

**CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**  
**OF POST-1989 HUNGARIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY**  
**IN VOJVODINA**

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Submitted to

Central European University

Nationalism Studies Department

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of Masters of Arts

Budapest, Hungary

May 2010

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis aims to present the results of a research carried out on post-1989 minority Hungarian historiography in Vojvodina, Serbia. Special focus is dedicated to the historical narratives regarding the events of World War II and the early years of the communist regime, which were characterized by severe inter-ethnic conflicts in the region. The aim of the investigation was to examine whether post-socialist transformational narratives managed to contribute to reconciliation with the past, or rather served as tools to legitimize nationalism.

Applying the methodological guidelines of Critical Discourse Analysis, strategies of shifting blame and responsibility, of scapegoating, of mitigation and avoidance, and the rejection of active participation in shaping the history were found as the most important discursive strategies of Hungarian minority historiographers. By taking into account the stylistic as well as the rhetoric aspects of the narratives, it has been concluded, that although the examined historical works had great importance in breaking serious taboos of the socialist era, they still failed to provide open platform for reconciliation with the past, and became part of competing nationalist discourses in Serbia.

# CONTENTS

<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Theoretical Background.....</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1 Nation and national identity as a discursive construction .....	5
2.2 The Role of Memory and Forgetting in the Construction of National Identity – Contested Interpretations of the Past.....	8
<b>Chapter 3: Methodological Approach.....</b>	<b>17</b>
3.1 Research Description – Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis .....	17
<b>Chapter 4: The Case Study of Vojvodina .....</b>	<b>21</b>
4.1 Historical Context of Inter-ethnic Relations in Vojvodina – With Special Focus on the Events of World War II.....	21
4.2 Shifting Narratives of World War II in the Time of Transition in Serbia.....	26
4.3 Critical Discourse Analysis of post-1989 Hungarian Historiography in Vojvodina.....	34
4.3.1 The Contexts of Vojvodinian Hungarian Historiography .....	34
4.3.2 The Topics of the Discourse.....	36
4.3.3 The Main Strategies of the Discourse and their Linguistic Means of Realization..	38
4.3.4 Summary of Research Findings .....	46
<b>Chapter 5: Conclusions.....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>List of Primary Sources .....</b>	<b>58</b>

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Difficulties and conflicts within inter-ethnic relations in the Balkan region of South East Europe have been prevalent for a long time. Although the most severe historical periods – World War II and the Balkan wars of the 1990s – are past, the differing opinions and interpretations of such events prevail until today. Analyzing these discourses and their impact on current developments seems a highly relevant field of research. Reflexive approach towards the narratives of the past could also play a vital role in reconciliation and in improvement of inter-ethnic relations. As a part of these larger research aspirations in this study I intend to focus on the multi-ethnic region of Vojvodina in northern Serbia and by the tools of Critical Discourse Analysis I will examine the role of post-1989 Vojvodinian Hungarian historiography in developing new understandings of the past of Vojvodina. My aim here is not to judge whether these narratives correspond to any kind of historical truth or not, in fact I question the existence of one ‘true’ historical narrative. However, I will try to indentify the most important discursive strategies applied in these narratives, and their role in the process of justifying actual political agenda and of constructing (sub)national identity.

The theoretical bases of my final thesis will be strongly connected on the one hand to the constructivist theories of nation and nationalism; and on the other hand to the so called ‘linguistic turn’ in the humanities and social sciences, which emphasizes the performative character of the language, arguing that the construct of our social reality is a linguistic act. (Barker & Galasinski, 2001). All kinds of cultural identities including national identity are discursively produced, reproduced, transformed and destructed (De Cillia & Reisigl & Wodak, 1999). The different constructions of national past and the various interpretations of history are, therefore, embedded into the discursive construction of different national

identities. These narratives can legitimize the existence of the nation, serve as nationalizing projects, and in extreme cases they can also be used as instruments of mass mobilization.

Historical events can serve as raw material not only to totalitarian regimes as a means of propaganda, but generally modern history is written as the history of certain nations, playing a major role in nation-building process and maintenance of national identities of certain groups. In this respect Hayden White's definition of history as a literary artifact proves relevant. Not only has the selection of certain facts from history made the historical text subjective, but also its rhetorical aspects and aesthetic value (White, 1997).

Applying this theoretical background and mainly the methods of the Viennese approach of Critical Discourse Analysis, I will examine how Vojvodinian Hungarian historiography presented certain periods of the history, how did this create a public notion of collective identity, and what kind of political and social function did they play. Many periods of the past and their interpretations in different historical and political context are relevant to be analyzed. Because of the large amount of sources, however, it is advisable to restrict the research to concrete events as well as to a specific time period when the narratives were constructed. Therefore, I intend to focus on how the events of World War II – which is the period of severe inter-ethnic conflicts – are presented in the post-1989 Vojvodinian Hungarian historiography.

I will argue that these works had a great importance in bringing into public discourse those events of the past that were treated as taboos during the socialist era of Yugoslavia, and aimed to strengthen Vojvodinian Hungarians national identity in very specific historical and political circumstances of the 1990s. I will also argue, however, that although these works were meant to provide fields of open discussion about the past, especially in their aesthetical and

rhetorical aspects they failed to enable such an open debate. In fact, through my analysis I intend to show, that these texts constructed a historical narrative of the minority as the story of misery, passion and salvation. The most important discursive strategies involved in this construction were victimization, passivization, rejection of responsibility and active participation in shaping history, presenting the genocidal ethnic Other as the scapegoat in explaining all the sufferings of the ethnic Self. While there are several valuable critical reflections on the highly nationalistic Serbian historiography of the 1990s<sup>1</sup>, I lack similar scientific approaches regarding the Vojvodinian Hungarian historiography of the same period. My present investigation aims to fill this gap in the existing scientific literature.

The first chapter of my study will give a short overview of the most significant theoretical concepts regarding the discursive construction of nation and national identity, as well as the role of memory and forgetting in the construction of the national identity with special focus on the politics of historical representation, and the debate on the historical text as a literary artifact. The following chapter of my work will introduce the applied methodology of my research, with the most important research questions and hypotheses. The next chapter will turn to the case of Vojvodina, and give a short insight to the history of inter-ethnic relations, as well as an overview of Serbian historiography during the years of the dissolution of Yugoslavia regarding the history of World War II. The systematic analysis of the Vojvodinian

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<sup>1</sup> Among others see: Dragović-Soso, J. (2002) 'Saviours of the Nation'. Serbia's Intellectual opposition and the Revival of Nationalism. London: Hurst & Company; Macdonald, D. B. (2003) *Balkan holocaust; Serbian and Croatian victim-centered propaganda and the war in Yugoslavia*. Manchester: Manchester University Press; Marković, P.J. & Milićević, N. (2007) Serbian historiography in the time of transition. A struggle for legitimacy. *Istorija 20. veka*. 1/2007; Hayden, M. R. (1994) *Recounting the Dead. The Rediscovery and Redefinition of Wartime Massacres in Late- and Post-Communist Yugoslavia*. Watson, R.S. (Hg.) *Memory, History and Opposition under State Socialism* (Santa Fe, NM.); Djokić, D. (2002) The Second World War II: discourses of reconciliation in Serbia and Croatia in the late 1980s and 1990s. *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*. Vol.4. No. 2. pp. 127-140 etc.

Hungarian historiography of the 1990s will be the topic of the following section focusing on the representation of the events of World War II, aiming to identify the discursive strategies involved in these historical narratives and the most remarkable linguistic means of realization. The last chapter of my work will summarize the main findings of my analysis and pose relevant questions for further research.

## CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Nation and national identity as a discursive construction

I understand nation as a discursive construction based on two main theoretical concepts. First of these major approaches refer to the constructivist conception of the nation and national identity. In contrast with the primordialist and the perennialist understandings of the nation and nationalism which treat these phenomena as natural, universal, ubiquitous division of humanities, or things that always existed through the human history, the most influential modernist theories emphasize that these phenomena are not a naturally existing essential entities but constructs in the time of modernization, due to specific historical, cultural, structural changes (Gellner, 1983). Even the ethno-symbolic understanding of the nation and nationalism agrees with the constructive nature of these phenomena, and points out those pre-modern ethnic characteristics which could be the components of the selective symbolic construction of modern nations (Smith, 1999).

Another important contribution to the constructivist understandings of the nation and nationalism was Anderson's concept of the 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1983). The author defines the nation – along other communities that are bigger than to enable face-to-face communication – as imagined ones, underlining the fact that these communities do not exist as real entities in an objective reality but in the minds of people who imagine them. Following the ideas of Anderson (1983, p 15), de Cillia, Reisigl and Wodak understand the nation as:

Mental constructs, as imagined political communities. They are represented in the minds and the memories of the nationalized subjects as sovereign and limited political units and can be very influential guiding ideas with sometimes tremendously serious and destructive consequences. (De Cillia et al. 1999, p. 153)

The second main theoretical foundation of my thesis is the so-called ‘linguistic turn’ in human and social sciences, showing that beside other social phenomena, nation and national identity as a construction is a product of a linguistic act involving signifying social practices. As Barker and Galasinski (2001) convincingly argue language is the main means and medium by which we understand and construct our world and our identity. Language no longer mirrors an independent objective world, but is a performative tool that constitutes it. Some of the most important authors in this field are Austin who proposed his speech-act theory; and Derrida with his theory of linguistic deconstruction and non-stability of meanings (Austin, 1990; Barker – Galasinski, 2001).

Austin in his most influential work: *How to Do Things with Words* broke the previous concept on language where the main purposes of sentences were to describe, and state facts; and thus to be true or false based on the truth or falsity of those facts. He argues that most sentences are not truth-evaluable, but performative utterances. To utter these sentences does not mean just to ‘say’ something but to perform a certain kind of action. Therefore, the elements of communication are no longer morphemes, words, or sentences, but performative speech-acts. Austin distinguishes the illocutionary act, as an act performed *in* saying something that has an acting power, as contrasted with a locutionary act, i.e. the act *of* saying something and perlocutionary act, i.e. an act performed *by* saying something. He concludes that even constative utterances that are semantically truth-evaluable are illocutions; therefore, they also have a performative character (Austin, 1990).

The philosophy of Derrida also had a remarkable influence in reconsidering the role of language. Derrida’s main point was to undermine any reliance on fixed *a priori* transcendental meanings.

His key notions of intertextuality, undecidability, deconstruction, difference [...] stress the instability of meaning its deferral through the interplay of texts, writing and trace. Here, words have no universal meanings and do not refer to objects that possess essential qualities. [...] The production of meanings is a process of signification is continually deferred and supplemented in the play of more – than – one. (Barker & Galasinski, 2001, pp 9-10).

Derrida's practice of deconstruction, therefore, means to "take apart, to undo, to seek out and display the assumptions of the text". (Barker & Galasinski, 2001, p. 10). Derrida's though rather radical concept of the instability of meanings had great influence on social sciences and cultural studies, suggesting that the different categories of identities like 'gender' or 'ethnicity' etc. are not essential universal or eternal groups but rather plastic, malleable cultural constructs.

We can find the conjunction of the anti-essentialist theories of nation and nationalism and the various philosophical approaches on the constructivist nature of the language in the theory of Maurice Halbwachs's (1992) concept of 'collective memory' and in Stuart Hall's (1996) description of the nations as 'system of cultural representation', also presented by Wodak et al. (2009). While Halbwachs emphasizes the selective reconstruction of the national past as a discursive process, aiming to create the narrative of the nation; Hall points out the importance of culture in the process of constructing the nation and national identity. Hall defines the nation as a discursively constructed symbolic community and a system of cultural representation (Hall, 1994, in: De Cillia et al. 1999, p. 155).

A national culture is a discourse, a way to construct meanings which influence and organize both our actions and our perceptions of ourselves. National cultures construct identities by creating meanings of the 'nation', with which we can identify. (Hall 1994, in: Wodak et al. 1999, p. 155).

At this point I need to underline my critical awareness when using the terms individual versus collective identity and individual versus collective memory. I disagree with essentialist understandings of collective identity and collective memory, which treat these phenomena as reified existing entities and anticipate the existence of some kind of a 'collective subject'. In the contrary, I follow the concepts of constructivist approaches, which interpret memory work and identification only as a matter of individual mental processes, while understand 'collective' memory and 'collective' identity only in metaphoric terms (see Brubaker et al., 2000; Reisigl, 2006). Consequently, I find it analytically more precise to use a terminology which distinguishes the level of individual remembrance and identification from the level of a public discourse which aims to create a homogenized notion of collective identity in a metaphoric sense. The way how such a notion of homogenized collective identity is being constructed through the historical narratives of the past will be the object of the following chapter.

## **2.2 The Role of Memory and Forgetting in the Construction of National Identity – Contested Interpretations of the Past**

Interpretations of past events, various historical narratives are crucial elements of nation and national identity-building understood as system of cultural representations and signifying practices. In this process giving meaning to certain events of the past, while forgetting other ones play a basic role. Therefore, in the public discourse on national past and common identities collective memory and amnesia have fundamental importance. Imagined communities are communities of common codified historical memory focusing on the questions of: What is, that we should forget, and what is, that we must remember?

The importance of memory and forgetting in the construction of the nation became very soon and important elements of various theories on nation and nationalism. Already Ernest Renan points out in his well-known work titled: *What is a nation?* that during the nation-building process „Every French citizen must have forgotten the night of St. Bartholomew and the massacres in the thirteenth century in the South” (Renan, 1995. p. 175). Benedict Anderson also mentions the changes in different time-conceptions by referring to the case of the United States. As 1776 was depicted as birth of the American nation, all previous events were interpreted as preconditions and inherent elements of the way which lead to this foundation. To further demonstrate the role of historical narratives in the nation-building process, the author mentions the historical interpretations on the 1861-1865 war, which was consciously presented as a conflict between two parts of the nation and not as conflicts between different national entities (Anderson, 1983).

Maurice Halbwachs was one of the first influential authors who studied the collective memory and forgetting. As an important figure of the Durkheimian school he emphasized that even if the individual is the one who remembers, memory is always a collective product, which is being produced in communication, and interactions within the community. Halbwachs argued that if a community wants to maintain its cohesion it also has to compose a reminiscent community. Memory and forgetting are basically two aspects of the same process, when some events gain importance, while others become meaningless. Halbwachs already underlined that remembering things is a reconstructive process; it does not reflect ‘pure facts’ as such, but it is a process of reorganization of certain depicted events. Such a process structures not only the past experiences, but the present ones as well, with possible implications for the future (Halbwachs, 1992).

Paul Ricoeur deals with the same aspects of memory work, when distinguishing between the field of our experiences regarding the events of our past and the horizon of future expectations. In the dialectic of collective memory and history Ricoeur observes firstly how collective memory construct the meaning of the past, secondly, what kind of critical remarks do historians have about the past, and thirdly, how does this constructed history reflect and recolor the memories itself. When dealing with the past Ricoeur emphasizes the difference of active and passive remembrance, and active and passive forgetting, respectively. In the opinion of the author active remembrance i.e. memory work in a Freudian sense and active forgetting can be key solution in overcoming traumatic past events. In this respect active forgetting does not refer to the event itself, in fact it preserves the event in the collective memory, but to the sin connected to this event and its place in the dialectic of historical consciousness. This is what Ricoeur understands as reconciliation with the past (Ricoeur, 1999).

With respect to the topic of memory and forgetting, another author is worth to mention. Jan Assmann makes a distinction between two types of the memories. On the one hand, he defines *communicative memory* as the memory of the living members of the community based on their own experience, maintained in personal interactions. On the other hand, he talks about *cultural memory* which is connected to different objects and rituals as means of representation of the community. In this latter case there are no members of the community with first-hand experience about the certain historical time, therefore, the source of such narratives is absolute history. The events of the past are conveyed in ceremonial fixed ways, through different rituals, and there are acclaimed members of the societies, who have the authority to modify and to channel these memories (Assmann, 1999). In both cases, however, the question of objectivity arises. While communicative memory is a personal interpretation of certain

historical events imbedded in the subjective life-course, cultural memory can be understood as a selection of different momentums of the past to create a coherent narrative of the nation. Assmann does not necessarily question how real these events were which has become the part of the national narrative, in fact he underlines how such a selective process could contribute to the creation of the myth of the nation, which endowed the remembrance of these events with normative, and performative character (Assmann, 1999).

Further influential theorist on nation and nationalism Eric Hobsbawm emphasizes the role of invented traditions in the construction of the new nations of modernity. The author refers to the facts that there were traditions even before modernization, but these were of smaller, local communities. The new traditions, however, were created for the great masses of people with nation-building purposes as a new form of integration. While in pre-modern era the main references of identification were ranks, titles, or kinship ties, from the modern times nations become the elemental categories of identification. The national identity is in a way replacing the faith and religion in the secularized world by creating its saint places, saint symbols and ritual, saint „popes” and followers. The main sources of this symbolism and myth creation about the nation are often the highly regulated reinterpretations of the historical past. As an example the author also analyzes how the collective image about the French Revolution and the Third Republic was controlled; through which mechanisms of forgetting and remembering the storming of the Bastille became one of the biggest symbols of French history, whereas other controversial details of the revolutions were in this context rather marginalized (Hobsbawm, 1992).

Based on the above elaborated theories it can be concluded, that various interpretations and reconstructions of historical events play a crucial role in nation-building process as well as public discourses on collective national identities. It has also already been argued, that this

process is a linguistic one, imbedded in value-laded politicized discourses on understanding our social reality. Analogously to the personal narrative of the individual life course there is an attempt to create a coherent narrative of the nation as well. At this point it becomes crucial question: who has the privilege to narrate the story of the nation, which historical events can be the part of this story in what kind of interpretation. Most illustrative examples to demonstrate the non-positivist nature of historiography are the cases of different dictatorships, as it is one of the main characteristics of these regimes to recreate, reconstruct the past the way it fits to their political ideological frameworks.

More radical critics on narrative historiography however, do not restrict their interest only on case of dictatorships. Historical events can serve as raw material not only in totalitarian regimes as a means of propaganda, but generally modern history is written as the history of certain nations. Generally, a positivist scientific approach towards un-reflexive historiography becomes questionable. One of the most critical theories is presented by Hayden White. The author defined historical narrative as a literary artifact, and therefore it cannot be analyzed only on the level of facts, but also the rhetorical and aesthetic elements are relevant. White goes even further and absolutely questions the factual characteristics of the historical events; by elaborating on the selective procedure by which some events are depicted as factual elements of the history, while others are marginalized. The author argues that there is no remarkable difference between the literary fiction and historiography, historical discourse creates the object of history and not the other way around. Therefore, he ignores the relevance of any kind of historical truth, and concentrates on the selection of discursive strategies, which structure the historical field (White, 1978, 1987).

White attacked the concept of positivist historiography and the position of traditional historians, who presupposed an objectively existing (his)story 'out there' which is waiting to

be told; an objective narrative that organizes itself independently from the possible biases of the historian. The author opposed the concept of *knowledge* with *interpretation*; *epistemology* with the fictionality of *hermeneutics*. Historical narratives are in this opposition clearly interpretations, “which impose a discursive form on the events that [the narrative’s] own chronicle comprises by means that are poetic in nature” (White, 1987, p. 42). In this sense the role of historical narratives is not to present but to constitute. This imposition of a discursive form plays the function to endow historical events with meaning. According to the author, however, the choice between these narrative explanations i.e. discursive forms is not connected to factual argumentations, and therefore, it cannot be a result of rational choice. The author emphasizes the purely linguistic operation of narratives, regulated by aesthetical and moral criteria. Consequently, these narrative explanations can rather be understood as “the *topoi* of literary plots, rather than the causal laws of science” (White, 1987, p. 44).

Another influential author associated with the concept of metaphoric narrativism, understanding historical narratives as an extended metaphor is Frank A. Ankersmit. Among his fundamental theses, Ankersmit makes a clear distinction between the historical research and historiography, and defines historical narratives as interpretations of the past. Similarly to White’s arguments Ankersmit also claims that these interpretations project a structure on the past, instead of assuming an already existing structure of explanations. As historical narratives apply to the past, but are not equal with it, nor do they refer to it, there is not fixed relationship between them and the actual events of the past. He understands narrativism as a construction, which refers to the narrative interpretation of the past, and not to the past itself, in this sense such an interpretation is not being understood as knowledge, but as an arrangement of knowledge. In such narratives the relationship between language and social reality is constantly destabilized in character. Ankersmit also concludes, that modern

historiography is pervaded by ethnical dimensions and is always based on political attitudes (Ankersmit, 2000, pp. 111-120).

Jörn Rüsen, however, appears to be less radical in this question of factuality regarding historical narratives, by understanding them as fundamental operational way of historic consciousness. In his essay about the rhetoric of the history the author argues, that the narrative is not necessarily the total opposite of scientific objectivity. Writing history is unavoidably a discursive process, and as such it unavoidably contains aesthetical and rhetorical aspects as well. This is the only way to give meaning to the passing time, which serves not only as orientation points to our acts, but also has an identity-creating function. The aim of these historical investigations is also to create a community which seemingly has continuity with the past. Historians' goal is to construct a linguistic medium that tries to bridge the chasm between the historical explanation of the nation and the present time. These goals are achieved by homogenizing time and constructing a linear time-conception that makes it possible to create continuity between the modern nation and those communities in the past who are considered to be earlier co-members of the nation (Rüsen, 1999).

While most of the authors describe the creation of the nation, national identity and the narrative of the nation form a constructivist and/or instrumentalist point of view, Levringer & Lytle made further significant contribution to the existing body of literature by offering a model, which linked these phenomena with the theories of social mobilization. The authors have found some general patterns which characterize the historical narratives of almost all nations. The three basic elements of this pattern are the glorious past, the degraded present and the utopian future. The glorious past as universal characteristic of all national rhetoric refers to a once pure, harmonious flourishing period in the national past, which was usually ruined by internal or external enemies of the nation. The image of a utopian future prompts

for collective action to restore the glory of the nation. In the process of political mobilization, nationalist rhetoric gives a diagnosis of the facts, which has led to the degraded present by identifying loss of territory, linguistic or racial purity, internal political division or moral decline, and therefore, creates a tension between the perception of the past and the present. Furthermore, it gives prescriptions pointing to the utopian future by inverting the previously given diagnosis, and as such it transforms the created tension into political mobilization (Levringer & Lytle, 2001).

Similar patterns of historical narratives are examined by Anthony Smith as well when identifying the importance of the golden age and the national renewal as essential elements of nationalism, as well as national historiography. The narrative reconstruction of the national past based on the triadic structure of the golden age, the unsatisfactory present and the utopian future endow these narratives with almost transcendental characteristics, by presenting the history of the nation as the story of passion, salvation and rebirth. According to Smith in this construction, the image of a golden age plays important function to reestablish roots and continuity of the community, the image of authenticity and dignity, as well as a model of national destiny (Smith, 1997, pp 48-52). Schöpflin (1997) refers to similar schema of historical understanding, in his taxonomy of historical myths. Beside the myths of territory, election, military valour, ethnogenesis and antiquity, kinship and shared descend, the myths of redemption and suffering, of unjust treatment, and the myths of rebirth and renewal will play special importance when analyzing the historical narratives of Vojvodinian Hungarians as well.

There is still a live debate between the above elaborated metaphoric narrativism and neo-positivist historians. Most of the critiques targeting the former approach emphasize that metaphoric narrativism failed to connect historical research with historiography i.e. the

narrative itself, while also rejected that historical narratives still concern certain existing events of the past, however selectively they may be chosen. Radical version of questioning both 'objective' and 'synthetic' master narratives might even lead to complete relativization of history, including underrating the significance of the Holocaust, or similar weighty events. Other fascinating critiques of White and Ankersmit like the one written by Chris Lorenz: *Can Histories be True? Narrativism, Positivism and the "Metaphorical Turn"*, however, interpret the metaphoric narrativism as a double inversion of positivism, and underline that White's understanding of historical narratives as an imposed structure on certain events presupposes an existing knowledge without interpretation, which is nothing else but pure empiricism (Lorenz, 2000).

My position in this debate is the closest to what Cox & Stromquist suggest in the introduction of their book titled *Contesting the Master Narrative. Essays in Social History*. Here the authors do not want to escape the dilemma of historical objectivism versus relativism; however, they aim to lay down some basic commonly shared scholarly principles, which would serve as guidelines to the practice of historical research and historiography. These principles are *self-awareness*, *self-criticism*, and *fairness*. By self-awareness the authors expect historians to reflect on their narrative strategies, and to make them explicit. Besides, it is expected that historians realize their own constitutive role in shaping of history. Closely connected to this demand, under self-criticism the authors understand open consideration of alternative stories, and the evaluation of these choices. Finally, under the term fairness the authors understand willingness to consider the views of other scholars and of other alternative narratives (Cox & Stromquist, 1998). During the analysis of Vojvodinian Hungarian historiography I will also examine to what degree do these narratives fulfill the above elaborated critical claims.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

### 3.1 Research Description – Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis

The primary sources of my work, i.e. the objects of my analysis are works of Vojvodinian Hungarians published after the political changes of 1989 regarding the events of World War II and the early years of the Tito regime in Yugoslavia. As chapter 4.1 titled: *Historical Context of Inter-ethnic Relations in Vojvodina – With Special Focus on the Events of World War II* of the present thesis will demonstrate, this period was characterized by the most severe inter-ethnic conflicts. Consequently, I argue that these events are still used and abused for politicized purposes, both from the side of the majority as well as from the minority. After the detailed elaboration of shifting Serbian historical narratives in the years of political transition, I will turn to the in-depth analysis of the Hungarian perspective<sup>2</sup>.

With respect to the categorization of my sources, they fulfill academic criteria in various degrees. Some of the authors (like for example Márton Matuska) can only be categorized as publicists, who conducted research on these important public issues; however their methodology is scientifically questionable. Others (like Sándor Mészáros, who was a professor at the Department of History at the University of Novi Sad) approached these topics with more established methodological criteria, but still often relied on the findings of publicists or writers. Consequently, there is usually no clear cut line between the genres of works which constructed new historical narratives on World War II among the Vojvodinian Hungarian elite in the 1990s.

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<sup>2</sup> For detailed references see the List of Primary Sources on page: X

In my analysis I intend to apply the methods of Critical Discourse Analysis, specifically following the methodological guidelines of the Viennese approach of CDA, also referred as the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA). Besides the systematic analysis of the given oral, written or visual language DHA is especially sensitive on the context of the given discourse. This means, that inter-textual and inter-discursive utterances are also taken into account as well as extra-linguistic social variables, and the broader sociopolitical and historical context (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). During the analysis of Vojvodinian Hungarian historiography, it will also be crucial to consider the inter-textual aspects of these texts like previous approaches of actual works of Serbian authors regarding the examined historical period; the social and demographic characteristics of Vojvodinian Hungarians; and above all the unique historical circumstances of the 1990s in Serbia.

Following the theoretical concepts of Fairclough and Wodak, during my analysis, *discourse* will be understood as:

a form of ‘social practice’. Describing discourse as a social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s), and social structure(s), which frame it: The discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them. That is, discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially constituted – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense, that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it. Since discourse is so socially consequential, it gives rise of important issues of power. Discursive practices may have major ideological effects – that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which represent things and position people (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 258).

Thereby, discourse is not only kind of linguistic debate, but – following Foucault – it should be interpreted in a much broader sense, as a knowledge, which refers to all kind of contents that make up human consciousness, reaching almost the ontological frameworks of our understanding:

For Foucault discourse constructs, defines and produces objects of knowledge in an intelligible way while at the same time excluding other ways of reasoning as unintelligible. He explores the circumstances and rules under which statements are combined and regulated to form and define a distinct field of knowledge requiring a particular set of concepts and delimiting a specific ‘regime of truth’ (i.e. what counts as truth) (Barker & Galasinski, 2001, p 12).

Consequently, based on Foucault’s discourse theory, critical discourse analysis aims to identify what becomes valid knowledge in a specific place and time for which specific group of people, how is this knowledge produced, and passed on, what is its function in constructing social subjects, and what role does it play in the overall shaping of social reality (Jäger & Maier, 2009). Besides, as power is legitimized and de-legitimized in discourses, in which the ideological components of the discourse establish and maintain unequal power relations, another aim of the analysis is to demystify the hegemony of certain taken for granted discourses. Such expressions of power can be detected in establishing hegemonic identity narratives or by controlling the access of other social actors to specific public discourses (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009).

During my analysis I will apply the systematic methodological guidelines of Discourse-Historical Approach which is tree dimensional. First the specific content and topics of the discourse will be identified, second, the most important discursive strategies involved and finally the most important means of linguistic realization. In their study on the discursive construction of the Austrian nation and national identity Wodak et al. identified at least five

types of discursive macro-strategies. These were (a) constructive strategies which constitute national identities; (b) strategies of justification and relativization, which aim to conserve or reproduce national identities and narratives of that identity by, for example, shifting of blame and responsibility, downplaying or trivialization, legitimization and de-legitimization; (c) strategies of perpetuation, aiming to maintain the permanency and continuation of the nation; (d) transformative strategies, aiming to change national identities; and (e) destructive strategies aiming at the dismantling of national identities (Wodak et al. 2009, pp. 36-42).

In the case of discursive analysis of Vojvodinian Hungarian historiography my goal will also be to examine the role of language in construction and regulation of truths about history by the analysis of the content of these texts as well as by identifying similar discursive strategies as presented by Wodak et al. Further level of the analysis will touch the most typical rhetorical means involved in the realization these strategies, which will contain the analysis of vocabulary and style as well as the symbolism used in the narratives.

In my research my aim is to answer the questions how are the historical events between 1941 and 1945 in Vojvodina presented in post-1989 minority historiography, what are the main discursive strategies involved in these historical narratives, and what function they aimed to fulfill in the unique historical circumstances of the 1990s. My hypothesis is that beside the fact that these works broke serious taboos regarding the history of Yugoslavia in World War II and in the early years of the Tito regime, the main goal of them was also to create social reality in which ethnic differences have primary importance. Therefore, there might be deeper explanatory factors as well behind these discursive constructions, which aim to strengthen minority national identity. This would also explain why are these historical narratives, based on the strategies of victimization and passivization, so permanent and stable characteristics of minority historiography.

## CHAPTER 4: THE CASE STUDY OF VOJVODINA

### 4.1 Historical Context of Inter-ethnic Relations in Vojvodina – With Special Focus on the Events of World War II

In a study like the present thesis, which takes a fundamentally critical approach towards historiography, it is a difficult – though necessary – task to give a short historical overview of inter-ethnic relations in Vojvodina, with special focus on Serbian – Hungarian relations. Being aware of the contestable nature of my own narrative as well, my aim in this chapter is to give a short insight to some of the arguably most important historical events which significantly influenced political and social characteristics of Vojvodina in the past century by taking into account both majority and minority aspects.

One of the most fundamental changes in majority-minority relations in Vojvodina was due to the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy after World War I, with the establishment of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, ruled by the Karađorđević dynasty. From the Hungarians' perspective, who lost their political and economic dominance, and became a national minority in the new state, the treaty of Trianon, which decreed the new borders was perceived as the most weighty and tragic historical event. At the same time, the Serbs celebrated the union of their co-nationals within the territory of the same state.

There are contested interpretations of the interwar period of the new South-Slavic state as well. During the Tito era it was presented as monarcho-fascist dictatorship of the hegemonic Serbs<sup>3</sup> while in Serb nationalist discourses from the second half of 1980s<sup>4</sup> the interwar period

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<sup>3</sup> For more details see the characteristics and the later breakdown of the Yugoslav official historiography in: Dragović-Soso, J. (2002) 'Saviours of the Nation'. Serbia's Intellectual opposition and the Revival of Nationalism. London: Hurst & Company.

<sup>4</sup> See for example Serbian national re-evaluation of the interwar period and the Četnik movement of World War II during the years of dissolution of Yugoslavia elaborated in details by Djokić (2002).

is described as rather democratic. From the perspective of the Croats, Hungarians<sup>5</sup> and other national historiographies of the state the same period is characterized by constant tension between the state's Serb and non-Serb political powers; the manifestation of the great Serbian nationalistic aspiration; and forceful political and bureaucratic centralization. Juhász (1999) argues, that both the Constitution of Vidovdan accepted in June 1921 which framed a constitutional monarchy and guaranteed considerable political power to the king, as well as the dictatorship of King Aleksandar I between 1929 and 1934 served these ends.

Hungarian historiography puts the emphasis on the unjust treatment of the Hungarian minority regarding the interwar period and generally on the failure of the post-World War I international setting of minority protection. The most important elements of these narratives are the agrarian reform of 1920, which not only deprived Hungarians from significant proportion of their lands, but by distributing these lands among Serb wartime volunteers the legislative also resulted changes in the ethnic proportions of the settlements. From Hungarian perspective further emblematic events of minority repression were the replacement of Hungarian functionaries; the radical alteration of the Hungarian school system; the cutback of minority language education and press; and the difficulties of minority political representation (Domonkos, 1992; Juhász, 1999).

The most severe conflicts with serious consequences on the inter-ethnic relations between the Serbs and the Hungarians happened during and shortly after World War II. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of March, 1941 the Cvetković-Maček government of Yugoslavia joined the Tripartite Pact. This was followed by the military coup in Belgrade, and within few days General Dušan Simović became the prime minister, who preferred negotiations with the Allied Powers. Shortly

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<sup>5</sup> See: Domonkos, L (1992) *Magyarok a Délvidéken* [Hungarians in the Southern Region]. Budapest: Zrínyi Kiadó.; A. Sajti, E. (2003) *Hungarians in the Vojvodina 1918-1947*. Boulder, Colorado: Social Science Monographs. Atlantic Research and Publications, Inc.; Highland Lakes, NJ. Distributed by New York: Columbia University Press.

afterwards Hitler commanded the Wehrmacht to occupy Yugoslavia. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of April the Croatian Ustaša state declared its independence, and a day after Hungarian troops marched into the country. Soon Prekmurje (Muravidék), Međimurje (Muraköz), Baranja Triangle (Baranyai háromszög), and the north part of Vojvodina, the so-called Bačka (Bácska) fell under Hungarian supremacy. While both in Titoist and in Serbian historiography the presence of the Hungarian units was interpreted as fascist occupation of the country, for the Hungarians it primarily meant the re-occupation of some territories, which were lost after World War I. However, today, also Hungarian authors report on the cruelties committed against the Serbs during the months of occupation, and especially in the following winter. Among other conflicts during this period, one of the most notable events in the history of Vojvodina were the so called ‘cold days in Novi Sad (Újvidék)’ in December 1941 and January 1942 and the mass killings in the settlements of the Šajkaš region (Sajkás vidék) when Hungarian authorities with the leadership of lieutenant-general Feketehalmy-Czeyder executed thousands of Serbs, Jews and political enemies (Pihurik, 2009).

Further tragic event in the history of Vojvodina is the Holocaust itself. The deportation and extermination of the Jews started already in 1941 in Banat (Bánát) the Eastern part of Vojvodina, which was under German administration and in Srem (Szerémség) in Southern Vojvodina, which belonged to the Independent State of Croatia. In spring 1944, after Hungary’s German occupation, along with the rest of countryside Hungary the Jews from Bačka (Bácska) were deported mainly to Auschwitz by the active contribution of the Hungarian police and gendarmerie (Juhász, 1999).

In autumn 1944 when Vojvodina got under the control of Tito’s partisans, the situation of the German and Hungarian minority turned drastic. From the approximately 330 000 Germans living in Vojvodina in 1941, by the end of the 1940s almost none was left. Some of them left

the country already with the withdrawal of the German troops from Vojvodina, others were deported to the Soviet Union, became victims of the partisan's cleansing, or were expelled to Germany (A. Sajti, 2009). Between autumn 1944 and spring 1945 thousands of Hungarians fell also victims to partisan power takeover, not only in those territories, which belonged to Hungary during the war, but all around Vojvodina. Beside the actual executions, many Hungarians and Germans were taken to labor camps of Bački Jarak (Tiszaistvánfalva), Gajdobra (Szépliget), Mladenovo (Dunabökeny), Knićanin (Rezsőháza) etc. (A.Sajti, 2003, p. 409; Ilić, 2002). Although from the perspective of the Hungarians, these were the most painful events in the history of inter-ethnic relations in Vojvodina, all through the Tito regime these events were treated as severe taboos, and there was no possibility to bring these issues to public debate, or to call the perpetrators to account. The actual number of the victims of all sides was variously estimated in different publications after the political transition in 1989 when the contested interpretations of World War II became one of the central themes of political discussion.

After the most intensive political cleansings and the difficulties in applying the new socialist economic system, the period between the 1960s and 1980s is often epitomized as the 'golden age' of the Hungarian minority in Vojvodina. These decades are characterized by economic prosperity, the extension of political, cultural, and institutional rights, and peaceful minority-majority relations. The decentralization of Yugoslavia and the 1974 constitution which established the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina offered further potentials in realizing minority self-interest (Jushász, 1999).

After the death of Tito, severe political and economic crises in the highly federalized Yugoslavia and the radical changes in the international politics due to the breakdown of the Soviet Union lead to the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Within the circumstances of the war and

the large scaled ethnic violence, which characterized the dissolution process of the state, ethnic differences became primary categories of differentiation and group formation, articulated in highly nationalist discourses. This setting opened new chapter in the Hungarian-Serbian inter-ethnic relations as well. The fall of the socialist regime enabled the establishment of the political party of the Hungarian minority the Democratic Community of Vojvodinian Hungarians (VMDK) in 1990. However, in all other aspects from a Hungarian point of view the situation of the minority was significantly deteriorated. Due to the generally difficult economic situation of this period, the international isolation of the country, the highly tense inter-ethnic relations characterized by national intolerance, and the refusal of liability for military service in the war, according to some estimation almost 50,000 Hungarians left Vojvodina during the 1990s (Nagy, 2007). At the same time the ethnic composition of Vojvodina was also altered by big number of Serbian refugees and settlers from other parts of Yugoslavia.

It is questionable whether the fall of the Milošević regime in October 2000 brought immediate radical changes to the political live and democratization in Serbia. Nevertheless, especially in the past few years, minority-majority relations in Vojvodina show significant improvement. Part of this process was the restoration of the autonomy of Vojvodina in 2002, Serbia's overture towards the European Union, and the remarkable extension of minority rights, which resulted in granting cultural autonomy with the establishment of Minority National Councils as the representative bodies of national minorities in Serbia.<sup>6</sup>

Within these rather consolidated circumstances new political and scientific initiatives aimed to re-examine the most violent periods of inter-ethnic coexistence in Vojvodina. In 2003

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<sup>6</sup> See the new law on the National Minority Councils in Serbia, ratified by the Serbian Parliament in 2009. (Zakon o nacionalnim savetima nacionalnih manjina. "Službeni glasnik RS", broj 72/2009)

based on the decision of the Parliament of Vojvodina, the Vojvodina Academy of Sciences and Arts (VANU) under the coordination of Dr. Dragoljub Živković established a commission to investigate the truth and the exact number of the civilian victims in Vojvodina between 1941 and 1948, regardless of their ethnic belonging. The results of this research which was published in nine volumes also contains the names of 83 881 victims form the total of 106 000. Though the authors of the monograph emphasize that these are not final results, and the research has not yet come to an end, the present data show, that 52 000 Serbs, 25 000 Germans, 17 000 Jews, 4 600 Hungarians, and 2 000 Croatian civilians fall victims of the war and the different political regimes between 1941 and 1948 (Cerović, 2009; Živković, 2009, Vol. 1-8). The reception of the monograph was followed by political debate in Vojvodina, members of the Hungarian elite held the number of the victims of their co-nationals severely underestimated (A. Sajti, 2009). The causes behind the difficulties of possible mutual reconstruction of history could be better understood in the light of the both Serbian and Hungarian historiography of the 1990s. Identifying the main political strategies of these narratives will be in the focus of the following chapters.

## **4.2 Shifting Narratives of World War II in the Time of Transition in Serbia**

Tito's death in 1980 had crucial importance, and opened a new chapter in the history of Yugoslavia, therefore, of Serbia as well. The lack of Tito as a charismatic leader of the country, often referred as the strongest cohesive force of the federation coincided with the economical crisis of the country. These two factors lead to severe political crises and even to questioning the legitimacy of the existing state. Significant part of this process was the breakdown of the Yugoslav historiography. As Dragović-Soso argues, that already shortly after Tito's death some of the previously untouchable bases of the Yugoslav ideology have

become contested. These basic fundamentals of the system were absolute positive evaluation of the unification of the Yugoslav people, in contrast with the highly negative value attributed to the interwar Yugoslavia, characterized as a 'monarcho-fascist dictatorship' and aspirations to a 'Great Serbian hegemony'. Further, untouchable issues were the official interpretation of the communist revolution and the 'war of national liberation' (Dragović-Soso, 2002, p.71).

Meanwhile, however, in line with the administrative decentralization of the state, Yugoslav historiography was also decentralized, and historians primarily started to write the history of their own nations. In his study titled *"Historiography of the Countries of Eastern Europe: Yugoslavia"* Banac also concludes, that by the 1980s it was obvious, that "the unity of Yugoslav historiography was highly dependent on the unity of the regime itself" (Banac, 1992, p. 1086). Good illustration of this kind of fragmentation was the case of the Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia, which immediately evoked a hot debate, because of the nationalizing narrative of the history of the republics of Yugoslavia, as well as the history of the Albanians in Kosovo (Dragović-Soso, 2002).

Soon, the exclusively positive evaluation of Tito's figure has also become questioned, and the communist persecutions after World War II, with the prison island of Goli Otok entered more openly to the public debate. Similarly, interpretation of further events in the war became contested. In the new Serbian narratives of the past Tito was portrayed as somebody, who was always against the Serbs, as he was fighting against Serbia as member of the Austro-Hungarian troops during World War I. It has also come to surface, that the partisan leaders had secret talks with the Germans in 1943. Further important elements of the Serbian interpretation of the Yugoslav era were the question of the inner borders of the state. From the Serbian perspective the borders of the republics were drawn in an unjust way. While the republics of Slovenia and Macedonia managed to unite all their fellow-nationals within the

same sub-state, this was not true in the case of the Serbs who felt that the AVNOJ-designated borders left out of consideration Serbia's gains during the liberation war against Turkey and Austria-Hungary, nor did the Serbs get autonomy in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, despite the fact, that they were victims of the Ustaša regime (Dragović-Soso, 2002). The most remarkable publication propagating these ideas was the *Memorandum* of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SANU) in 1986, which was written in a highly nationalist and anticommunist spirit and portrayed the Serbs in Yugoslavia as the only nation without their own sovereign republic, and as the victim both in political and economical sense of an anti-Serb collusion lead by Croatia, Slovenia and Vojvodina (Banac, 1992; Suppan, 2003).

The most important legitimization myth of Yugoslavia, namely the common struggle against the fascist occupation of the country by foreign forces and by domestic traitors has also lost its relevance, when the historians of the transition time rediscovered the issue of the civil war in Yugoslavia between 1941 and 1945. The persecutions and the number of victims during World War II became one of the central issues in the new Serbian public debate about the past. The most vivid rivalry regarding these contested interpretations of the past happened between the Serbian and Croatian elite. Members of the Serbian intelligentsia dedicated special attention to the victims of the Ustaša regime of the Independent State of Croatia, and Jasenovac has become the symbol of Serbian martyrdom. As Macdonald convincingly argues in his book titled: *Balkan holocaust? Serbian and Croatian victim-centered propaganda and the war of Yugoslavia* (2003), the rhetoric of victimization and persecutions were central elements of the newly reconstructed national histories. While the Serbs were keen on overestimating the number of the Serbian victims, Croatian historians aimed to relativize the volume of the persecutions committed by the Independent State of Croatia, and argued, that these crimes were not more outstanding, than any other persecutions during wartime. In 1990

the first president of the independent Croatia, Franjo Tudjman not only underestimated the volume of prosecutions committed by the Croats, by claiming that the number of people who have died in Croatian camps during the war was not more, than 60 000, but he also argued against the absolute criminality of the genocide itself ( Dragović-Soso, 2002).

Macdonald also discusses how the Serbs drew a parallel, between their sufferings during the war, and the extermination of the Jews. Referring to the persecutions committed against the Serbs as ‘Serbian Holocaust’ can be understood as a trivialization of the Jewish Holocaust itself, and using the term as a general symbol of national suffering (Macdonald, 2003). There were several symbolic gestures to express the mutual fate of the Serbs and the Jews during the war. One of these events was, when in the 1985 Vuk Drašković sent an open letter to Israeli writers to express the unity and brotherhood of the Serbs and the Jews in suffering. He also added, that “the creation of the state of Israel had ended Jewish suffering, whereas the Serbian ‘Golgotha’ still continued” (Dragović-Soso, 2002, p. 107-198). By this rhetoric Serbian intelligentsia and historiography aimed to present themselves as the ultimate victims of the war, while at the same time representing the Others – in this case mainly the Croats, but also Muslims who committed persecutions against the Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina – as the ultimate manifestations of the evil (Macdonald, 2003). The Serbian elite recognized it very well, that by this rhetorical strategy, they can stimulate strong nationalist feelings and mobilize the Serbs. Important element of this rhetoric was what Bibó (1994) called in his essay on *The Misery of Eastern European Small States* the existential anxiety for the community’s threatened identity and the destruction of the nation (Bibó, 1994, p.39).

While the term reconciliation is usually refers to reconciliation between different nations, Djokić shows that it can also be understood as “homogenization of the nation by reconciling ideological differences within it” (Djokić, 2002, p.130). This process could be detected both

in Serbia and Croatia, when right-wing and left-wing thinkers of both Serbs and Croats were harmonizing their views about certain events of the past instead of trying to find mutual platforms of discussion between the two nations. In Serbia this meant reinterpretation of the role of the Četniks in World War II, while at the same time de-legitimizing the official Yugoslav historical narrative, in which the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, with Tito in the lead was the only resistant movement during the war, which reconciled all nations of Yugoslavia under the slogan of ‘brotherhood and unity’. In the years of transition, however, pan-Serb reconciliation program has begun to unite the ideologically fragmented nation. One of the most emblematic figures of this initiative was Vuk Drašković, who founded the Serbian Renewal Movement in 1990 together with the highly nationalist politician Voljislav Šešelj later leader of the Serbian Radical Party (ibid.).

One of the most memorable events in the process of national reconciliation was when Vuk Drašković erected a monument to the leader of the Četnik movement Dragoljub-Dražo Mihajlović in 1990, commemorating the Četnik uprising against the Germans in May 1941. Additionally, Drašković wrote a novel on Mihajlović, and his party was supporting the return of the monarchy from the exile. Further elements of the reconciliation process targeted even some of those politicians of World War II, who unquestionably collaborated with the Germans, like Milan Nedić, the president of the war-time Serbian puppet state or Dimitrije Ljotić the leader of a pro-fascist movement (Djokić, 2002, p.135). Undoubtedly, similar national reconciliation process was characterizing the political atmosphere other republics as well, like in Croatia by reinterpreting the role of the Independent State of Croatia during the war, and by dedicating equaling weight to Jasenovac and Bleiburg.

The most important Serbian historians who propagated highly nationalistic narratives of the past were Vasilije Krestić<sup>7</sup> and Radovan Smardžić the two historians among the authors of the already mentioned Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts; the Bosnian Serbian Milorad Ekmečić<sup>8</sup> and Vojislav Lubarda<sup>9</sup>; Branko Petranović<sup>10</sup> and Veselin Djuretić<sup>11</sup> who contributed a lot to the reevaluation of the role of Četniks in World War II. Among further remarkable Serbian historians, Ljubogard Dimić is also to be mentioned. In his book titled *Srbi i Jugoslavija: Prostor, društvo, politika (Serbs and Yugoslavia: Space, society, politics)*<sup>12</sup> published in 1998, Dimić followed the history of the Serbian nation up until the date of the book's publication, and portrayed the Serbs as the biggest victims and sufferers of the history, already during the time of the Balkan Wars, through the massacres of World War II, as well as during the violent dissolution of Yugoslavian in the 1990s. When discussing the events of World War II, besides the big number of Serbian victims of the Croatian Ustaša regime, Dimić also elaborates the loss of Serbian lives during the Hungarian occupation in Bačka – North-Eastern Vojvodina – between 1941 and 1944. According to the estimations of the author only in 1941 more than 10 000 Serbs were massacred by the Hungarian authorities (Dimić, 1998).

As it is demonstrated above, in the case of Vojvodina as well, Serbian historiography of the years of dissolution put the emphasis on the suffering and the victims of the Serbs during

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<sup>7</sup> Krestić, V. (1983) *Srpsko-hrvatski odnosi i jugoslovenska ideja. [Serbian-Croatian relations and the Yugoslav idea]*. Belgrade: Narodna Knjiga.; Krestić, V. (1986) O genezi genocida nad Srbima u NDH. [About the genesis of the genocide on the Serbs in the NDH]. *Književne novine (15 September, 1986)* 5.

<sup>8</sup> Ekmečić, M (1989) *Stvaranje Jugoslavije (1791-1918). [Formation of Yugoslavia]*. Belgrade: Prosveta.; Ekmečić, M (1992) *Srbija između Srednje Evrope i Evrope. [Serbia between Middle Europe and Europe]*. Belgrade: Politika.

<sup>9</sup> Lubarda, V. (1990) *Anatema. [Anathema]*. Belgrade: Dečje Novine.

<sup>10</sup> Petranović, B. (1983) *Revolucija i kontrarevolucija u Jugoslaviji (1941-1945) [Revolution and Counterrevolution in Yugoslavia (1941-1945)]*. Belgrade.

<sup>11</sup> Djuretić, V. (1985) *Saveznici i jugoslovenska ratna drama. [The Allies and the Yugoslav War Drama]*. Belgrade: Politika.

<sup>12</sup> Dimić, J. (1998) *Srbi i Jugoslavija : Prostor, društvo, politika [Serbs and Yugoslavia: Space, society, politics]*. Belgrade: Stubovi Kulture.

World War II, underlining especially the events of the so-called Cold Days in Novi Sad (Újvidék), and further raids of the Hungarian authorities mainly in the Šajkaš region (Sajkásvidék). One of the examples of these works was Zvonimir Golubović's *Racija u Južnoj Bačkoj, 1942 (Raid in Southern Bačka (Bácska), 1942)* which was published for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Novi Sad raid. By portraying the Serbs as the main victims of these years, there was no room in the mainstream Serbian historiography for mentioning crimes committed against the Hungarian minority of Vojvodina after the reoccupation of these territories in 1944-1945. Almost the only exception is Aleksandar Kasaš's book titled: *Mađari u Vojvodini 1941-1946 (Hungarians in Vojvodina 1941-1946)* published in 1996 at the History Department of the University of Novi Sad. In his work, Kasaš was dealing with the direction and the limits of the Hungarian politics of Magyarization between 1941 and 1944, when Bačka (Bácska) fell under Hungarian supremacy. However, Kasaš's scope of interest was not restricted only to the events of World War II itself, but he also extensively wrote about the atrocities committed against the Hungarian minority by the partisans in the first years of the communist regime, as well as about the reasons of a more tolerant policy towards minorities after 1945. Kasaš refused to interpret the historical events of the examined period within the discourse of victimization, and self-justification, but took rather an analytic approach. He criticized the mainstream Serbian historiography which presented the innocent Serbs as the victim of fascist Hungarians while referring to the crimes committed against the Hungarians as righteous call to account. On the other hand, however, the author held 40 000 as the estimated number of Hungarian victims propagated by Vojvodinian Hungarian publicists and historians a politically biased over-exaggeration (Kasaš, 1996).

Except for few publications one can conclude, that during the years of transition the official Yugoslav narrative of World War II and the following years was entirely displaced by

mainstream national narratives of these events. The official interpretation of the war during the communist era, based on the dichotomy of the revolutionary, liberating Partisans versus the rest of the forces labeled as fascists, could successfully de-ethnicize the historical memory of the war. The essential idea of this de-ethnicized narrative was, that the bourgeoisies of all Yugoslav nations were held responsible for the crimes committed during the war, while emphasizing that all nations committed cruelties during wartime, and had their own traitors, so none of the Yugoslav nations were portrayed as more guilty than the other (Dragović-Soso, 2002, p. 100). During the years of dissolution, however, such a class based explanation has completely lost its relevance, and the events of World War II were re-contextualized in national narratives.

Further important sources of past-reinterpretations were from the field of literature and other types of artistic expression. Probably the most important character who fostered nationalism and reinterpretations of the Serbian past was Dobrica Ćosić. His epic novel *Vreme smrti* (*Time of Death*, 1972) depicts the heroic fight and suffering of the Serbs during World War I against an overwhelmingly more powerful enemy, which underlines the greatness of the Serbian nation and its wartime martyrdom. In his trilogy titled: *Vreme zla* (*A Time of Evil*) Ćosić depicted the communists as fanatical believers of their new religion, and characterized the history of the Serbs as they were always surrounded by enemy nations, both outside and within Yugoslavia (Dragović-Soso, 2002, pp. 89-94). Other important pieces of literature were Danko Popović's popular book: *Knjiga o Milutinu* (*The Book About Milutin*, 1985), Slobodan Selenić's *Očevi i oci* (*Fathers and Forefathers*, 1985).

All the above elaborated events, initiatives and publications were part of the very powerful memory politics, which took place in all federal states of the Ex-Yugoslavia during the years of transition, and therefore, they were crucially characterizing the political atmosphere in

Serbia as well. The new narrative of the past completely disregarded the previous official Yugoslav historiography, and utterly de-legitimized the ideological fundamentals of the communist Tito era. The selective reconstruction of the past served the goal to justify the breakup of the Yugoslav state, the highly nationalistic aspiration of the political elites to create their own nation states and to mobilize the masses for these goals. Consequently, the political transition in Serbia was not followed by a self-critical reconstruction of the historical narrative like in the case of the German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, in the contrary, new historical narratives were tools of the elites to legitimize nationalism.

### **4.3 Critical Discourse Analysis of post-1989 Hungarian Historiography in Vojvodina**

#### **4.3.1 The Contexts of Vojvodinian Hungarian Historiography**

As I mentioned in the presentation of the methodological principles of my analysis, the inter-textual and inter-discursive context, like the general political, historical and demographic, circumstances of the 1990s are highly important element of understanding the character of post-1989 Vojvodinian Hungarian historiography. In this chapter I will shortly summarize the main contextual variables, which had an impact on minority historiography in the examined period.

Arguably the most important factor which influenced the historical discourse on the events of World War II among the Hungarian elite was the radically new political circumstances of the 1990s i.e. the violent dissolution process of the Yugoslav state. As I argued in the previous section of my thesis, this unique historical period was characterized with highly crystallized presence of ethnic groups, as the main criteria of social categorization. The historical narratives of this period were both influenced by this social reality, but at the same time they

were also powerfully constitutive elements of it. A wider historical context of these events, namely the fall of the Soviet Union and the socialist regimes in Europe resulted in a radical revision of socialist historiography in the neighboring countries as well. Also in Hungary, the shift from the socialist towards national frameworks of historiography after 1989 opened the floor to re-thematize Hungary's geopolitical position and the history of ethnic Hungarians living in the neighboring states (Trencsényi & Apor, 2007). These changes made it possible, that significant amount of Vojvodinian Hungarian historical works were also published in Hungary.

Additionally, as I presented it before, the Tito regime had a highly politicized narrative of World War II, resulting toboozation of many darker episode of the common history. Many of the first pioneering publications on these events were often written by publicists and not even within the academia. The decades-long exclusion of these topics from the public discourse might also have intensified the highly dramatized presentation of certain events in the first historical works in the 1990s. Besides, other inter-textual and inter-discursive variables, like the highly nationalist Serbian historical discourses of the same period also had crucial impact on the narrative frameworks of Vojvodinian Hungarian historiography.

Strongly connected to the political context of the examined period, general demographic characteristics of the Vojvodinian Hungarian minority should also be taken into account. Based on the data of the Yugoslav censuses after World War II, the proportion of the Hungarian minority shows continuous decline. While in 1948 the number of the Hungarian minority was over 418 000, constituting 25.6% of the total population of Vojvodina, by the last census of 2002, only 290 200 people identified themselves as Hungarians, which means 14.3 % of the province's overall population. After World War II highest number of the Hungarian minority was registered by the census in 1961 (442 560); however, their proportion

in the overall population kept decreasing through the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and up until today (Nagy, 2007). These tendencies can be explained by generally low birth rates, the assimilation process of the Hungarians, by the extensive immigration movements of non-Hungarian population towards Vojvodina, as well as by large waves of Hungarian emigration (Nagy, 2007; Gábrity, 2001). From our point of view it is important to consider, that these demographic data also feed discourses on the existential angst of the minority, and on the threatened identity of the community, which will be detected in the case of minority historiography as well.

#### **4.3.2 The Topics of the Discourse**

In the present chapter I will give an overview of the most important themes which appear in the post-1989 Vojvodinian Hungarian historiography regarding the period of World War II and the early years of communism, and the topics of the discourse which can be extrapolated from these themes. At this level of the analysis I am primarily interested in which events of the past became the part of these narratives, and also quantitatively how much space is dedicated to certain events in the examined works.

The historical works Hungarians in Vojvodina in the 1990s are dominantly focusing on the execution of members of the Hungarian minority during the early years of the communist regime in Yugoslavia. Almost all of my primary sources<sup>13</sup> attempt to unfold the events of this period, and dedicate either no or only few chapters to previous events of the war, in which Hungarian forces were the persecutors and not the victims of the actual regime. Other relevant historic events of World War II like the Jewish Holocaust are almost completely displaced from these narratives. In my primary sources only Matuska (2001) dedicates few pages to these

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<sup>13</sup> For detailed references see: List of Primary Sources on page 58.

events, and some references to the history of the Jews also appear in the stories of individual reminiscences collected by Matuska (1991). The history of the German minority in Vojvodina is also absent from the examined historical works. Consequently, these narratives seem to be set in the frameworks of Serbian – Hungarian rivalry and competing national discourses, and do not aim to give a general picture on the loss of civil lives during World War II in the region.

In connection with the inter-ethnic conflicts of World War II further themes of the discourse are the situation of the Hungarian minority in the interwar period, as well as during the years of communism. The historical scope is also extended to the character of inter-ethnic relations within the borders of the historical Hungary before World War I, as well as to the actual political circumstances of the post-1989 in Vojvodina with possible future expectations.

Extrapolated from the above mentioned themes, the following most important topics of the discourse could be identified: (a) the claims of the Vojvodinian Hungarian elite regarding Serbian reconciliation with the past, with special focus on the crimes committed against Hungarian communities in 1944-1945; (b) years of communism in Yugoslavia; (c) moral obligation of the Hungarian elite to break the taboos of the Tito era; (e) inter-ethnic conflicts of the 1990s; (f) transitional justice – benevolent consequences of reconciliation; (g) freedom of the society, democracy. Most of these elements of the discourse refer to the importance of reconciliation with the past, as a precondition of peaceful inter-ethnic relations, and democratic society. During the detailed analysis of Vojvodinian Hungarian historiography, my main aim is to test whether these narratives themselves contribute to such self-critical and reflective interpretations of the past; or in the contrary, they also rather played legitimizing function of nationalist political aspirations in the 1990s.

### 4.3.3 The Main Strategies of the Discourse and their Linguistic Means of Realization

From the macro-strategies of constructing national identity presented by Wodak et al. (2009) in the case of Vojvodinian Hungarian historical narratives, the strategies of justification, relativization and victimization seem to play the most important role. The crucial aim of these works was to break with the official Yugoslav interpretation of the events of World War II, and the following years, which presented any kind of post-war retribution committed against the Hungarian minority as a just and righteous punishment of the Nazi-collaborators. Consequently, Vojvodinian Hungarian historiography aims to construct a narrative in which their own ethnic group is presented not as a persecutor, but the victim of this historical period.

To this ends they often distinguish between the local Hungarians and the ones that only came from Hungary and were the main protagonists of the crimes committed between 1941 and 1944. Furthermore, the cruelties of the Hungarian occupation are often mitigated, and instead of reporting in details about the committed crimes, the emphasis is put on the years between 1942 and 1944, which is portrayed as a rather consolidated period. Another aspect of victimization is the almost complete ignorance of the Jewish Holocaust from these narratives, and any kind of reference to possible nationalistic, and anti-Semitic attitudes of Vojvodinian Hungarians in the examined historical period. Finally, an important element of this victimization strategy is portraying Hungarian victims of the Tito regime as the martyrs of the community. In these representations the spheres of the saint and the profane can hardly be differentiated any more.

As it was already underlined before, the post-1989 Vojvodinian Hungarian historiography dedicated much less space to the events of the Hungarian occupation, in the comparison with the months of the partisan power takeover. The argument behind this decision is that the socialist historiography as well as the actual Serbian one in the 1990s was dealing with this

topic extensively enough, while the crimes committed against the Hungarians was entirely ignored by them. Nevertheless, in most of the cases there is a reference given to the massacres of the Hungarian occupation, in order to compare it with the Tito atrocities. In these comparison, the crimes committed by the Hungarians is often reduced to the raid of Novi Sad (Újvidék) and the Šajkas region (Sajkás vidék) while those people who died during the entry of the Hungarian forces and the Holocaust itself are often neglected. Besides, interpreting the mass killings of 1944-1945 as 'retribution' or a 'revenge' it is suggested, that Hungarians have already suffered and paid for the crimes of 1941-1942, and therefore, there is no further need to take responsibility for these crimes, or to call anyone to account.

Those authors, who still give rather detailed description of the Hungarian occupation, often use the strategy of downplaying and trivialization. Botlik (1994) for example mentions that as certain parts of Vojvodina got under Hungarian supremacy, Serbia schools were closed, Serbian press was entirely oppressed, those Serbs, who settled in the region after 1918 were despoiled from their homes and property, and Székely Hungarian colonies were arriving to their places. However, the civil victims of the power turnover are entirely neglected in his narrative. Furthermore, there is a highly one-sided reasoning regarding the causes of the Cold Days of Novi Sad, namely that although the situation has consolidated by that time, there were still many political and military sabotages of partisan units with wide support of the Serbian civil population. The author also adds, that the crimes committed by the Hungarians soon fell out of control of the civilian as well as the military governance. By such an interpretation of the events, beside the highly selected historical events, which became part of this narrative, the author uses the strategies to shift blame and responsibility, and therefore, his hidden agenda seems to be to mitigate the weight of the crimes committed by his co-nationals.

These strategies become even more obvious, when the period of 1942-1944 is portrayed as peaceful times of consolidation, in the name of the ethnic tolerance, which traditionally characterized the rule of the Hungarians, dated back even to the first Hungarian king, Saint Stephen I. Such references to the kings of Hungary become parts of constitutive strategies in Vojvodinian Hungarian historiography, aiming to construct a unity with the historical Hungarian nation. The emphasis is put on the positive political continuity of the nation, while at the same time the years of Yugoslav supremacy is de-legitimized. Characterizing the centuries of Hungarian rule by a tolerant political milieu serves as an important constructive narrative strategy of singularization, underlining positive national uniqueness. The notion of ethnic tolerance associated with the Hungarians also serves as the strategy of avoidance regarding the crimes committed during the war. Besides, comparing the positively evaluated centuries long Hungarian supremacy with the de-legitimized intolerant Yugoslav era, the author also uses the strategy of scapegoating. By the inversion of victim perpetrator roles, instead of elaborating on the mass killings perpetrated by the co-nationals, he emphasizes previously committed injustices against the Hungarian minority.

With respect to the selection of historical events, which became the part of Vojvodinian Hungarian historiography, Mészáros (1995) mentions smaller affrays during the period of occupation, however, he the main stress is put on how the number of the victims was over-exaggerated by the historians of the Tito era. He also rather refuses to give a detailed analysis of what exactly happened in Bačka (Bácska) during the occupation, arguing, that the Hungarians have already suffered a lot as a consequence of these events, as well as because of the tragic Cold Days of Novi Sad (Újvidék). Therefore, similar strategies of avoidance can also be detected here as well as. The argument is that the Hungarians should face no further expectations to take responsibility for these events.

Though Mészáros (1995) dedicates a whole chapter in his book to the raid of Novi Sad (Újvidék), mainly his goal is to argue against the work of Golubović (1992) and other Serbian interpretation of these events, of the 1990s. In this sense he also gets involved to the discourse of competing nationalism, instead of taking more distance from the object of his study by dedicating equal attention to crimes committed by both sides. In his attempt to balance the one-sidedly negative image of the Hungarians in Serbian historical works, he tends to stress those individual achievements of local Hungarian citizens, who managed to preclude further crimes against the Serbs due to their firm and brave actions. However, there are no similar stories mentioned regarding the period of Serbian atrocities against the Hungarians.

In this narrative, another common feature of Vojvodinian Hungarian historiography can be detected. Namely, by the linguistic construction of social actors, there is often a shift in identification with Hungarians as such as a cohesive national unit, or explicitly only with the local Vojvodinian Hungarians. In the case of positive traits, or when legitimizing the presence of the Hungarian forces in Vojvodina, the former framework of identification is used; while in discussions about the perpetrators of the committed crimes the differences between local Hungarians and the ones from Hungary proper are underlined. This strategy also serves the agenda of victimization and passivization, and the shift of responsibility. It is suggested, that local Hungarians were only passive sufferers of the history, while any kind of reference to the possible nationalistic, anti-Semitic attitudes and action of these people are displaced from the narrative. Another stylistic mean to express this kind of passiveness is when the history of the minority is referred as *'fate'* and *'destiny'*. In these cases as well local Hungarians are portrayed as passive sufferers of the historical events, without any active participation.

Good example of differentiation between local Hungarians and the ones who came from the kin-state during the war can also be spotted in Teleki's (1999) book when she argues, that by

the time Tito's partisans arrived to the Šajkaš region (Sajkás vidék), no 'foreign invaders' i.e. Hungarian units were left anymore, who were the perpetrators of earlier crimes, but only the local Hungarian population, which was, consequently, innocent. Beside the rejection of responsibility, by these kinds of constructive strategies, which present a homogenously innocent image of local Hungarians, there is no possibility to find out who were actually involved in previous crimes, and who were the ones who really innocently fell victims to the partisan cleansings. Other authors, like Matuska (2001) present a less generalized picture, and argue that the number of Hungarian victims during in 1944-1945 was much bigger, than of those who were listed as Nazi collaborators by the partisan administration, so he concludes that the majority of the victims certainly lost their lives innocently.

With respect to the crimes committed by the partisans against the Hungarian population in 1944-1945, these events are obviously represented in highly victim-centered narratives. Similarly to the case of Serbian – Croatian narratives on World War II, there are contested estimations about the actual number of the victims, using the strategy of overestimating the number of the co-national victims, while downplaying the one of the other ethnic group. With respect to the partisan cleansings the Vojvodinian Hungarian historiography usually mentioned 20 000 to 40 000 Hungarian victims, however, in some publications reference to 50 000 victims can also be found<sup>14</sup>. From the point of view of my analysis, however, the important thing is not to find out the historical 'truth' about these events, but to identify and to understand the function of discursive strategies involved in the examined historical narratives. From this perspective the actual number of the victims is less relevant, than their discursive representation.

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<sup>14</sup> See for example: Ötvenezer magyar vértanú. Tudósítás a jugoszláviai magyar holocaustról. 1944-1992. [Fifty thousand Hungarian Martyrs. Reports on the Yugoslavian Hungarian Holocaust]. (1992). Kiadó: Nyárádi István.

The victim-centered narratives were part of the constitutive strategies which promoted clear distinction between the ethnic in-group and out-group, as elemental social cleavages, and attached highly positive attributes to the ethnic Self on the bases of moral superiority. At the same time, when presenting the other ethnic group as the persecutor, as the genocidal Other, strategies of destruction were applied to de-legitimize the claims, and political interest of the out-group. In the case of the Vojvodinian Hungarian victims as well, parallels with the Jewish Holocaust were also applied in the discourse of victimization. Nyárádi's publication on the *Fifty thousand Hungarian Martyrs. Reports on the Yugoslavian Hungarian Holocaust* as well as Teleki (1999) also refers to the mass killings of 1944-45 as Hungarian Holocaust. As it was already demonstrated in previous chapters of this thesis, regarding similar parallelism between Jewish and Serbian sufferings during World War II, Jewish Holocaust was often generalized to any kind of national sufferings in nationalist historical narratives. However, in the present case, when the partisan execution of the Vojvodinian Hungarians is defined as Hungarian Holocaust, it also means the complete displacement of the persecution of Hungarian Jews from the narrative, who lived in Vojvodina before the Shoah. The term 'Hungarian Holocaust', namely, refers to the extermination of Hungarian Jews during World War II, also of those who were deported from or executed in Vojvodina. However, by this rhetorical twist, not only the victimhood of Hungarians is further dramatized, but any kind of responsibility for the elimination of the Jew is rejected.

One of the most typical characteristics of Vojvodinian Hungarian historiography is to present the victims of the partisan persecutions as the martyrs of the nation. Consequently, these events became the part of national myth creation of redemption and suffering, and unjust treatment. The visual aspect of these works which often contained religious symbols as illustrations to these historical events contributed a lot to elevate them into mythical level of

national discourses. Some of the examples of such visual expressions are the book covers, especially the ones written by Márton Matuska. His book titled *Három mártírunk (Three of our Martyrs)* Jesus' crown of thorn appears on the cover, while the cover picture of the book titled: *Hová tűntek Zsablyáról a magyarok? (Where did the Hungarians from Žabalj (Zsablya) Disappear)* depicts the scene, when Virgin Mary holds her dead son, Jesus. The combination of the spheres of saint and profane are not alien elements of myth creation in the case of other nations neither. However, the combination of these elements with historical works, which have the ambition to reveal historical truth, sheds immediate doubt to the scientific objectivity of such narratives. On the other hand, however, they might be successful discursive tools to establish continuity with the victims of the past who – analogously with Jesus – died for the present members of the community. Such representations are also powerful strategies of shifting blame and responsibility, by portraying the ethnic in-group as ultimately innocent sufferer of the history. Extension of the individual victimhood on the whole ethnic group with the combination of religious motives symbolically elevates the whole community to sacred heights.

Further characteristics of Vojvodinian Hungarian historiography is the use of historical parallelism. Both in the publication of Nyárádi (1992) and Teleki (1999) there is a comparison between the Yugoslav war of the 1990s, and the events of World War II. First of all, showing the similarities between these two historical periods, the authors aim to give external legitimization of their narrative. The horrifying images of the war of the 1990s were widely present in the public discourses. By the use of this historical parallel, these images could also be associated with the events of World War II. As by the end of the 1990s nobody could question the cruelties committed during the Yugoslav war, such parallels could also retrospectively confirm the narratives on post-World War II Hungarian executions as well.

The authors' strategy to use the topos of 'return of the history', served to bridge the time difference of the two historical periods and to bring the more distant past close to actual present experiences.

There are also significant stylistic differences in presenting the crimes committed by the Hungarians in contrast to the crimes committed against them. Not only the contested estimation of the number of the victims makes the portraying of the latter events more dramatized, but also the nominalization of these events, the selection of adjectives used in the description. Though all the authors refer to the Cold Days of Novi Sad (Újvidék) as *tragic, shameful, painful events*, the persecution of the Hungarian victims is often signified as a *horror, genocide, torture, and murder*. Illustrative example of such differentiated nomination is the term *vendetta*, and other strategies of somatization, when reference to human blood becomes part of the description. Cseres goes so far in this nominating strategies, that he only implicitly refers to the crimes committed by the Hungarians as "the events of Novi Sad (Újvidék)" while the partisan atrocities are worded as: "Serbian vendetta [...] which was ten times greater in size, and many times graver in cruelty" (Cseres, 1992, p. 17). Similar strategy of downplaying and relativization can be detected when opposing the idiom of 'cold days' with the one of 'freezing weeks' when referring to the crimes committed against Hungarian co-nationals.

By paying attention to these fine elements of historical narratives one can detect how fuzzy sometimes the border between historiography and literature is. As significant amount of the research done by the authors of these works was also based on oral history, these parts of the texts naturally include more poetic and artistic expressions as well. Some authors, however, also illustrate their findings explicitly with pieces of fine literature. Examples of this is the poem written by Teleki herself: *Keresem az apám sírját (I am Searching for my Father's*

*Grave*) (1999). Obviously, these elements further contribute to the dramatic expression of these events, and play important role in emotional mobilization of the audience. Undoubtedly, any kind of representation of wartime events fit into pattern of drama, both in the case of scientific and non-scientific works. However, disproportionate use of these rhetoric tools, with respect to portraying the two groups of victims, might also express possible biases and hidden agenda of the authors.

#### **4.3.4 Summary of Research Findings**

During the discourse analysis of the post-1989 Hungarian historiography in Vojvodina my aim was to examine the characteristics of minority history writing and to unfold the most important discursive strategies involved in these narratives. Considering the contextual variables of the historical discourse on the events of World War II in the 1990s, the selection of events, which became part of these narratives, as well as the rhetoric tools of linguistic realization; my goal was to examine, whether these new post-communist transformational discourses resulted in self-critical reconciliation with the past, or they rather served other legitimizing functions.

Among the most important contextual variables which significantly influenced the characteristics of Hungarian minority historiography, radically new international political circumstances as well as the violent dissolution process of Yugoslavia are the most important to be mentioned. The fall of the Soviet Union was accompanied with the displacement of socialist historical narratives in all of the countries of the former socialist block, and resulted in the resurgence of national historiographies in the region. This made it possible that the historical investigations dealing with Hungarian minority communities also found support in the kin-state, where several of these works were published.

Due to the Yugoslav war, however, the case of Hungarian historiography in Vojvodina was further influenced by highly nationalist Serbian historical discourses as well. The agenda of the Hungarian historical writings can only be understood in the light of, and as a reaction to majority historiography of the 1990s as well as previous narratives of the Tito era. Along with these unique political and historical circumstances, demographic characteristics of the Hungarian minority, which show continuous tendency of decline and the generally perceived existential angst during wartime also strengthened nationalist interpretations of the past.

With respect to the selection of the historical facts, which became part of the examined narratives, it seems obvious, that the main goal of Hungarian historiography was to unfold the story of partisan persecutions in the early year of the communist regime. There were less attempts to re-contextualize in new transformational discourses other historical events of World War II, like the crimes committed by Hungarians during the war. I identified a fallacy in argumentation, when the authors justified their decision not to elaborate on these events with the fact that Yugoslav and Serbian historiography was already extensively dealing with them. Discursive strategies of avoidance and mitigation could also be spotted when portraying the years of Hungarian occupation. Not only the selection of the historical events, but the stylistic, poetic aspects of language use supported my argument.

The strategies of shifting blame and responsibility, mitigation of the committed crimes was also spotted in distinguishing between the local Hungarian population and the ones who came from Hungary-proper during the time of occupation. In such construction of social actors, the former group is portrayed as innocent, while often only the latter one is held responsible for the atrocities committed against the ethnic out-group. These kinds of interpretations lead us to another typical characteristics of minority historiography, namely to use passivization strategies, and to present the ethnic Self as innocent sufferer of the history, without active

participation and no control above the historic events. Interpreting the history of the minority as *fate* or *destiny* were illustrative examples of this hidden agenda. Furthermore, religious symbolism and overlapping of saint and profane spheres contributed a lot to interpret the story of the Hungarian minority as the story of misery, passion and salvation.

The ultimate goal of these strategies was to constitute a social reality in which the ethnic Self is endowed with positive attributes – in this case with moral superiority – while the rival ethnic group is portrayed as the genocidal Other. Constitutive and destructive macro-strategies identified during the analysis, also primarily aimed to construct unified notion of the Hungarian nation, by emphasizing positive traits of characteristics. At the same time several rhetorical tools were mobilized to de-legitimize the political and social interests of the majority ethnic group.

In the light of these results, I got to the conclusion, that although the post-1989 Hungarian historiography in Vojvodina made important steps to break the historical taboos of the socialist era, however, especially with respect to the stylistic and rhetoric aspects of these works, they failed construct adequately self-critical and self-reflexive historical narratives. Based on my analysis, in the case of Hungarian minority historiography in Vojvodina, we can detect more than just some unavoidably subjective use of narrative patterns in the representation of history. Consequently, these transformational discourses failed to promote real reconciliation with the past as it was in the case of German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, but they themselves have become part of competing nationalist discourses. Therefore, they also played the function to strengthen collective identity, and to legitimize minority political interests, based on the arguments of existential anxiety for the community's threatened identity and the destruction of the nation.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the present study was to examine a highly relevant, though still poorly researched field of inter-ethnic relations in Serbia, namely the characteristics of Hungarian minority historiography after the political transitions of 1989. I restricted my investigation to the contested historical narratives of World War II and the early years of the Tito regime. While the competing nationalist interpretations of the past between the Serbian vs. Croatian elites, or the Serbian vs. Bosniak elites are already widely covered, existing scientific literature still lacked similar analysis regarding Hungarian minority historiography. Such critical reflections on historical writings may, however, contribute to reconciliation with the past, and foster peaceful inter-ethnic relations in the region.

In the early chapters of my thesis I provided detailed theoretical introduction to the discursive construction of nation and national identity, arguing that these phenomena are not essentially existing entities, but the products social discourses. The notions of collective remembrance and forgetting, selective reinterpretation of the national past play crucial role in creating and legitimizing the existence and interests of these communities. Furthermore, national historical narratives may also be used for political mobilization. I was arguing that similar tendencies could be detected in the case of Yugoslavia as well, when during the violent dissolution of the state, selective reconstruction of the past served to justify the highly nationalistic aspiration of the political elites in order to create their own nation states. Consequently, post-socialist transformation narratives did not provide field of open historical debates, but rather played the function to legitimize nationalism.

In line with the methodological principals of Critical Discourse Analysis, the aim of my research was to examine how the historical events between 1941 and 1945 in Vojvodina were

presented in post-1989 minority historiography, what were the main discursive strategies involved in these historical narratives, and what function they aimed to fulfill in the unique historical circumstances of the 1990s. The identification of the most important contextual variables, which influenced Vojvodinian Hungarian historiography – like the radically new political changes of the examined period, the social and demographic characteristics of the minority community, or the impact of nationalist Serbian historical narratives – was followed by the systematic fine analysis of my primary sources. During my investigations I was not only focusing on the content of the historical discourse, but my goal was to unfold the possible background intention; a possible hidden agenda behind these narratives.

My analysis showed, that the most important discursive strategies involved in the reconstruction of the events of World War II in the post-1989 Vojvodinian Hungarian historiography are the strategies of shifting blame and responsibility, passivization, strategy of scapegoating, of legitimization the moral superiority of the in-group and de-legitimization of social and political interests of the ethnic Other, strategies of avoidance and defense, rejection of own active participation in shaping of history. Based on these results, my final conclusion is, that although the examined historical work had great importance in breaking serious taboos of the socialist era, they still failed to provide open platform for reconciliation with the past. Instead of distancing themselves from nationalistic discourses, they have become powerful constitutive forces of a social reality in which ethnic cleavages become the primary categories of differentiation. Besides the actual political interests of the minority elites, deeper explanatory factors behind these narratives were the perception of threatened existence of the ethnic community.

Within the frameworks of further research on this field, it would be interesting to see, if there are any successful synthesis efforts in minority-majority historiography, and to identify within what kind of political, historical circumstances could these initiatives be prosperous. Whether there is a critical length of time between the period of ethnic-conflicts and the time of future successful reconciliation? How are these shifts of paradigms connected to generational differences? Answering these questions would not only provide a deeper understanding of Serbian – Hungarian relationships in Vojvodina, but could also contribute to our general knowledge on post-conflict resolution.

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