

THE POWER OF MEMORY
ZRC SAZU, Ljubljana, Slovenia
9 November 2012

Programme

9.30 Student room (Novi trg 2, 1 floor)

Coffee

Welcome address

10.00 – 12.00

Session 1: Revising memory in Central and Southeastern Europe

1. Tchavdar Marinov *Memory and Forgetting of the Macedonian Holocaust: the Polemics between Sofia and Skopje on the Fate of the Macedonian Jews during World War II*
2. Maja Lovrenović *Uncanny Landscapes of Memory and Impossibility of 'History' in the Postwar Central Bosnia*
3. Ljiljana Radonić *The Jasenovac Memorial Museum: Memory Applying for EU Membership?*
4. Primož Tanko *The Literary Memory of Traumatic Eras in Slovenian and Slovak Literature*

12.00 – 13.00 *Discussion*

13.00 – 14.30 *Lunch*

14.30 – 16.00

Session 2: Historical revisionism: Issues with memory in post-socialism

5. Michael Shafir *History, Memory and Myth in the Holocaust-Gulag Competitive Martyrology"*
6. Daniela Koleva *Socialism as (non)trauma: constructions and contestations*
7. Oto Luthar *Post-socialist Historiography Between Democratisation and New Politics of History*

16.00 – 17.00 Discussion

Closing remarks and publication options

Session 1

Tchavdar Marinov: *Memory and Forgetting of the Macedonian Holocaust: the Polemics between Sofia and Skopje on the Fate of the Macedonian Jews during World War II*

In the presentation I focus on the polemics between Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia concerning the deportation and the tragic fate of the Macedonian Jews during the World War II. I would focus on historiography, in Bulgaria and in Macedonia, as well as the other forms of "politics of memory": the newly inaugurated Museum of the Holocaust in Skopje and especially on the controversies with Sofia provoked by a new Macedonian movie ("The Third Half"). In fact, the controversy is currently played on EU level as Bulgarian MPs of the European parliament try to obstruct the negotiations with Macedonia because of the movie. I believe the topic fits well in the themes of the conference.

Maja Lovrenović: *Uncanny Landscapes of Memory and Impossibility of 'History' in the Postwar Central Bosnia*

'Landscape' as a particular relationship between the 'foreground' of people's concrete actualities and the 'background' of the perceived potentialities to envision a future provides stable points of recognition and reference for people's everyday routines and making sense of the world in which they live. However, the violence of the 1992-1995 war brought the world-making possibilities within the Bosnian-Herzegovinian 'landscape' to its limits. The traces of the war-ridden past still present in the 'landscape' continually disrupt people's efforts of reconstructing their everyday routines as well as their narratives about the past and their experiences. These postwar historical subjectivities remain largely unacknowledged within the efforts to establish factual historical records of the violent events during the 1992-1995 war. Examples of the postwar commemorative practices in Central Bosnia, as well as disrupted life stories, show how these historical subjectivities that go unacknowledged in the discursive "historical organization of things" nonetheless remain present in particular forms of nondiscursive historical imagination, as 'ghosts' of the unspoken relationality between the past and the present. The unspoken,

implicit social knowledge of such relationality puts the very notion of 'history' at stake and poses a challenge to the notion of "European memory culture".

Ljiljana Radonić: *The Jasenovac Memorial Museum: Memory Applying for EU Membership?*

Even though the self-critical dealing with the past has not been an official criteria for joining the European union, the founding of the *Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research* and the Holocaust-conference in Stockholm at the beginning of 2000 seem to have generated informal standards of confronting and exhibiting the Holocaust during the process called "Europeanization of the Holocaust". This is for example indicated by the fact that the *Holocaust Memorial Center* in Budapest opened almost empty only weeks before Hungary joined the European Union although the permanent exhibition had not been ready yet. On the other hand, after 1989 conflicting memories emerged: the Holocaust as Europe's negative founding myth vs. the parallelizing of National Socialism and communist crimes. The Croatian case, especially the new exhibition that opened at the concentration camp memorial Jasenovac in 2006, will serve in order to examine how the "Europeanization of the Holocaust" impacts on a candidate state. The memorial museum resembles Holocaust Memorial Museums in Washington, Budapest etc., but, although it is *in situ*, at the site of the former KZ, the focus clearly lies on individual victim stories and their belongings, while the perpetrators and the daily "routine" at the camp are hardly mentioned. Another problem influenced by the international trend to focus on (Jewish) individuals and moral lessons rather than on the historical circumstances is that the focus on the Shoa blanks the fact that Serbs had been the foremost largest victim group. The third field, where the influence of "European standards" on the Croatian politics of the past will be examined, is the equalization of "red and black totalitarianism" at the annual commemorations in Jasenovac. While this was already done during the revisions era of President Franjo Tudman during the 1990, today it perfectly matches EU-politics, as the introduction of the 23rd of August, the anniversary of the Hitler-Stalin-pact, as a Memorial day for both victims of Nazism and Stalinism shows.

Primož Tanko: *The Literary Memory of Traumatic Eras in Slovenian and Slovak Literature*

The focus of my contribution will be to present a few ways how traumatic eras (II. World War and postwar communism) represent in literature. One of ways how to express yourself in the restricted conditions of freedom is also literature.

Slovenian and Slovak literature, which I'd like to compare fragmentary, have some common characteristics in the communist regime.

In the period between the end of World War II and the end of Cold War despite the limitations of the art production were created important literary works (*Antigona* by Domink Smole, *Galjot* by Drago Jančar, or *Menuet za kitaro* by Vitomil Zupan) that discuss the Slovenian Civil War, ideological contradictions, political trials and other delusions of communism taking power. On the other hand are faced with the basic human dilemma of good and evil against the background of often brutal history.

Often these are works that have made great metaphors and symbols and this for the reader who is familiar with the situation in the country means questioning about situation in the society, seizure of power or even direct charge of regime.

In this article I will discuss the most distinctive themes of memories of the traumatic period and metaphorical figures of Slovak and Slovenian literature. I will try to define, how the literature reveals its message.

At the same time I will try to explore if the narration of the traumatic events is similar at Slovenian and Slovak authors. From Slovak literary works I'd like to analyze Leopld Lahola, Pavol Rankov, Jozef Cíger-Hronský and Ladislav Mňačko.

Comparison of Slovak and Slovenian literature regarding traumatic memories is important because of minimally two reasons: First, it is a way of narrating about the traumatic events in the literature and its simultaneous human touch. Second reason is the literary comparison of two communist political systems, seen by writers, who present the litmus paper of the society.

Session 2

Michael Shafir: *History, Memory and Myth in the Holocaust-Gulag Competitive Martyrology*

The "Symmetric" or "Double Genocide" Approach was reflected in, among other places, the Prague Declaration of June 2008. This approach is rejected by many Jewish historians and activists, who see in it an attempt to "obfuscate" or "trivialize" the Holocaust. In fact, one deals here with a "clash of memories" rather than a clash of histories. Both sides reflect different "cultural traumas," that is to say are expressing subjective collective memories, or "counter-memories." There is no way to breach between "history" and "memory. Historians are not a-mnemonic. The Holocaust and the Gulag, in this particular case, are functioning as "myth" in the sense of the term consecrated by George Sorel, rather than in the sense of "legend." They are fulfilling a mobilization function under post-communism. This leads to what has been termed as a "competitive martyrology" which, paradoxically enough, is the outcome of the Jewish success to inculcate to mankind the gruesomeness of the Holocaust. Precisely because of that, those who promote the memory of the Gulag are unwilling to settle for less the calling communist rule "genocide," although "crimes against humanity" are just as severely punished under international law. The fact that there are few Holocaust survivors and soon we shall not have many Gulag survivors will not necessarily change this situation, because one deals here not only with memory but also with "post-memory" and not only with traumas but also with "post-traumas".

Daniela Koleva: *Socialism as (non)trauma: constructions and contestations*

I will draw on Alexander et al.'s book *Cultural Trauma* (esp. the chapters by B. Giesen on Germany and P. Sztompka on postsocialism) to make sense of the attempts at establishing a postsocialist memory canon in Europe informed by the memory of Nazism and WWII. I will try to highlight the idea of 'cultural trauma' inherent in the attempts of former socialist countries to establish traumatic memory of communism as 'exemplary memory' (Todorov) and as part of the 'founding myth' of Europe on a par with the Holocaust.

My thesis is that these attempts have not been successful and therefore a space has opened for alternative mnemonic practices 'from below' that circumvent the traumatic aspects of the past. These practices chart a topography of memory different from the 'canonical' one but I will argue that it also has a transnational dimension. The argumentation will be based primarily on the analysis of websites for sharing memories (Bulgarian and others).

Oto Luthar: *Post-socialist Historiography Between Democratisation and New Politics of History*

As part of the debate on post-socialist historiography of the last decade, the author discusses the complexity of (anticipated) democratisation of historiographical interpretation after 1989. Concentrated on the professional, political and popular (mis)uses of history in Slovenia in the period between the late 1980s and the early 2010s, he is trying to see the historical revisionism a part of a more complex process. Even more so, he firmly believes that two decades after the end of "communism" the very term has to be seen as part of more complex changes in historiographical and political landscape of SE Europe.

Like in some other countries of the area in Slovenia too historical revisionism is part of new politics of history or politics of the past that consist of different entities, sub-processes, The author argues that the professional debate on the nature of historical explanation was overshadowed by the new attempts to monopolise the revised historical interpretation. Once vivid interest for the new forms of historical representation gave way to politicised reinterpretation of the most disputed part of national history during WWII and the time of socialism. Because of that the anticipated/awaited democratisation and modernisation of historical interpretation were obstructed by two processes: firstly, by the nationalisation of history and, secondly, by the struggles for new political monopolisation of a particular version of historical interpretation. According to this the author believes that historical revisionism in Slovenia, as well as in other parts of Central and South Eastern Europe, can be understood as "catchword" that galvanised political and historical debates of the last two decades.