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## Museum (Re)public<sup>1</sup>

Through the examination of various episodes of the 'sessions at the museum', this text looks at the educational function of the Museum of the Second AVNOJ Session in the Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav context at the level of performance. The text is divided into three chapters. The first looks at the development of the AVNOJ Museum, its function in society, and the museological and methodological context of its activity. In the second chapter I give a short overview of the 'fate' of this museum – which was caught up in the storm of the recent war in Bosnia and Herzegovina – and of the first steps that have been made toward rejuvenating the institution. The reframing of the image of the AVNOJ's Second Session after the disintegration of Yugoslavia, as exemplified by the AVNOJ Museum, is the theme of the third section.

*Key words:* performativity of WWII images, museum, AVNOJ session, anti-fascism(s).

## Музеј (Ре)публике

Кроз преглед различитих епизода „заседања у музеју“, овим текстом проматра се едукативна функција Музеја II заседања АВНОЈ-а на разини перформанса, у југословенском и постјугословенском контексту. Први део посвећен је изградњи Музеја АВНОЈ-а, друштвеној функцији и музеолошко-методолошким оквирима његовог деловања. У другом делу текста, дајем кратак осврт на „судбину“ ратним вихором захваћеног музеја и прве кораке предузете у правцу обнављања ове институције. Изновно кадрирање (енг. *re-framing*) слике II заседања АВНОЈ-а након распада Југославије, на примеру Музеја АВНОЈ-а, тема је треће концептуалне целине.

*Кључне речи:* перформативност слика Другог светског рата, музеј, заседање АВНОЈ-а, антифашизми.

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<sup>1</sup> The text "Museum (Re)public" is the outcome of several years of research (2012–15) in the library and archive of the Museum of the Second Session of the National Antifascist Liberation Council of Yugoslavia (hereafter: AVNOJ Museum), as well as the collection of secondary material by conducting numerous interviews with participants of the "AVNOJ Days" events, museum staff and various NGO activists who have been credited with the renewal of this institution. Regarding the museum and its institutionalization thresholds, to some extent I can speak as an 'insider' since I was involved as external associate in several projects of the AVNOJ Museum. I will mention only two: the Educational Center „Museum as a place of permanent conference“ (my own concept 2014) and the conference „1945-2015: museological apologies of (dis)continuity“ (conception and organization 2015).

## Museum (as) Parliament

A museum cannot replicate what its subject of musealisation is, because when a historical record / object / document enters a museum, it becomes something new. (Myers 2006, 505-536). The process of recontextualisation, i.e. the passage from 'natural environment' to 'museum's reality', reverses any future possibility of an authentic dialogue with the exhibited object. A visitor is confronted with a representation of musealia, the result of curatorial strategies and tactics to conceptualize a 'spatial-message' where „each individual object can be defined on the basis of its location – physical position in space and its relation to other objects and its 'niche' – its functional position in relation to space and other facilities“ (Mensch 2011, 13-21). The exhibition context is also the reconstruction of historical event(s), their recycling, reproduction and simulacrum. The museum „as a social technology“ (Ivan Karp et al. 2006, 2) was created, and still remains as an idea of a „materialized performative utterance“ (Macdonald 2003, 1-16), the place of (national and later on transnational) identification. The museum plays a particularly important role in times of crisis, or so-called 'transitions', when the population should be prepared for approaching socio-political changes. Regarding the treatment of heritage by the Yugoslav authorities, the fact is „that one of the very first laws passed – the war was not yet over – was on the protection of cultural property“ (Kumović 2004). „Museal forms have never existed separately from social development“ (Stránský 1987, 3), so in this sense the 'Yugoslavization' of museums resulted in two types of institutions: the Museum of Revolution (the museum of the *idea* of socialism)<sup>2</sup> and NOB<sup>3</sup>-Museum (the museum dedicated to one event/person from the Second World War)<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Musealisation of the idea (of revolution) presupposes a high degree of flexibility and modernity when it comes to the collecting or exhibiting activities of the museum. On the origin of the "Museum of the Revolution of nations and nationalities of Yugoslavia" Veselinka Kastratović Ristić says: "The lack of material heritage, which would show the formation and history of the labor movement was a challenge for the founders because the backbone of the exhibition was the political thought and not the object" (Kastratović Ristić 2008, 326 -340). Zbyslav Stránský wrote on the collecting activities of museums of revolution, calling them pioneers with a progressive orientation because in them "the most distinctive requirement applies a dialectical linking of the past and present, what in museological terms means that collecting activity directed towards the past must be associated with collecting activity towards the present as well, and therefore precisely in these museums the question of the relationship of science and museum is actualized." (Stránský 1984, 9-33).

<sup>3</sup> NOB is abbreviation for Narodnooslobodilačka borba (People's Liberation Struggle).

<sup>4</sup> The tendency of building independent NOB-Museums started in 1949. Dušan Pleča gave a detailed report on the issue of the NOB-Museum in the journal *Museum* 8 (Pleča 1953). He states that SUBNOR (Association of Veterans of World War II) takes upon itself the obligation of collecting objects from the National Liberation War and makes possible the establishing of two categories of an independent National Liberation War Museum: one which deals with the development of NOB within the whole Yugoslavia or within a republic, and for the second category he specified the memorial NOB-Museums dedicated to a specific event or period of the NOB. The function of the museum, according to Dušan Pleča is to „interpret the political line of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in the Liberation War, which the masses have accepted as their own,

From the combination of these two types of museum ensued the „museum of the creation of the Yugoslavian idea“, i.e. the Museum of the Second AVNOJ<sup>5</sup> Session in Jajce (Bosnia and Herzegovina). Regarding the fact that nothing of the original inventory of the historic building where the session took place was preserved after the war (the former „Sokol House“, Serbian: „Sokolski Dom“; in 1943 it was renamed „AVNOJ House“), priority was given to performative means of communication in creating the conceptual basis of the AVNOJ Museum. It was conceived as a place where the political elite and the „ordinary people“ can meet, to celebrate the Republic Day (official federal holiday commemorating the Second AVNOJ session held on 29<sup>th</sup> November 1943), and as a conference and exhibition complex. Consequently, the museum was opened by a series of sessions. In the words of Radoljub Čolaković: „The museum should provide its visitors with a faithful picture of the conditions in which the nascent federation of Yugoslav peoples appeared, but more than that, the museum should embody a place in which our visitors, especially young people, could breathe in Yugoslavian patriotism.”<sup>6</sup> An inaugural meeting of the Federal Executive Council was held at the museum, when Moša Pijade, one of the leading political figures of post-war Yugoslavia, gave the speech titled „The development of the new Yugoslavia on the basis of the historic decisions of the second AVNOJ session“. On the one hand, political speech(s) as a subject of musealisation for the AVNOJ Museum will be simulated through the stage adaptation of the `authentic space` and atmosphere of the historic session (the furniture was re-made)<sup>7</sup> – a `frozen image` – and on the other hand, there was an

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and they are obliged to interpret and explain the victory of the masses against a treacherous local bourgeoisie, to stand out in the war-forged brotherhood and unity of our people“ (Pleča 1953, 45-51).

<sup>5</sup> AVNOJ (Anti-fascist Council of the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia) was the supreme political body of the Yugoslav anti-fascist resistance movement in World War II. Its second session held in 1943 in Jajce (city in Bosnia and Herzegovina) proclaimed the abolition of the previous Kingdom of Yugoslavia and establishment of the federal democratic Yugoslavia.

<sup>6</sup> In accordance with the decision of the Committee for the organization and maintenance of important sites from the War and the Revolution at the Central Committee of the Association of Veterans of World War II (SUBNOR), in 1953 the Museum of Second AVNOJ Session was opened. On the left wall of the foyer a marble slab was placed, 110 x 65 cm, with an inscription in Latin alphabet stating: “The representatives of all peoples of Yugoslavia in the Second Session of AVNOJ, held in this building between 29th and 30th November 1943, have reached the fundamental decisions on the creation of the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia, as part of general people's liberation and revolutionary struggle” (Bešlić 1958).

<sup>7</sup> In the first few years, the museum operated with minimum capacity, only fulfilling its exhibiting function. Its first, modest museum exhibition, conceptualized by Emil Vičić, consisted of 177 photographs, 179 documents from the National Liberation War and 18 exhibits. (Vojinović, without year of publication). The reconstruction of the building and interior design was entrusted to the architect Živa Đorđević with the goal to reconstruct the building and the furniture as faithfully as possible – in style and material – to the original. Showcases and exhibition panels occupied a central partitioning role, whilst the „AVNOJ stage“ was represented independently. The only document that testifies to the later amended (final) museum display from the Yugoslav period is held in the archive of the AVNOJ Museum, under the title „The Investment Program of recovery and modification of the museum exhibition“ (from 1977). The commissioning body for the pro-

accompanying museum program (event) offered as a 'live session' ('the real thing'). In this way, the political event of the 29<sup>th</sup> November 1943 has been studied and stage-managed for the audience, consisting of historical personages<sup>8</sup> together with citizens who in this way become witnesses of a new session, thus 'entering a history' which is performed in a „museum-as-context“ (Mensch 2011, 13-21). Conference exhibitions were included in the so called 'exhibition corpus', which is a very modern take on the function of the museum, where activities such as symposia and conferences are treated, as Bourdieu (1993) puts it, "as a part of cultural production" (Myers 2006, 505-536). In reviving the session, the focus of the institution shifted from "storing" to the discussion of the memory of the session. In a symbolic move, through the reenactments of the historical session, the museum opened the door to what is "behind the scene". In the sixties, as the activities of the AVNOJ Museum expanded<sup>9</sup>, the permanent exhibition was enriched with witnesses' video

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ject was the Municipality of Jajce and the executor was the Institute for Architecture and Urban Planning in Sarajevo. The chief designer was Nedeljko Rosić. In this document it was stated that the restoration of the historic hall had been carried out in such a way that it looked as authentic as possible, visually and in terms of atmosphere, to how it appeared in 1943. In practical terms, this meant reconstructing the podium with a table covered with a Bosnian carpet; on the left and right sides of the stage were furnaces; the floor and ceiling were made from pine boards; Tito's armchair (in the characteristic form of armchairs from inter-war period); chairs „tonet“; benches (without backrests, which were typical for that period); Tito's bust (the original bust had been made by the sculptor Antun Augustinčić but was destroyed during the war, and was remade by the same artist again for the museum, again using photographs); portraits of Marx, Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill which had been restored by Đorđe Andrejević Kun and Tito's portrait as an artwork by Ismet Mujezinović (on the left side of the stage was Tito-Churchill and on the right Stalin-Roosevelt); galvanized plates through which the letters of the slogan were perforated saying: „Death to fascism“ (in large letters) with a five-pointed star in the upper center of the slogan; on the balcony stood the slogan: „Long live our heroic People's Liberation Fight“; on the left of the stage were slogans: „Long live Comrade Tito“ and „Long live our allies USSR, England and America“; a third slogan on that side has not yet been subject to reading; on the right of the stage were the slogans: „Long live Comrade Stalin“ and „Long live The Red Army“; flags are made from canvas and parachute silk; the windows were covered with dark blue cardboard; the Bosnian carpet was on the balcony railings. Yugoslav coat of arms (the first sketch by Đorđe Andrejević-Kun); flags: on the left side of the stage were the flags of Macedonia and Yugoslavia (both without a five-pointed star), the British and the flag of Serbia (without the five-pointed star), and on the right side of the stage the flags of the USSR, Slovenia, United States (with 48 stars) and Croatia (without the five-pointed star). In all rooms, on the stage, on the seats and tables, a small inventory of minutes, belts, coats, arms, partisan bags, etc. was arranged simulating the atmosphere of the session.

<sup>8</sup> Every year, on the 29th November, the surviving AVNOJ-councilors gathered in Jajce, in the AVNOJ Museum, to evoke memories.

<sup>9</sup> Until 1959, Municipality of Jajce provided few resources, only those enough to perform the most basic museum activities i.e. the collection of exhibits and for adding to the museum collection, right up to the point of establishing of the Memorial Museum by the Republican Council for Culture of Bosnia and Herzegovina. From this moment onwards, the Municipality of Jajce took over its financing. In the jubilee year of 1963, the museum significantly expanded its operations. One small gallery was founded as a part of the museum, specially tasked with nourishing the visual arts dedicated to NOB and particularly the historical event of the Second AVNOJ Session. The works of key artists of that time were exhibited: Božidar Jakac, Đorđe Andrejević-Kun, Bora



and audio recordings – from AVNOJ councilors. In their statements, it was possible to learn about the political diversity of the delegates (Zečević 1963, 290-297), partisans meeting with chetniks, and about the peasants' lack of belief in the intentions of the partisan army (Čolaković 1963, 97-139), which is unusual in the musealisation of the World War II in Yugoslavia. Even Tito himself, in his speech, which is in the introduction of the publication "Thus was born Yugoslavia" (III), in explaining the historical significance of the event (the Second AVNOJ session), stated that "these historic decisions are the most powerful weapons against the occupier, and against all kinds of traitors and reactionaries who have cast slander on the NOB movement, calling it purely communist, etc." (Tito 1963, editorial). Keeping in mind the political intentions for building the network of the NOB-Museums – as the pillars of Yugoslavia, the carriers of "the founding identity-myth of the second Yugoslavia" (Höpken 2008, 27-33) – it can be concluded that the AVNOJ museum held a special status as a 'cradle of Yugoslavism'. It was an institution which is 'something else', more than a mere museum, closest in definition to a communication center, a „museum-forum in the age of communism“<sup>10</sup>, freed from the Soviet matrix and the ossified matrices of Marxist-Leninist museology. Without doubt, it couldn't be understood within the discursive apparatus of New Museology, which in that period, in the 'Western hemisphere', advocated a total opening of the museum toward the local community and its needs. Nevertheless, the prosperity of the Museum of the Second AVNOJ Session still very much brought benefits to the citizens of Jajce. In 1984 a quarter of a million tourists visited the city-museum which „was voted the best maintained tourist center of the country“ (Nikolić 2013, 22-24). Although „socialist pilgrimages in a museum context“ were a well known phenomenon also in the European Eastern Bloc, the case of the AVNOJ museum is from today's perspective unique for two reasons: the museum as a place of ritual retained its way of functioning, and the celebrations of the Republic Day outlived the state

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Baruh, Stevan Bondarev, Moša Pijade, Ismet Mujezinović and others. In that same year, the museum launched itself also as a publisher, and published a large collection - in five volumes - of the memories of the participants of the II Session of AVNOJ titled „Thus was born the new Yugoslavia“, and a photographic monograph „The Second Session of AVNOJ in 1943“. A photography lab and library was added to the museum complex as well. In addition to the publications and photographs, the museum recorded its first documentary short films. In 1968, in cooperation with „Sutjeska film“, the museum produced the film „The Parliament of the Revolution“, which premiered on 28<sup>th</sup> November 1968. (Vojinović, no year of publication).

<sup>10</sup> The idea of the 'museum as a forum' is a relatively new idea. For example, Piotrovski's „critical museum“ is defined as a „museum-forum included in the public debate, which deals with the important and often controversial issues of a given society, the problems related to the history of a given society and its modernity. The Critical Museum is an institution that works in favor of democracy based on discussion, but it is also a self-critical institution able to revise its own tradition, which questions its own authority and the art-historical canon on which itself formed“ (Piotrovski 2013). Interestingly enough, the fact that the slogan „Long live Comrade Stalin“ has never been removed illustrates the idea which the AVNOJ Museum upholds - the idea of the museum as a „time capsule“. In this light, it can be concluded that the profession enjoyed a certain kind of political immunity and credibility, and that it was even possible (after the „witch hunt“ of the Yugoslav Stalinists, starting in 1948) to interpret and openly debate the aforementioned slogan „Long live Comrade Stalin“ in the Museum of the Second Session of AVNOJ.

project of Yugoslavia; also, after its reconceptualization, the museum inherited a „hybrid heritage“ with a supranational character. It is the only surviving NOB-Museum in whose reconstruction all former Yugoslav republics took part.

Whose voice is speaking from the new-but-also-old-museum and to whom is it speaking? This will be discussed in the following lines.

### **The war in/for ‘reconciliation-museum’<sup>11</sup>**

*Museumcide*<sup>12</sup> is still waiting to be written. The war that ended the era of Yugoslavia violently erased thousands of NOB monuments. Museums were also subjected to looting and destroyed.<sup>13</sup> In the 1990s, just like in a movie, „shows“ were interrupted by army units who were „liberating“ museums’ showcases in which partisan war-equipment was kept, and in such a way restored the exhibits to their original function. The museums of (brotherhood and) unity became military barracks, ruins, ghost places and public-toilets<sup>14</sup>.

Although the Yugoslav museums were signatories of the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954), no international political body responded to the destruction of museums (Brodie 2003, 10-22). Museums were „caught by surprise“ with the war, so the response was sporadic and based on the personal initiative of museum workers, who came to their rescue.<sup>15</sup> Motivation for the demolition and looting of the museums was only

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<sup>11</sup> In the Yugoslav museums, the master narrative was reflected in the idea (of brotherhood and unity) achieved by the united struggle against fascism during World War II, which led to the unification, and thus reconciliation, of the Yugoslav people.

<sup>12</sup> Here I am alluding to the title of the book „Knjigocid. The destruction of books in Croatia in the 1990s“ (Lešaja, 2012) in which there is also a glimpse of the destruction of books and archival material in the memorial museums in Croatia. A list of looted, demolished, abandoned and destroyed museums after the breakup of Yugoslavia – either regionally or in individual successor states of Yugoslavia – does not exist to my knowledge.

<sup>13</sup> Concretely speaking, the AVNOJ Museum, during the Serbian reign over Jajce 1992-1995, was partially burned down and exhibits blown up. It has never been established whether this was a politically directed act, or if the „exhibits were resold for good money“. See: Šagolj, Zoran. 2001. „Otišao si Josipe, ostala je tuga“. *Slobodna Dalmacija*. [http://www.unet.univie.ac.at/~a9802328/ojajcu/crvenisalon\\_\\_muzej\\_avnoja\\_\\_jajce.htm](http://www.unet.univie.ac.at/~a9802328/ojajcu/crvenisalon__muzej_avnoja__jajce.htm), accessed January 11, 2016.

<sup>14</sup> „This (the Museum of the II AVNOJ Session) was a rubbish dump when we arrived. It was a public toilet, stank of urine and excrement, rain spouted through the roof. Prior to this, shortly after the war, it functioned as a bridal salon and later on some kids wanted to establish a Croatian Sokol Home but they all left., - Excerpt from the interview with Zeko, the current museum janitor, conducted by Dragan Nikolić (Nikolić 2013).

<sup>15</sup> It is worth mentioning the fact that „the war happened to museums“, and that it was not possible to protect them as more or less all former employees of these institutions claim; in 1979 – a decade later the Museum of the II AVNOJ Session will be found in flames – the museum hosted the Assembly and the Congress of the Federation of Museum Associations of Yugoslavia which brought together 250 museum workers and whose theme was „Protecting the museum collections

partly financial.<sup>16</sup> The calamity of war did not leave the Museum of the Second AVNOJ Session untouched. Its roof structure was set on fire and rich museum collections taken away. After the war ended, a few enthusiasts from Jajce who did not settle for such a situation began to collect the books from the ruins and clean the former museum building. They searched after the stolen museum inventory in neighboring countries and further abroad.<sup>17</sup> It was a „matter of honor“ (Nikolić, 2013). In the early 2000s, when war passions and national tensions had quietened, a small group of people from two local associations (Society for the Protection of Cultural-Historical and Natural Values of Jajce, and Association „Josip Broz Tito“), led by Dr. Enes Milak, entered into a `battle for remembrance`. In their negotiations with the government, they played on two cards: political, and therefore financial support was simultaneously needed, and they proposed the idea of the museum as a place of celebration of the statehood of Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand it was necessary to alarm the museum professionals. In September 2002, the „Commission for Preservation of National Monuments“ declared the „AVNOJ building“ a national monument of Bosnia and Herzegovina which should be restored to the function of the Museum of the Second AVNOJ Session. Financial support came shortly after from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (one of two main political entities of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina).<sup>19</sup> This „heritage gueril-

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in war and peace“. The results of the meeting were published in „Proceedings V-VI 1979-80“, by the Museum of Revolution of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo in 1981.

<sup>16</sup> After the war, the AVNOJ Museum managed to get back only 10 of the 846 art-works which the museums had owned before the war. This information was given to me by Dr. Enes Milak (director of the Museum of AVNOJ in the period 2008-2013) in an email interview conducted in September 2012.

<sup>17</sup> The statement by the director of the Museum of the Second AVNOJ Session Emsada Leko: „After the war in Jajce we found Tito’s armchair, two side armchairs which were in the hall, two ovens, some of the original chairs, and portraits of Tito, Stalin, Churchill, Roosevelt and Marx. Portraits of Engels and Lenin, unfortunately, were not found. In the municipal archives of Jajce we found over 1,500 original photographs taken during the Second World War. In Jajce there are 3,000 titles of books, magazines, periodicals and catalogs. Kun’s portraits and nine paintings, as well as a part of the museum’s library were preserved in the Franciscan monastery in Jajce.“ See online interview: <https://bedrudingusic.wordpress.com/2014/12/page/3/> (last modified December 15, 2014).

<sup>18</sup> Contemporary sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina is rooted in decisions of the ZAVNOBIH, which were later legitimized at the Second AVNOJ session. ZAVNOBIH was the supreme antifascist council of Bosnia and Herzegovina during World War II – council’s most prominent session took place on 25<sup>th</sup> November 1943. Mrkonjić Grad, where the ZAVNOBIH session was held, now belongs to the Republic of Srpska (Serb political entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina) which is belligerent towards ZAVNOBIH heritage, whereas in the entity of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina November 25<sup>th</sup> is celebrated as a Day of Statehood. In these circumstances, Jajce, often designated as a “royal city”, and the AVNOJ Museum as the “cradle of the second Yugoslavia”, have been accepted also as symbols of modern statehood of the Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina.

<sup>19</sup> The reconstruction of the museum building was mainly financed by the Ministry of Culture and Sports of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The reconstruction of the ground floor, including the toilets, was funded by the main board of the Slovenian SUBNOR or by other Slovenian donors. Part of the funds for the restoration of settings have also been donated by: the gov-

la<sup>20</sup>, persevering step by small step – but not allowing out of its sight that there isn't such a thing as a (politicaly) neutral heritage – restored the legitimacy to the institution of the AVNOJ Museum. Firstly, the „Committee for the restoration of the permanent exhibition and the museum building of AVNOJ Museum“ was created. The representatives of the Association of Veterans of World War II (SUBNOR) from all the former republics of Yugoslavia were invited. The sessions were held in 2004 – when SUBNOR representatives from all the former Yugoslav republics gathered together and agreed that the museum should be rebuilt in a joint effort. In 2005 they strategically „made contact on the terrain“, and took the first small steps toward a permanent exhibition,<sup>21</sup> in the building of the former museum – „with no plaster on the walls“ and with an unresolved legal status – and organized the event „May Days of Anti-fascism“. In 2006 the preparation of the application to put the city of Jajce on the UNESCO heritage list was under way, which was later withdrawn. In 2007 the public institution „Museum of the Second AVNOJ Session“ was founded. In the same year, Nataša Mataušić, at that time a curator of the Croatian History Museum, wrote the synopsis for the new museum exhibition. Her concept – essentially being the restoration of the museum to what it had been in Yugoslavia – was supplemented by the requirements of the representatives of SUBNOR organizations. In addition, they insisted that each former Yugoslav republic should get a niche in the museum where the development of the governments of each of the former republics could be presented. Museums workers from the former republics were contacted through SUBNORs, and were tasked with creating niches i. e. pavilions, while for the central part of the exhibition, as well as for the pavilion of Bosnia-Herzegovina, help was sought from the most appropriate place: the Museum of

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ernment of Montenegro via the Central Committee SUBNOR Montenegro, the Ministry of Culture and Education of the Republic of Srpska, the Ministry of Culture and Sports of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Ministry of Physical Planning of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Jajce Municipality and individuals. Croatia and Serbia have not financially supported the restoration of the AVNOJ Museum.

<sup>20</sup> The restoration of the AVNOJ Museum was initiated by citizens. According to one of the participants, Prof. Dubravko Lovrenović: “Life cannot stop because we do not have a Ministry of Culture at the state level. So we cannot wait for the Ministry of Culture to come and give help to us, we have to work and act, in some way to be guerrillas”. Because of this statement, according to Dragan Nikolić, the group of people that had gathered with the aim of restoring the original functionality to the devastated building of the AVNOJ Museum, have been called “heritage guerrillas” (Nikolić 2013, 22-24).

<sup>21</sup> In addition to the photos of the Second AVNOJ Session, an exhibition of the academic painter Aldin Popaja from Jajce was also organized under the title “Urbicide – the story of Jajce”. On the one hand there was the sad picture of wet, graffitied and unpainted walls, cheap and pale copies of photos from the Second AVNOJ session arranged as a collage on the so-called classroom panels, and in addition several works of art (with no apparent sense in how the two parts were to merge). On the other hand, if this “situation of the exhibition” liberated from the visually seductive role can be understood as a political performance of “squatting” the former museum, an occupation of the ‘territory of remembrance’, then of course we will think of the meaning of this performance and its historical importance as a step in the realization of the goal of reviving the memory of the AVNOJ Museum.

History in Sarajevo, the successor to the Museum of the Revolution of Bosnia and Herzegovina<sup>22</sup>.

### ***Heimatlos*<sup>23</sup> Museum: Birthplace of the former states of Yugoslavia vs. The birthplace of Yugoslavia**

After the breakup of Yugoslavia, the Museum of the Second AVNOJ Session not only lost its authenticity (its collections), but also its legitimacy (the state or social order whose instrument and the product it had been). So what gives it its image as a museum today? At the core of all museum studies, including this one, lies the question: What makes a museum a museum? For the example of the AVNOJ Museum, this complex issue becomes even more burdened by the dimension, or the sub-question: what makes a *heimatlos* museum a museum? The universal definition of the museum as an institution can be simplistically summed up in three words: the preservation of national treasures. But in the case of the AVNOJ Museum, its own name is a warning that, with respect to its hybrid heritage, it is not reducible to an origin belonging to a single member state. Seemingly, after Yugoslavia, one Yugoslav museum remains. However, it belongs *de facto* and *de jure* to Bosnia and Herzegovina whose 'Dayton hybridity' guarantees its legitimacy, with all the controversy that it brings. Can the Museum of the Second AVNOJ Session symbolize the 'cradle of Yugoslavia' and Yugoslav successor states at the same time? How can it be reconciled with Yugoslav, national and European (re)integration? The key is in its symbolic potential – the museum as a temple (and/or forum) of anti-fascism: once mutual, shared and Yugoslav anti-fascism, and now torn apart, multiplied, and nationalized anti-fascism. A question remains: who is entitled to use this 'key' and to whom is it of use, i.e. the AVNOJ Museum as an advertising platform? Can the rhetoric of both „national liberation“ and „people's liberation“, speaking in Kuljić's words (Kuljić 2013), dwell under one roof, side by side?

Very similar to the dilemmas posed before AVNOJ councilors in 1943, “the same questions plagued the new architects of the AVNOJ Museum: how to

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<sup>22</sup> The Historical Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina would then actually operate – according to Dušan Otašević, the distinguished Yugoslav museologist and expert in the memorial (NOB) Yugoslav museums – in the role of a “buckle” between the spirit of two times / museums. This is the first and the only time when the achievements of Yugoslavia, at least those related to cooperation in the museum network, were revived. The re-evaluation of the collections of the former Museum of the Revolution, the search for the missing records or the entire collections from the different NOB-museums, dealing with “locked”, devastated or completely “erased” memorial museums throughout the former Yugoslavia, is unfortunately still nobody's concern.

<sup>23</sup> The German word “heimatlos” does not have a proper translation in the English language. It is a compound word (“Heimat” means “home”, “native”, “homeland”, “habitat” and “los” stays for “void off”. The closest translation would be “homeless” {adj}, “unhoused” {adj}, “homelessly” {adv}). Here I use the word “heimatlos museum” in order to underline the epistemological break which AVNOJ Museum “traveled” through. Museum lost its maker – the state – and through transformations entered a new realm of re-invention.

unite different cultural and political needs, communists, nationalists and ordinary citizens?“<sup>24</sup> How to make the date of the 29<sup>th</sup> November publicly relevant again? ‘Heritage guerrilla’ sought answers to these questions at six meetings of the „Committee for the restoration of settings and building of the AVNOJ Museum“, running over nearly a whole decade (the 2000s). The de-politicization of memory, the un-linking of anti-fascism from its communist prefix has become inevitable. In this light, there were discussions that the AVNOJ Museum should be awarded a brand new role by renaming it as „Anti-fascism Museum of Southeastern Europe“.<sup>25</sup> One of the proposals was to establish “the museum as a joint stock company (shareholders can be all those who expressed an interest in buying shares and thus will acquire the right to manage in proportion to their holding); a polyvalent space with a multi-functional character suited for scientific conferences, round tables, symposiums, mini-conferences, biennial, commemorative ceremonies, not only political, sociological, historical and economic events, but also cultural and artistic“.<sup>26</sup> Fortunately, members of the boards for the restoration of the museum eventually decided that the museum should remain a public, state institution. It can be argued that a national museum justifies its function by how it represents the state. The question is whether the „green light“ would have come from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (as the largest sponsor of the reconstruction of the museum) if the museum had not been recognized as a place of statehood. The building of the AVNOJ Museum also meant the restoration of the ritual birthday celebration, this time not (only) of Yugoslavia but (also) of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this way, a point of intersection of different interests was found: the building of the AVNOJ Museum as a place of remembrance is a document/certificate of Yugoslav statehood, „and since one of the main decisions of 1943 was the establishment of the federation, which coincidentally meant the establishing of intra-Yugoslav borders (that were recognized as international borders in 1991 by the Badinter Commission of the Council of Ministers of European Union), the nascence of Yugoslavia through AVNOJ is simultaneously regarded as the commencement of the establishing of Yugoslav successor-states” (Šahović and Zulumović, 2012, 245-262). The museum as a system of beliefs (values), underpinned by objects and rituals (in addition to the museum’s principals), was also largely dependent on the visitors and their engagement. Because the restoration of the AVNOJ Museum was a bottom-up process, a civic initiative, loyalty and needs of future museum visitors was taken into account. Some of these visitors sat on boards for museum restoration or sent support from their own museums, negotiated with local politicians, wrote petitions, synopses, projects and budgets. Secondly, for the survival of the AVNOJ Museum, an important part of the audience were those, who after the opening of the museum doors, walked in singing and ap-

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<sup>24</sup> Here I am quoting Dragan Nikolić, from his presentation at the conference “The Second Session of AVNOJ and statehood of Yugoslav successor states. 1943-2013”, which was held in 2013 in Jajce.

<sup>25</sup> This idea was put forward by the museum’s first director Dr. Enes Milak.

<sup>26</sup> This proposal came in 2002. The author was signed as “Walter”. The employees at the AVNOJ Museum today could not tell me who was behind this pseudonym.

plauding at the head of the procession.<sup>27</sup> These were the eyewitnesses and embodiments of the Yugoslav pilgrimages, which in the new socio-political circumstances became „agents of remembrance“.

„In order to create authenticity, many brought with them ‘emotionally loaded’ items, such as emblems from Slovenian partisans or flags of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia. French sociologist and anthropologist Bruno Latour uses the concept of ‘mediator’ to draw attention to the practice and experience of materiality in the formation of identity, and to the importance and the use of something as a ‘mediator’, which is not only a carrier of meaning but also produces it: When they arise from more than one country, the people and things engaged in crossing of borders become a part of the process of the mediation of memories.“<sup>28</sup>

The ceremony „Days of AVNOJ“ was originally conceived as „an idea to reduce national tensions in the region“, and also to encourage the revival of tourism in the town of Jajce. But it’s not only the citizens of Jajce who know that „Tito is selling well“. The compounding of activism and the industry of „red tourism“ is most transparently observed in the example of the association „AVNOJ Slovenia“.<sup>29</sup> Also, it has to be asked: does red tourism have a subversive potential? Echoing Foucault’s „Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison“ (1977), Bennett (1995) warned that the museum is a ‘disciplinary’ institution that embodies state power. What is interesting in light of the ‘ritualized’ visits to the restored AVNOJ Museum is that museum visitors actually make effective use of and seemingly ‘enjoy’ the panoptical function of the museum in a subversive way. They are not obedient, loyal, passive consumers of the museum experience. On the contrary, they are loud; they sit in the chair-exhibits (without seeking permission); they applaud the museum’s architecture, its „aura“. Such relationship of visitors with the museum could be read as a kind of occupation of the place of remembrance. The idea that the museum is a performance and we are giving it pulse, can be understood as the message that these visitors and gestures wish to send. To whom they are speaking, who do they want to address? They are aware of the media attention the Museum of the Second AVNOJ Session receives each year on November 29<sup>th</sup>. By posing for the media, they are creating documents and testimonies, since in the end it is memo-

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<sup>27</sup> There are numerous videos on the YouTube channel that demonstrate the social choreography of the event “The Days of AVNOJ”. I cite one example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B57majZB7s> (accessed February 20, 2016).

<sup>28</sup> The quotation is borrowed from Dragan Nikolić (Nikolić 2013, 22-24), who borrowed the term “mediator” from Bruno Latour.

<sup>29</sup> The chairman of this Association, Franco Pleška, was one of the first activists who visited the AVNOJ Museum in the postwar years, when it was just a ruin. He was one of few who started fundraising for the museum building’s reconstruction. Today his Association regularly visits Bihać, Kumrovec, Belgrade, Jajce, etc. When you look the footage of the ‘Days of AVNOJ’ on YouTube, Association’s members can be recognized by their carnival approach to it. Some authentic medals can be seen on the lapels of veterans. Other symbols are actually souvenirs and costumes, which are sold to participants on the road to Jajce.

ries, and not the exhibits that ultimately count (this can be argued, at least from the example of the AVNOJ Museum). With their rituals, the visitors are „inventing history“ (Malœuvre 1999). Probably the most interesting example of this was the case of actor Ivo Goldnić (a person who responded most professionally to the role of „AVNOJ Museum visitor“), who appeared in a black limousine at the opening of the AVNOJ Museum in 2008, wearing Tito's white uniform.

From the very beginning, the event „Days of AVNOJ“ was also accompanied by the official state visits. In the first year, Željko Komišić (at the time member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina) stood in the focus of interest. In the following years, the museum will walk the shadow of the Social-democratic party of Bosnia and Herzegovina (SDP BiH), considering that it was the only political party in Bosnia and Herzegovina that was claiming symbolic ownership and thus appropriating the symbolic value of this museum. In order to break from this tradition, in 2014 two independent political candidates used the AVNOJ Museum in their election campaign; according to the museum's director Emsada Leko, that was „to send a message that monopoly on anti-fascist values, which are symbolized by this museum, does not belong to only one political party, but to everyone in Bosnia and Herzegovina“<sup>30</sup>. But one politician paying his visit to the museum provided the most accurate definition of the new, redefined Museum of the Second AVNOJ Session. At his official visit to the museum, president (2000-2010) of Croatia Stipe Mesić said: „The second session of AVNOJ represents the basis of our independent and sovereign states, and it is an adequately good reason for Croatians to visit Jajce, to learn about the genesis of the current statehood.“<sup>31</sup> In a very short and concise way, he articulated the new message of the museum, shaped to accommodate the widest range of people who might be interested in the museum. However, we must ask ourselves how a simulation of the AVNOJ-stage – which contrary to the historical evidence and logic of the concept according to which the museum was realized, in which two Tito's appeared – converses with the pavilion style approach used to represent the development of the government of each individual successor state of Yugoslavia? The overlapping of audiovisual material of two different politics, rather than making them continuous, actually creates the fragmented character of memory. The AVNOJ decision-making process is exhibited on a few shelves, sidelined and in the shadows, in barely legible characters on an A4 paper sheet (pale let-

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<sup>30</sup> Paraphrased from the conversation with the director of the museum Emsada Leko, held in November 2015. The museum was used for the purposes of the election campaign by Bakir Hadžiomerović and Dr. Mustafa Cerić, both independent candidates for the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina in September 2014. About the election campaigns held in AVNOJ Museum one can find several media articles online: <http://www.bosnjaci.net/prilog.php?pid=53706> (last modified October 1, 2014) and <http://depo.ba/clanak/119833/naprijed-bakire-siguran-sam-da-me-neces-razocarati-a-evo-zasto> (last modified October 8, 2014).

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.abrasmedia.info/arhiva/node/1864?page=9%2C1%2C0%2C0%2C2> (last modified February 28, 2009).



ters on a yellow background), while the panels on which each individual state is represented are monumentalized.<sup>32</sup>

In this way, taking into account all differences and motives, polyphony triumphed in the end. The policy of the display of a dissonant heritage advocates a dialogue, calls for tolerance, empathy, deconstructs the term 'victim', 'hero' and even, in this particular case, a concrete case of a state project. Concurrently, democratic and European 'museology of reconciliation' obliges to this. Consequently, in line with contemporizing of the past, instead of the museum being a space in which the idea of integration is based on the postulates of brotherhood and unity which forged the Yugoslav identity, the museum becomes a place of integration under the umbrella of transnational identity that nowadays represents common provenance of citizens of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Montenegro, Macedonia and Serbia. The Museum of the Second AVNOJ Session, clearly a political project as Yugoslavia was, emerged and disappeared in the war and arose from the ashes in 2008 as a producer of democratic values, and the AVNOJ decision-making process and anti-fascist struggle can be understood as „specific elements of a common identity which today offers the possibility of international cooperation and integration in the framework of European integration processes.“<sup>33</sup> And finally, a question must be posed: to what extent do the museum images of World War II, in the case of the AVNOJ Museum, fit into trends of the 'Europeanization' – the political and epistemological shift – of the museum field? Or another way to put the question: how has the idea of 'Europe' – embodied in integration after the 'great suffering' of World War II – been perceived from the perspective of its periphery? It seems that the aspiration for social cohesion, emerging from the national into the transnational framework at the European level, becomes the basis for strengthening the nationalist connotations in the museological policies in post-communist countries, which are today EU members, as well as in those who yearn for this status. As shown by this text, in the post-conflict society of Bosnia and Herzegovina, democratization of the museum space means a „pavilion-shaped historical panorama“, as an attempt at reconciliation, but (again) leaves no space for critical historiography.

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<sup>32</sup> AVNOJ Museum web site: <http://muzejavnoj.ba/virtuelna-tura/sala/> (accessed March 24, 2016).

<sup>33</sup> I took the above quote from the website 'National monuments Jajce', from a section which shyly represents the AVNOJ Museum as the "Home of AVNOJ", but the promotion of European anti-fascist values museum is emphasized: <http://www.agencija-jajce.ba/karta/index.php/bs/dom-avnoj-a-u-jajcu> (accessed February 20, 2016).

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Примљено / Received: 22. 02. 2016.

Прихваћено / Accepted : 24. 05. 2016.