted on a collective level by memory makers in the Republic. The first two chapters of this dissertation show that at first leaders of a party-state sought primarily to control a large unwieldy military structure that had succeeded in mobilizing Slovenes primarily with a rhetoric of national liberation that undermined control, especially from outside power structures in either Belgrade or Moscow. In the immediate postwar period, the regime's focus on control and revolution failed to mobilize people as they had been mobilized during the war.

Even before the Soviet Union withdrew support for Yugoslavia, its leaders began to experiment with new ways to mobilize people, something desperately needed to repair the ravages of war. By the late 1940's a loosening of press controls made possible a flood of references to the war. Collections of memoirs became best sellers in the still paper-short federation. In the 1950's the story of the war became a pillar of regime legitimacy, so much so that by the end of the decade authorities attempted to take greater

control over history production. This coincided with a push to control all levels of a society that had the potential to become as unruly as neighboring Hungary or relatively closeby socialist Poland.

Historians, however, proved difficult to control. Despite forming a commission within the Central Committee and founding a new institute, historians sought to write with academic integrity, meaning Marxist theory often took a backseat to factual descriptions. What these historians did understand, however, was to avoid reaching beyond the canon of acceptable topics. Virtually no histories from the émigré community made it into Slovenia during this period. Any discussion of postwar reprisal killings or of any justification for anti-Communist forces to have even existed remained respected taboos.

Even in the freer press sphere of the 1960's, few questioned the legitimacy of the Partisan narrative, until 1968 when students felt disenfranchised by the privileges given to a war generation based on their service in a conflict to which youth were barred by the timing of their births. The conservative backlash (conservative in the sense of reaffirming far Left revolutionary values) that followed the student protests created massive popular support for Yugoslavia, and a flood of professional and popular histories on the war.

If ever there was an official version of the war, it was produced by dozens of researchers working during the 1970's. At the end of the decade fringe iconoclasts began to poke fun at the Partisan war mythology. They were joined by more serious questions of wartime guilt posed first by Edvard Kocbek in 1975, then again examined in the mid 1980's with several attempts to discuss the postwar killings and nature of a Stalinist

revolution by Spomenka Hribar. In 1986 the presidency of Milan Kučan began to slowly adopt a Slovene version of Glasnost, allowing more and more taboo topics from the war to be addressed. As Slovenes began to agitate for independence, even the reformed Communist party began to address Spomenka Hribar's call for reconciliation, which concretely meant to admit that wrongs had been committed, though not necessarily casting specific blame or making restitution for those wrongs.

After independence political conservatives (conservatism now implying opposition to social and economic policies of state socialism) began to seize on the tragedy of the postwar killings for political capital, alienating the majority of Slovenes who continued to identify with positive legacies of the National Liberation War. By 1997, those who experienced personal trauma or even second hand trauma through the experiences of a parent or other older relative connected to the Second World War were a small minority of Slovenia's population. It seemed as the new state gained the security of memberships in international organizations that the need to reconcile the fractured memories of its citizens into a common collective story no longer mattered. It was a new century, and new Slovenes were ready to move forward in a better world.

This new order was so tempting that government officials were even willing to change certain laws that had disenfranchised people from former occupying countries, yielding Slovenes' memory of the Liberation War to an Italian and Austrian memory of postwar victimization by Tito's Communists. Like any other order, this new order had problems. As global markets crashed in 2007, causing severe problems within the Eurozone, many Slovenes began to lose faith in the new Europe. Slovene politicians on

the right appealed to memories of conservative victimization at the end of the war to push through their agendas that favored large capital over expensive public benefits.

Unlike in the early 1990's, by the mid 2000's Slovene politicians could draw on a European wide movement to exhume mass graves then symbolically bury social divisions in a process of national healing. Janez Janša secured European Commission funds to exhume graves and promote a surge of new research into the postwar killings. Slovenes learned that the postwar killings were far greater in extent than they had ever before imagined.

As the economy continued to languish in recession, defenders of Slovene socialist traditions began to appeal to the positive legacies of the Liberation War, as lessons to guide Slovenia in an uncertain future. The activity of a few politically oriented historians and the Slovene Veteran's Association have been key drivers of the new memory debates. In 2013 both sides continue to speak of reconciliation in Slovene collective memory of the war, but neither is willing to accept the political entailments of the others' memory. At the time of this writing, protests over austerity measures continue sporadically in central squares across Slovenia. Many of these protesters wear the Titovka star as they march. They use the Partisan memory to rhetorically reject a hegemonic global power that nevertheless permeates all aspects of their lives.

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