

The Cult of the Fallen Soldier in Serbia and Hungary (1914-1918)
Seen through war monuments

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Abstract

This paper examines post WWI monuments in Serbia and Hungary, specifically those representing the cult of the fallen soldier. The fallen soldier represents the memory of the war and the attitudes taken towards the experience of the war. I argue that the way these memories are transformed into monuments contributes to the understanding of the post war society and the attitudes towards the new state.

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Introduction

World War I completely reshaped the human understanding of the present and the expectations of the future. This unprecedented series of events separated Europe's life into two distinctive epochs. In the heart of the reason for all the changes there was the war, which left not only material, but psychological experiences that deeply determined the emotional world of the contemporaries.

Historians gradually dealt with these experiences. They were examining failed expectations about the postwar world as well as the feeling of constant crisis and disenchantment. E. H. Carr's book published in 1939 *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, also pointed, already in its title, towards one common denominator. Brutalization of politics and everyday life were also acknowledged by historians.¹

Since the 1980s and the broadening of the cultural history term, the studies related to the dead soldiers and the communities that experienced these losses, started to occupy the attention of historians. George Mosse in his path breaking work *Fallen Soldiers* (1990) dealt with the way how people confronted the modern war.² Focusing on Germany and France he created the

¹ Leslie Derfler, *An Age of Conflict, Readings in the Twentieth Century European History*, (Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch, 1990); Carl Levy, *Three Postwar Eras in Comparison, Western Europe 1918-1945-1989*, (Palgrave: New York, 2002).

² George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

concept of the *Myth of the War Experience*. Besides forming this term he made series of observations and conclusions regarding the role of the “war dead” in mass and elite culture. In addition to his works, there were other historians that focused on various aspects of the mental worlds of the first decades of the 20th century. Anthropologist Nicholas J. Saunders analyzed the ways in which the war remnants, in material shape, played an important role for memories of the veterans and their families.³ Jay Winter, today’s leading expert for the war memorials, focused on the rituals and modes of commemorating and overcoming grief, which presented the most permanent war result.⁴ That the war set upside down many of the previously firm values can be seen from the book of Allen J. Frantzen when he analyzed the impact of the new type of warfare on the idea of chivalry, which dominated in the minds of train officers on all sides.⁵ Frantzen explained the confusion and frustration caused by their incapability to adapt to the new front reality, shaped by rapid artillery fire, machineguns and barb wire. Unexpected appearance of the long range projectiles was destroying any possibility to choose moment of one’s own death. For the brave as well as for the coward, the way of dying was the same way.

In all of these writings, the authors, while creating highly relevant observations and explanations, dealt only with the largest western European countries: France and especially Germany. In some cases the conclusions, relevant for these countries, were even automatically transferred to the rest of Europe. The studies of war memorials, as a part of the cultural history of warfare, are still at the very beginning in most of Eastern and Central Europe, thus it is still impossible either to compare these areas or to put them in a wider European frame. As John

³ Nicholas Saunders, *Materials of Conflict: Material Culture, Memory and the First World War*, (London: Routledge 2004).

⁴ See Jay Winter’s books on the remembrance of war, such as memorials and mourning sites: *Remembering war: The Great War between History and Memory in the 20th century*, *Sites of memory, sites of mourning*, *War and Remembrance in the 20th century* etc.

⁵ Allen J. Frantzen, *Bloody Good, Chivalry, Sacrifice, and the Great War*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004).

Horne observed the area of former Yugoslavia presents extremely complicated case that is yet to be discussed when researching “the war dead” and their memorials.⁶

The topic of the Fallen in the Great War, as the main embodiment of the psychological legacy of the war, has been mostly underresearched field in Hungary and Serbia. In Hungary, the focus in contemporary memory studies has been put on events related to 1848, Millennium celebration and the communists architectural legacy, but not on the First World War.⁷

In Serbia, Olga Manojlovic-Pintar was the only historian who dealt with war monuments within their social and lieux de mémoire context.⁸ Other works were just partly interested in social surroundings and they were more artistic or architectural endeavors.

How was the psychological legacy of the war accepted, in two different manners, victory and defeat? How much was the war present in the minds of the interwar people?

I will analyze the Cult of the Fallen Soldier in Serbia in order to evaluate the place which memories of dead soldiers occupied in Serbia’s public space. I believe that the attitude towards the war traditions, embodied in death cult, can be used as a good indicator for revealing the opinions regarding the hopes or disappointments related to the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenian. In this thesis, the Hungarian war monuments will be investigated only briefly and with the sole purpose to provoke new perspective and previously unasked questions regarding the Serbian case study, which composes the core of the work. Thus, the Hungarian segment of this research will, in this situation, have an auxiliary role.

⁶ John Horne (Dublin), conference presentation, “*Commemoration of the Great War in East-Central Europe, 1918-1939*,” Central European University, Budapest, 23-25 March 2007.

⁷ Hofer Tamas, *Hungarians between East and West. National Myths and Symbol*. (Budapest: Museum of Ethnography, 1994); Antoine Maré, *Lieux de mémoire en Europe médiane : représentations identitaires*, (Paris: Publications Langues'o, 1999).

⁸ Olga Manojlović-Pintar, “*Ideološko i političko u jugoslovenskim spomenicim 1919-1980* (Ideological and Political in the Yugoslav War Memorials 1919-1980),” (Ph.D diss., University of Belgrade, 2005).

This topic is a part of cultural history. It can be seen as a consequence of the broadening of the cultural history field, which happened during 1960s when George Mosse argued that “culture is a state or habit of mind which is apt to become a way of life intimately linked to the challenges and dilemmas of contemporary society.”⁹ In this way it is possible to explore “mental worlds and mediated human perceptions” as relevant parts of cultural life, because they are brought about by the changes within society as a whole.¹⁰ Further affirmation of this type of cultural history meant rapprochement to social history which enabled Jay Winter to say that social history should be seen as a part of the cultural history or at least as her stepsister.¹¹ It should be mentioned, at this point, that the topic will indirectly encompass military history as well as the history of ideas.

Among the several types of sources, I will present newspaper articles, works of several interwar intellectuals and the main archive documentation regarding the creation and maintenance of the monuments to the Fallen. The war memorials will be in the focus of this investigation. In the Serbian part of the thesis, I will analyze the memorials regarding the three day fighting around Belgrade in 1915, and in the Hungarian case I will present various monuments related to 1914-1918 experiences, placed in the capital, during interwar years. This way the monuments will be comparable by their chronological and geographical criteria. The special link can be found in the fact that they are commemorating, often, the same battlefield.

⁹ George L. Mosse, *The Culture of Western Europe: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. An Introduction*, (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1961), p.67.

¹⁰ Steven E. Ascheim, “George Mosse at 80: A Critical Laudatio,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 34, No.2 (April 1999): p. 295-312.

¹¹ Luc Capdavia, Daniele Voldman, *War Dead: European Societies and War Casualties*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p.3.

Chapter Two

2.1. Methodology

The special problem for this work posed the nonexistence of clear methodology regarding the approach to the war monuments as well as certain concepts regarding the social or collective memory. Thus, I will depict the exact meaning of the concepts used in this thesis in order to avoid confusion. Besides these terminological issues two other problems appeared in my methodological approach. The first one is related to the analysis of war memorials, as the dominant source subgroup. The other challenge was connected to the mode of use of the comparative method. Although, each of these problems had its own specificity, there was a certain similarity between these challenges manifested in the nonexistence of a clear methodological or even subfield delineation.¹² The literature and press were used in a much less essential way in this thesis than the monuments and I will not comment those types of sources.

2.2. Terminology:

2.2.1. *What is the Myth of the War Experience?*

George Mosse defined this concept as a *way of transforming the reality of the war into meaningful and sacred event*¹³. Like this it makes it easier to bear, legitimize and justify the sacrifices made in the name of the fatherland. The myth usually has several parts: cult of the fallen, communal experience, abolition of class structure, adventurism, usage of nature, various modes of trivializing the war, Christian spirit of martyrdom and mission etc. Elements can vary

¹² “As a type of scholarship, ‘comparative history’ is probably best identified as an existing corps of writing rather than by any clearly defined method”. D.R. Woolf, *A Global Encyclopedia of Historical Writing*, (London; Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998), p.192.

¹³ George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p.12.

from one country to another. As Mosse pointed out, and what is of special importance for this study is that the components of the Myth are strongly determined by the result of the war, victory or defeat.¹⁴ One of the fundamental segments of this Myth is the Cult of the Fallen Soldiers, which presented the constant in almost all of the interwar countries. That the soldier has died did not imply questioning of the war, but it served as mobilizing force for other countrymen.

The Myth of the War Experience was formed by the representatives of the elites, still its acceptance and popularity can be treated as relevant for much greater segment of society than the narrow educated core of the population.

George Mosse also stressed that in France, and especially in Germany, public abandoned this Myth after the horrifying and sobering experiences in the 1941-1945 period. Similar opinion can be found in the words of Ernest H. Kantorowicz who argued that “cold efficiency during and after the Second World War, together with the individual’s fear of being trapped by so-called “illusions” instead of professing “realistic views”, has done away with the traditional “superstructures,” religious as well as ideological...”¹⁵ Thus, by rationalized interpretation of the war the Myth was undone or at least expelled into far away corner of collective memory. At this place it should be mentioned that I believe that this Myth of the War Experience, in Serbia, gained certain peculiarities that distinguished it from the German or French case. Consequently, it can be argued that this Myth not only survived 1945, but survived until the Yugoslav wars in 1990s.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Ernest H. Kantorowicz, “Pro Patria Mori in Medieval Political Thought,” *American Historical Review* 3 (1951): 472-492.

2.2.2 Social Memory

As this thesis deals with the perceptions of the past, the concept of memory plays significant role. The source of all the emotions and social purposes of the monuments comes from memory. Thus, understanding the way in which memory functions can help explain the strong or weak symbolic function of war memorials.

Like in many other social disciplines there is no consensus concerning the meaning and the employment of the word memory. Almost all historians, who deal with cultural history of wars, accept the concept of collective or social memory.¹⁶ Some anthropologists are against this concept arguing that memory can in all forms be, only individual.¹⁷ Still, Maurice Halbwachs' approach seems to be more encompassing and reconcilable: "while the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember."¹⁸ As concerning the term *group* I will use the description made by Paul Connerton who stressed that the group "includes both small face-to-face societies (such as villages and clubs) and territorially extended societies most of whose members cannot know each other personally such as nation-states and world religions."¹⁹

The interest in memory studies started at the beginning of the 20th century, but as in the case of contemporary cultural history, the huge spread happened in the 1980s.²⁰ Pierre Nora

¹⁶ Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Barbie Zelizer, "Reading the Past Against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 12, No. 2 (Jun 1995): 214-39.

¹⁷ David Berliner, "The Abuses of Memory: Reflections on the Memory Boom in Anthropology," *Anthropological Quarterly* 1(2005): 9-23.

¹⁸ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press 1992), p. 48.

¹⁹ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, (Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.23.

²⁰ The term *memory boom* implies the immense rise of interest for the past. The boom started in the 1980s. Among the reasons for this curiosity for the past xxx stated as the main reasons: the Holocaust, increase in the number of higher educated people, the speed of today's way of leaving

synthesized the ideas that were encompassing the minds of many social scientists since the post 1945 era. In his influential introduction “Between Memory and History” for an anthology “*Lieux de Mémoire*” he wrote that human kind have destroyed the real memory and that we, now, only have “places of memory and places of history.” He saw history as critical, rational and as a hostile towards the real, living memory. History through its methodology longs for creating *places of history*.

How did he define living memory? He regarded it as a living thing, a tradition that exists not for the sake of tradition, but because it is necessary and irreplaceable for the life of that specific society. Those are the repetitive moves of the body, it is rhythmic storytelling etc.²¹ Thus, with the change in the structure of our societies, before anything else with the disappearance of rural communities, Nora pointed out, living memory became very rare. “We speak so much about the memory because there is so little of it left.”²² In this way he argues that places of memory reflect our awareness of this disappearance and frenetic action to preserve, even artificially, the remnants of real memory now in the “places of memory.”

What are the places of memory? Those are all the artifacts or places which can provoke certain emotion or reaction regarding our past. Monuments, museums, street names, canons or pencils, anything that can evoke our past. Naturally, a certain set of criteria has to be fulfilled. Places of memory must be material, symbolic and functional. They have to be symbolic because our imagination has to be invested by a *symbolic aura*.²³ Also, there must be a will to remember something. “Without the intention to remember, lieux de mémoire would be indistinguishable

etc. Kerwin Lee Klein, “On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse,” *Representations* 69 (March 2005): 127-150.

²¹ Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996-1998), p.34.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

from lieux d'histoire.”²⁴ These observations made by Pierre Nora, accepted by most social scientist, dealing with memory, will present one of the key concepts in this thesis.

Parallel to this disclosure in memory studies new sub discipline emerged within the cultural history. By combining anthropology, sociology and social history, a new historical field was created: the cultural history of warfare. The connection of this historical subfield with memory studies has been mainly realized through the reassessment of war memorials and memory value of material remains.²⁵

2.2.3. War memorials

“Not far from this building, in a small square lined with ancient trees, stood an obelisk of considerable interest. It bore a bombastic inscription, having been erected by the French commandant of Coblenz in 1812 to mark the crossing of the Rhine by Napoleon’s Grand Army on its march to Russia. Bellow the original inscription another had been engraved. Its approximate purport was: ‘Noted and approved’, and it bore the signature of the Russian General who had become commander of Coblenz in 1814. What a pity Hitler never saw this!”²⁶

This anecdote from Manstein’s memoirs testifies to one way of using monuments as historical source. It may appear as a funny anecdote at the first sight, but there is more to it. The fact that the inscription was put by the initiative of the Russian general implies the extent of the authority of a Russian general. He felt the liberty to change or destroy monuments. Additionally, the original French text points out that the contemporaries were well aware of the historical significance of the campaign.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Main representatives of this are Annette Becker, John Schofield and Nicholas Saunders.

²⁶ Erich Von Manstein, *Lost Victories*, (Munich: Presidio, 1982), p.67

War memorials have been the unavoidable source group for all social scientists dealing with war culture or memory. Recent cases of delicate nature of monuments have just confirmed findings of some of the mentioned scientists.²⁷ Still, it should be explained why and where lies such a strong emotional burden of monuments.

Francois Choay gave a definition:

“The affective nature of its (monument’s) purpose is essential; it is not simply a question of informing, of calling to mind a neutral bit of information, but rather of stirring up, through the emotions, a living memory... The specificity of the monument is therefore a direct function of the way it acts on memory.”²⁸

In this way she framed monuments in the classical division of historical sources: the intentional ones and the ones which present the random remnants of some activity. This intentionality is more relevant for this thesis than pure remnant because it tells us more about the society. It is also indicative that Choay did not use concept of “living memory” in the way Nora did, but more as a refreshment of old collective memory.

It is irrelevant whether the society is democratic and liberal or totalitarian and authoritarian. In both cases monuments are constructed to promote strong state or to influence the creation of social conscience.²⁹ The promotion of ideology was often the only purpose of the monument. It is important to add that monuments can lose or change not only the level of

²⁷ In the documentary *Brothers of Bagdad*, broadcasted on Sky News on the 5th of April 2007, special attention was dedicated to the process of the “spontaneous” removal of the Saddam Husein’s monument from the centre of Bagdad. The American soldiers that were participated in the destruction of the statue were accused, from by the part of American press, that they had the special order to “be in the closeness of the monument” as soon as they enter the centre of the city; Similarly, events from Talin, the capital of Estonia proved the rule of sensitive nature of war memorials: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6645789.stm>, Last seen on 13th of May 2007.

²⁸ Francoise Choay, *The Invention of the Historical Monuments*, (University of Paris and Cornell University, Cambridge, 2001), p. 12.

²⁹ Reinhart Koselleck, Michael Jeismann, *Der Politische Totenkult : Kriegerdenkmäler in der Moderne*, (München : Wilhelm Fink, 1994), p.56. (translated for this study by Ana Rakicevic).

emotions that they encapsulate, but even the very nature of the emotions.³⁰ In order to perform these functions architects used various motifs and messages. As Reinhart Koselleck pointed out, the patterns showing on the monuments were not essentially changed from the French Revolution until the end of the Second World War.³¹ The complicated elements from ancient Greece and Rome, early Christianity and even postmodern concepts were often mixed on the same monument.³² After the Second World War, war memorials have been developing towards more abstract forms and trying to show attention to the victims more than to the hero fighters.³³ Nevertheless, these tendencies are far from generally accepted and many states and groups erect “classical” statues aware of the symbolic power of the monument, even in the age of completely new visual culture.

Having in mind all that has been said I argue that memorials can be built for various purposes: mourning and commemoration, education, glorification or exultation. Still, it is important to note that multidimensionality of the monuments implies that they were often erected for more than one reason and that those various layers can be interpreted differently in each epoch.³⁴

³⁰ Rudy Koshar, *From Monuments to Traces: Artifacts of German memory 1870-1990*. (Berkley, University of California Press, 2000), p.76.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Such an example can be found on the London’s Trafalgar Square where Rachel Whiteread put her sculpture *Monument*. David Cottington, *Modern Art, A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford University Press, 2005), p.5. Kathe Kollowitz, German artist from the interwar period designed monument for her son, who died in Belgium as a German volunteer. Her monument is considered to be the first antiwar monument and the sign of changing perception of the war. Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 59.

³³ Luc Capdavila, Daniele Voldman, *War Dead. European Societies and War Causalities*, (Edinburg: Edinburg University press, 2006), p.54.

³⁴ Nicholas Saunders used the term multi vocal or multidimensional meanings when speaking about the meanings of memorabilia. Nicholas J. Saunders, *Materials of Conflict. Material Culture, Memory and the First World War*, (London: Routledge, 2004), p.6.

2.2.4. *The Analysis of War Memorials*

In most of the cases historians while obtaining data from the monuments used simply common sense without creating even the elementary rules. They were using erudition and basic historical skills related to the source criticism. This approach proved its value, still things can be improved especially if the final aim of the research is to compare the results.

The improvement is primarily based on the creation of the strict typology which can then be applied to analysis of the monuments. Gavriel D. Rosenfeld proposed posing a number of standardized questions in order to implement more cohesion and order in the analysis.³⁵ His line of thought can be further upgraded in the following way. That is to say, as monuments are, above all, visual sources, they are quite similar to other works of art, architecture, photography or even caricature. All of, the disciplines that use these types of visual sources had developed substantial methodology which enabled them to highly benefit from the potential their sources offer. By borrowing some of their inquiry apparatus, and on the foundations mentioned by Rosenfeld, it is possible to create the following form for monument exploration.³⁶ The three basic categories can be used as the initial research guidance. Formal characteristics: Is the monument abstract or figurative? Does it possess a textual inscription and what is the nature of the wording? What size is the monument? Where is the location of it and how far is it situated from the place which is considered to be the center of that area. What is the level of public visibility of the monument? Internal Critique: Who was the one who erected the monument and why? What were the broader

³⁵ Gavriel D. Rosenfeld, "Monuments and the Politics of Memory: Commemorating Kurt Eiser and Bavarian Revolutions of 1918-1919 in Postwar Munich," *Central European History* 30, No. 2 (1997): 221-253.

³⁶ Morris Wright, *Time Pieces, Photographs, Writings and Memory*, (New York: Donnelley & Sons, 1999); Ken Light, *Witness in our Time*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000); Jean- Michel Rabaté, *Writing the Image After Roland Barthes*, (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997).

and the immediate context of the process of the construction? Reception Questions: Were there any debates related to the issue of the construction, motifs presented on the monuments etc? Who intervened and were there any obstacles during the process of fund raising or lobbying? What was the fate of the monument after it's uncovering and was there a deliberate neglect?

The number of raised questions can be expanded within the mentioned categories. By analyzing the monuments in a precise and formal way, it is possible to compare them more easily and to systematize the acquired knowledge. The second problem can be found in the complex symbolism and diverse layers of meanings that are connected with the existence of the monuments. The already mentioned logical way of analysis proved to be the best in decoding symbolism. The multidimensionality of these sources demands high level of erudition from the historian, confirming Burckhardt's saying that the historian must be a professional in his field of study, but also a dilettante in at least one more discipline.³⁷

The knowledge about the war uniforms or weapons can also play important part in discovering the intentions of the construction committees. Often the defeated armies are presented with modern weapons unused in the conflicts they honor. This feature can be interpreted as a modernization of the conflict and as a measure of promoting retaliation.

Among all of the problems related to the interpretation, of the ideas of the builders of the monuments, the most difficult one is to understand the political motives. What were the exact political intentions of the clients? How the "war dead" were treated in broader context, in which monuments played just partial medium for the transfer of certain messages? In comprehending the deep layers of behavior, related to legitimization of violence and accepting the loss of life, anthropological and sociological findings can be of considerable help. Additional way to surpass

³⁷ Jacob Burckhardt, *Razmišljanja o svetskoj istoriji* (Thoughts about the world history), (Beograd: Prosveta, 1999), p. 233.

the problem can be found in the usage of sources that discuss public discourse related to the fallen and the reasons for the sacrifices.

The third problem can be found in the interpretation of the monument's intended messages and purposes. The mark of the interpretation is always personal, as Jeffrey Keith put it: "Commemorations are contemporary, but our interpretation definitely comes from the 21st century."³⁸ In this way it is possible to challenge many of the conclusions made by historians dealing with monuments. Still, it is not possible to use this relativism so freely to say that each critic or attack is equally valid.³⁹

War monuments are rich historical sources which can be used as a mere illustrations of historical process, but also for the understanding the interdependent flows of intellectual history. They pose special methodological problems: the information related to the monuments belongs to the different spheres of human activities, thus often eluding classification and causing the dispersion of historian's attention.

2.2.5. The Comparative Approach

At this point I will define the aim of comparison as well as the nature of that process. In this thesis I will use asymmetrical comparison, established by Jurgen Kocka. That type of comparison offers advantages as well as certain shortcomings, but it is nevertheless suitable when it is not possible to obtain equally quality data, for both case studies.⁴⁰ As Jurgen Kocka

³⁸ Keith Jeffery (Belfast), conference presentation, "Empires, Nations and War Memory in the Twentieth Century" on the Commemoration of The Great War In East-Central Europe, 1918-1939, Central European University, Budapest 23-25 March 2007.

³⁹ Elizabeth A. Clark, *History, Theory, and Premodern Texts*, (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2004), p.157.

⁴⁰ J. Kocka, "Asymmetrical Historical Comparison: The Case of the German Sonderweg," *History and Theory* 38 (February 1999): 40-50.

explained the asymmetric form of comparison can lead to new set of questions that were previously out of the focus.⁴¹

Thus, two favorable opportunities arise from this method. Firstly, the possibility for asking new, fresh questions that might otherwise go unasked. Two different perspectives can put in question some old unchallenged assumptions. Secondly, there is an opportunity for creating a more equal overview of the situation. The latter is even more important when considering the cult of the fallen and the strong emotions that can arise from single sided approach to such a bloody event.

The comparison method aims at identifying similarities or differences among the phenomena or case studies analyzed. Similarities are convenient for creating a general theory and differences are more suitable for identifying and isolating historical problems previously overlooked.⁴² The importance of comparative method is even greater when having in mind the similarities that are already known in the cases of Western Europe, about the treatment of war dead. As the perception of the death was not restricted to a few countries, but a world wide phenomenon, comparative method has been accepted as without an equivalent, in creating theories about how societies looked upon their dead. In this way each new case study is a test for what is already acknowledged.

Determining the proper unit for comparison always presents a complex problem. I have selected seven monuments on each side for analyzing. The place, chronology and (broadly) war events that were commemorated present the connection among the two countries. As a further point it should be mentioned that two countries had common frontier and tense relations. Also,

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Raymond Grew, "On the Current State of Comparative Studies," in Marc Bloch *Aujourd'hui, Histoire Comparée* (The Comparative History Today) ed. Harmut Atsma and Andre Burguiere, (Paris: Editions de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Science Sociale, 1990), p. 233-251.

when speaking about these two countries it should be mentioned that in these cases war memorials, played in the most obvious case, an integral part of foreign policies, during the period which is selected for analysis.

Chapter Three

3.1. Debates about the Fallen Soldiers and the Yugoslav Crisis

In this chapter I will discuss some of the main debates that took place in Belgrade's public opinion, among the Serbian elites, regarding war memories and their its connections with the crisis of Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The arguments used by various public figures often outspoken the issues which monuments transferred through ambiguous symbols. In this sense, this chapter provides relevant background for the core part of this thesis dedicated to the visual and ideological study of different monuments. As a further point, these debates show that Yugoslav crisis manifested itself through the war discourse. Thus, the main political dilemma of interwar Yugoslav was not only reflected into the Cult of the Fallen Soldiers, but was in fact severely fuelled and even amplified by it.

The dramatic events of World War One constituted the biggest challenge to the survival of the Kingdom of Serbia in the twentieth century. Out of a total population of four million people, as Serbia had in 1914, the country mobilized 450 000 soldiers, among whom only 150 000 managed to survive the war.⁴³ Such a huge percent of casualties as well as the total and undreamt of war victory marked the minds of the contemporaries. The crucial question for the successful life of the new state was: Will the kingdom be a centralized or a federative edifice, remained open and dominant until the April of 1941 and the German invasion. The dilemma of how to organize the new state manifested itself in all spheres of life. The cult of the Fallen was a

⁴³ Branko Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije (History of Yugoslavia)*, Vol.1, (Beograd, Prosveta, 1990), p. 31.

major test for the Yugoslav ideology, as well: how to commemorate and acknowledge Serbia's essential merits in the creation of the new state, while at the same time not to isolate those inhabitants that happened to be on the wrong side of the conflict but later became Yugoslav citizens.

Milos Crnjanski and Zivojin Peric, two notable intellectuals of interwar Belgrade, were on opposite sides during these polemics. Both intellectuals reacted passionately and harshly to the problems they confronted. It is interesting to see what made them react so temperamentally. As they were on the opposite sides of the debate, their opinions could offer a comprehensive view for perceiving the contemporary debates.

The opus of Milos Crnjanski presents a highly interesting source for the exploration of the atmosphere in postwar Serbia, especially his thoughts about the war legacy. In many ways Crnjanski's ideas were unique, highly contradictor and, perhaps, not very typical, nevertheless, as he was a well known writer it is reasonable to assume that he was able not only to articulate some features of his time, but even to instigate some new discussions.

Milos Crnjanski was born in Chongrad, in Hungary. He finished his school in Timisoara and then studied art history and philosophy, in Vienna and Belgrade. He participated in the First World War as an Austro-Hungarian soldier. After the war he worked as a teacher of history and physical education in Belgrade. During the interwar years he published some of his best works *The Lyric of Ithaca* (1919), *Journal about Carnojevic* (1921), *Migrations* (1929) as well as several short stories. Parallel to these artistic endeavors he participated in the cultural and political debates in the Yugoslav public, through his comments in the daily "Vreme" [Time], and later one in his own weekly "Ideje" [Ideas]. During 1928 he went abroad, to Berlin, as a

correspondent of the Central Press Agency of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenians.⁴⁴

He lived in Berlin up to 1938, when he was sent, to Rome, where he occupied the same position.

Zivojin Peric was born in 1868 in Valjevo, in western Serbia. He studied law in Belgrade and Paris. Afterwards, he worked as professor of international law at the Belgrade and Lyon Universities. He was regarded as one of the most educated members of Serbian elite. Peric was a conservative politician, a believer in a bicameral parliament and an admirer of Western civilization. After the 1903 royal assassination, Peric was among the most prominent guardians of the legal questioning of the whole manner in which the Karadjordjevic dynasty came to power. Peric was also a devoted Christian as well as a pacifist. He dreamt of living in the Kingdom of Serbia, an integral part of the reformed Austro-Hungary.

During the occupation of Serbia, which lasted from 1915 until 1918, Peric remained in Belgrade and collaborated with Austrian authorities. Affected by the war experience, Peric denounced his admiration to western individualism and looked more into Bolshevik Russia. It should be mentioned that he was one of the strongest opponents of the Serbian vision of Yugoslavia as a centralist state.⁴⁵

Although, Peric did not write about the war, as Milos Crnjanski did, he completely understood the nature of the Yugoslav crisis. His remarks can be thus valuable for grasping some of Crnjanski's ideas. Peric's writing also shows that, within the already small Serbian elite which was reduced even further by the war, there were people who did not unconditionally identify

⁴⁴ Central Press Agency was founded as a helping organ of the Presidency of Ministers Council for "general state information purposes". In this sense Crnjanski was not strictly speaking a member of Yugoslav diplomacy, which enabled him to have much more freedom in his acting. Cvijeticanin Radivoje, *Nova Evropa Milosa Crnjanskog* (New Europe of Milos Crnjanski) (Beograd: Prosveta, 1990), p. 76.

⁴⁵ Olga Manojlović-Pintar, "*Ideološko i političko u jugoslovenskim spomenicim 1919-1980* (Ideological and Political in the Yugoslav War Memorials 1919-1980)," (Ph.D diss., University of Belgrade, 2005), p. 78.

themselves with the military victories. Those men considered the war as an expensive adventure that highly exceeded Serbia's capacities.⁴⁶ Certain sobriety and rationality resulted from this attitude, regarding the view on Yugoslav crisis.

In 1919, Crnjanski still under the immediate war experiences, published his anti-war collection of poems *The Lyric of Ithaca*. There he exposed his pacifism. As he was sent from jail into the Austro-Hungarian army, his experiences were especially bitter ones. From 1932 up to 1935 Milos Crnjanski published more than 50 texts in the daily press. The span of the topics was very broad. At the beginning he polemicized with several publishing houses as well as unnamed and named writers from Yugoslavia. Contemporary politics, commemorations of major military events of the Great War, and "the communist threat" were the main topics that fascinated Crnjanski, in his columnist carrier. Always emphasizing the moral virtues of his subjects, he sent obvious messages to his contemporaries.

Two texts are especially interesting for the topic of this thesis were published in 1934: "Slandered War" and "Blood was joyfully flowing in streams, for the honorable face of Belgrade." These texts are in many ways similar and were dealing with same problems.

His article "Slandered War", published on 16th of March 1934, was full of very controversial and strong ideas that provoked many to call Crnjanski a fascist. The days of Crnjanski's devotion to pacifism, six years after the war, were over.

The world was deafened by the howling of the most dangerous illusionists that history has ever seen, incurable dreamers who believe in the arrival of the internal peace... Pacifism after the War, did not have any distinctions of logical thinking, comprehension or

⁴⁶ Similar observation was made 80 years later, by historian Milan S. Protić. He said that Serbia has not yet recovered from the Great War. Radio Index, 4th of October 2000.

reasoning. Propaganda for the peace was not sensible, reasonable or based on the economical reasons, but was defeatist and fanatical and temporary...

The ones, which participated in the war, whom lied among the dead know that war is magnificent and that there is no greater moment, nor it has existed ever, in the human life, from the conscious participation in the battle...In fact there is no state organization, nor the party one, that has any values if it does not have military virtues. With the general suffrage, there is no doubt; it is the same value the importance of general military draft.....The peaceful life, any way, by itself, full of dirt, misery, despair and meanness, can not stand the comparison with the solemn shadows of the war...If you take from the peasants military proud, his soldier's past, his valiant dignity, what will you leave him in return? If you degrade his (peasant's) participation in the wars, if you degrade Serbia's wars, the only capital still not squandered, what will rest nice that you will be able to say about ...The war which was, with all of its horrors, with all of its striking casualties and consequences for our people, still looks like a shining star, eternal star in the night above us.⁴⁷

In another article "Blood was joyfully flowing in streams, for the honor of Belgrade" Crnjanski repeated most of the ideas. This article is of special importance because the main case study in this research is the event from the October of 1915. The unknown journalist wrote indicative introduction for Crnjanski:

⁴⁷ Miloš Crnjanski, "Oklevetani rat (Slandered War)," *Vreme* (16. mart 1934.): 5-8. (all translations done by the author).

In the first days of peace, the worlds become the dancing hall. If we should depict somehow those first decades after the greatest bloodshed in human history, we can call it the age when man tried, by force, to take glands from the apes! Nature, they were saying is recovering thus, let us as well be joyful, our will should wonder freely and we should all forget the war!⁴⁸

Then Crnjanski continued posing several questions related to the motivation of the defenders: It was not a deception because they had the collective feeling of Serbianhood. Our grandparents and our fathers started this job, and they started it well, we are the ones that finished it”⁴⁹

After the appearance of Crnjanski’s ideas about the war, the debate unfolded. He was attacked in the press from several sides. Miroslav Krleža made the most brutal and the most authoritative attack.⁵⁰ He found several quotes from the novel *Journal about Carnojevic* which Milos Crnjanski wrote during the Great War. There Crnjanski defined the war “as the insanity in the sea of mud.” Thanks to the debate which lasted several weeks it is possible to understand Crnjanski’s ideas about the war more clearly. He underlined that he was provoked by the constant campaign of blasphemy of Serbia through pacifist propaganda. He said that he is angry because the jokes about Kajmakalan are circulating all over country.⁵¹ Crnjanski argued that on top of all

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ Miloš Crnjanski, “Krv je veselo tekla za castan obraz Beograda (Blood was joyfully running for the honorable face of Belgrade), *Ideje*, (21.maj 1934): 32-37.

⁵⁰ Miroslav Krleža was a novelist, poet, essayist, short-story writer, and playwright, a central figure in modern Croatian literature. Through out the interwar years he declared himself as a Communist. He was one of the first ones to meet with Josip Broz (Tito) in 1921 after Broz’s return from Soviet Union. Goran Miloradović, *Karantin za ideje* (The quarantine for ideas), (Beograd: Udruženje za Društvenu istoriju, 2005), p. 211.

⁵¹ Kajmakčalan is the top of the mountain Nidža, one of the most important positions on the Thessalonica front. The fierce battle was fought there against the allies and the Bulgarian troupes,

the troubles of Serbia there is Marxist propaganda as well. In his replay to Miroslav Krleža he did not find contradictions between his contemporary writings and his previous novels. Instead, he advised Krleža to read some other parts of the same novel. The part was the praise of the army, the praise of the Serbian army.

Conscious sacrifice or voluntarily participation in the war was always stressed by Crnjanski. It seems that he wanted to emphasize that all Serbian sacrifices were based on the voluntary level. Although, high moral was constant through out most of the wars of 1912-1918, it is evident that the reality of war was more complex than in the articles in *Vreme* [Time] or in the *Ideje* [Ideas]. This complexity was not questioned in the discourse about the Fallen, but only the heroic performance.

1.1 Pacifism Pacifism by its nature finds war unacceptable. Crnjanski was in the 1919 not only a pacifist, but a sympathizer of socialist idea. What caused him to change his former beliefs? It is possible that while still having fresh war memories he belief that the world will soon be changed dramatically. As that did not happen and as his new states quickly feel into strained relations, with all of its neighbors, he perceived pacifism as the attack on the defensive capacities of his country.

1.2 Communism The communist threat was also one of the issues that enraged Miloš Crnjanski. Communists, with their most prominent supporter among the intellectuals Miroslav Krleža, saw in the Serbian war traditions one of the pillars of the citizens' state which they

in the late summer of 1916. It was a very important challenge for the remnants of the Serbian army, in order to convince the allies in its battle value after the retreat through Albania. Four thousands Serbian soldiers dyed in two days. *Vojna enciklopedija*, vol.4. [Military Encyclopedia] (Beograd: Vojnoizdavčki zavod, 1978), 344.

wanted to overcome.⁵² It appears that Crnjanski was not that shocked by the war that he would wish to disregard his national feelings or to wish to change the whole social system like communists did.

1.3. Militarism The way in which Crnjanski described peaceful life uncovers his discontent with democracy. Military values acquired the status of the total opposite to current insulting speeches between Yugoslav nations. Army methods meant activity, initiative and ultimately self-sacrifice. Interwar politics meant bargaining, over voting and secret arrangements. Without stressing who was the main contributor in the war, it is evident that Crnjanski thought that Serbia's best, and perhaps the only, qualities were the military values. The line saying that the war is "the only capital still not squandered" testifies of the importance attributed to the war Serbia's efforts, but also about the disappointment with the current state. If all other capital is vested and the war glory is the only thing that remains to be proud off, that idea is deeply pessimistic. Where the other capital was wasted. In this way Crnjanski wanted to initiate new optimism in the whole state, it was the optimism based on the proven More data about this tiredness with the democratic system and Yugoslav debates can be found in the writings of Zivojin Peric. He wrote in 1940 that:

Yugoslavia is one of the European countries with the most heterogeneous population; historically as well as ethnographically... that population can not be described as the nation in no circumstances, but as nations! People of the new state belong to various

⁵² Miloš Crnjanski, "Oklevetani rat (Slandered War)," *Vreme* (16. mart 1934): 5-8.

historical state entities and were more than once on the opposing sides during conflicts.⁵³

Perić also criticized Serbian elites for suppressing national feelings and insisting on Unitarian type of Yugoslavism.

1.4. Oblivion. In all of his texts, even in his novels, Crnjanski attacks oblivion. The forgetting of the death seemed wrong to Isidora Sekulić as well.⁵⁴ She wrote in 1940, also related to the First World War memories that: “Forgetting, that is the gift from God to humans. Through sleeping or dreaming, or through natural weakening and erasing of all those information in our conscience and our brain, that probably should be erased, we forget. Still, to neglect willfully, that is man’s invention. That is the skill to live and leave out important parts of things that happened.”⁵⁵ Thus, Isidora Sekulić observed also this tendency to overlook war experiences. Nevertheless, she did not react in the same manner as Crnjanski. It appears that she thought that such mass scale bloodshed can not be just put aside without serious contemplation. They both were against indifference that some other sources, as I will show in the chapter dealing with monuments, also identify as incomprehensible feature of their time.

1.5. The Croats The war as a glorious moment in Serbian history was a widely accepted view inside and outside Serbia. In Croatian part of the Yugoslavia the idea of Serbian merits was fading faster than in Serbia itself, as most of the Croats reluctantly participated in the Austro-Hungarian army. The famous shooting inside Yugoslav Parliament on the 20th of June 1928 had

⁵³ Živojin Perić, “Jugoslovenska federalna država (The Yugoslav Federal State),” in *Pravnoj misli* (1940): 23.

⁵⁴ Isidora Sekulić, “Jedna misao o jednoj pesmi Sime Pandurovića (One thought about one song of Sima Pandurović)” in *Srpskom književnom glasniku* (1940): 34-54.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

its immediate cause in the discussion about the Serbia's worth in the war. How to commemorate and cherish the memory on such huge efforts and still not to use them in disarming the Croats in their attempt to rearrange the structure of the kingdom?

In the usual fierce assembly discussions, the intense emotions were especially provoked by mentioning the Fallen. Milan Stojadinovic described how the discussion unfolded, using the shorthand recording and his own memories:⁵⁶

Amidst the noise, insipid and insulting speeches, the tension was growing. After pause for the platform came Punisa Racic.⁵⁷

'I declare here that Serbian interests, from the date when the canons and guns stopped shooting, had never been in such jeopardy than they are now! I openly say to you all that I will not hesitate to use some other weapon, in order to protect Serbian interests' (huge noise in the conference room)

'Let the Europe here that they are threatening us with arms'

Pernar⁵⁸ shouts that the Serbs had taken the gold from the Muslims and Racic immediately asked for satisfaction. Then Racic mentioned the Serbian Fallen. Croatian deputy Ivan Pernar who was seating close to the platform ironically made a comment:

⁵⁶ Milan Stojadinović was the mare of Belgrade (1930-1934) and a president of Yugoslav government (1936-1938). He published his memoirs in 1962, *Nor War nor Pact*, in Buenos Aires.

⁵⁷ Puniša Račić was a temperament member of People's Radical Party. He was known as one of the most violent men in interwar politics. He was among the first men killed by the communists in liberated Belgrade 1944.

⁵⁸ Ivan Pernar was the member of Croatian Peasant's Party, led by Stjepan Radić. In the shooting Puniša Račić killed Pavla Radica and Djuru Basaričeka. Stjepan Radić also died from the wounds. Ivan Pernar and Ivan Grandja survived the wounds. Branko Petranovic, *Istorija Jugoslavije* (History of Yugoslavia), Vol. I, (Beograd: Prosveta, 1989), p. 175.

“Well then, why don’t you say how many litters of blood you loosed, so that we can pay you in gold...?”

Punisa stopped speaking and his face became red, he was completely beside himself. He shouted several times:

‘Take your word back!’ Pernar just laughed on that.

At exactly 11.25 the shoots were heard.⁵⁹

This vivid account shows how deep were the divisions inside Yugoslav state and that the cult of the Fallen was used by both sides as an argument. For Serbian side that was the sacred memory that justified the right to have the last word in the political discussions. As concerning Croatian part, the mentioning the Fallen so often and 10 years after the war presented pure anachronism.

This event happened five years before Crnjanski’s text, but it appears, from the tone of “Slandered War” that nothing actually changed after the introduction of the dictatorship. Six month after his article, king Alexander I was shot dead by Croatian extremists in Marseille.

Soon, after the assassination Crnjanski wrote several texts that were censored by the authorities, because of his too harsh remarks about the Croats. Consequently, it is possible to find representatives of the Croatian elite in the people that Crnjanski attacked in his previous writings, when he did not mention the names.

1.6 The Peasants. Crnjanski also gave special place to the peasants. As I will show in the case of several monuments, peasants were regarded as the symbols of the Great War in Serbia.

⁵⁹ Milan Stojadinović, *Ni rat ni pakt* (Nor war nor pact), (Beograd: Politika, 1962), p. 233.

They symbolized hard and honorable work, moral and endurance as well as justice. All these values were through peasants transferred to the whole perception of the war. This symbolism reflected certain illusions. Up to the recent times it was widely acknowledged that all Serbian officers from the First World War were also of a peasant origin. The reality was much different. The works of Milic Milicevic showed that 75% of the officer's corps was of citizen's background.⁶⁰ Even Peric, always so critical towards Belgrade elites, praised Serbian peasants.

Crnjanski continued to write about the places where battles fought, about the forgotten participants, about "immoral generation" which just enjoy life neglecting the memory of the ones who laid the foundations for the current peace. He wrote an idealistic text about the defenders of Belgrade from the Germans in the 1915 with the.

One of the novels that Crnjanski wrote after the Second World War *In Hyperborean* deals with his thoughts about the life, history and art, while he was on his, mentioned, semi-diplomatic service in Rome. The exact time of this autobiographical novel is 1939 when Italy entered the war. Characteristic for war ideas in this book is that they are much calmer and moderate then in the previous works of this writer. There is no more sign of his radical fighting spirit. Once he spoke with Italian peasant and wrote about it:

The First World War destroyed my life and my youth, so I feel peaty and I love everyone who participated in that war. The result of that war for that pore peasant was just one: poverty. The world has long ago forgotten that, that peculiar war, has ever existed. My

⁶⁰ Milić Milicević, "Socijalno poreklo oficirskog kadra školovanog u Srbiji od 1850. do 1901 (Social background of officer cadre educated in Serbia from 1850-1901), in *Godišnjaku za društvenu istoriju* (Annual for Social History), No. 2, 1995.

country forgotten it too, in spite the fact that we suffered, even more dead, than many others.⁶¹

He lost the will, fell into apathy similar to Yugoslav army after witnessing the cataclysm of their brothers in arms, French soldiers.⁶² His mobilization on the basis of glorious traditions failed.

From this discussion it is possible to see that the part of the Serbian elite redrew from the Yugoslav ideology on the positions of their Serbian identity. The reasons for that was disappointment with the new state, provoked, among other things, by the questioning of the Serbian war traditions. Pacifism and communism as well as forgetfulness caused this shift too. These war traditions were considered by most of the Serbian public as sacred epic times, which were put in the foundations of the new state. On the other side, among the Croat intellectuals, it was evident that emphasis on the Serbian war merits meant inferior political position as well as the postponement of the solution of the “Croatian question” in Yugoslavia. All these debate encircle the monuments to the same extent, but the messages were transferred, more subtly, through symbols, short inscriptions and small details within the commemorative ceremonies.

⁶¹ Miloš Crnjanski, *Kod Hiperborejca* (In Hyperborean), (Beograd: Prosveta, 1966), p. 45.

⁶² Branko Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije* (History of Yugoslavia), Vol. 3, (Beograd: Prosveta, 1989), p. 233.

Chapter Four

4.1. Serbian War Memorials

As soon as the war ended all over the new kingdom various monuments appeared. Some were dedicated to the royal family or to the Fallen Soldiers and some to the liberation and unification to Serbia or to the Kingdom of SCS. Despite the terrible economic situation, especially in the area directly stroke by the war, war memorials of different types were built all over the country. Still, by 1927 the situation was perceived as very chaotic. Consequently within the Ministry of Education special Artistic Department was founded with the responsibility to supervise and approve all constructions of the monuments, private or public:

In all country, every day, new monuments are appearing. They are celebrating the dynasty or the heroes dyed for the liberation and unification. It is not necessary to emphasize how great the importance of these monuments regarding their national and artistic significance is. They suppose to guard national feelings and ennoble taste of our people...⁶³

This explanation an anonymous official of the Ministry of Education clearly marked two main purposes of the Yugoslav monuments. Its primarily role was to promote the values of patriotism and in keeping it alive. Thus, it is no accident that Ministry of Education was the one to observe how this national engagement was fulfilled. Nevertheless, this control was not without artistic considerations. The Artistic Department was promoting certain standards as “in whole

⁶³ Ministry of Education of Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and the Slovenians, Regulation no. 13 from 4th of June 1921. Archive of Yugoslavia, fond no.66, folder 627.

civilized world “ like open competitions and assured finances in order to finish the monument in time and not to leave it half done.”⁶⁴

However, these decrees were not obeyed. There were situations in which orders from Ministry of Education were sent to the Ministry of Interior, to implement these principles. All local officials received strict orders concerning this issue. It is clear that besides ideological importance of the war memorials, making order in this activity presented the test for the state apparatus, but is even more interesting state tried to use even the Cult of the Fallen as a way of modernizing the country.

Kingdom of SCS built its Pantheon related to the recent war. Several projects were considered as high priorities and were financed by the state. The first state war memorial project was the Unknown Hero placed on the top of the Avala Mountain (1921-1922). This was considered a personal project of the king, who actually financed its construction. Two subsequent projects were carried out in Greece, to commemorate the retreat through Albania and the fight on the Thessalonica front (1925, 1926). The tomb of Duke Radomir Putnik from 1927. presented the last state memorial project. Parallel to these state plans there were the concepts of various private organizations. These associations built almost all of war monuments related to the Belgrade Battle. There were at least two important societies that claim the right to cherish and influence the way of remembering Belgrade battle: “The Society of Reserved Army Officers” and “The Society of Belgrade Defenders”. In the next chapter I will show how, during these constructions, these societies together with the Serbian Orthodox Church “fought” for establishing the monopoly over the war memories.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

4.2. The Battle, October 1915.

I will first briefly reconstruct the battle in order to create context for the analysis of the postwar memories of that event. Because of the huge number of battles, between 1912 until 1918, in which Serbia participated, the defense of Belgrade from 1915 has been treated, in contemporary Serbian discourse, as secondary war event. Still, it appears that many of the dramatic events that occurred from the 6th until the 9th of October deeply moved the contemporaries and marked their collective memory. From the very beginning the battle was marked by some unusual chivalry moments. Namely, field marshal von Mackensen, commander of Austro-Hungarian and German forces, issued an order, before starting the battle that produced a deep effect on the Serbian army as well as subsequent generation in Serbia.

Soldiers! You are not going on Italian, Russian or French front. You are going to fight a new enemy. This enemy is dangerous, brave, tough and strong. You are going on Serbian front and Serbs are the people that love freedom and they will fight and self-sacrifice for freedom. Be careful or this small enemy will darken your glory and compromise your successes.⁶⁵

As Serbia was uncertain about the behavior of Bulgaria, she sent her best troupes on eastern border, while second and third rate conscript were sent to Belgrade. The general strategic plan of Serbian army was to hold the territory as long as possible in order to hold on until the

⁶⁵ Petar Opacić, *Odbrana Beograda 1915* (the Defense of Belgrade 1915), (Beograd: Društvo za negovanje tradicija oslobodilačkih ratova, 2005), p. 58.

promised French reinforcements arrive from Thessalonica. Thus, fighting for every street of Belgrade was of great importance.⁶⁶

Mackensen on the other side wanted to take Belgrade as soon as possible and that to proceed south enabling any kind of Serbian regrouping. Mackensen had two full army corps at his disposal, one German and one Austro-Hungarian, sufficient number of artillery pieces, planes and five Austrian monitors from the Danube fleet. Serbian general Mihailo Živković had several times smaller forces, dominantly Serbian second rate troupes with symbolic presents of French, Russian and British soldiers. In total there were 13 360 defenders. France sent one plane squadron, Russia helped with two river battle ships and two canons of bigger caliber. The battle took place on two different places simultaneously. Austro-Hungarian forces attacked across the river Danube, straight towards the ancient Kalemegdan fortress and the city centre. The Germans attacked across the river Sava in order to take the surrounding hills around the Kalemegdan positions. In total, whole space where the battle took place was not wider than 10km, meaning that huge destructive power was used in a very small space.

On the morning of the 6th of October, attackers started the artillery barrage that was previously unseen in the Balkan front. Around 30 000 grenades fell on the city within two days. During the 7th of October, early in the morning the Germans started to cross the river and to build pontoon bridges. After six hours of continuous fights they managed to establish a bridgehead and a foothold in Belgrade. Little bit after the German success, Austro-Hungarian soldiers established several small positions on the right bank of the Danube River. During these fights several hundreds of Serbian soldiers were captured.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ *Vojna enciklopedija*, vol. 5. (Military Encyclopedia) (Beograd: Vojnoizdavčki zavod, 1978), 378.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

While several small battles unfolded, dramatic events were coming one after another. Serbian command, because of the severe losses, introduced gendarmerie units in the fight. Because of the closeness of the troops, near the mentioned bridgeheads, both sides limited the use of artillery. One of the most dramatic events, from the Serbian perspective, happened early in the afternoon on the 7th of October. It was clear that if the attackers establish firm foothold near Kalemegdan the battle will be soon over. As follows, it was of vital importance to try to push the enemy back towards the river. This was the moment when one of the biggest war myths in Serbian history was about to be created. Major Gavrilovic supposed to lead one of the several simultaneous charges on the Austro-Hungarian positions. His speech made him famous because of its embodiment of the self sacrifice spirit:

Heroes! At three o'clock sharp, the enemy must be crushed by your mighty charge, torn to pieces by your grenades and bayonets. The honor of Belgrade must be spotless. Heroes! Soldiers! Supreme command has erased our regiment from its records. Our regiment is sacrificed for Belgrade and Fatherland. You don't have to worry about your lives! Your lives don't exist any more! So, forward to glory! For the king and the Fatherland! Long live the King! Long live Belgrade!⁶⁸

All 13 charges, except one, were unsuccessful and most of the soldiers were killed during the charge. Major Gavrilovic, who was leading one of the attacks, was taken from the battlefield severely wounded.

During the 8th of October battle was coming to its end. Several desperate counterattacks of the defenders just postponed already decided battle. On the 9th the dying was over: 1,182

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

German and Austro-Hungarian soldiers and around 5,000 Serbian soldiers were killed. Nobody counted the civilians. As this honor and endurance contest ended, von Mackensen ordered that within newly German military cemetery should be a small Serbian memorial. It will be at the same time the tomb for all, found, bodies of the defenders. The details about this monument will be discussed later in the thesis.

This battle provided the Serbian public with more than sufficient material for the creation of the war myth. Several elements from the battle attained “sacredness”. The Mackensen’s speeches supplied the clash, from the first stage, with certain sublime atmosphere, creating perfect material for Myth of the War Experience. Likewise, the mentioned speech of major Gavrilovic became the most repeated speech in Serbia, it has been recited on all school competitions ever since. Similarly, Gavrilovic’s speech contributed significantly to the creation of the Myth of the War experience because it emphasized the readiness for suicidal fight in the name of the nation, but it don’t lay stress upon the scenery after the unsuccessful charge.

The latter memories of the battles suppressed some less praiseworthy moments of the battle, like the fact that more than 400 Serbian soldiers fell into captivity.⁶⁹ Also, as I will explain in next chapter, in more detail, it appears that certain number of Albanians fought on the Serbian side, sent to Belgrade by Serbian allays Esad Pasha Toptani. The fact that civilian casualties were never even approximately numbered gives the impression about the values that were cherished in the Serbian state: one of the rare ways to be remembered in the collective memory was to day as a soldier, who is fighting against the overwhelming odds.

All these contributions to the Myth of the War Experience were, as I will show, transferred to various monuments, through the inscriptions and symbols.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

4.3. The Monuments

The Belgrade Battle was commemorated by eight monuments. They were built from 1915 until 1989. In this segment of my work I will analyze all of them through various criteria, as numbered in the Methodology chapter, in order to determine what was the status of the war memories as well as to investigate all indications about the conditions in the Yugoslav society.

4.3.1. *Mackensen's Monument*

The Serbs lost the battle for Belgrade, still from the highest place, from the enemy, there was a tribute for the brave and fair fight. The monument was built in the Topcider Wood in 1915, within the German military cemetery. The monument was done as a simple monolith with the inscription in German and in Serbian. Not far from this Serbian memorial the German monument was built. Both memorials have crosses on their top. The disproportion between the two memorials is obvious. Serbian memorial is half a meter high and the German surpasses two meters. The whole cemetery was conceived as a cascade, thus German memorial was put on the top of the small hill, to dominate the cemetery. German inscription is very simple, it is the phrase: "For our Fallen".

The motive for constructing this monument gives interesting insight in the minds of professional soldiers. Was this respect the relict of the past or is there any other explanation? In their joint project, Luc Capdavila and Daniele Voldman discussed the ways of dealing with the enemy dead bodies. They mentioned three usual manners: respect, fury and the urge to annihilate.⁷⁰ The first option, which Mackensen choose is, they argue, most theorized and legally

⁷⁰ Luc Capdavila and Daniele Voldman, *War Dead: Western Societies and the Casualties of War*, (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 2006), p.76.

founded, but very rare. The authors mention several reasons for this paying of respect: fidelity to one's own image of oneself, political considerations, and a concept of military honor. It can also be perceived as a promise or a warning- to public opinion to one's allies, neutral parties etc.⁷¹

After considering these explanations it is quite possible that Mackensen perceived the German troupes as forces which obey chivalry code and respect the military honor even in this new type of war that perplexed so many professionals. Also it can be perceived as a remained of Austro-Hungarian incapability to subject Serbia alone. Nevertheless, this move of German commander helped the creation of the Myth of the War Experience in the sense that his move supported the view that in war there are rules which are ultimately the moral ones and that the amount of brutality can be restricted. It was homage to chivalry, which if ever widely acknowledged, was in 1915 becoming rare and bizarre phenomena.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*



Picture no1. *Mackensen's monument*

Two monuments that mark graves of two confronted armies created a very specific impression. The dead were separated, a fact that in a way can be interpreted as the continuation of the war, just with other resources, but it can be also interpreted in another manner: “these men were equal in their bravery and that they had the war as a common enemy.”

Today, only four elements testify that German cemetery ever existed: the two mentioned memorials, small entry inscription and the concrete bench with a view on the mouth of the Sava River. It is reasonable to argue that German memorial, in such a isolated place, survived through out the century on the account of Mackensen's desire to commemorate Serbia's Fallen. That wish left deep impression in Serbia.

As the monument in Topcider was too small and too far away from the city and as it built by enemy, the ex soldiers wanted to put their personal mark and to express gratitude and respect in their own way. Because all of these reasons this monument did not become the center of interwar commemoration. It is interesting though that this place served as an important segment of German official visits to Belgrade. Mackensen's gesture provided convenient starting point for all German diplomatic visits to Serbia.⁷²

4.3.2. Conscript of the Third Call-Up

The cult of the fallen Belgrade defenders was initiated, at least regarding the Serbian monuments, in 1923. In that year a monument was erected in Karadjorđe's Park, in the central circle alley, to the conscripts of the third call up of the Seventh Regiment of the Serbian Army, killed in the fighting at Varovnica and while defending Belgrade in 1914 and 1915.⁷³ The monument is 250 cm high and made out of stone. As there are no preserved records about this monument it is unknown who constructed it. It appears that this monument had local character and that it did not play any significant role during central war commemorations.

⁷² The monument was last time reconstructed in 1984, just before the visit of West German chancellor Helmut Kohl. Archive of Yugoslavia, found no.66, folder 627.

⁷³ Varovnica is the wood near Belgrade.



Picture no.2. *Conscript of the third call-up*

Still, this monument is the rare one that realistically depicts the look of the bulk of the Serbian soldiers that fought in the 1915. Peculiar for this monument is that it reflects certain “calm and melancholic expression” thus it can be said that this memorial expressed questions about the horrors of the war, parallel with classical theme of patriotism.⁷⁴

4.3.3. *The monument of Nikola Krasnov*

One of the central memorial places in Belgrade regarding the Great War can be found in the Kalemegdan fortress. On a very small area, there are two churches and three memorials related, in different ways, to the 1915 battle. I argue that this memorial place symbolically united Serbian medieval history with the commemoration of World War I.

The St. Petka Church was built in 1937, and at first sight it has no connections with the Great War. Still, at closed scrutiny, it becomes apparent that the church has numerous links to the war. Firstly, the church was built in such a way that it clasped ancient well of St. Petka. The cult of St. Petka spread among the Serbs in the 14th century, when parts of her relics were placed in Belgrade. The spring was closely tied to the cult of the saint, being regarded by numerous people, as sacred. In 1915, just few weeks before the battle for Belgrade, the water stopped running from the source and that event was regarded as a bad sign for the Serbian war efforts. The water started to run again, few months before the country's liberation, in August of 1918.⁷⁵ This geological phenomenon became an integral part of the war myth. The well and the cult of the medieval saint contributed to the creation of a solemn atmosphere before and well after the battle.

⁷⁴ Darko Šarenac, *Beogradska Skulptura* (Belgrade Sculptures), (Beograd: Rad, 1991), p. 67.

⁷⁵ “Izvor Svete Petke,” *Vecernje Novosti* (Beograd), (2.maj 2007), p.9.



Picture no.3 *Nikola Krasnov's monument*

Momir Korunovic, the architect of the church of St. Petka, was also deeply influenced by medieval Serbian beliefs. He was trying, throughout the interwar years to develop a “Serbian” style in architecture, which was in many ways grounded in the Serbian medieval culture. It is worth mentioning that he was considered one of the best architects for designing war memorials after the Great War.

The second building in the complex that is of direct relevance for this thesis can be found just few meters from the Sr. Petks's church: the Ruzica church, built in 17th century, but destroyed during the fights in 1915. During her reconstruction two war memorials were placed in front of it as well as two memorial plates. Left from the door there was a statue of the Serbian soldier from the 1912-1918 wars. Near the right fringe of the door there is the sculpture of a medieval spearman. Both figures are 180cm high and both fighters have mustaches, unavoidable

masculine symbol on almost all war memorials. These statues were built by a Russian architect in 1924. It was Nikola Krasnov, one of the 44,000 Russian émigrés that came to kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians, after the Bolsheviks took the power. In this sense, by hiring a Russian monarchist for commemorating Serbian war efforts, the clients clearly sent the message of anticommunism, in the time when it just became clear that communists have no chances of performing the revolution in the new kingdom. It was also the statement of support for the continuity, regarding the old Russian state.

Who were the ordering parties of this memorial? The replay to this question leads to the very special relationship between the Royal Army and the Serbian Orthodox Church. Even before the reconstruction works in 1924, this religious object was called “the holy military church”. It is not clear since when this denomination is connected with the church and why was it related to this peculiar church. Possible answer comes from several commemorative boards that are situated within the church. They mention many high ranking Serbian officers, as benefactors of this church. The plate that is placed in front of the church, in 1924, mentions the special clients who helped renew the church: King Alexander as well as the patriarch. The text, among other things praised the men who fought in 1915, the ones who dyed as well as the ones who survived. This emphasis on the survivors implies that they were probably the ones who took care of the church after the war. The wording also praised the new Yugoslav state and three nations: Serbs Croats and Slovenians. In this sense, this plate was on the lines of official state politic in spite of the semi private connections between some of the Army officers and the clergymen.

The two memorials deserve attention. The modern Serbian soldier wears peasant boots and stands in a calm position. He is neither rushing into the battle nor does it have the posture of

defense which Rudy Kochar finds so common in the Balkan war memorials.² That posture of defense she explained as a wish to scare all possible attackers. But, this soldier remind on a lonely sentry who is on duty because he was ordered to do so. Thus, he is not a volunteer, but a peasant taken from his usual works. This interpretation can be supported by some remarks made by Milos Crnjanski. In few of his articles he stood up in the defense of peasant stating that they never asked anything from anybody, but they performed bravely in the war.

What was the real reason for peasant's silence is a different question, but it is possible to classify this memorial as a shy questioning of the war. Especially, because the soldier is placed, practically, within the church what, all together, evokes serious thoughts about the war and death.

The medieval memorial was not placed in front of the church just for the sake of symmetry. Belgrade's medieval days played a significant psychological role for the defenders as well as for subsequent cult of the dead. As Zivojin Peric explained, the Serbian elites saw Serbia as the defender of the East against German imperialism in the 20th century, similarly as the medieval Serbian nobles from the 14th century, saw themselves as the defenders of the West against the Turks. The severe experience of the war were thus placed in a sensible and coherent historical totality of Serbian history. The message of the clients was clear: "time was passing, but we always guarded this fortress." The other connection with medieval times can be found in the often comparison of the success of the 1918 with the success from the middle of the 14th century and the emperor Dusan. One of the participants of the 1928 war commemoration mentioned this clearly: "Today, our state is even bigger than Dusan's state!"⁷⁶

⁷⁶ "Komemoracije povodom Velikog rata (Commemorations and the Great War)," *Politika*, (12 November, 1931), p.13.

This monument presented commemoration along with the official line of Yugoslav politics. Nevertheless, by evoking Serbian medieval traditions, peasants and Orthodox church this memorial emphasized aspects of Serbian national feeling.

4.3.4. To the Defenders of Belgrade

All the mentioned monuments that were built were small or in natural sizes. Also, they did not attract greater public interest. It appeared that part of the public wanted to see huge, monumental sculpture which will become central commemorative place within Belgrade. The main instigator for the further construction activity was the “Society of the Reserved Army Officers and Warriors of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia”. The monument that they built presents the main object of analysis in this thesis as it encapsulated all the ambivalence that existed within Yugoslavia regarding the Great War memories.

This society which built the monument has not been researched, but after considering their role in the process of monument construction it is reasonable to argue that they had substantial influence and connections within the state. The way in which this society, for the first time appeared, in the records of the mentioned Ministry of Education and its Artistic Department, is very indicative. In the letter of 14th of June 1929, reserved colonel Radivojevic, asked the Ministry of Education, to maintain as an employee Russian sculptor Roman Verhovskaja, mentioning his merits for the ongoing process of building the monumental war memorial at Belgrade’s new cemetery.⁷⁷ On the 19th of June the Ministry asked from the Society for more details about this construction, as apparently they had no idea about this project⁷⁸ Thanks to the required explanations, it is possible to reconstruct several important details regarding this monument.

⁷⁷ Archive of Yugoslavia, fond 66, folder 627.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

From the several press articles (from the unknown journal) and number of construction documents, that were sent to the Ministry, it is possible to say that the idea for the monument came from the “Society of Reserved Officers and Warriors” and the society “Fidak”.⁷⁹

The reply of the society is very telling:

It is our honor to inform you that we did not inform Your Ministry about our project. We believe that our monument, as will be placed, on the cemetery, does not fall under your jurisdiction...⁸⁰

The letter addressed to the Ministry is a real gold mine for obtaining data about the construction of this monument. Namely, before the start of the project open competition was held and several sculptors participated. Still, it is interesting that in the board, which was responsible for this competition, were two main figures of the Society: president Radosavljevic and his deputy Arambasic. The third member was an engineer, Zdravko Vaskovic. Thus, there were no members of art circles to contest or interfere in the idea of the top people of the veteran society.

Like in the relationship with the Ministry, in the case of the open competition there was a tendency to monopolize the remembering and to immortalize personal impression of colonel Radosavljevic and his group.

The action of constructing took more time than the clients wished. Instead in November of 19129, the monument was finished in November of 1931. Probably the money problems postponed the works, which were supposed to be finished already in 1929. It is interesting that the King knew what was going on at the New Cemetery, on the contrary to Ministry of

⁷⁹ It is not completely clear, from the press and documents, what was the nature of this society, but it seems to be a branch of the Europe wide network of war veterans' organizations.

⁸⁰ Archive of Yugoslavia, fond 66, folder 627.

Education. Four months before the responsible Ministry. In the Archive of Yugoslavia there is a hand written letter with the following content:

“Dear friend Aco,

As there is no chance that I will soon be presented to the king, I am asking you that the king allows as putting the model of our monument “To Defenders of Belgrade” on public display. This is necessary in order start fund raising and to start the construction. Stay well,

Yours,

Milan.”

Milan is colonel Milan Radosavljevic, and Aca is one of the king’s adjutants. Thus, informal contacts played much more important role than laws or other strict acts. Besides, many of the members of this society had influential civil jobs or were pensioners, connected through personal relations with high circles.⁸¹ The habit of finishing things behind closed doors did not stop there. The canon which was placed on the monument was also obtained through private connections in Ministry of Defense. In any case the society itself was “under high protection of the king Alexander I” as proudly mentioned on their cot of arms. It is not strange that the king took the role to support several different veteran societies, he was after all with them during all six years of fighting. Bogan Radica vividly captured this relationship mentioning that the King after the war smoked strong “front” cigarettes “Gauloise” cigarettes, which all Serbian troops received from the French army on Thessalonica front.

Nevertheless, besides these emotional relations, there were also ones of more practical nature. The king was remembered as a person very involved in daily political dispositions. He

⁸¹ Colonel Radosaljević was a lawyer, *Politika*, (23 May 1921), p.12.

influenced the political life until his death. Thus, through his personal connection with the veterans as well as with the army, he was able to reinforce his already firm position. The following letter, made by signed by colonel Radosavljevic offers a clear and rare insight into the minds of the clients of this monument:

“To the defenders of Belgrade 1914-1918.

The monument above the war charnel house

In order to warn, during the subsequent centuries, all generations of the capital of Yugoslavia- of proud Belgrade, we placed elated their Holy Deed, embodied in granite and bronze.

The main idea of this monument is the giant monolith, symbolizing the power of the people. The monolith will be in the shape of two headed eagle, made of stone, symbolizing peace, justice and freedom.

Under the feet of this eagle there will be another eagle, black, made of bronze. That will be the fallen eagle lying on the broken flags. It will symbolize strong enemy. Near the eagle, torn fetters will be placed, symbolizing the fetters that our people had to wear for centuries.

White eagle above black one: victory of good over bad.

On the top of the rock, there will be firmly standing soldier victor, full of determination and straight, ready to sacrifice himself for the king and country. For the ideals, for which had gave their lives 5000 heroes, which are resting in the crypt. That soldier is ready to defend his sacredness – the state, which is symbolized in the highly raised flag. That flag sprouted from the rock (the power of the people) and the soldier holds it near his heart.

The cross on the top of the flag, the posture of the soldier in the shape of the cross and the cross on the monument are the symbols of our sufferings.

Eternal glory to the arms (rifle and the canon) and the hero-victor, in which honor this monument has been erected.

The monument was built on the initiative of the Society of Reserved Officers and Warriors, on the initiative and following the ideas of our president reserved colonel

Milan Dj. Radosavljevica.

Author of the monument: architect-sculptor Roman Verhovskoj.

Ps. Dedication of the monument will take place on the 11th of November 1931.”⁸²

⁸² Archive of Yugoslavia, fond 74, folder 242.



Picture no.4 *Monument for the Belgrade Defenders*

This document was sent to the Court and was followed by a special invitation. This detailed explanation of monuments symbolic is highly important for understanding not only the intention of the organizers, but also to see what was the world of symbols that Serbian interwar society had on its disposal. Firstly, the reason for the construction which is mentioned is “to warn” or remind future generations, meaning to inspire them to emulate on them. Regarding the

usage of symbols the motive of eagle is very interesting. The same animal was used twice, but with a completely different meaning. The colors also played their usual role, namely black and white. It is worth noticing that the eagle is still alive.

In the press article that was given to the Ministry of Education, that fact was explained in the following way: “Head and the claws of monstrous eagle- the enemy in war, now fallen, but still has the enough power to express how strong and dangerous he was”. Indeed, this comment can be true, but it is also possible that the eagle meant that the army could recover and attack again. The eagle probably symbolized territorial ambitions, that were present almost on each side of Yugoslavia’s border.



Picture no.5 *Fallen Eagle* made by Roman Verhovskaja

The fact that the eagle is dying on broken enemy flags is also indicative. Serbian soldiers, after the 1915 Belgrade battle, left the city and this battle was treated as honorable defeat. On the other hand, captured enemy flags symbolize victory. If this argument is connected with the official name of the monument it is possible to come to certain conclusions. “1914-1918” were the years that we put on the monument. Before the battle of 1915, there were some quite severe fighting around Belgrade during 1914, but no military events in 1916 or 1917 took place. The liberation of Belgrade in November of 1918 was also not preceded by any major military events. Thus, this implies that this monument was commemorating all Serbian war efforts during which many enemy flags were ultimately captured. The posture of the soldier is so proud that this gesture can be connected only with the total victory after which is hard to remain modest. Broken fetters also point to a much wider context than it is the local Belgrade operation. The monument obviously suggested that the fetters were broken by the Serbian soldier, meaning that he is the one who all others, which were liberated, owed gratitude.

The monolith that was depicted as the main part of the monument, symbolizing “the power of the people” is highly relevant for the main argument of this thesis. On the monolith there is the four “s” traditional Serbian coat of arms. This element was present on all military flags of the Royal Serbian Army and naturally the devotion to this symbol remained strong for all the survivors of the war. Thus, there suppose to be nothing especially interesting regarding this relief. The first suspicion can arose from the fact that although, in their memorandum sent to the court, organizers did not mention that there is such a symbol on the monument. They mention just the “white eagle”. Why they did not mention in few words the meaning of such a symbols when they explained, in detail, the symbolism of so many other motifs?

If these elements would be put in a broader context it would be possible to obtain logical answers. With the beginning of the dictatorship of the king Alexander I on the 1st of January of

1929, all symbols and societies related to the national affiliation were forbidden. In this sense, this monument that was by its several elements put well beyond the local Belgrade 1915 context could have been problematic from the perspective of official politics. Still, no documents were preserved about any dilemmas. On the contrary, through out the interwar years this place became, as I will show later, one of the main commemorative places in the official remembering discourse. The big white four “s” were placed in the central part of the monument and besides the fallen eagle and the canon, were the only parts of the monument that were actually visible for the audience.

The monolith as the source of all power and legitimacy deserves few comments. It is evident that this motive can be placed in the wider European context of the necessity to ask for opinion and consent of the people for major political decisions. Mass drafting meant also mass voting. In Serbian case, where mass voting existed prior to the war, this emphasis on sovereignty of the people could be understood as a statement of collective experience and collective consent for the readiness to fight the war. Still, it is possible to argue that this piece of stone did not praise the sovereignty of the people as much as it used to put the valiant soldier higher and to emphasize his victory even further. What kind of a hero is the size of an average Serbian peasant?

The monolith was the only abstract part of the mainly realistic memorial. The realism supposes to ease the understanding of the messages, thus the authors using abstraction showed that they did not really want from the audience to think about the right of the people. The overconfident soldier on the top of the monument also does not imply towards the second and third draftees that were fighting the attackers. If we compare the uniforms or weapons that were at the disposal of the defenders it is easy to see that they had little in common with the soldier just came from the uniform catalogue. Again, soldier-victor is the symbol of some other battles that

had much greater military and political importance. Belgrade defense was after all just a moral victory, as some other monuments that will be discussed later point out.

The state was represented on this monument as a sacred thing. So, it is not the Serbian nation, but the Yugoslav state. The usual formulation would be other way around, in the old kingdom of Serbia. As Yugoslav nation was highly questionable element, as Zivojin Peric pointed out, the organizers decided to chose the state as their main object of worship. In this way, it obvious that there was official discourse on the surface and the reality which was much more complex.

The desire to position the soldier in the form of the cross shows, like in the case of most of the Serbian war memorials, strong attachment to Orthodox form of Christianity. As the rifle was not long enough for touching the ground peace of bronze was placed to support the rifle. Emphasize on the suffering which organizers said that wanted to stress, was not really achieved by so many crosses. It is more likely that they wanted simply to underline Orthodoxy. The only moment that actually spoke about the real pain was the bones of the fallen, which most directly remained on the ones that are not present.

The day of the ceremony arrived. With the approaching of the 11th of November, the correspondence between the Court and the Society intensified. Society with the help of Belgrade's Assembly hurried to finish the monument before the Armistice Day, which was accepted in kingdom of Yugoslavia as one of the main celebrations regarding the end of war. It is evident that the king as well as organizers took things seriously. The program of the revelation reveals that each detail was planed. It is interesting that the main moment presented the religious ceremony of dedication of the charnel house. The charnel house presented part of the monument and it gave him mystical temple atmosphere. The bones of 5,000 soldiers were collected and placed bellow the monument. In this sense it was logical to put this monument in the cemetery

and on the other part of the city. Charnel houses were usual way of commemoration in Serbia. They were placed all over Serbia and they were the usual solution for replacing the shallow graves that could be found all over Belgrade. Why this solution prevailed and not any other is difficult to say, but it is possible that Christian fate played the important role. The bones of the soldiers, who were always called the martyrs, were regarded as similar to saint's relics. Thus, incorporating the bones inside the monument, powerful combination was created.

Several days before the ceremony invitations were sent to the king, foreign representative, and various societies. The program of the revelation was diligently prepared. Each speech was preciously delineated like 5 or 7 minutes. Also, the songs that were to be performed, in between the speeches, were specially chosen. There was also a special scenario in case of a windy weather. On the other side, the court took also great care. Two members of the guard were chosen to put the king's wreath, and they were ordered to be at the location sharply one o'clock before the ceremony.⁸³

4.3.5. The Ceremony

On the 11th of November, the plateau in front of the monument was full of people.⁸⁴ The king and the queen were greeted with cheering during there arrival.⁸⁵ The entire government of General Petar Zivkovic was present. These, the most important men, were followed by local officials. All Belgrade's senior officers were gathered as well. Among foreign representatives, countries of Small Antante occupied the first rows. French military representatives were the first ones to be mentioned by the official daily "Politika". Besides the French there were Czechoslovak, Rumanian, Greek and Italian military delegates. All kinds of veteran, patriotic and

⁸³ Archive of Yugoslavia, fond 64, folder 545.

⁸⁴ Komemoracija pored kostrunice (The commemoration near the charnel house)," *Politika*, (12 Novembar 1931), p. 4.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

cultural societies were present. Daily “Politika” especially stressed the presence of the young people.⁸⁶

As program foresaw, the speeches followed the religious ceremony. The representative of the society that built the monument mentioned the course of the battle and emphasized the fact that in Belgrade in 1915 the small resisted the big ones. Also, during the speech, Belgrade was compared with Italian Piedmonts. The more revealing talk came from the Belgrade’s mayor Nesic:

Our people really suffered during the war thus, it is understandable that idealism, after the war, started to fade away. People started to forget the old, glorious days, days of suffering and to guide themselves with some subjective and material interests. Still, the concerns of this country, the interests of totality demand than in spite our personal interests, to revive national idealism. We must foster love towards our people’s king Alexander I Karadjordjevic and love towards our fatherland, its borders, its fields and hills, rivers and mountains. We must love every footstep of our Yugoslav land!⁸⁷

Then the bones of the soldiers were placed in the ossuary. Many among the present cried during this part of the ceremony.⁸⁸ It is worth mentioning that the process of extensive exhumations was preceded by the pressure of the families of the dead.⁸⁹ This part of the ceremony was the only segment with the antiwar character.

⁸⁶ “Spomenik braniocima Beograda (The monument to the Belgrade defenders)” *Politika*, (12th November 1931, p.11.)

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Archive of Yugoslavia, fond 66, folder 627.



Picture no.6 The King and the Queen on the ceremony, 11th November 1931, Politika, (12 November 1931), p.12.

This monument became the main stage for all future interwar ceremonies. The 11th of November was commemorated as one of the most important dates related to the Great War. As some more local celebrations were sacrificed for this day it is evident that Yugoslav political elites wanted to use commemorations to emphasize one more time modernization as well as the affiliation to the winning side of the war.

The pattern of the ceremonies was always similar. The only thing that reflected the spirit of the time and change could be seen in the solemn speeches. International political situation required from the dead to be mobilized again, for the present interest of the state. Among the very interesting speeches I separate the speech of French deputy count the Damier, once a fighter around Verdun. The speech was held on the French military cemetery in 1930:

Friendship between Yugoslavia and France, for us is one kind of religious dogma! We put our sword in the sheaths, we wish peace...but, if they force us, one more time to show our sword, we will pull it out for the same ideal that for which these soldiers fell!⁹⁰

Thus, every opportunity was used to stress Yugoslav-French friendship. Interestingly enough, French presents during the Belgrade battle was the only one that was stressed during the commemorations. Foreign political orientation dictated the way of memorizing the past. This was even more obvious in the mid 1930s, when the political orientation of Yugoslavia changed, shifting towards Germany. Thus, Germany was introduced into commemorations by organizing small gathering in the Topcider Wood at the German military cemetery that was built in 1915. The first information about these celebrations can be found in the daily “Politika” only from 1937.⁹¹

The memorial “To the Belgrade Defenders” showed the complexity connected with the remembrance of the war. On one side there were private societies that the King had to recognize and support. Those veterans felt that their merits were in jeopardy. On the other corner was the official ideological line. How come it happened that this peculiar monument became the official commemorative place? That can be explained with the fact that the vision of Yugoslav state that veterans ultimately accepted, coincided with the unitary conception represented by Yugoslav government. Nevertheless, the paradox of the Yugoslav state structure clearly manifested itself in the case of this monument. The new state had to commemorate huge number of Serbian dead soldiers which were fighting for the state that did not exist anymore. In this way, by emphasizing Serbian history, new state undermined its own cohesion.

⁹⁰ “Na francuskom vojnom groblju (On the French military cemetery)” *Politika*, (12 November 1930), p.12.

⁹¹ “Komemoracije (Commemorations),” *Politika*, (13 November 1937) p. 11.

4.3.6. Memorial Board in the Kalemegdan Underpass

In 1934, a new veteran society working on the preservation of the memories on the 1915 event: “The Society of Belgrade Defenders”. Their cote of arms also mentioned “the high protection of the king” that they enjoyed. It appears that the previously powerful society of reserved officers lost its energy while trying to build their monument. There are no records who were these men and why did they step in the position which was previously reserved for colonel Radoslavljevic and his followers. The memorial stated:

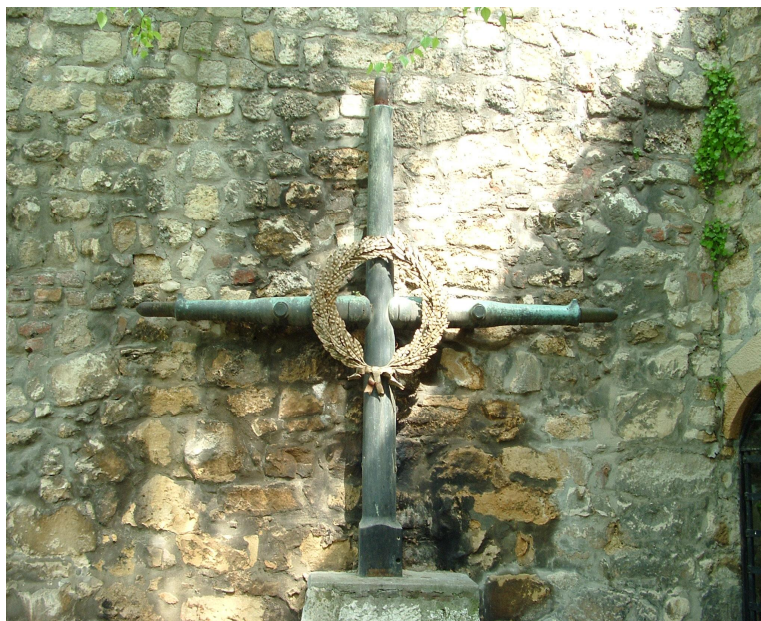
At this place, during the construction of this underpass, sixty skeletons were excavated, of the Belgrade’s defenders, dyed in September 1915. “The Society of Belgrade’s Defenders” transferred these bones, in a solemn way, to the charnel house of the Belgrade Defenders at the New Cemetery on the 29th of April 1934. Let this memorial be a sign of eternal gratitude to the fallen heroes, who dyed for freedom and unification. Let these heroes serve, to future generations, as an inspiration for patriotism and self-sacrifice.

This memorial proves that there were several organizations competing for establishing the sole right for guarding the memories of the Fallen. As the number of veterans decreased every year the societies wanted to create places of memory as more and more people forgot about their exploits. It is important to stress that the King Alexander I had good relations with all of these societies.

4.3.7. Charnel House and Cross Memorial near the St. Petka Church

As an addition to already “sacred” part of Belgrade’s fortress, in 1935 two new memorials were placed near the two mentioned churches. The placing of the new object within the perimeter

of already existing memorials proves the argument that the actual place where battle took place had a special importance for the contemporaries. “Conflict locations were not simply left as decaying battlefields, but were actively becoming something else- a complex palimpsest of overlapping multivocal landscapes.”⁹² I will also argue that church officials wanted to achieve the monopoly regarding the 1915 battle memories.



Picture no.7 *Monument in front of the ossuary.*

During the subsequent works on restoration of Church “Ruzica”, in 1935 twenty skeletons, in Serbian uniforms, were found. The fact that these skeletons were not found during last large scale excavations done by the Society of Reserved Officers in the late 1920s, testifies about the chaos during the battle, when bodies were buried in haste.

Consequently, it was decided that they should be put in the new charnel house which will be built in one of the medieval towers, close to the St. Petka church. It would be interesting to see why the dead were not put in the already existing charnel house at the New Cemetery. It might be

⁹² Nicholas Saunders, *Materials of Conflict: Material Culture, Memory and the First World War*, (London: Routledge 2004).

possible that it was the case of “clashes” for the memory preservation. As one recent article mentioned, the Orthodox Church is the only institution that takes care about this ossuary.⁹³

Besides the charnel house, special memorial was placed in front of the entrance to the ossuary. It was a cross, made of two cannon barrels that were used in the battle. The materials that were actually used in the battle played important role in evoking the memories. It appears that they possessed certain level of sacredness, for the veterans. Like in the case of the main memorial on the New Cemetery, canon was again perceived as the arms of victory. The part evoked the whole.⁹⁴

This initiative was conducted by society of “Belgrade Defenders”. The plate put besides the entrance to the charnel house informed that “these soldiers dyed for their fate, king and country” It is interesting that religious ceremonies that took place during the funeral of found human remains, were conducted in all three main religious traditions. Catholic and Orthodox rituals were followed by Muslim ritual. This strict care about the religious ceremonies testifies about one more dimension of Yugoslav complexities. This feature, also, points to some other unknown segments of the battle from 1915. Namely, it is possible that these skeletons presented the dead soldiers who were sent to Serbia by Serbia’s ally Esad Pasha Toptani.

4.3.8. Monument to Major Gavrilovic

This is the last memorial dedicated to the battle from 1915. It is interesting that it was built 70 years after the battle. Although, this monument exceeds the chronological boundaries that were chosen in this work, it is important to show the ending process of commemorating 1915 battle. Such a late construction of this monument support the claim that battle of 1915 left strong

⁹³ “Izvor Svete Petke,” *Večernje Novosti* (Beograd), (2.maj 2007), p.9.

⁹⁴ Robert Hughes, *The Shock of the New: Art and the century of change*, (London: Themes and Hudson, 1993), p.23.

mark in Serbian collective memory. This memorial also indicates to ambivalent attitude of the Serbian Communist Party towards the Serbian monarchical traditions.

The monument was built by “The Board for Cherishing and Developing Revolutionary Traditions”. Thus, one society with the mission for preserving communist legacy was promoting a military event that was closely connected with the monarchical and Orthodox traditions. It is even of greater importance to mention that major Gavrilovic was well known opponent of the communists and that he left Yugoslavia after the arrival of the communist authorities.

The very design of the memorial, done by Nikola Milanovic, was created in the shape of traditional Serbian peasant army cap “šajkača”. The monument was built in 1989 although the general plan was to finish it in 1985 in order to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the battle. Still, the monument was introduced in 1989. It is not known what caused the delay.

The plate near the memorial contextualized the battle. This detail is important. It implies that people at the end of the 20th century did not have sufficient knowledge about the event from 1915. Among other things the plate mentions the number of 10 000 dead enemy soldiers. This is a striking example how easy is to manipulate with the memory 70 after the event. From precise, German interwar data, of 1182 dead German and Austro-Hungarian soldiers, the number rose to round amount of 10 000 soldiers. The figures of the dead enemies had to be multiplied in time when suppressed national proud started to surpass all rational boundaries.



Picture no.8 *Monument commemorating the charge of major Gavrilovic.*

Chapter Five

5.1. Christianity and the Cult of the Fallen Soldier

As showed in the previous chapter, the Orthodox Church participated in the creation of the Cult of the Fallen Soldier. It was involved in the process of mourning soldiers' death as well as in instigating the moral for continuing the fight. The influence of religion can be found also in many segments of commemorative ceremonies, which in many cases evolved from the Christian traditions.⁹⁵ In this chapter I will explore the position of the Christian church, by discussing some general problems as well the concrete commemorations of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

5.1.1. *Pro Patria Mori and the Christian Church*

In his programmatic article "Pro Patria Mori in Medieval Political Thought", Ernest H. Kantorowicz dealt with the medieval origins of this idea depicted in Horace's and Thucydides works. Using a 1915 discussion between Cardinal Mercier and Cardinal Billot, Kantorowicz analyzed the origins of the *Pro Patria Mori* concept and especially the role of the Christian church. Surely, this debate was not peculiar to Serbia, but took place in each of the belligerent nations.

Although "the Nation" was the one who conceptualized and sacrilized the idea of dying for the fatherland, the Church was among the main contributors to the Myth of the War Experience. What was the opinion of the Church regarding the destiny of the Fallen for their

⁹⁵ Michael Mitterauer, *Zašto slavimo istoriju* (Why do we celebrate history?), (Beograd: UDI, 2001), p. 45.

country? This problem, like so many other related to the Cult of the Fallen had deep roots. Was it worth dying for that fatherland as the martyrs dies for the patria in heaven? In answering this question, Cardinal Mercier stated:

But if you ask me what I think of the eternal salvation of a brave man, who consciously gives his life to defend the honor of his country and to avenge violated Justice, I do not hesitate to replay that there is no doubt whatever that Christ crowns military valor, and that death Christianly accepted assures to the soldier the salvation of his soul...The soldier who dies to save his brothers, to protect the hearts and the altars of his country, fulfills the highest form of love...⁹⁶

To this, Cardinal Billot replayed:

“To say that the mere fact of dying consciously for the just cause of the Fatherland ‘suffices to assures salvation’ means to substitute the Fatherland for God...to forget what is God, what is sin, what is divine forgiveness.”⁹⁷

This debate mirrors even deeper issues about the relation of the Christian church towards war, in general. That debate was stimulated, in its modern form, by the experience of the Great War, but was reiterated by other military events, as well.⁹⁸ Which patria has a primate, the spiritual one or Jerusalem in Heaven? In reality, the Church was inevitable part of the cult of the

⁹⁶ Ernest H. Kantorowicz, “Pro Patria Mori in Medieval Political Thought,” *American Historical Review* 56, No.3 (1951): 472.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 473.

⁹⁸ Similar debate is presently ongoing in Serbia, about the practice of the parts of the Serbian Orthodox Church to give blessings to the volunteers going for Bosnia during 1990s.

Fallen, its symbols and teachings were regularly used during commemorations. Often that practice was not restricted to the Christian vision of the fate of the dead, but it was more a pragmatic and secular usage of Christianity in the name of the country's more current interest.

For all the supporters of cardinal Billot it is unthinkable to equalize saints that had given their lives for the celestial city with the soldiers dying for the sake of the nation. Yet, by exploring the history of church's relationship towards the *pro patria mori* concept, Kantorowicz offers very interesting solution. In his view, from the antiquity, when the concept *pro patria mori* was introduced, its meaning went through several stages, from the obligation and desired behavior presented by Pericles's funeral speech, to the early medieval times when this idea was forgotten, under the global influence of Christianity: "At any event, *patria* had the emotional content which had characterized it in antiquity, while on the other hand *patria* was yet far from coinciding with a national territory or a territorial state as in modern times."⁹⁹

By the late 13th century there was another transformation. The classical emotional values of *patria* were recovered *as they descended from heaven to earth*.¹⁰⁰ Then Kantorowicz explained the importance of the crusade wars for the discussion of the two cardinals. Apparently, during the 1095 Council of Clermon, the first steps were taken to ensure that all crusaders will receive indulgences. Consequently, gradually dead crusaders were approaching old martyrs. When this process merged with the rediscovery of antique moral values the concept of *patria* was formed as represented by the cardinal Mercier. In this way Kantorowicz concludes, and his remarks will be fundamental for this thesis as well, that both cardinals were right. One was supported by the councils decisions and the historical practice of Christianity and other by elementary foundations of the Christian theology.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*

5.1.2. *The Memorial Character of Christianity*

In his book “Why Do We Celebrate History”, Michael Mitterauer dealt with various roots of present celebrations of history. He dedicated special amount of attention to memorial character of Christianity. He argued that, since its beginnings, the church was strongly connected with memory of religious events. He gave several examples: core parts of every secular commemoration, the speech, came from solemn sermon, while the formal procession evolved from church procession.¹⁰¹ As process of secularization progressed the significance was transferred from the saint and religion to the nation and the state.¹⁰² It should be added that rituals can not be exclusively related to the Christian origins because antiquity played its part as well.¹⁰³

5.1.3. *Commemorative ceremonies and the Serbian Orthodox Church*

The first and the central part of every war commemoration that took place in Belgrade was the Orthodox religious ceremony. By performing the religious ritual of dedication priest would mark the inauguration of a monument or an ossuary. After these ceremonies priests used to give a small but emotional speech. These speeches are of great importance for analyzing the views of the top Church people regarding the Fallen.

On the 12th of November 1934, one month after the assassination of king Alexander I, Bishop Dr. Vikentije Vuic said: “We gathered here on this holy place, in the moment of great state and national pain...Our king is dead.”¹⁰⁴ “This holy place” was related to the ossuary in the New Cemetery. Thus, with the regard to the previous discussion, between the two cardinals, it

¹⁰¹ Michael Mitterauer, *Zašto slavimo istoriju*, 44.

¹⁰² *Ibid*

¹⁰³ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁴ “Na Novom Groblju (On the New Cemetery)” *Politika*, (12 November 1934), p. 5.

can be stated that Serbian priest did not find anything strange in Christian support in an arm conflict.

During the commemoration held on the New Cemetery in Belgrade, patriarch Aksentije compared the fallen from the Great War with Karadjordje's soldiers. Also, he said: "This place should be sacred for all our people and let the martyrs, who fell for their faith and their fatherland enjoy eternal glory"¹⁰⁵. This comparison with the Serbian fighters against the Turks presented typical non historical interpretation of the event. Two different epochs were put together in order to strengthen the national cohesion.

It is interesting to see how Catholic priests looked at dead soldiers. Father Bernard during commemoration on the French military cemetery in Belgrade said: "The victory was too expensive. There was too much black color...In history of mankind there is the law of self sacrifice. That law says that life comes out of dead, whom all life joys come after the price was paid in great suffering. In the world, after the war, there is a great wave of selfishness. That is not Christian and that is not what tells us these graves."¹⁰⁶ Thus, the dead were seen as a pledge for peace and that guaranty was seen as too expensive. Selfishness was again stressed as the problem of the day as contemporaries were not anymore wiling to maintain their confidence in the State.

In front of the same monument Bishop Arsenije argued in 1940: "The youth should be protected from various harmful philosophical directions, which contain many delusions, which can provoke the fall of the people and the state." As the great days of pacifism were gone he was probably targeting the communists. The Church in this case took the role of the protector and the pillar of the state.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

Kantorowicz's article shows how complicated the role of the Christian church can be, during and after wars. In mixture of various arguments and such a long tradition each side was able to find its own well founded arguments. In Serbia it appears that the supporters of an unrestricted Church support to the war efforts did not encounter any opposition. The Orthodox Church, during these ceremonies did not propagate unreserved devotion to peace, but contributed to the Myth of the War Experience by making sense of the war and giving it the sacred oriole.

Chapter Six

6.1. Conclusion

As a part of the conclusion I will now introduce several war monuments made in Hungary, during the inter-war years. The analysis of the war memorials in Hungary will mainly be visual without wider contextualization. Thus, the “Hungarian part” of the thesis will serve to emphasize some characteristics of the monuments made in Belgrade. Namely, by placing Yugoslav war memorials in the wider perspective it is possible to avoid traps of ethnocentrism as well as to discover new questions that would, in other cases remained, unasked. Just by putting Serbian war memorials in a wider framework it will be possible to see were there any peculiarities and if yes, what were the reasons for their existence. Ultimately, the comparative method is the natural solution for approaching the war monuments because they present world wide phenomena that does not recognize national limitations.

6.1.1. Hungarian War Monuments

Contrary to the French, German or Serbian example, in Hungary war monuments were massively built already in 1916.¹⁰⁷ Random examples could be seen already in 1915, but the systematic spreading of war memorials started after the creation of the “National Committee for Commemorating the Memory of the Heroes”¹⁰⁸ The term *heroes* presented common expression in Hungarian Parliament during the Great War. Huge debates took place, during these years, about the general broadening of the political rights. Parliamentary opposition asked that besides the war

¹⁰⁷ Andrew C. Janos, *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary 1825-1945*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p.209.

¹⁰⁸ Kovacs Akos, *Monumentumok az első háborúból*, (Budapest: Fenyes Adolf Terem, 1985), p.94 (translated for this study by Szofia Lorand).

memorials soldiers obtain voting rights as well as agrarian reform. Still, the only certain “gains” were the war memorials.¹⁰⁹

The work of the mentioned commission was briefly interrupted during the rule of Bella Kun, but with Miklos Horthy’s entry to Budapest, the commission continued its work. Until 1945 Hungary was full of various types of war memorials. There were three main waves: first from 1916 until 1924. The new law regarding the memorials issued in 1924 gave new strength to the construction. During the second stage, until 1929, new 620 monuments were built. The third cycle, from 1933 to 1945, presented the pick of state propaganda regarding the revision of Hungary’s frontiers. In those years 117 new monuments were constructed.¹¹⁰

6.1.2. To the Heroes of the Law Faculty

This monument is placed on the University Square, in front of the Law University in Budapest. It was built in 1930 by Hungarian artist Gyorgy Zala, famous because of his participation in the construction of the Millennium Monument in Budapest. The monument presents one of the typical themes regarding the Hungarian war memorials. The soldier is falling, hit by the bullet. Usually the soldier was falling into arms of the Virgin Mary, creating the Pieta composition. Still, this monument presents slight variation of this pattern. It is probably the *Patrona Hungaria*, women related to the arrival of the Hungarians in the Central Europe. The dying soldier was placed near its fellow students from the Hungarian past emphasizing the continuity of the Hungarian history.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Andrew C. Janos, *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary...*, p.211

¹¹⁰ Kovacs Akos, *Monumentumok az első háborúban*, 99.

¹¹¹ Kovacs Akos, *Monumentumok az első háborúban*, (Budapest: Fenyves Adolf Terem, 1985), p.55.



Picture no.9 *Monument dedicated to the killed students of the Law faculty.*



Picture no. 10 *Detail from the monument.*

6.1.3. *Life and Blood*

One of the peculiarities of the Hungarian war monuments was that they were built honoring the exact military units. The monument built in Baross utca in 1933 by Istvan Szengyorgyi presents fine example of this practice. This monument significantly epitomized the Myth of the War Experience. The soldier represents the storm trooper that composed the elite part of the Austro-Hungarian army. The posture of the soldier implied frenetic action, movement was very important part of the Myth of the War Experience.

The soldiers of the Great War were just partially controlling their movement during the war. Most of them were dug into the trenches hiding from the grenades and snipers. There was nothing glorious in this way of fighting. Still, as the war had to be popularized and made bearable the designer of this monument choose some other image from the Great War. That picture, the storm trooper rushing towards the enemy, existed in the reality of the war, but it presented just the small exception from the generally static warfare.

Storm troopers were introduced in the Austro-Hungarian army during the autumn of 1916 after their appearance in the German army. These soldiers presented hand picked men that should attack enemy positions before the main mass attacks. The storm troopers suppose to eliminate the sentries and remove the main obstacles. Their equipment was light and reduced to minimum in order not to slow them down. Grenades and bayonets, as shown on the monument, presented there primary weapon. The steel helmet that can be so often seen on the Hungarian monuments presented one of the distinctions of these elite troupes. The first supplies of helmets, as soon as they were introduced in the Austro—Hungarian army in autumn of 1916, were given only to the storm troupers.¹¹²

¹¹² Christian Ortner, *Storm Troopers*, (Vienna: Verlag Militaria, 2005), p.34.

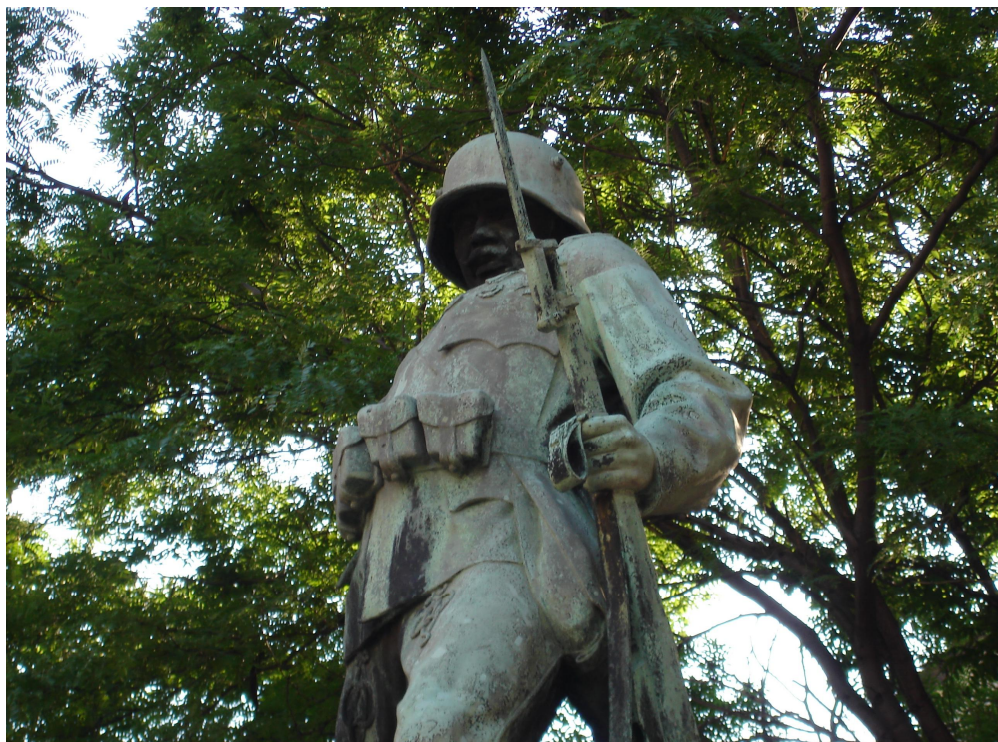


Picture no.11 *Monument in Baross street.*

It is interesting that the efficiency of these units was far more exaggerated than it was in the reality. As Luc Capdavila and Daniele Voldman showed just 1% of the wounds inflicted on the Western front were done by the bayonets and more than 87% by the artillery fire.¹¹³ The age of bladed weapons and hand to hand combat was history in the 1914. Still, the mythology of the warrior implied personal moment in the killing, close combat that meant heroic individualism and not desperate hiding in the pits.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Luc Capdavila, Daniele Voldman, *War Dead: European Societies and War Causalities*, (Edinburg: Edinburg University press, 2006), p.5.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*



Picture no.12. *Detail from the monument*

The storm troopers were good front units, still they were maybe even better propaganda tool. They shocked and scared with their speed and sudden appearance. Fifteen years after the end of the war, storm trooper on the Budapest monument had the similar purpose.

The inscription on the monuments is dedicated to the exact unit and to the famous moments from Hungarian military history. The chronology stated with 1741 when Hungarian nobles gave solemn oath Life and Blood to the empress Maria Terezia. One of the battles mentioned is *Sabac 1914*. Sabac is the town, in then northern Serbia, on the Sava River and presents one of the places where the bloodiest part of the Cer battle, from the 1914, took place. The list of the battles was concluded with just two battles from 1916 and 1917. In this way, it was possible that the equipment of the presented storm trooper was used only in those two clashes, as hamlets and storm troupers did not exist before 1916. Naturally, in 1933 the impression was

created that all Austro-Hungarian soldiers had the most advanced weapons as well as unbreakable wish to fight.

6.1.4. Pro Patria Mori

The last monument from the Hungarian context, that I will discuss in this thesis is the one done by Bela Horvath in front of the Elte University. It was built in 1936 and it clearly shows the German influences that can be recognized in the usage of classical antique motives.¹¹⁵

The soldier from the Great War is again presented with the helmet. The other parts of his clothing remind on the Ancient Roman times. His sword as well as his gown coincide with the lyrics engraved on the monument. Those are the verses from Horace's Second Roman Ode: Pro Patria Mori. The youth present on the monument implies the educational role that monuments had. This monument was built by the Catholic Pazmany Peter University, thus the Catholic Church was also involved in the process of war legitimization.¹¹⁶



Picture no.13. *Detail from the monument*

¹¹⁵ George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p.44.

¹¹⁶ Kovacs Akos, *Monumentumok az első háborúbol*, p 102.

The similarities between the Yugoslav and Hungarian war memorials are great. The state control was present in both countries. Also, the church played important role by giving the legitimacy to the conflict. The use of medieval mythology and history was also present in both countries. Thus, both states used monuments as a way of propagating state ideology and the continuation of the foreign policies neglecting the potentials that monuments offered as the consolation for the families of the fallen.

Regarding the Cult of the Fallen Soldier in Yugoslavia it can be said that the war memorials built in honor of Belgrade's Battle from the 1915 can be used as evidence for several processes that took place in Yugoslavia. By analyzing these eight monuments it is possible to observe several characteristics of the inter-war Serbian society that are not that visible from the perspective of some other groups of sources.

Some of the memorials provided the insight into the internal political problems, mainly regarding the Serbo-Croatian contradictions. The monuments constructed during the interwar years in Belgrade, especially the one built on the New Cemetery, reflected the lead back made by the part of the Serbian elites, regarding the Yugoslav idea. The various ex-servicemen, with the support among the Royal Yugoslav Army, felt that Serbian national identity was under the attack by pacifists, communists and through constant disputes with the Croat politicians. Consequently, parts of the Serbian elite decided, during the 1930s to reestablish the importance of the war traditions as a good denominator of the Serbian national unity. Still, they did stay, formally, on the course of the official Yugoslav politics of the integral Yugoslav identity. This fact lead to the second conclusion of this work: the Yugoslav government and the king Alexander I accepted these monuments as official commemorative places, in spite they were the obvious manifestations of the Serbian identity. How did this happen? Although, the veterans abandoned fate in the unlimited brotherhood within Yugoslavia, they could still accept that model of

Yugoslavia praised by the central government. That was the model of strong centralist state. On this ground the collaboration between the official, state commemorations and veteran memories could converge.

The research of the war memorials also points towards more general overview of the paradox that was in the foundations of Yugoslavia. One part of the new state participated in the war and achieved the victories on which the new state was created. Still, by honoring these victories, simultaneously underlining the Serbian identity, the new Yugoslav individuality, which was just in the making, was already undermined.

Almost all of the analyzed memorials in Serbia testified about the new aspect of postwar Serbian society. Classical approach to the Great War, in Serbian historiography, meant that historians should only be writing about the victories and other heroic aspects of the war. Nevertheless, several sources used in this work clearly showed that war victory had its immense price. The Serbian public was constantly criticizing population, within Serbia, on the basis of their disinterest in the traditions of the Great War. It is important that the reason for this oblivion was not founded in any ideology, but was rather characterized with the lack of any. It is possible that this disregard was a consequence of the immense weariness and dying that occurred during 1912-1918 in Serbia. This fatigue presents important psychological fact of the time. It shows that in spite of the victorious ending of the conflict, there was another part of the postwar reality that historiography usually neglected. It seems that the war did not leave many illusions for contemporaries. Six years (1912-1918) of heavy fighting were enough to destroy much of the war enthusiasm, which was so carefully built up in Serbian society, during the 19th century.

Like in the case of Hungarian monuments it should be mentioned that the ones made in Serbia were products of different elites and that as such did not represent the wishes or war memories of the masses. In Serbia the peasant already had the voting rights as well as the

agrarian reform before the 1914. Still, like in the case of Hungary it remains the question what were the failed promises that monuments just camouflaged.

One of the points that should be mentioned is the relation between the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Royal Yugoslav Army. The monuments showed that Orthodox Church preserved its special status even within the new state. Through semi private connections it maintained the influence on the public as well as on collective memory. The Church also served as one of the main pillars of the Monarchy. The role of the Monarchy during the commemorations was also interesting. The king Alexander I incorporated the commemorations as a part of the wider activity in order to gain support for the Monarchy and his dynasty.

The usual presentation of arms within the memorials showed certain characteristics of the Serbian society, that can be studied in a much wider chronological period that it is the case in this thesis. The special relationship existed between the veterans and the artillery pieces. As some other sources testified the canon was perceived, in Serbia, as the weapon of victory. Thus, this praise of artillery weapons can be put in the wider context of Serbian admiration towards the weapons as such, through out the history. It appears that the weapon was apprehended as a guarantee of independence and safety. When mentioning the phenomena that can be traced and analyzed within wide periodical frames, it should be mentioned that the question of self-sacrificing for the country deserves special attention of historians. As there were no monuments for the dead civilians nor for the war prisoners it is reasonable to argue that the most probable way, for being remembered in the Serbian collective memory, meant committing radical example of self-sacrificing. This characteristic leads to deep insights into the system of values that was cherished, not only within the Serbian Army, but in the other segments of the society.

All numbered monuments in Serbia testified that the Myth of the War Experience survived the war, in spite of the disillusionment that appeared after 1918. By majority of the

population the war was still seen as a just enterprise in which the most glorious moments of Serbia's history took place. In this way the idea of a noble, mythical endeavor prevailed, contributing to the maintenance of the Myth of the War Experience. Consequently, the Myth was not destroyed, but in some of its segments was even made stronger. Thus, it can be argued that the First World War decisively contributed to the Myth of the War Experience helping it survive until the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s, when parts of the First World War memory were significantly used in order to mobilize the nation for the new conflicts.

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